

**TASMANIAN**

**YOUTH POLICY FRAMEWORK**

*for*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**



Tasmania

July 1999

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The Tasmanian Youth Policy Framework for Local Government has been written as a guide for Councils in developing a role in youth affairs. The Policy Framework, based on the *Bikes, Bands & Strategic Plans* model published by the Local Government Association of Queensland Inc, was developed through consultation with Tasmanian Councils, and the Office of Youth Affairs, Department of Education.

It is endorsed for use in Tasmania by the Minister for Local Government, the Premier, Jim Bacon MHA, and the Minister responsible for Youth Affairs, the Hon Paula Wriedt MHA.

The Policy Framework focuses on a number of common issues which have been identified by a steering group of 10 Councils as areas of importance for all 29 Tasmanian Councils. The Framework also identifies key elements for councils to consider when developing their roles in youth affairs. Policy statements have been developed around these issues and key elements.

Defining a role in youth affairs does not mean that Councils will have to take on a whole new set of responsibilities. It is about building youth needs and issues into the existing functions of Councils and ensuring young people's needs are catered to.

It is envisaged that these areas and policy statements can be of use to Councils in developing their own policies in relation to young people and giving directions to their work.

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## 2. BACKGROUND: LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN YOUTH AFFAIRS

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Local Government's response to youth issues over the years has been considerable. Councils are major facilitators of recreational projects and resources, including sports, arts and cultural activities, are significant employers of young people, and provide some youth services. This has not necessarily been a planned response to young people's needs, rather it has been part of Councils' overall role in servicing the community at large.

While State and Commonwealth governments have always had a specific focus and responsibility for youth affairs, Councils, all to a different degree have had association with youth related matters. Especially in the last ten years local government has recognised that there is a role for councils in the development of youth policy and involvement in youth affairs. In 1998 all Tasmanian Councils indicated that they had an increased demand for youth services in their areas. Most Councils in an audit of youth services felt they are ideally suited to provide a wide range of services to young people and are in a position to react quickly to local needs and deliver services in a cost effective and timely manner as they are close to their respective communities.<sup>1</sup>

Local Governments are increasingly aware of their valuable role in addressing youth needs. Councils want to cultivate a proactive response in working with young people to address youth related issues that are important to the whole community. Councils are often involved with young people through their focus on families. Councils are seeing the value of providing appropriate recreational activities and facilities, along with employment programs and a range of other services and responses. Many Councils are also taking seriously the consultations

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<sup>1</sup> *Local Government Youth Services/Facilities Audit Summary* by Office of Youth Affairs

required in their corporate planning and are including specific consultation strategies aimed at young people. Young people themselves are seeking involvement in Council and community processes and decisions. It is recognised that young people want to have an input but are not always interested in council procedures and processes. Young people also like to have positive reinforcement and be given due credit.

Combined with this growing role, is the increasing number of Youth Development Officers, Youth Workers and Community Development Officers with youth responsibilities being employed by Councils. In 1998, there were approximately 41.5 FTE (see breakdown below) employed around the state.<sup>2</sup>

	<b>Youth Development Officers</b>	<b>Youth Workers</b>	<b>Other (often identified as Community Development Officers and includes Social Workers &amp; Managers)</b>
<b>Full-time equivalent</b>	8.4	15.3	17.8
<b>Number of Officers</b>	10	18	18
<b>Number of Councils</b>	9	9	18

In 1998 councils spent \$1 851 694 from Council Budgets as well as other sources, eg Commonwealth, on youth related issues in Tasmania.

Local Government is well-placed to respond to the needs of young people, within its existing functions:

- Local Government is the sphere of Government which is closest to the people, has knowledge of the community, is at the grass roots. Local Government is a credible and accessible sphere of government.
- Local Government has a significant impact on community design, development and operation.
- Local Government often has a range of existing facilities, services and resources.
- Local Government is well-established with accountability procedures, industrial arrangements, administrative requirements and so on.
- Local Government has established policy and planning procedures through the corporate planning process and other planning processes.

This document provides a framework for councils to look at their current and future roles in youth affairs. Linked to the Councils' total strategic plan, it would have the strength and credibility needed to make it a substantial and complete resource for youth affairs.

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<sup>2</sup> *Local Government Youth Services/Facilities Audit Summary* by Office of Youth Affairs

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### 3. WHO ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE?

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Traditionally, young people are commonly defined as the age group 12 years to 25 years. In practice councils find that some of the young people they come into contact with are younger than 12. These years are generally seen as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, and are a time of many changes. During this period young people obtain the right to vote, to drive, to work, to marry and to leave home.

Young people are a significant sector of the community, members of a council's constituency and importantly, potential voters, ratepayers and future leaders. In most communities, young people are a significant proportion of the total population. In Tasmania, young people average 20% of the total population.<sup>3</sup>

Young people are by no means a homogenous group. Like any age group within the community, there are many different sub-groups within the larger group and young people may be members of any number of sub-groups. When considering developing strategies and responses to youth issues in relation to the larger group, Councils need to consider specific issues and sub-groups such as:

Low income	Living in rural and isolated areas	Homelessness
Age group	Being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Gender
Disability	Ethnicity and cultural background	Unemployment
Health	Transport	Education

With limited resources available, it is imperative that access to any services or strategies caters to the needs of the broad community of young people. As this is the case, Councils need to consider the above issues as part of their planning processes so they don't inadvertently discriminate against some young people and fail to meet their needs.

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### 4. WHY HAVE A FRAMEWORK: HOW IT FITS IN WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Local Governments' activities in youth affairs in Tasmania have evolved over the past decade. The previous lack of a suitable framework to operate within has meant that responses to youth issues vary greatly from Council to Council across the State. As it is critical that responses are developed and delivered in ways that are appropriate to local conditions, differences will always be evident.

The development of a broad policy framework will assist Local Government to become clear about its role, and will help develop partnerships with other spheres of Government and the community, defining where Local Government's responsibilities for young people starts and stops.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1991 & 1996 Census of Population and Housing

The current State Government has recognised that committed progressive local communities and sound local economies are fundamental to the social and economic development of the State. To this end, the Government committed itself at the last election to enter into a series of Partnership Agreements with Local Government to promote sustainable economic and social development within local communities.

Through these agreements between state and local government, councils can find opportunities to promote and get recognition for youth affairs within their area. The Partnership Agreements also provide an opportunity to examine service delivery arrangements and for the parties to jointly identify measures to improve their design and/or delivery. A key aspect is to ensure that there are effective service delivery arrangements to meet the reasonable needs of all residents including young people, and, where appropriate, options to improve coordination of joint service delivery arrangements or address gaps and overlaps in service delivery.

The Government is also developing a long term State social and economic plan to guide the development of Tasmania into the future. The Plan will bring together the Tasmanian community to implement a shared vision of where the State should be in twenty years time.

The Agreements with Local Government will be integral to the development and implementation of the State plan.

**5. WHAT WILL THE FRAMEWORK DO?**

Councils already performing different roles in youth affairs will put the Framework to different uses. Some Councils already play a key role in youth affairs and may find that this Framework merely affirms their current direction. Other Councils will find the Framework useful in further defining their role; while for others it will represent a new opportunity to consider their direction in youth affairs.

The Framework suggests some very broad directions for Tasmanian Local Government, in order to assist individual Councils to clarify their role in youth affairs within their local communities.

**6. KEY ELEMENTS AND COMMON ISSUES**

*Key Elements*

Tasmanian councils have identified some key elements for consideration in developing a role in youth affairs:

Planning	Services and Strategies	Roles/Responsibilities
Policy	Diversity	Funding
Participation	Partnership	Research

## Common Issues

Some common youth issues for Tasmanian Councils have been identified through the consultation process:

Transport	Arts and Culture	Housing	Public Space
Education and Training	Recreation/Entertainment	Health and Wellbeing	
Community Pride	Employment	Justice/Law	Safe Community

The following Policy Framework has been developed as a guide to Councils in developing a role in youth affairs. It contains a set of broad policy themes and statements which are linked to the key elements and common issues. It is envisaged that these broad themes and policy statements may be of use to Councils in developing their own policies in relation to young people; or simply in suggesting directions for their work.

Defining a role in youth affairs does not mean that Councils will have to take on a whole new set of responsibilities. It is about building youth needs and issues into the existing functions of Councils and ensuring young people's needs are recognised and addressed.

## 7. A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONDING TO YOUNG PEOPLE: KEY ELEMENTS AND POLICY STATEMENTS

Key Element	Example of Possible Principle	Example of Possible Policy Statement/s
<b>Research</b>	To ensure the needs and issues of young people within council planning are researched and investigated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government is committed to ensuring the needs and issues of young people within council planning and in council processes are researched and investigated.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	To consider young people's needs in Council planning processes and areas such as land use planning, strategic planning, social planning, and recreational planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government is committed to the implementation of positive association of young people, and therefore acknowledges the importance of planning communities which address the needs of young people.</li> <li>Local Government is committed to including young people in the design and development of communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy</b>	To formalise and clarify Council's involvement with young people in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government is committed to having young people's needs formally recognised within existing Council processes.</li> <li>Local Government is committed to including young people's needs within their Corporate Plans, both in the written plan and in the process of its development.</li> <li>Local Government acknowledges the need to develop policies in relation to specific youth issues where required.</li> </ul>

Key Element	Example of Possible Principle	Example of Possible Policy Statement/s
<b>Participation</b>	To encourage young people's participation in Council decision making processes and in community life generally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises the importance of assisting young people to participate in community life.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing consultation strategies which involve young people, and incorporating young people's issues and needs into Council planning.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to reviewing existing procedures and operations within Councils to encourage greater participation by young people.</li> <li>• Local Government will respond to the needs of young people in a measurable way.</li> </ul>
<b>Services and Strategies</b>	To ensure access to a range of services and facilities for young people in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government will endeavour to ensure access to a broad range of services and facilities for all young people in the community.</li> <li>• Local Government recognises the importance of developing strategies to address the needs of young people which are proactive, developmental and integrated.</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity</b>	To recognise diversity amongst young people in planning any strategies or responses to youth issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises that young people are a diverse group within the community, and will work towards equal access to services, strategies and processes for all young people.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing and implementing specific strategies which recognise particular groups of young people when necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnership</b>	To recognise the value of working collaboratively and in partnership to address youth issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to working in partnership with other spheres of Government, other Councils, the community and private sectors, and young people, to address youth needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Roles/ Responsibilities</b>	To recognise the broad range of roles available to Local Government, and ensuring clarity of role when addressing issues or developing strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises the broad range of roles that can be played in the area of youth affairs, and is committed to determining an appropriate role for itself in regard to specific issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<p>To ensure that adequate funding is made available for Councils to fulfil their responsibilities in youth affairs.</p> <p>To ensure that funding reflects how young people are valued by Councils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to providing and/or seeking funding to ensure that local youth needs are addressed.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to looking at sustainable programs or projects for young people.</li> </ul>

## A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONDING TO YOUNG PEOPLE: COMMON ISSUES AND POLICY STATEMENTS

Common Issue	Example of Possible Principle	Example of Possible Policy Statement
<b>Employment</b>	To encourage the development of sustainable employment opportunities for young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises the importance of employment for young people and the serious long term consequences of unemployment for young people and the community at large. Therefore, Local Government is committed to encouraging the development of sustainable employment opportunities through its own employment practices, and through its role in economic development.</li> <li>• Local Government will develop specific employment programs in partnership with other spheres of Government and the community sector, where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreation/ Entertainment</b>	To ensure that a range of recreational and entertainment activities exist for young people in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to the continued provision of recreational activities and services, and to regular reviews to ensure that young people's needs are being met.</li> <li>• Local Government recognises that recreation can be both active and passive, and is committed to ensuring that a range of recreational pursuits including entertainment are available in the community.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Space</b>	To develop public spaces where young people can meet together safely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government acknowledges the need for young people to meet together and socialise in public places, and will work within Council planning processes and in partnership with others, to ensure that this can happen safely.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing strategies and policies aimed at developing public spaces designed specifically for young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	To ensure access to a range of services and facilities for young people in the community that promote good health and well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing strategies and encouraging service provision in the community to provide services and facilities that promote good health and wellbeing that young people can access</li> </ul>
<b>Safe Community</b>	To develop safe communities for both young people and the general community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises the need for young people to live in safe communities, and will develop strategies which promote safety for the whole community.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to the prevention of crime and vandalism through its planning and design processes and through the development of comprehensive strategies which divert young people from these activities.</li> </ul>

Common Issue	Example of Possible Principle	Example of Possible Policy Statement
<b>Arts and Culture</b>	To ensure young people's participation in the cultural life of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to involving young people in all aspects of cultural life, and in ensuring that existing cultural facilities and programs include young people.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to implementing specific strategies to encourage the development and recognition of young people's art and culture.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	To encourage the availability of a range of safe, affordable housing options for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises that housing is a fundamental need and right and is committed to working in partnership with other spheres of government and the community to ensure that supported housing is available for homeless young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Pride</b>	<p>To encourage a feeling of community pride amongst young people and the community and to foster community relations.</p> <p>To recognise the environmental concerns of young people as they relate to the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing strategies and encouraging young people to be proud of their community, environment and facilities.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing positive strategies to address graffiti and vandalism in the community.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to developing strategies to improve community attitudes and perceptions of young people.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to improving community relations and fostering understanding and tolerance between all members of the community</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	To encourage the development of safe, affordable transport for young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government recognises the importance of transport for young people in terms of accessing employment, education, recreation and housing, and is committed to considering their transport needs through the planning of communities.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to the development of integrated bikeways where possible, and to consulting with young people in their development.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to working with the State Government, private contractors, and the community to advocate for the development of safe, integrated and affordable public transport.</li> </ul>
<b>Education and Training</b>	To ensure young people have access to a range of educational and training opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government is committed to working with educational institutions to explore alternative educational and training programs.</li> <li>• Local government is committed to working with local educational institutions on issues associated with young people at risk.</li> <li>• Local Government is committed to taking a strong role in influencing organisations that provide educational services to look at the needs of all young people in their area.</li> </ul>

Common Issue	Example of Possible Principle	Example of Possible Policy Statement
Justice/Law	To ensure young people's rights are recognised within the community and that the incidence of crime is addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government is committed to working with justice/law institutions to ensure young people are aware of their rights and that the other members of the community are also aware of young people's rights.</li> <li>Local Government is committed to working with justice/law institutions to address the incidence of crime in the community committed by young people and against young people.</li> </ul>

## 8. THE NEXT STEP

As Councils are at varying stages of policy development, this document will create the opportunity to further their current stage of development whether it is to start from the beginning or review their current policy.

Councils need to define their own position in relation to youth affairs, and to develop specific policies and strategies which are in line with that position. The Framework offers key elements, common issues and policy statements which may be useful as a basis for a Council's own youth policy.

Using this Framework as a foundation, individual councils can develop their own youth policies specific to their unique council area. If councils already have a youth policy in place, this document provides a good opportunity to review that policy.

## 9. USEFUL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The following documents are examples of youth policies and frameworks from other areas around Australia which may provide useful reference information:

*Bikes, Bands and Strategic Plans*: including young people in the business of local governments (a folder that includes a Policy Framework, Resource Manual and good practice guide) - Local Government Association of Queensland Inc 1997

*A model youth policy for local governments in South-West Queensland*, South-West Queensland Councils (Toowoomba City Council coordinated project)

*A City for Young People, City of Melbourne's Plan for Youth 1996-1999*, City of Melbourne Council

*Youth "not just a Quick Fix", A Dynamic Strategy to address Youth Issues in the City of Fremantle*, Community and Youth Training Services in conjunction with Fremantle Community Youth Service.

The Office of Youth Affairs has a copy of all these documents in its resource library and is happy to loan them out for a short period of time.

