

ITEM 3 FUTURE DIRECTION OF WOLLONGONG YOUTH SERVICES

This report provides an update on the future direction of Wollongong City Council's Youth Services. The report outlines the model of service delivery being delivered by Wollongong Youth Services (WYS) and provides recommendations regarding the Neighbourhood Youth Work Program (NYWP) in response to Council Minute No 150 of 20 December 2016. These recommendations included:

'3 Council officers, and available Councillors, meet with Neighbourhood Youth Work Program providers once more to determine their ability to meet Council's requirements for the delivery of youth services to the 12 to 24 year old demographic in the Wollongong Local Government Area.

From 1 July 2017, services deemed compliant will enter new funding agreements setting out clear objectives and data collection methods and these will be reviewed by Council quarterly. Non-compliance will result in the termination of the funding agreement.

4 Any current providers who do not engage in the process in (3) above, will be deemed as non-compliant and the funding agreement terminated.'

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 Council enter a one year funding contract with Berkeley Development Association; Careways (Dapto); Helensburgh Community Centre; and Port Kembla Youth Project Inc for the delivery of Neighbourhood Youth Work Program in 2017-18 as per their agreed One year Plans.
- 2 Council continue to negotiate with Cringila Community Cooperative for the delivery of Neighbourhood Youth Work Program in 2017-18.
- 3 An audit and evaluation matrix is implemented throughout the funding period to assess Neighbourhood Youth Work Program providers' compliance and a report detailing the assessment of Neighbourhood Youth Work Program compliance be compiled in April 2018 and provided to Councillors in an Information note.
- 4 Based on the outcome of the Neighbourhood Youth Work Program compliance report, either:
 - a Enter a three year funding contract, under Delegation of the General Manager, with compliant Neighbourhood Youth Work Program providers based on the Neighbourhood Youth Work Program service provider's continued compliance; or
 - b Do not enter into future Neighbourhood Youth Work Program funding contracts with non-compliant Neighbourhood Youth Work Program providers and a service be delivered by Wollongong Youth Services.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Sue Savage, Manager Community Cultural and Economic Development (Acting)
Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Corporate and Community Services - Creative, Engaged and Innovative City (Acting)

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments for this report.

BACKGROUND

Wollongong City Council's Youth Services Program consists of Wollongong Youth Services (WYS) and the Neighbourhood Youth Work Program (NYWP). WYS is a generalist youth service and has a focus on community development, capacity building and connecting young people with the services, support and opportunities which best meet their individual needs. WYS operates from Wollongong Youth Centre and currently provides outreach services to Warrawong and Bellambi.

WYS oversees the delivery of the funding program for NYWP. Wollongong City Council (WCC) provides funding, under an annual agreement, to community organisations to provide generalist youth services and community development activities in specific suburbs of the Local Government Area. Currently, funding is provided to five organisations being: Berkeley Development Association; Cringila Community Cooperative; Careways (Dapto); Helensburgh Community Centre; and Port Kembla Youth Project Inc.

NYWPs provide a diverse range of activities for young people in their local areas funded via a variety of government and non-government sources. Some of the activities delivered via Council's financial contribution are inconsistent with the scope of Council's funding agreement and have been the subject of ongoing discussion. The issues include: programs within the funded geographical area, and projects offered only within school based environments. As a result of the meetings with each of the NYWPs, clarity has been provided regarding the objectives of the program, and changes have been made to the scope of the NYWP funding program. These include:

- Inclusion of a transition to high school program in Term 4 for Year 6 Primary School students
- Drop-In comprising an identified percentage of service delivery, with targeted programs providing the majority of the program
- Identification of young people's inclusion in the development of the programs delivered
- Simplified reporting requirements.

Based on the 12 December 2016 resolution of Council, initial meetings were held between 22 February and 2 March 2017 with each NYWP to determine their ability to meet Council's requirements for the delivery of youth services to the 12 to 24 year old demographic in the Wollongong Local Government Area. Each meeting was attended by the Lord Mayor, available Councillors, Council staff and representatives from the NYWP. The process for achieving compliance was presented, identifying that NYWPs were required to provide, by 7 April 2017:

- 1 A revised 2016-17 One Year Plan which details increased compliance.
- 2 A 2017-18 One Year Plan completely compliant to a new Funding Contract.

A 2017-18 One Year Plan was deemed compliant if it addressed the following:

- Capacity building programs based on demonstrated need.
- Involving young people in decision-making.
- Provision of information, support and referral.
- Demonstration of partnerships.
- Programs held for young people in the geographical area.
- Maximum identified percentage of service delivery as Drop-In.
- Programs for primary school students limited to Term 4 transition program.

The revised plans have been submitted and assessed.

PROPOSAL

Wollongong Youth Services

Changes have commenced to service provision at WYS resulting in a shift towards a hybrid model of youth service provision. A hybrid model includes both direct service provision and strategic planning and provides a range of benefits. Youth Development Workers (YDW) add to the work of direct service provision by including extra elements of participation that enhance the outcomes of programming; strong strategic direction is undertaken and supported by local research and planning; strategic engagement and involvement with other services and funding bodies.

Youth Services has a strong focus on establishment of partnerships with other youth service providers, including NYWPs. The development of partnerships allows for more effective service delivery, less

duplication, efficient resourcing, improved service coordination, stronger connections to community and the ability for WYS as a generalist service to work closely with target service providers to address the needs of young people.

Youth Services have demonstrated the ability to provide consistency and efficiency in service delivery across the whole youth service program. A key focus of WYS is increasing young people's opportunity to develop new skills and build capacity. The new approach has diversified the program offering, increased the number of new participants to the service, increased skills and connected young people to additional opportunities.

WYS continues service delivery in Kemblawarra, Lake Heights and Warrawong. More recently, WYS has commenced service delivery in Bellambi and planning has commenced, with service delivery in Koonawarra anticipated to commence in the coming month.

Neighbourhood Youth Work Program

NYWPs provide a connection to local communities and allow young people to access services in their own suburb. A number of projects have developed innovative services and programs, however, overall NYWPs were not meeting WCC outcomes. Since the Council Meeting of 12 December 2016, strategies have been implemented by WYS to assist NYWP providers to reach compliance:

- 1 *New funding contract* – the funding contract has been revised to remove redundant clauses and include specific details which provide clearer boundaries and expectations.
- 2 *New reporting framework* – a new reporting framework has been developed in consultation with NYWP providers. The framework streamlines reporting, reduces complexity of data requirements and provides greater accountability in meeting funding requirements. Overall the framework seeks to reduce administration time and provide a platform to highlight the positive contribution of NYWPs.
- 3 *Improved communication* – the frequency and methods of communication between WCC and NYWPs has increased providing greater support for NYWPs and increasing clarity of expectations.

The One Year Plans submitted by each NYWP provider demonstrates the commitment to undertake support, referral and advocacy, community development, youth participation in decision-making, capacity building programs and raising community awareness. The proposed programs will be delivered collaboratively and have been developed based on identified need.

Overall compliance was achieved by Berkeley Development Association; Careways (Dapto); Helensburgh Community Centre; and Port Kembla Youth Project Inc. As a result, it is proposed Council enters into One Year Funding Contracts with each of these service providers for the delivery of NYWPs in 2017-18 as per Agreed One Year Plans.

Whilst the required documentation was submitted by Cringila Community Cooperative, compliance was not achieved for the following reasons:

- 1 Ongoing instability in Centre Manager role resulting in inadequate supervision and support for Youth Worker role.
- 2 Resignation of current Youth Worker as of 30 June 2017 resulting in a loss of knowledge and experience from the project.
- 3 Reduced funding from other sources resulting in WCC providing only funding source for program (\$28,930).
- 4 One Year Plan provides opportunities for service to a low number of young people (approximately 45 individuals).

Negotiations will continue with Cringila Community Cooperative to negotiate a deliverable and effective One Year Plan.

To assess each NYP’s compliance to the 2017-18 Funding Contract an audit and evaluation strategy will be developed in consultation with each NYWP provider. A report detailing the assessment of NYWP compliance will be compiled in April 2018. Based on the outcome of the NYWP compliance report, Council will either enter a three year funding contract with compliant NYWP providers based on the NYWP service provider’s continued compliance, or not enter into future NYWP funding contracts with non-compliant NYWP providers.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Internal and external consultations with key stakeholders were conducted and they have continued to be informed as the project progresses. These included:

- NYWP Management Committees
- NYWP Youth Development Workers
- WYS Youth Development Workers
- Lord Mayor and Councillors.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Wollongong 2022 goal 5 “*We are a healthy community in a liveable city*”. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2012-2017	Annual Plan 2016-17
Strategy	5 Year Action	Annual Deliverables
5.1.1 We work in partnership to build on opportunities to strengthen vulnerable communities	5.1.1.1 Partner with community based organisations in the provision of services	Implement recommendations of the youth services review including the future direction of Neighbourhood Youth Projects
5.6.1 Projects that building on community strengths are encouraged	5.6.1.1 Deliver a diverse suite of projects to the community that foster and enhance community strengths	Deliver a range of youth services with a focus on youth participation and community development, targeted programs, music and culture, and sector development and coordination

CONCLUSION

Youth Services play an integral role in strengthening our community and enhancing the lives of young people. Young people throughout the local government area deserve consistency and efficiency in service delivery. NYWPs provide a connection to local communities and allow young people to access services in their own suburb. A more stringent accountability framework will endeavour to ensure services provided across the region are meeting the needs of the community and funding requirements.