



Hawkesbury City Council

attachment
to
item 212

Attachment 1
Young People:
Community Participation
and Civic Leadership

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Young People - Community Participation and Civic Leadership

A Research Report

Commissioned by the Community Services Branch
of Hawkesbury City Council

A Working to Strengthen Youth Services
in the Hawkesbury (W Y S H) project

September 2008

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Bligh Park Community Services Youth Project

Forgotten Valley Youth Development Project

Hawkesbury City Council

Hawkesbury Community Outreach Youth Project

North Richmond Youth Development Project

Peppercorn Services Inc

ted noffs Foundation

Women's Cottage Young Women's Project

This research report was commissioned by Hawkesbury City Council.

The Working to Strengthen Youth Services in the Hawkesbury (W Y S H) Coalition, undertook this report on behalf of the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency.

Acknowledgement

The W Y S H Coalition would like to acknowledge the many young people who contributed to this project engaging with the researchers honestly and with enthusiasm. Many of these young people are active in our community. We hope this research project has provided opportunities to build their knowledge and skills towards active and positive citizenship.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary + Recommendations	4
2. Introduction	6
3. Consultation with Young People	7
4. Consultation with Youth Services	15
5. Summary of Consultation Findings	17
6. A demographic profile of Young People in the Hawkesbury	19
7. Literature Review	20
8. Good Practice Recommendations	23
9. Methodology	24
10. References	25
11. Appendixes	26

► Executive Summary + Recommendations

► 1 Executive Summary.

1.1 In response to a Council resolution of 8 April 2006, the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency (HYI) was approached to prepare a report for Council's consideration which investigated current models and possible options for increasing the civic engagement of young people. HYI subsequently commissioned the W Y S H Coalition to develop a consultation strategy and research methodology for this project (the W Y S H Coalition is a consortium of youth services providers established in 2007 to build the capacity of local youth services to better support the needs of local young people). The strategy was designed to involve a diverse group of young people in the consultation process.

1.2 More than 80 young people participated in this consultation. 12 focus groups were held at schools, youth groups and refuges. The focus groups were designed to be youth-friendly and encouraged young people to express their views informally through discussion and activities. The process provided opportunities for young people to learn more about Council and documented the views of young people about the civic issues relevant to them and the best ways to support their participation in civic activities and community leadership.

1.3 The consultations with young people indicated that young people were already engaged in community and civic activities and were very active participants within their communities. A significant number of the young people consulted held valuable and constructive civic leadership roles. The majority of young people knew little about the role of local government, and consequently, there were a considerable amount of negative comments made about Council with Council being held responsible for the perceived lack of resources and services for young people - even where these were the responsibility of other levels of government. Lack of accessible and cheap transport continues to be the major issue for young people living in the Hawkesbury - for young people access to transport is a critical issue in determining their capacity for civic engagement.

1.4 Just over half of the young people consulted felt that their opinions and views were not important or disregarded by Council. Young people indicated that they would like to interact with Council and Councillors on a face-to-face basis but would prefer to do so on their own terms, using a more youth focused approach using the mechanisms that young people already use to communicate with each other and the connections that youth services have already established with young people. Young people would also like to participate in Council's 'mainstream' processes but would require the help of youth workers and practical assistance to support this engagement.

1.5 A focus group was also held with Hawkesbury Youth Interagency members to canvass suggestions for how Council and youth services could work in partnership to support civic engagement and civic leadership opportunities for young people. Youth services indicated that Council had a key role to play in co-ordinating promotional activities including the public recognition of the contributions of young people. Youth services requested support and information to enable them to better navigate Council processes so that they could more effectively support young people to engage with Council and to speak directly with Council.

1.6 A literature review was conducted in conjunction with the consultations. The review focused on recent developments in youth participation policy and legislation to identify 'good practice' recommendations for civic engagement and leadership programs for young people. The outcomes of the review corroborated the findings of consultations which young people in that they emphasised the importance of civic engagement opportunities being purposeful, youth focused and practical, and advocated the need to consider a range of participation strategies which could adequately reflect the diversity of young people. The evidence indicates that partnership arrangements between youth services and Councils are more likely to deliver successful engagement outcomes and that sustainable youth participation strategies need to be well planned, resourced and evaluated. Councils are well placed to provide opportunities for young people to consolidate their civic engagement and leadership skills. Making the most of these opportunities hinges on the support of the Mayor and

Councillors who are well placed to mentor and train young people in community leadership and civic engagements.

1.7 The literature on youth participation and civic engagement suggests that young people who are engaged in their community become responsible citizens contributing to the development of a peaceful and productive society. Young people lead busy lives. They want to be able to contribute to their communities without necessarily having to make long term commitments and without having to negotiate bureaucratic concerns. Civic engagement for young people needs to be youth focused. It needs to build on the strengths of young people and utilise those activities that young people are already involved using the communication tools which young people are most comfortable.

1.8 The results of consultations with young people and youth service providers together with the findings of the Literature Review have informed the youth participation and civic engagement recommendations within this report. The eight recommendations outlined below have been ratified by the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency and are presented for Council's consideration.

► 2. Recommendations:

2.1 The '*Young People - Community Participation and Civic Leadership*' Report be formally launched by Hawkesbury City Council in partnership with Hawkesbury Youth Interagency.

2.2 Hawkesbury City Council and Hawkesbury Youth Interagency invite the participants in the research project and consultations to the launch of this Report (to provide feedback to participants).

2.3 An annual youth summit to be held in conjunction with Youth Week. The summit to be developed as a partnership activity of Hawkesbury Youth Interagency and Hawkesbury City Council. Councillors to be invited to attend the Youth Summit.

2.4 Council give consideration to including an amount of \$4,450 within its 2009-2010 financial estimates as a contribution to the staging of the Youth Summit.

2.5 A delegation of young people, supported by youth workers, be invited to present the outcomes and recommendations of the Youth Summit to an informal Councillor Briefing Session to provide the opportunity for young people to talk directly with Councillors about youth issues.

2.6 A 'rapid response' youth engagement strategy, utilising electronic communication tools favoured by young people (e.g youth web-site, MySpace and/or text messaging), be developed and trialled. This rapid response strategy will provide Council with the opportunity to seek the views of young people on issues which may arise and will complement the more formal annual youth summit.

2.7 A representative of the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency be appointed to the Young Citizen of the Season Selection panel to review and make recommendations on nominations for the *Young Citizen of the Season Award*. Council to work with the HYI on a media strategy to disseminate information about the Award and Award recipients.

2.8 A user-friendly guide for young people be developed to advise and inform young people of arrangements and protocols for making representations to the Mayor, Councillors and Council. This guide to be distributed to all youth services.

► Introduction

► 3. Council's Resolution of 8 April 2008.

3.1 During Youth Week held in April 2008, the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency co-ordinated a successful program of activities including Rock across the River in Nth Richmond, A Young Women's Art Exhibition, Spray Art activities and a Film Festival, at Wisemans Ferry. The Youth Week activities were launched by Hawkesbury City Council at a Civic Reception attended by the NSW Minister for Young People, Ms Linda Burney. Several young people spoke at this meeting raising issues of relevance to the community and local politicians

3.2 The planning for these events generated media interest resulting in a number of articles and letters to Editor. Councillor Barry Calvert subsequently drafted a Notice of Motion which was debated at Council's Ordinary Meeting held on 8th April 2008. Youth representatives from Hawkesburyheart spoke at the Council meeting, presenting articulate and passionate reasons for council to develop youth engagement and civic leadership strategies. In considering this matter Council resolved;

1. *Council recognise the achievements of young people in the Hawkesbury but notices that youth are generally under-represented in Council policy-making processes.*
2. *Council continue to actively support youth initiatives by working in partnership with the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency to consult with young people and develop youth participation and leadership opportunities.*
3. *Council recognises the contribution of local groups such as Hawkesbury Heart in their efforts to provide a voice for young people in the Hawkesbury and pledges to support them whenever possible.*
4. *A further report be provided to Council to identify options for supporting youth services and young people to plan and deliver events, programs and activities for youth and to become more involved in future council policy-making processes.*

► 4. Commissioning of Research Report.

4.1. In response to Council's resolution of 8 April 2006, Council's Community Services Branch requested that the Manager of Community + Youth Services at Peppercorn Services Inc., approach the Hawkesbury Youth Interagency to develop an agreed process for the preparation of a report to Council to identify options for supporting youth services and young people to plan and deliver events, programs and activities for young people, and to increase their involvement in Council's policy-making processes. This approach was proposed to facilitate a robust and independent research project and the preparation of impartial recommendations for Council's consideration.

4.2 The Hawkesbury Youth Interagency subsequently commissioned the W Y S H Coalition to develop a consultation strategy and research methodology for the project. The consultation strategy was required to be appropriate to the needs of young people, and seek the views of young people on their knowledge of local government, the civic issues relevant to them, and what and how they would like to contribute to their communities. The research component of the project was focused on investigating current models and possible options for increasing the civic engagement of young people; for establishing more inclusive consultation processes to facilitate communication between young people and Council about issues relevant to young people, and to increase recognition of the diversity and contributions of young people to the future of their communities.

► 5. The W Y S H Coalition - Consultation Strategy

5.1 The W Y S H Coalition is a partnership consortium established in 2007 with the aim of building the capacity of local youth services to better support the needs of local young people. Hawkesbury City Council (working through Peppercorn Services Inc.) is the lead agency for the consortium with

the Manager Community + Youth Services, Peppercorn Services Inc. as convenor. The membership of the consortium includes Bligh Park Community Services Youth Project, North Richmond Youth Development Project, Hawkesbury Community Outreach Youth Project, Forgotten Valley Youth Development Project, ted noffs foundation, and the Women’s Cottage Young Women’s Project.

5.2 In 2007, the W Y S H Coalition submitted an application to the Western Area Assistance Scheme to fund a youth capacity building and participation project to improve access and service provision for young people. The objectives of this project were to strengthen local youth services by establishing a formalised partnership between these services, convening 'good practice' forums, trialling electronic communication methods, and developing evidence based youth participation activities. In September 2008 Council was advised that the W Y S H Project application was successful. The project will provide a welcome and significant boost to the youth services sector in the Hawkesbury. The Project anticipated Council's more recent exploration of civic engagement and youth participation strategies and consequently, the W Y S H Project will be instrumental in advancing the recommendations outlined in this report.

5.3 The W Y S H Coalition consulted with almost 100 young people. 12 focus groups were held, including a youth services consultation with 17 youth services represented. A literature review was conducted and other Councils were contacted to obtain information about successful youth participation initiatives. This report summarises the views of a diverse range of local young people and youth services, as well as a review of the current research into the best practice strategies to support the participation of young people in civic activities and community leadership.

► Consultation with Young People

► 6. Consultation Strategy

6.1 The consultation strategy involved a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys which were undertaken at youth services schools and other service outlets. The purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of young people and youth service providers about the participation and civic engagement needs of the young people of the Hawkesbury.

6.2 The consultation process aimed to provide a sample of the views of young people in the Hawkesbury and their needs, therefore diverse groups of young people from all areas of the Hawkesbury were included in the consultation process. A number of these groups were already established youth groups, while others were a random mix of young people selected through schools or users of youth service providers. A series of 12 focus groups and interview sessions were undertaken over a period of one month in various locations around the Hawkesbury (as detailed in Table 1). In total 88 young people were consulted.

Group	No of YP	Method	Make up of Group
Bligh Park Youth Service	12	2 focus Groups	Existing service users
Merana	4	Focus group	Existing service users
North Richmond Youth Centre	5	Focus Group	Existing committee
Turning Point Youth Refuge	3	Interviews	Current residents
Womens Cottage (Young Women’s Mentoring)	3	Focus Group	Existing Group
Hawkesbury Community Outreach Service	4	Focus Group	Existing service users
Hawkesbury High School	15	Focus group	Random
Windsor High School	15	Focus Groups	Random
Colo High School	21	Focus group	Random
Richmond High School	6	Focus group	Random
San Miguel Family Centre	3	Focus group	Current residents
Hawkesburyheart		Surveys	Existing group

Table 1 - schedule of youth consultations

6.3 Participants in the focus groups were asked a number of questions about civic engagement, their knowledge of local government and their level of participation within the community. The questions were developed in a youth friendly format with questions and activities to encourage participation and engagement with the young people. Facilitators were encouraged to be as creative as possible to engage young people.

6.4 A focus group was also held with HYI (Hawkesbury Youth Interagency) members to identify how Council can better support youth services in planning, service delivery and participation and leadership opportunities for young people. A description of the agencies participating in this focus group is outlined in Table 2.

Name of Service	Type of Service
Forgotten Valley Community and Youth Project	NGO, Youth Service
San Miguel (Boys Town)	SAAP (Family & youth accomodation)
Bligh Park Youth Service	Youth Service
Hawkesbury Community Health service	Health
Youth Insearch	Youth Support Service (Camps)
Hawkesbury Police (Youth Liaison Officer)	NSW Police (Law Enforcement)
Hawkesbury Youth services	Youth Group/ In school programs
Dept of Education & Training (Home School Liaison Officer)	Education
Marist Youth Service	Youth accommodation Service SAAP
The Warehouse	Information Referral & Activities
The Women's Cottage, Young Women's Mentoring Project	Youth Service
Youth Transport Options	Youth Transport Service
Peppercorn Services Inc	Youth Development Service

Table 2 - schedule of youth services participating in focus group

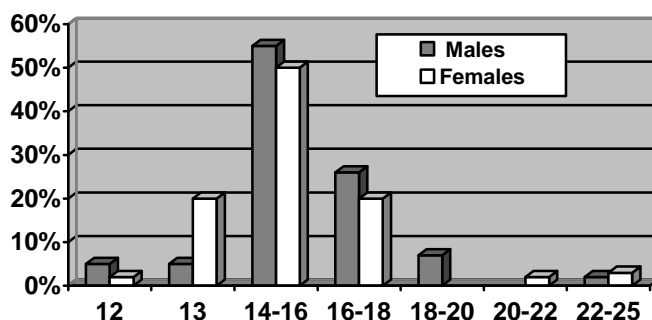
► 7 The Participants

7.1 The total number of young people participating in the consultation process was 88. There were 42 males (47.7%) and 46 females (52.3%), giving a balanced representation of both genders.

7.2 The participants involved in the consultation process ranged in ages from 12 to 25 years of age. A larger percentage of the respondents were in the 14-16 years age bracket, followed by 16-18 years and 13 years age bracket. This was to be expected due the age of young people attending the focus groups undertaken at the four local high schools.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the gender and age of participants

Table 3 - age and gender of young people consulted



7.3 Of the 88 respondents, 10 young people were of Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander descent, and 8 young people were from other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

7.4 Respondents were also asked to indicate which area of the Hawkesbury that they resided in. Table 4 provides a breakdown of respondents by locality. The data indicates a

broad representation of the geographical suburbs in the Hawkesbury LGA, but with larger concentrations of young people from the larger suburbs, or where youth services were present. Three young people indicated that they were from Richmond as they resided currently at The Turning Point Youth Refuge, but also listed themselves as transient.

Locality	no	Locality	no
McGraths Hill	1	Ebenezer	1
Windsor	2	Colo Heights	1
Bligh Park	18	Colo	1
Sth Windsor	5	Grose Wold	1
Sth Maroota	1	Richmond	7
Pitt Town	1	North Richmond	10
Wilberforce	3	Bowen Mountain	2
Box Hill	1	Bilpin	3
Kurrajong	9	Blaxlands Ridge	2
Glossodia	7	Londonderry	2
East Kurrajong	4	Transient	3
Freemans Reach	4	Total	89

Table 4 -Youth consultation participants by locality

► 8 Consultation with Young People - Data Analysis

8.1 Participants in the focus groups were asked a number of questions about civic engagement, their knowledge of local government, particularly their views of Hawkesbury Council and their level of participation within the community.

Question 1. What kind of activities/leadership are you involved in (or have you been involved in?)

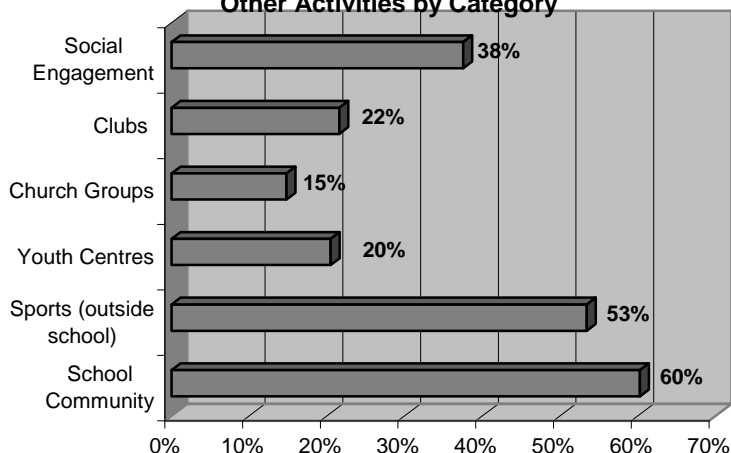
8.2 A series of printed sheets indicating different areas of involvement were spread on the floor and respondents were asked to place themselves near the sheet best explaining what activities were involved in. Facilitators then encouraged participants to list the things they were involved in. This was required as a large majority of the participants were involved in more than one activity.

8.3 The activities were grouped into the following categories:

- Sports - outside school
- Clubs - scouts, drama debating
- Community Centres (programs run by youth groups etc)
- School Community (SRC, extra curricular activities)
- Social engagement (hanging out with friends, skating/ bike riding etc)
- More than one of these things
- Nothing

8.4 The young people who were consulted participated in activities both inside their school community but also the wider community. The majority of respondents participated in multiple activities. Participants had a diverse range of interests and many were active in the wider community and valued the importance of it.

Table 5 - Youth Involvement in Community and Other Activities by Category



8.5 There were also a significant number of young people who actively sought to engage in leadership opportunities, both within their school and in other community programs. 12 young people were involved with their Student Representative Council, while 6 young people were peer support leaders. 8 young people volunteered their time to referee or coach sporting teams or to help out at their local youth centre. Of the 18 young people who were involved in their local youth centre or group, 8 were part of a management committee, advisory group, or event organising committee. 3 young people participated in mentoring programs while 1 young person was a group leader at their local church group.

8.6 Young people were involved in a range of activities and leadership roles including school captain, sports captains, choirs, bands, debating groups, dance groups, ambassadors, school newsletters, library monitors and sporting teams. Young people participated in a range of sports including soccer, netball, gymnastics, dirt and mountain bike riding, martial arts, basketball, ice-skating, softball, tennis, rock climbing, football and little athletics. The kinds of groups that the 19 young people who were outside of school included music groups, drama groups, toast masters, bands, singing groups, RAAF cadets, Scouts, Mentoring courses, leadership groups including indigenous leadership groups. At a more informal level, young people engaged with their friends at their friends places, shopping centres, parties, hanging at river and parks, Richmond McDonalds and RG McGees and the Jolly Frog Pubs.

8.7 The responses to Question 1 clearly demonstrate that young people are already engaged in community and civic activities and are very active participants within their communities. A significant number of the young people consulted also held valuable and constructive civic leadership roles

8.8 This question was discussed using butchers paper as a graffiti wall to encourage young people to freely write their opinions. The comments made by young people are documented in Appendix 1.

Question 2 & 3. What do you think Council does or is responsible for?

8.9 There were a considerable amount of negative comments made about Council. Some of the young people's opinions appeared to be influenced by parents and carers and also negative experiences they may have had with council. Some of these appear to be related to youth services and lack of resources within the youth sector, which is primarily a State Government responsibility and also appears to be associated with particular suburbs in the Hawkesbury.

8.10 Young people from outlying suburbs appear to be disenchanting with the lack of decent roads and sewerage. Young people residing in other outlying suburbs indicated they wanted more resources and services. Participants indicated they felt Council prioritised funding on adults and the elderly and overlooked the needs of youth. - Some young people had angry and very dissatisfied views with Council in general and commented on their perceived lack of importance in the community.

8.11 The level of knowledge of young people about the roles and functions of Council was mixed. Some young people appeared to have an understanding about what Council did and were able to nominate services and functions that Council was responsible for but many young people did not have clear knowledge about what Council was responsible for. This suggests that any meaningful strategy for engaging young people needs to include an education and information component - young people need to be able to easily access accurate information about Council.

Question 4. What do you think about the things Council does?

8.12 Prior to asking this question (and the next question), young people were given a handout about council's roles and responsibilities and given information about where to obtain this information on

the Council website. After reviewing this information young people made the following comments “*I learnt something*”; “*They do a lot more than the general public think they do*”; “*Interesting*”; “*Educational*”

8.13 Question 3 appeared to provoke some very negative comments from the young people, although some young people said they had experienced positive interactions with Council. The comments made by young people are documented in Appendix 2. As previously suggested parental opinion may have exerted an influence on young people's responses. Particular areas of concern included were future employment prospects for young people, as was lack of resources for young people. Garbage and recycling and keeping the parks clean received positive feedback.

8.14 While the young people recognised councils contribution to the community, many expressed a view that resources are unfairly distributed, with more allocated for adults, elderly and young kids, as a result they feel very disenfranchised, isolated and undervalued in the community, with no information as how to voice their opinions or needs. Some comments included “*They do heaps for adults*”; “*Needs to consider opinions of youth in the Hawkesbury- now and in the future*”; “*We need to communicate through an adult to get our point across*”; “*Need to let us know what they do- so we can use them*”

8.15 Young people from some larger suburbs expressed they felt worse off and said there is an unfair dispersal of funds across the suburbs in the Hawkesbury; this possibly may be indicative of influence by youth services and negative experiences with obtaining funding.

8.18 The young people consulted gave some valuable insights into the perceived effects of the things that council does or doesn't do on their lives. The major areas of concern identified were the lack of transport which impacted on their ability to get around, and safety on the roads. 19 young people indicated that the condition, maintenance and safety of the roads directly affected them. 10 young people listed the cost of rates as having an impact on them. Comments made by young people included:

Question 5. How are you affected by these things?

<i>Concern over state of the roads</i>	<i>Needs tarred roads</i>
<i>Need wider roads</i>	<i>Roads difficult to drive</i>
<i>Traffic is bad</i>	<i>Road closures affect me getting anywhere</i>
<i>Potholes cause damage to my car</i>	<i>Spend more money on roads, not museums</i>
<i>Getting lost when road signs are missing</i>	
<i>Parents take long route to avoid bad roads (time consuming)</i>	
<i>Need Drop off lane is front of RAAF base for safety</i>	
<i>Need wider roads and larger roundabouts for easier place for Learner Drivers</i>	
<i>Rates rises affect parents which affects me</i>	
<i>Parents pay rates and taxes and leaves less leisure money left</i>	

8.17 18 young people indicated that the lack of services for young people was another area that directly impacted on them. Young people made a number of suggestions as to how Council could improve services and facilities for young people. These included:

Need more youth services
Need more community get-togethers
Need low cost activities
Lack of community cohesiveness
They take away stuff from our age group
Lights at skate park so we can skate at night
A place to learn graffiti- so they don't get into trouble
A skate park needs to be put in Bligh Park- youth needs input
Extension to Youth Centre for more things and resources
Not enough entertainment eg skate parks- makes life boring

Kids are getting fat because they don't have anything and just sit around all day
They need to stop blocking the motor bike tracks- bored on the weekend
Some parks need more attention (Bilpin Reserve)
Need better job access without travelling out of the Hawkesbury
Need cycle ways on Londonderry Road and The Driftway for bike safety
Footpaths in Hobartville so it is safer to walk to school
Meetings especially about the new shops at Tiningi (Bligh Park)
Let us build change rooms at Woodbury Oval (Glossodia)
Chunks out of skate ramp, slows you down –needs repairing
Too much graffiti on Skate Park at Clarendon
Gravel on ground next to skate ramp is dangerous and difficult to skate on
Bad sporting fields affect our ankles and joints
They need to speak to people about their plans

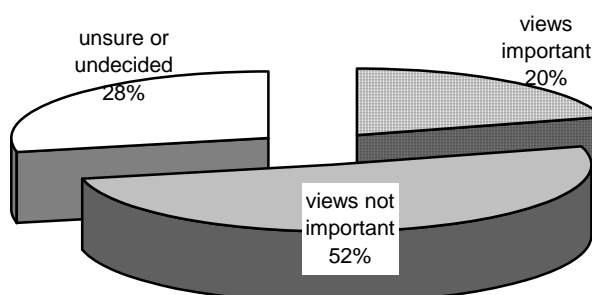
8.18 In general the young people consulted came up with a range of constructive ideas that Council could do in areas that affected them.

Question 6. Is what you think important to Council?

8.19 Participants were asked to indicate if their views were important to Council. The responses of young people are documented in [Table 7](#). Of the young people who answered this question, 20% indicated that they thought their views were important to council,

52% indicated that they thought their views were not important to Council while 28% indicated that maybe their views were important to Council or they were unsure or undecided. Not all participants provided an answer to this question

Table 6 - Perceived importance of young people views to Council



8.20 [Table 6](#) suggests that more young people thought that their opinions were not important or disregarded by Council. The reasons they expressed for this opinion included that they didn't pay rates or were old enough to vote - therefore they felt that their opinions were not valid or of little importance and not recognised by Council. This perception suggests that young people feeling undervalued and disconnected from their community, with no opportunity to be heard. Comments from participants included:

'Because we are young and don't pay rates'

'Because we don't vote'

I once submitted a petition to Council for a skate park and Council just blew it off and threw it in the bin. It had loads of adult's signatures and I worked really hard on it. They just don't want to listen

"Young people are undervalued in our society- its important for young people to have their say, but as young people need to be 18 to vote- there needs to be another way to have their say before 18- we need a young person on Council"

"It is more important to keep adults happy because they are the ones that pay rates"

'They don't give a damn about what our generation has to say and thinks we are pests'

8.21 Only one young person was definite in their belief that their views were important to Council, while others express the belief that they hoped their views were important to council

"Definitely because it gives Council an insight on what the public wants, needs and relies on. If its teenagers point of view it's very important because they express both views of teens – now and in the future"

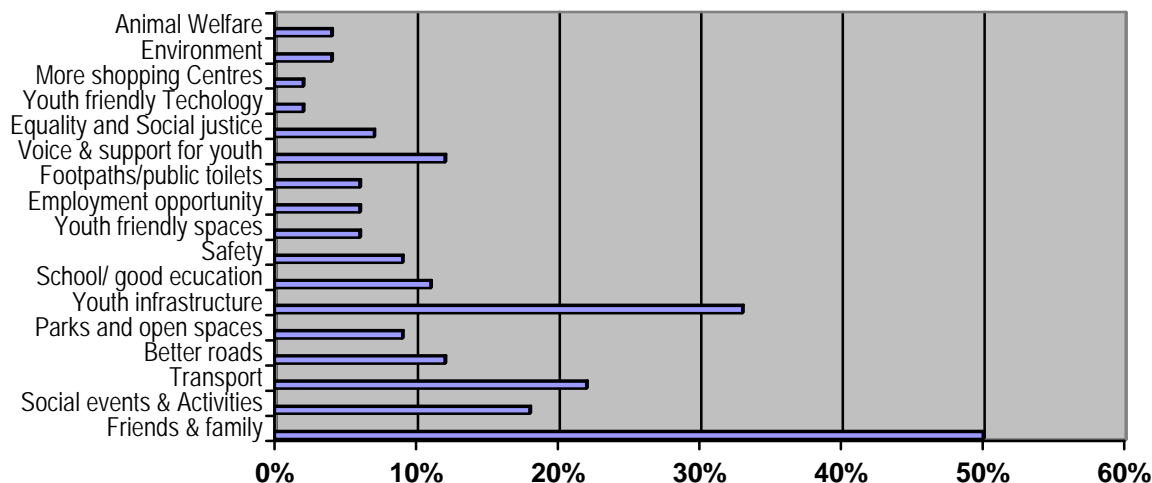
8.22 The remainder of the participants were ambiguous in their opinion about where their views were important to council: they said it was dependant on other variables. The remainder of comments from participants are listed in *Appendix 3*.

Question 7. Tell us what is important to you?

8.23. Question 5 and the following two questions were undertaken as a group discussion. Participants were asked to indicate what was important to them. The participants were encouraged to indicate as many

answers as they wished. Young people indicated that overwhelmingly friends and family were the most important, followed by social events and activities, youth infrastructure, better public transport, better roads, open spaces, parks and schools. Comments are documented in *Table 7*.

Table 7- Issues rated as important to young people



8.24 In broad terms, this survey has reinforced the data Hawkesbury City Council obtained when it commissioned a series of consultations with young people, as a part of its Community Consultation for the Council’s Community Strategic Plan. Aside from their friends and family, opportunities for young people and public transport were the highest priorities in both surveys. Infrastructure renewal was also rated highly in both surveys. 16 young people indicated that they needed social events and activities that were drug and alcohol free, and affordable or low cost.

8.25 Having places to go and activities to do was very important to the respondents, with 29 young people rating this as important, second only to friends and family. Young people came up with a wide variety of ideas on what they would like to see in the Hawkesbury these included:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>More skate parks</i> | <i>Swimming pools</i> | <i>Places to ride your bike</i> |
| <i>Rock climbing</i> | <i>Movie theatres</i> | <i>A PCYC in Richmond</i> |
| <i>A central sporting complex</i> | <i>Ice skating rink</i> | <i>Legal Graffiti wall</i> |
| <i>Places to go</i> | <i>Time zone/ Laser zone</i> | <i>Legal car racing track</i> |
| <i>A better underage disco than “Crush”</i> | | |

8.26 Equality and social justice appeared to be a concern for a number of older respondents, who were engaged in the wider community or involved in leadership projects within the community. Their concerns included women + young people’s rights, equality and social justice, equal opportunity for all. Comments made by young people included

- Places that are accessible for adolescents, all ethnic backgrounds, equally addressed and treated, thing that will benefit me now and in the future”*
- “Places and people who believe that they can help improve or maintain a good standard of life for all people of the world, whilst allowing them to maintain their freedom”*

8.27 10 young people indicated that having support and a voice was very important to them. Their comments included the need for more interaction between Councillors and young people (with Councillors coming to youth centres) and the need for people to support young people at [Council] meeting. In this regard youth workers were identified as an important resource. Young people also believed that Council needed to have a 'younger view' with more Councillors representing young people - one young person felt that young people should not be required 'to go through adults' to have their voices heard.

8.28. There were also a range of miscellaneous comments made by individual young people (as to what was important to them) which are not recorded in Table 8. These included: *Location, Sport, health, Food and petrol prices, Public drains made safer, More resources for youth centres, Riding my bike, having fun, drawing, church groups, not failing, more bin pick ups*

method	%	method	%
Letter/phone/e-mail	24	attend council meeting	2
don't know	11	rallies + protests	2
visit council representative	10	posters/flyers	2
petition	8	become part of council	2
get parents to call	6	be an adult	2
focus groups	4	don't bother	2
through youth workers	4	form youth sub-committee	1
get someone to take question to council	3	have a family member in Council	1
media coverage	3	yell at council workers in street	1
Councils website/chatroom	3	graffiti	1
constant whingeing	3	voice your opinion	1
surveys	2	songs	1

Table 8 - methods for letting Council know what young people wants

8.29 Participants were asked to indicate how they tell the Council about what was important to them. Some of the young people were aware of the different means they could contact Council about their concerns. The majority of young people came up with constructive methods of contacting council, with a small minority of young people identifying anti-social or inappropriate methods getting Councils attention.

Question 8. How do you go about letting Council know about the things that are important to you?

8.30 Most young people were aware of methods such as, letters/ phone calls/ emails, petitions, visiting Council Chambers or speak to a Council representative. Young people also indicated that they thought getting an adult/ youth worker to ring Council for them would also be an option. The participants thought that they would get better results by using an adult. This possibly indicates that young people feel disempowered and are unable or not confident enough to contact Council directly themselves, or worry about not being taken seriously.

8.31 Others indicated youth sub-committees or focus groups as a means of communicating with Council. This implies that participants believe that they may have more success as a unified youth voice, rather than approaching Council on an individual basis. This suggests that Council should investigate more youth friendly or better resourced options to enable young people to communicate their needs directly to Council.

Question 9. How can Council get creatively involved to help you get what you want?

8.32 Participants were asked to think creatively about how Council could get involved to help them get what they want. Responses are documented in Table 8. Young people indicated that the use of computer technology was a youth friendly means for Council to

obtain feedback (suggestions included MySpace, Facebook, Internet, online questionnaires, internet surveys, texting SMS. These are mediums that young people access and feel secure using as an everyday communication tool and should be considered by Council.

8.33 Participants indicated that they would like to be able to interact with Council on a face-to-face basis. Young people said they would like council to be more connected to the lives of young people. They said they would like Council to give young people the opportunity to meet Councillors. This interface would facilitate young people learning about Council's protocols and procedures, giving young people the required resources to access Council when necessary. Some options identified by young people included;

Representatives for young people at Council meetings

Voting for young people at Council

Making Councillors more accessible for young people

More Council involvement

Let young people visit council and meetings (eg Open day)

Meetings at youth Centres

Holding youth relevant meetings

Support and guide

Provide us with experiences to learn from.

8.34 The participants said that they are open to positive interaction with Council, but are seeking a more youth friendly approach or youth focused environment as a platform for building better communication between Council and young people. The participants also indicated that consultation and feedback were important ways to communicate with Council - talking to young people to obtain their opinions and also provide feedback was identified as a positive way for Council to demonstrate the value and validity of young people's views.

► Consultation with Youth Services

► 9. Hawkesbury Youth Interagency

9.1 In conjunction with the youth consultation, a focus group was conducted with Hawkesbury Youth Interagency (HYI), to ascertain what youth services may need from Council to improve participation and leadership opportunities for young people in the Hawkesbury. Questions were put to the service representatives following a presentation on good practice indicators for youth civic participation and leadership opportunities. The responses generally fell into 5 broad areas .

Question 1. How can Council better support your service to improve participation and leadership opportunities for young people?

9.1.1 *Promotion of Youth Services and Young people in the Hawkesbury.* Promotion of youth services on a wider scale is needed to help engage young people to attend youth services and projects offered at the services. Positive promotion will aid in providing a positive image for services and youth workers, which in turn will help increase youth participation and allow them positive leadership experiences and engagement in a range of community opportunities. (e.g. Rock across the River, Young Women's Mentoring Project etc). Due to time constraints faced by youth workers, promotional support from Council would allow workers to dedicate more face to

face time with young people and the development and delivery of quality youth projects. Suggestions from services included, *Youth services highlighted in council PR – website; A page in the Gazette re: youth services, articles, needs – council to co- ordinate; Council to promote youth week – big events on home page*

9.1.2 *Recognition of Young People and Youth Services.* Youth workers highlighted the importance of acknowledgement of role of youth services and young people involved in youth leadership opportunities. Workers felt that this would encourage more participation and engagement with young people and improve the public perception of youth services. Suggestions included Council sponsoring Awards for youth services for outstanding work in the Hawkesbury area, and a morning tea with Councillors to acknowledge youth leaders from projects like Young women's mentoring project and Rock across the river.

9.1.3 *Education.* The results of the consultations suggested there is a need for young people and youth service providers to be educated about the role of local government. Education of youth service providers would provide workers with resources to educate and support young people in communicating with government bodies. Due to the high turnover of staff at youth centres, regular education and training about Council processes would empower both workers and young people. Suggestions included *workshops on civic participation; A council/community fun day for young people; Council representatives to explain exactly what they do in council*

9.1.4 *Engagement with youth services and young people.* There appears to be a strong need for Council representatives to spend more time out in the youth community, to develop positive relationships and build pathways for young people and workers to partner with council. Suggestions included:

A representative from council to visit a youth service once a month and hang out with young people.

Council to consult with young people to investigate services and facilities for weekend activities.

Council representative to seek out leaders by attending youth services

Representative to occasionally attend a youth group and chat to young people

Consulting with young people and ask them how to engage with them in leadership on an ongoing basis.

Representatives from council should participate in young people's community, come out and show their support at events

Providing funding opportunities

Funding youth week events and there needs to be more events other than Youth Week.

Council could fund a segment on Hawkesbury radio re: community events

9.1.5 *General Youth needs.* The following comments were made:

Workers gave feed back on when young people were consulted, saying they are excited about stuff and feel disappointed because they feel there is no follow up.

More multi-cultural involvement

Youth volunteer projects- youth want to help out if you give them a task. They just want to be a part of something

A space to hang out – e.g. Richmond park

Question 2. How can Council support local services to better plan and deliver events and activities?

9.2 Participants were asked how Council could support local services better plan and deliver activities and events. The responses fell into 5 broad areas:

9.2.1 *Information.* Participants indicated that information or a point of contact at Council would assist young people and workers in event planning. Service

representatives felt that there was a need for Council to educate services on what support might

be available, and who to speak to. Of particular concern were issues to do with risk management - service representatives felt that there were unreasonable expectations that workers should somehow know what to do to meet risk management requirements when they had very little experience in this area. Workers commented that the process limited their options and that it was *'off putting to do a project because you have to go through this huge process with little assistance from Council'*

9.2.2 Advertising and Promotion of Youth Services and Events. The promotion and advertising of youth services, events and activities was identified as a high priority for young people and youth services. It was felt that a partnership between Council and services would strengthen service credibility and encourage youth participation in activities and events by engaging a broader range of young people in the community. Ideas for promoting services included a Council partnership with other services to design a youth brochure/newsletter; a youth newsletter to be handed out in youth services/schools (needs to be paper not internet); HYI to be represented on council's website through a youth page which could be regularly updated and freshened; a calendar of events, links to MySpace, greater promotion of youth services e.g. calendar included with rates notice.

9.2.3 Promotion of Council. Workers encouraged Council to be transparent in its dealing with the community, to encourage trust and build positive relationships with young people and services and the wider community. Additional promotional suggestions included *Greater promotion of Peppercorn Services Inc and the Youth Transport Options Program; Telling the public how much Council spends on an area for things like foot paths.*

9.2.4 Funding Opportunities. Funding opportunities or in kind donations are essential to youth services when providing projects and events. Participants indicated a need for information on funding opportunities, venues, transport and in kind resources available through Council. Other issues highlighted included *providing venues; transport for events; Help to subsidise the cost of hiring venues; Resources in-kind*

9.2.5 General Youth Needs. The workers agreed that a youth specific position is very important in Council. Other suggestions included, *A youth shop or café run by young people for young people; innovative opportunities e.g. a money tree – encouraging local business to donate ten dollars to give to young people to do odd jobs etc preventing crime and feeling part of the community.*

► Summary of Consultation Findings - Issues and Trends

► 10. Participation

10.1 It is evident that the young people participating in this research have a high level of engagement in their communities and fill important youth leadership roles. Many young people participate in multiple civic and community activities. There appears to be a need for further development of opportunities for young people to become more civically engaged, particularly looking at how to engage disconnected, disenfranchised and economically disadvantaged youth, who have little or no connection to schools.

10.2 These young people need to be engaged in a more social setting rather than in formally structured groups, with investigation into a more realistic understanding of what these young people would take part in. Development of partnerships with youth services that have established connections with these young people and different ways of engaging these young people on their own terms is required in an effort to encourage participation in these marginalised young people.

10.3 Young people have very busy lives, with commitments to school, homework, jobs etc, while most participate in outside activities, particularly in sport, their time constraints limit them to the amount of participation they can engage in. Traditionally, there is a smaller number of young people engaged in leadership opportunities, trying to meet several obligations, further encouragement of a broader range of young people to participate in these activities, would not only encourage more young people to build skills and participate, but would spread the load around for those young people trying to juggle many commitments.

10.4 Public recognition by Council of young people's achievements would in some way go towards encouraging young people to further participate and become more engaged in the community and provide encouragement for other young people to become involved.

► 11 Education

11.1 Lack of in-depth knowledge of Council's roles and responsibilities was apparent through out the research process, with many young people confused over what Council was responsible for. Some of the negative comments from the young people stem from lack of understanding about who is responsible for certain things, resulting in some cases, with Council receiving negative criticism regarding responsibilities of other levels of Government or other organisations.

11.2 Educational options need to be investigated by Council in an effort to educate young people to not only understand the workings of Council and their roles and responsibilities, but to equip them with the necessary resources and points of contact and youth friendly pathways to interact with Council when necessary.

11.3 The development of ways of young people to familiarise themselves with Council and instigating pathways for youth to be able contact council and be equipped with the necessary method and points of contact will encourage young people to contact Council if they have a concern and will reinforce the belief that Council is taking their opinions seriously, leading to young people feeling valued and connected to the community

11.4 Information and education will lead the way in developing positive relationships between Council and young people and provide young people with the necessary resources to develop their own sense of judgement and informed views. Providing information to young people and a clear understanding of Councils allocation of expenditure and transparency of processes to young people and youth services will build trust and positive relationships and develop sustainable partnerships with young people, services and the wider community.

► 12 Perceptions of Council

12.1 Throughout the research it became evident that young people have a very negative image of Council. Some of these views maybe based on misinformation and/or negative experiences with Council. There is a need for Council to do some public relations work to develop a better public image and more positive working partnerships with young people and the youth sector

12.2 Young people have expressed a desire for face-to-face interaction with Council representatives. Young people indicated that they were keen and willing to be involved with Council, but preferred it to be more on their terms, using a more youth friendly or youth focused approach. They indicated that they would like Council to be available to young people via visits to youth centres, schools and events or to identify youth friendly ways for young people to engage in Council processes. This communication would not only aid in the development of a positive relationship with young people, but also facilitate their learning about Councils protocols and procedures, in a youth focused environment.

12.3 This interaction would allow Council the opportunity to consult with young people and obtain first hand feedback regarding their needs, which would reinforce young people's feeling of value

within the community and give validity to their opinions to Council. This information was underpinned by concerns voiced by youth service providers that time spent in the youth environment would develop positive partnerships and provide opportunity for Council representatives to experience young people lives and develop an understanding for their needs.

► 13 Transport

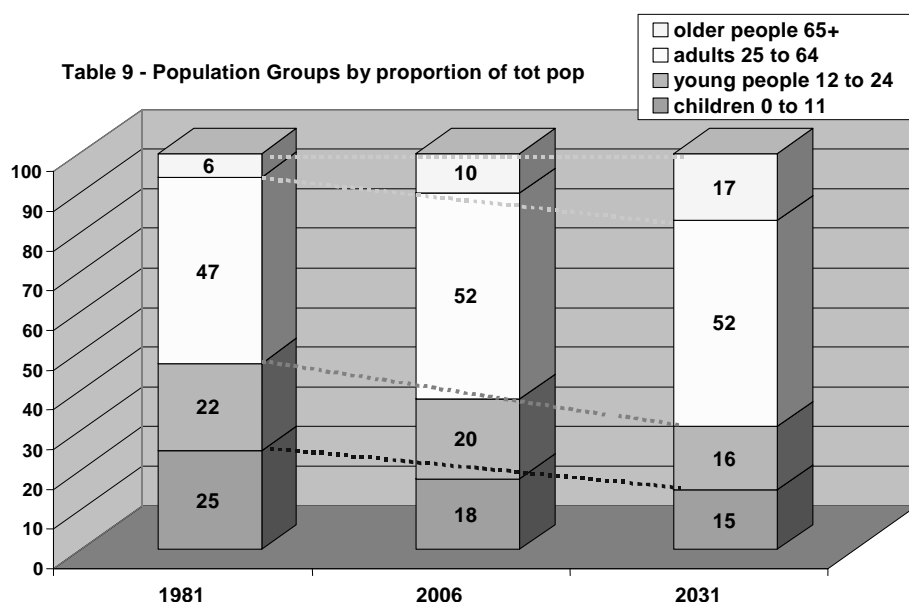
13.1 Throughout the research young people indicated that transport was a concern for them. Many of the opportunities for youth participation and leadership opportunities are linked to transport availability. The ability of young people to get around is a major concern for most young people; this was indicative of their comments regarding lack of transport, state of roads and need for cycle ways. Without transport young people are dependent on parents or friends for transport or are disadvantaged and isolated within our community and limited in their ability to become civically engaged and participate fully in the community.

13.2 There appears to be an identified need for youth transport to be further developed and promoted to allow young people to identify and access to this resource

► Demographic Profile of Young People in the Hawkesbury

► 14. The Demography of the Hawkesbury

14.1 As recorded in the 2006 census, the population of the Hawkesbury was 60,562. The population has fallen slightly between 2001 and 2006 and reflects a continuing trend where the rate of population growth has been steadily declining. Hawkesbury is the largest LGA in the greater Sydney region (more than 2775 square kilometres).



14.2 Consistent with national trends, the population of the Hawkesbury is ageing. In proportional terms the population of young people and children aged between 0 and 24 fell from 47% of the total population in 1981, to 38% in 2006 and is projected to decline to 31% of the population by 2031 (in absolute terms, the number of children and young people is projected to remain relatively stable over the next two decades). At the same time the proportion of older people aged 65 and above has risen from 6% of the population in 1981 to 10% in 2006 and is projected to increase to 17% by 2031 (see [Table 9](#)).

14.3 The Hawkesbury is a community of more than 40 towns and villages and rural localities. No one centre contains more than 11% of the population. The projected population distribution shows that more people are moving out of the townships of Windsor and Richmond, creating a doughnut effect, with significant socio-economic implications for these existing older towns. More than 90% of the population live in the south easterly portion of the LGA.

14.4 As recorded at the 2006 Census, the population of young people aged 10 to 14 was 4,975 (8.2% of the population), there were 4,757 young people aged between 15 and 19 (6.4% of the population), and the population of 20 to 24 year olds was 4,079 (5.9% of the population).

► Literature Review

► 15. Youth Participation - NSW Legislative Context

15.1 This literature review concentrates on recent developments in youth participation policy and legislation with the NSW State and Local Governments to provide a basis for identifying good practice recommendations for civic engagement and leadership programs for young people.

15.2 The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* - The importance of youth participation in civic matters was formally recognised in 1990 with the adoption by the Australian Government of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Articles 12 and 13 of the Convention provide that State parties ensure that a child (anyone under the age of 18 years) who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, and that these views be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Article 12 also requires State parties to provide children with opportunity to be heard in legal and administrative proceedings affecting them. Article 13 gives the child the right to freedom of expression, to seek, receive and impart information on all kinds of ideas. The Convention enshrined into international law the right of children and young people to express their opinions and to have those opinions heard and considered, according to their age and maturity. By ratifying this International Convention, The Australian Government set the standard for all Australian Governments and Organisations to review their practice and ensure that participation opportunities appropriate to the needs of children and young people were available and promoted as a part of their core practice.

15.3 *NSW Government Framework for youth participation - NSW Government Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation* - In June 2007, the NSW Government released Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation as a part of the implementation of the State Government Plan. These principles are to be observed by all NSW Government bodies as well as agencies. The Principles recognise young peoples rights to participate in developing government programs that impact on them and promotes the establishment of strong relations between government and young people which build young people's knowledge and skills. Importantly the Principles emphasis the role of Government to develop inclusive participation strategies which and take into account the capacity and interests of young people, particularly their training and transport needs (see Attachment 4).

15.4 *Historical Context in NSW* - In 1998 The NSW Government established the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 & the Youth Advisory Council Act 1998. These legislative initiatives provided a social policy framework for NSW to implement the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. Most Australian States have a centralised youth advisory mechanism. The Commission for Children and Young People promotes the serious consideration of the views of children and young people and the cooperative relationship between children, young people and the community for their safety, welfare and well being.

15.4.1 In 2004, The Commission launched a comprehensive guide to the participation of children and young people for government, organisations and the community on matters affecting them –

Taking Participation Seriously. The report was prepared in partnership with young people. The report emphasises that young people want to be more involved in community matters and want to feel that adults value their contributions. The Commission emphasises the importance of participation for young people because it connects young people them with their community, it allows young people to express their voice and opinions, and it means programs and services designed for young people can better meet their needs.

15.4.2 The NSW Youth Advisory Council Act 1998 established a Council to participate and advise the Minister for Youth on policy development and implementation issues which concern young people. The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is able to act on its own agenda, consult young people, community and government bodies.

15.4.3 In 2003 a Special Review of the NSW Youth Advisory Act was undertaken including reviewing the composition, processes and achievements of the YAC. This review was critical of the YAC in several areas and made more than ten recommendations to remodel the YAC. These recommendations included changes in nomination for membership (move towards self nomination); formalising relationships by clear definition of committee guidelines and responsibilities; developing a work plan ; providing adequate resources - including training and skilled support; providing administrative assistance, sitting fees, and risk management; and improved communication including advice and feedback

15.5 *NSW Youth Advisory Council Participation Survey, 2004* - In 2004, the YAC undertook a detailed survey on Youth Participation. A summary of the survey findings showed that Young people want to have a say about their local area and development issues; the youth services and facilities provided for them; how the media represents them; and the way local shops, businesses and shopping malls treat young people.

15.5.1 Significantly, the report emphasised that young people want to participate and contribute to their community because they like to contribute, they enjoy working as a group, they are passionate about issues and because they know it is expected of them.

15.5.2 The report noted the things which make participation easier for young people including feeling comfortable to speak out and get involved; feeling safe to participate including support and encouragement from their parents; having access to relevant information and support, including knowing how meetings work; support to get to meetings; knowing how to get involved; knowing how the levels of government works and age appropriate activities

► 16. Local Government and Youth Participation

16.1 In 2007, the Department of Local Government undertook a review of youth participation in the development of Local Council's Social Plans, following a request from the NSW Youth Advisory Council. The report on the Youth Focus of local council social plans was released in March 2007.

16.2 The Local Government Regulation amendment of 1998 requires all councils have a social plan addressing the needs of seven target groups including children and young people. The Social Planning and Reporting Guidelines stipulate that social plans have a community needs assessment that includes consultations with young people.

16.3 Local Council's in NSW are not required to establish formal youth advisory structures. The manner in which youth are consulted is open to the individual council to chose, however, the Department of Local Government recommends a range of consultative mechanisms to be used. The report noted that more than half local council's in NSW undertake good and in-depth consultation processes to engage young people in the development of social plans. More than 33.5% of local councils in NSW have Youth Advisory Councils, from the information available to the report. In summary, the report noted that consultation processes to young people could be considerably improved particularly in the area of Social Plans, as young people are more likely to respond to directly targeted methods of consultation.

► 17. Summary of Findings of Literature Review.

17.1 There has been an increasing interest by academics and practitioners in youth participation and civic engagement strategies over the last ten to fifteen years particularly around the following aims:

- consulting young people in order to improve council's decision making processes and outcomes for youth.
- developing young people's civic skills through involvement with Council's structures and participation in local organisations.
- more generally, enhancing young people's role as active members of the community, though a range of participation opportunities.

17.2. *The benefits for young people* - Current evidence strongly demonstrates the important role community participation plays in the development of the well-being and emotional resilience of young people. Effective participation by young people in community issues, beyond token involvement, builds their confidence, self-esteem, and knowledge. Young people shape their own opinions and values through community involvement, learn practical skills and make connections with community leaders giving them career advantages. Over recent years, much has been documented about young people's disengagement with political processes. This is demonstrated by young people's anti social behaviour, poor voter turn out and poor outcomes for well-intentioned youth engagement programs. Current research urges Council to respond to the needs of young people, where they are at, using the communication systems they use, to build a trusting relationship where the government/ organisational bodies listen and value the authentic voice of young people.

17.3. *The benefits for the Community* – Youth programs which have been developed with young people actively involved in the decision making, have been shown to be more successful and sustainable, ensuring a more effective use of resources. The research indicates that civic participation builds a healthy democratic community. Providing opportunities to support young people to participate in the community and engage with civic issues, is a key role which local councils can take to strengthen democracy at the grass roots level. This research argues that meaningful community participation by young people supports their development as effective and responsible citizens, which in turn underpins the development of a peaceful, tolerant and productive society.

17.4. *Barriers to participation* – The research clearly identifies the need to ensure that youth participation and civic engagement strategies are inclusive of the diverse needs and backgrounds of young people. Effective practice must be multi faceted and pitched at different levels to ensure young people, who are socially or economically disadvantaged are not excluded. It is not enough to invest the all of Council's resources into one strategy like a Youth Advisory Committee, as the sole means of delivering an inclusive whole of community youth engagement strategy. Councils often struggle to engage young Indigenous people, culturally and linguistically diverse young people, young homeless people and young poor people, particularly using traditional formal structures like advisory councils. However, local youth organisations who provide specific programs targeting these groups have established credibility working with these young people. The research recommends working in partnership with these established programs to offer enhanced community participation and civic leadership opportunities to these marginalised young people.

17.5 A key criteria for success, is not surprisingly, the commitment of Council to make an ongoing resource commitment towards providing an evidenced based youth participation and engagement strategy for sustainable long term outcomes. The research identifies the commitment of elected Councillors towards prioritising the role of young people in the community as the driving force, to reinforce the value of young people in the community and thereby ensuring program success.

► Good Practice Recommendations

► 18. Good Practice Recommendations for Civic Participation.

18.1 *Local Government is best placed to encourage young people towards civic leadership* - The evidence emphasises the importance of civic engagement programs for young people to build a health and vibrant democracy. Local Government can play a strategic role in the civic development of young people because of its grass roots involvement with the local community. Local government provides a range of ongoing resources (staffing and in-kind) and is able form strategic community partnerships. These are the essential ingredients for the development of sustainable effective youth participation and civic engagement programs.

18.2. *Engaging young people on their own terms* - Young people want to be able to contribute on their own terms, without making long term commitments and without dealing with bureaucratic concerns. The engagement must focus on the needs of young people rather than the organisational needs of Council. Young people want to determine what they want to know and how they wish engage with local government. It is fundamental to allow young people to work with Council using their own means and communication methods. There are practical and simple opportunities available to Council's to engage with young people, on an occasional basis, e.g. at concerts, school and church forums, through websites. These methods utilise the mechanisms which young people already participate. Today, Young people are busy juggling competing range of educational, social and sporting commitments. Any youth civic engagement strategy needs to youth focused, accommodating their changing needs and priorities.

18.3. *A partnership approach provides an inclusive range of strategies* – The research recommends working with existing youth services and programs to provide a range of participation and civic engagement strategies which are locally defined and respond to the diverse needs of the young people in the Hawkesbury. Pointing to the complex reasons as to why young people become disengaged with politics, the research states that a serious, sustainable and multifaceted approach is required to engage young people, around civic issues. This strategy might include a youth advisory council, however other strategies like working creatively with existing youth organisations, schools and church groups to engage young people on current issues would be a preferred approach.

18.4. *Building skills for civic leadership* - is an important function of any good practice youth participation and civic engagement strategy. Local Government can offer young people a range of practical skills to enhance their participation in the community both directly and through a variety of existing services already provided by Council. Council's website can provide a platform to disseminate information and educate young people about a range of civic issues. Learning opportunities for young people to build their civic knowledge on such issues as meeting procedures, political processes, environmental management, and planning can be provided directly or through partnerships with services and schools. It is important to integrate civic participation strategies for young people within Council's existing political processes. Mentoring is another skills building model successfully demonstrated by the Women's Cottage Young Women's Mentoring Program.

18.5. *Using a Strength Based model* - This method of working to engage people from their strengths has gained much recent creditability. The principle includes identifying the strengths of individual or groups of young people and using that as a basis to build a partnership to further develop their skills. In practice this means working with existing groups of young people, supporting and acknowledging their evident achievements, providing a trust basis to partner with young people to develop to further develop their civic skills. An example of this would be, Council to meet with the Rock across the River Sub-Committee (RaR) to listen to a presentation of their achievements, this would from a supportive basis towards developing a strategy to build the RaR group's event management skills and facilitate Rock across the River as a vehicle for young

people to demonstrate their cultural achievements and as a creative voice to articulate their opinions on civic issues.

18.6 *Adequate resourcing is essential* – Many well-intentioned youth participation programs fail because councils do not adequately resources the program to achieve long term sustainability. The available evidence from investigating youth councils and civic participation models implemented by other councils, suggests that all youth participation strategies require funding. Young people in the Hawkesbury are geographically isolated and have little access to public transport. To effectively engage with complex civic processes, young people are likely to require mentors and training. Evidence also notes the importance of skilled staff dedicating priority to these projects over the long term. These costs need to be considered with Council estimates in order to deliver a sustainable youth participation and civic engagement model.

18.7 *Good practice programs are practical* – The evidence recommends working with young people on clear and focused programs that have achievable and tangible outcomes. It is recommended that programs focus on issues which young people identify as important to them, and that they have clear time lines, with an achievable purpose. Examples of such programs already undertaken in the Hawkesbury include the Youth Week initiatives, in particular the Rock across the River Festival and previous time limited youth consultations.

18.8 *Successful Youth Participation Strategies hinge on the support of the Mayor and Councillors* – the research notes the importance of support by the Mayor and at least a core group of elected councillors. This support provides superior acknowledgement and value to the activity as well as offering a strong model of leadership to mentor and train the young people.

► Methodology

► 19. Research Approach

19.1 An *applied research* methodology has been employed within this research project. This approach is based on working in partnership with youth services and young people to formulate collaborative decisions. Collaborative action through service partnerships which culminate in prevention and participation strategies is recognised as a useful program development method. The Project also utilises a post-modernist analytic framework to address the power relationships involved in qualitative research and program development. This approach is critical in establishing effective and democratic stakeholder partnerships.

19.2 Stakeholders including members of Hawkesbury Youth Interagency were consulted to obtain a detailed picture of local service needs. The report explored and gathered facts about local youth participation and civic engagement opportunities for young people. A needs assessment was also undertaken to specifically ask the young people what they already knew and wanted to know about local government. The engagement process, with youth services and young people, actively encouraged collaboration and ownership of the process and the final recommendations - an essential tool in delivering a viable and sustainable youth participation and civic leadership plan.

19.3 The methodology integrates qualitative and quantitative research to provide a rich and detailed picture of young people in the Hawkesbury. This blended approach has ensured robust research results by combining information obtained from young people with the good practice indicators identified in the literature. This is reflected in the recommendations for action. The research has been informed by a social *indicator analysis* (obtained through the review of the Hawkesbury's Social Atlas and Council's strategic directions documents); *Good evidence based practice* (the exploration of youth participation strategies in other local government areas; and a *Community Group approach* - (the outcomes of groups and focus sessions involving young people).

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10. Appendixes

Appendix 1

What do you think Council does?

Positive Comments (only 1 or 2 people indicated each of these)

- Provides local government
- convene council meetings
- Look after local heritage and houses
- Funding
- Try to make the community better
- Manage local areas
- Builds and maintains youth centres
- Support and works with Community groups
- Plan for the future
- Clean graffiti
- Run swimming pools
- Take care of environment
- Council is representative to the area
- Employs lollypop ladies
- Bus runs for the elderly
- Plant Trees
- The grandstand at Richmond Park
- Public Toilets
- Does thinks for kids
- Fun to Young people sometimes
- Comes to schools and does this sort of stuff (consultation)
- Try to help people

Negative comments (Generally comments were voiced by only 1 young person each)

- Gets lots of money
- Makes motions to satisfy the public in every aspect?
- Nothing (Bludge, Screw around)
- Run art Gallery for old people
- Try to take your money
- Shitty roads made of gravel off the main roads
- Cheat people
- Build more houses on Peel's Dairy
- Could do more for young people
- A place for neighbours to ring and complain
- Does some stuff but not enough
- Causes trouble for people with businesses (not timely approval for businesses)
- Takes care of trees but also wreck them when they are cut
- Heritage lists Graffiti
- Sits in air conditioned offices while we sweat in crap hot classrooms
- Blacklists new so it can't be put in the media
- Puts in and takes away play equipment in parks
- Ruins children's fun
- Ruins our suburbs
- Steals from government funded schools
- Kills animals and takes away their homes by chopping down trees
- Creates pollution
- Makes roads worse
- Sits around while the road isn't being done
- Promises stuff and doesn't deliver (roads, sewerage etc)
- Takes short cuts
- Very little happens for youth

Appendix 2

What do you think about the things Council does?

The following list has again been broken down into positive and negative comments for ease of dissemination.

Positive Comments

- Some things are okay
- Recycling works really well- but needs to be more than fortnightly
- Good at collecting rubbish and council pick ups
- They wear cool fluoro vests
- Some good sporting fields/ some bad
- They have a lot to do
- Good job of keeping parks clean and collecting rubbish compared to other areas I have lived in
- I thought that Rock Across the River Festival was a council thing, not run by youth- I think they should do stuff like that
- I think they are doing a good job, but need to do more to entertain old people
- What the council does is beneficial to everyone
- Great for the public eg Youth Services
- Support is good

Negative Comments

- Don't really care
- Talk about stuff- no action (eg skate ramps, jumps etc)
- False promises
- Works slowly/ waste of time
- Doesn't do stuff their supposed to do
- They do nothing
- Took 3 months to get a ½ pipe- then they threatened to take it back
- Could do things better
- Nothing for youth
- Spend money wiser (eg new museum unnecessary)
- Poor resource management
- Unfair
- No footpaths (South Windsor)
- No cycle ways
- Skate parks not maintained
- Too many people on the one job
- Oasis pool is dirty- needs to be cleaned better
- Eat lunch instead of working
- Takes a long time to do things
- Focus too much on indigenous things (having too many things named using aboriginal words)
- Don't fix signs
- Don't think things through
- Don't respond to community suggestions
- Always lock public toilets and don't maintain them well
- Don't bury powerlines
- Closed Wiseman's Ferry tip
- I don't know and I don't care I just live here, but I still don't like them
- Council really needs to help more people
- They are lazy and don't clean stuff
- Don't repair soccer fields
- Land rates are stupid cause you buy the land and then you still have to pay Council for the land- as if they own it
- Land rates too high

- Streets aren't kept clean
- A lot less than I thought they did.
- Confusing
- Frustrating
- Tip too expensive
- Very few youth services offered
- They don't prevent natural hazards like bushfires
- Could do better
- More funding
- Council needs youth workers
- Lack of community/ human resources
- Quality rather than quantity

Appendix 3

How are you affected by these things?

Negative comments

- Not affected much except that it makes me angry
- Feel mistreated- not listened to
- Have to go into the bush so that they (Young People) can create dreams (cubby houses as they get pulled down by council- they understand the idea of insurance and suing)
- Sewerage plant stinks out our school and affects our learning (Windsor High)
- Adolescents are disadvantaged
- Indigenous people seem to have more rights and benefits and then we miss out

Positive Comments:

- Happy about Garbage- concerned about if it is being disposed of properly
- Have gained council support and funding
- Education
- Economy
- Provides road and Hospitals?
- Cleaner living environment
- Not affected that much
- Rubbish removal is okay
- Things are safer because Council creates safety
- Sporting facilities give us a place to play sport
- Windsor Library is good- it gives me somewhere to do my assignments

Appendix 4

Is what you think Important to Council?

- YES- what we think is important to Council
- Yes they might change their ways
- Because it effects them
- They should listen to us, as we are the future generation, but they probably won't change because they don't care
- I think they do care because for example I want a skate ramp that might bring more families into the region and No because it might cost a lot to build
- Majority of things for most youth, but some things like Drugs and Alcohol aren't all that important to Council
- I suppose so
- People's wants and needs should be important

NO- What we think is not important to Council

- They don't care about other people's needs
- I don't think they care about what teenagers want
- Probably not- they have a complete disregard of anyone
- Council believes that museums and stuff like that are important to them
- They don't relate to things young people do
- Probably they don't think we are old enough to make decisions for ourselves
- Probably not
- They don't think we have enough power
- They don't spend money on skate parks, jumps etc
- No
- All they want is money
- Nothing
- Council doesn't really care
- It should be, but isn't to the higher powers that be
- Maybe/ Unsure- if what we think is important to Council
- Depends if it has something to do with us, then it is important to do with them
- It should be- we are the future
- This focus group is the first time I have ever been asked for my opinion
- We should have a say in what we do and what happens
- Sometimes, but mostly no
- We think it should be
- Yes because it gives a variety of opinions to what matters around the Hawkesbury, but no because youth opinions aren't all that important
- They need to support inter-schools links (eg Captains meetings with Colo Richmond and Hawkesbury High)
- Don't know

Appendix 5



Premier of New South Wales
Australia

PREMIER'S MEMORANDUM No. 2007 -07

BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

(Memorandum to all Ministers and Chief Executives)

The Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation seek to encourage and support young people to participate in Government decision-making, in implementing the NSW State Plan, and in providing input to the development of programs and services that impact on their lives.

The Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation must be observed by all Ministers, Chief Executives and agencies where relevant and appropriate. I therefore draw your attention to the main elements of those Principles:

- recognise young people's rights to participate in developing Government policy, programs and services that impact upon them;
- promote respect by listening to young people's views and taking them seriously;
- build and maintain strong relationships with the young people we consult with;
- provide young people with appropriate and timely information on Government processes;
- build on young people's knowledge and skills;
- recognise young people's different situations and backgrounds, particularly those:
 - from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island backgrounds
 - from culturally diverse backgrounds
 - with disabilities
 - in out-of-home care
 - from vulnerable or marginalised groups
- organise participation processes that take into account the needs of young people, such as training and transport ;
- encourage young people to provide feedback on the effectiveness of participation processes.