



THE ENTRANCE PENINSULA

COMMUNITY PRECINCT

ENCOMPASSING: THE ENTRANCE; THE ENTRANCE NORTH; LONG JETTY TOOWOON BAY; BLUE BAY; SHELLY BEACH & MAGENTA

P0 Box 349 The Entrance 2261

17 June, 2010

Michael Whittaker
The General Manager,
Wyong Shire Council,
PO Box 20,
Wyong 2259

SUBJECT: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY SUBMISSION

Dear Michael,

As a member of The Entrance Peninsula Community Precinct Executive I have been asked to respond to Council's Youth Engagement Strategy because it was felt that I was able to review the strategy from the perspective and provide insights from a youth's perspective. Over the past five years I have completed both secondary schooling on the Central Coast and university degree course by commuting to Sydney. I believe this experience will allow me to provide insightful comment on the problems confronting youth in WSC. I hope to use this document to outline what I feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy.

I have lived in Wyong Shire Council for 19 years and as a 22 year old I am acutely aware of the challenges that confront youth on the Central Coast. Over the past several years I have hoped that any level of government involved on the Central Coast would formulate a concise policy direction aimed at assisting young people to meet their aims in several crucial areas. These areas included:

- Increasing the level of education either within school or within an industry (trade & apprenticeships).
- Ensuring that access to employment is encouraged by business within the shire. And that youth within the shire are aware and encouraged to seek local work.
- To address social issues that arises from a devastating level of youth unemployment.

I commend the aim of The Wyong Shire Youth Engagement Strategy which sets out to provide a concise direction for youth.

At the Wyong Shire Council (WSC) Management Plan meeting a month ago I raised the question of budget funding aimed to address youth employment. I was informed that the councils approach to combat this area would be included within the strategy

I have focused on the outcomes concluded within the strategy as well as the means of stakeholder input throughout the process.

Firstly I would like to comment on the stakeholder input into the strategy. It is evident that a large number of young individuals were consulted on what they felt was needed in such a strategy. However the engagement of the local business community appears to be limited. I am concerned that The Entrance Town Centre Management was not involved in consultation. The strategy has sought to include business communities from Wyong, Toukley and Tuggerah (Westfield). It is important to identify that communities such as The Entrance, Long Jetty and Bateau Bay were not included in this process. As I live at The Entrance I know that large number of young people live and are educated in this area, and the need to improve youth services here is paramount.

Was there a reason to exclude this region of the shire?

The strategy sees Council as a key player and facilitator in positive youth development by attempting to make youth engagement and participation practices central to the way Council addresses the needs of young people. The Engagement Strategy lists existing events which it hopes will increased youth community participation. However lacking from the strategy is the manner in which Council will encourage increased participation in these events. I feel as though identifying what services are available within the Shire fails to meet the aims of the strategy. It is vitally important that we consider the way these groups/events have been operating, if these practices are effective, and if not how can they be improved through the implementation of this strategy.

The six key priorities of the Youth Engagement Strategy are:

1. Strengthening and Connecting Our Young People
2. Valuing Young People.
3. Involving Young
4. Learning and Working.
5. Young People and Places and.
6. Working.

I see the priority of "Learning and Working" which aims to enhance local learning and employment pathways, support youth-led enterprises and equipment young people with life skills as most important.

The Youth Engagement Strategy has identified the following outcomes in relation to 'Learning & Working'

- Strong two-way relationship between business community and young people;
- School, Vocation Training and University curriculum connected to the creation of a strong local economy;
- Community networks and mentors for young people seeking local jobs and carers;
- Places where young people and business can come together to connect employment needs with young people's skills and interests;
- Development of creative industries connecting youth people's passions such as music, sound and the arts to professional work experience, training and employment;
- Developing a self-employment culture and related local training and youth friendly support networks;

- Holistic and flexible pathways and transitions from school to work and training in partnership with existing employment services and youth service providers;
- Access to affordable and secure housing that supports transition from home to independent living;
- Access to affordable and appropriately timetabled transport to and from learning and work opportunities; and
- Pathways and learning environments that respect the diversity of young people, their needs, aspirations, family and community commitments.

The Learning and Working Strategy has many positives to further develop and enhance learning and employment pathways for young people that include:

- Establish a collaborative model of youth mentor programs under a newly formed umbrella organisation.
- Facilitate partnerships and linkages with government, business, community and education providers to seek avenues for programs which develop and improve the education and skill base of young people.
- Establish a shared vision for education, employment and training pathways in conjunction with local employers and young people's aspirations.
- Promote the availability and benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships to young people.
- Promote the benefits and business incentives available to local employers to support and employ people.
- Continue to offer pathways into council employment for young people (including traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience placements). Encourage other employers to do the same.
- Continue to expand and promote the WSC scholarship program to assist young people access tertiary education opportunities in the region.
- Plan and advocate for improved [public transport opportunities that meet the needs of young people accessing education and employment.

It proposes to support and resource youth based ventures and enterprises that can lead to local employment.

- Partner with the North Wyong Shire Youth Arts Stratify to develop employment opportunities in arts, music and cultural/creative industries.
- Establish and support a social enterprise providing pre-employment readiness training and real work experience for young people (such as a youth café).
- Establish and support a Wyong Youth Enterprises Services
- Develop a youth journalism cadetship program.

One initiative I can propose is that Council organise a trade fair where students can develop business/environment projects/community projects for the local area. This will allow students to put on an exhibition where Councillors/Key business personnel attend. A financial award for projects with key benefits to the community is proposed. Students would then work with Council to implement these ideas within the community. It could be a yearly event with sponsorship from local business.

I do however have a number of concerns with the strategy:

1. The engagement strategy only includes open ended aims. There is little detail given to the expectation on what these initiatives will achieve. Moreover there is no time frame attached to any of the outlined projects above.
2. There is little detail on how the Council wishes to bring about these initiatives.
 - a. What will be the process of involving local business?
 - b. Who will be directly responsible for bringing about these aims?
3. There is no detail on funding for any of these initiatives.
 - a. What is the scope of the projects?
 - b. What are the realistic expectations attached to these initiatives with specific focus to funding restraints?
4. There is a lack of detail on attempting to improve school retention.
 - a. How can Council use information within the strategy to assist students making difficult decisions, such as to complete a trade or stay on for the HSC?
 - b. Where do we stand on the number of apprenticeships available to school leavers?
 - c. What steps can the Council take to improve this process (if any)?

It is hoped before Council adopts this strategy it gives serious thought to how the concerns I have raised are going to be addressed.

Yours Sincerely

Luke Nayna
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PS Please address any response to this submission to the Secretary, TECPC.