



Coffs Harbour Greens
Coffs Harbour
NSW 2456

24/08/2020

“Despite improvements in child and adolescent health over the past 20 years, progress has stalled, and is set to reverse.

“Countries need to overhaul their approach to child and adolescent health, to ensure that we not only look after our children today but protect the world they will inherit in the future.

Helen Clark, Commission co-Chair and PMNCH Board Chair¹

Youth Issues and Options Paper Submission

Dear Coffs Harbour City Council

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Our submission is based on making direct comment on the *Youth Issues and Options Paper 2020* and below in this cover letter.

We congratulate council on the willingness to confront the issues facing Coffs Harbour youth and recognising that young people are an important facet of our community.

We believe council is very well positioned to consider a strategic policy for youth, however, we repeatedly call on council to allow young people to lead this policy process.

A survey of youth issues from a young supporter can be found in the appendix section.

We summarise and expand on key Issues and Options below.

¹ <https://www.who.int/pmncnch/media/news/2020/world-failing-children/en/>

Review of Key Issue and Options

Movement and Connectivity

- Developing a holistic approach to local transport needs will benefit the entire community.
- We are concerned by the links to digital technologies and exclusion barriers this may present.²
- We support pop-up cycle ways as a solution that are increasingly a popular use of cycle and car road sharing.³ They can also be made to be attractive using plants as a border and inclusive in their design and establishment.⁴
- We would welcome council to consider the possibility of providing a mini-van transportation service as part of a strategy to alleviate transport stress for young or low-income households.



Employment and Education

- In 2014, a NSW Parliamentary inquiry found the Mid-North Coast had the second highest rates of child disadvantage in NSW falling just behind the Far-West region with 21.79%.⁵ In particular, Toormina can be singled out for its high levels of youth disadvantage and disengagement.
- In 2017, the Australia Institute found that when unemployment, underemployment and casual employment data was aggregated Regional NSW unemployment rate three times higher than the official percentage.⁶



Toormina Skate Bowl

² https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1584011621.pdf

³ <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/newsroom/2020/07/10/sydney-plans-to-keep-peddalling/>

⁴ <http://urbanrepairs.blogspot.com/2015/09/cycle-toronto-pop-up-bike-lane-on-bloor.html>

⁵ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/child-disadvantage-in-nsw-recent-findings/Child%20disadvantage%20in%20NSW%20-%20recent%20findings.pdf>

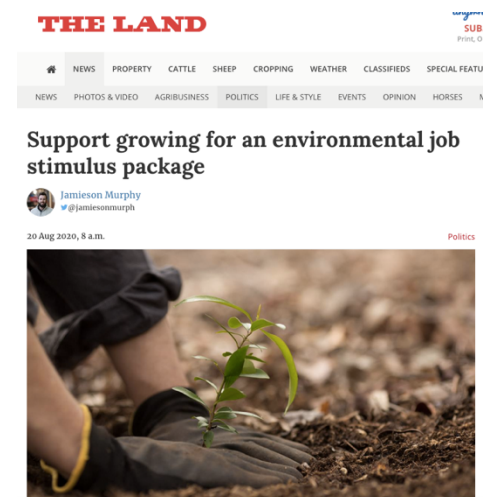
⁶ <https://www.tai.org.au/content/economic-importance-public-services-regional-communities-nsw>

- We support the options identified by council that directly strengthen opportunities for youth in Coffs Harbour such as developing youth entrepreneurship programs; facilitating VET programs and employment readiness programs.
- We recommend that Council also facilitate a work experience program for unemployed young people from the region.
- We encourage council to go further in supporting our youth. We believe council need to also look to non-conventional forms of job creation as a matter of urgency to assist youth and stimulate our local economy.
- We support the Economic Strategy education and employment opportunities in hospitality, food tourism and agriculture; in the digital economy; creative industries; and self-employment career pathways.
- We recognise council have not considered other career options that would likely also appeal to younger people and benefit our wider community.
- Further consultation with young people is needed to identify these careers of interest and involve young people and local youth services in identifying and planning local solutions to the high unemployment rate.
- We believe young people often have the answers themselves involving the need for and transition to a sustainable economy.

The following noteworthy careers of interest are based on innovative solutions to regional unemployment which are contemporary and timely economic developments.

1. Land Management Jobs

- According to the MyCoffs Youth Survey, 98% of young people agreed that we need to preserve our natural environment and 91% rated this as important.
- Council's possible identified actions of fundraisers, education and advocacy are welcome. However, it appears council may have overlooked a highly connected and appealing employment sector that is likely to become one of the fastest growth employment areas.
- Linking young people already passionate about the natural environment to employment in ecological restoration should be seriously considered by council.
- Across Australia, ecological restoration is being flagged as a future jobs creator with strong community demands. Polling by the National Landcare Network has found 4 out of 5 Australians support a \$4 Billion land management stimulus package



expected to create over 50, 000 jobs in the next 4 years slated for October's federal budget.^{7 8}

- In 2017, the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia (SERA) alongside 12 leading environmental organisations released their updated standards in consultation with hundreds of key stakeholders.⁹
- Coffs Harbour Greens believe council are well placed to deliver environmental jobs, education in collaboration with local education providers such as ETC, TAFE and Southern Cross University and institutional cooperation with local ecological restoration organisations.
- We request council explore the possibilities to facilitate the implementation of employment, training and advocacy in land management jobs for young people in particular.

2. Market Gardening

- We believe council need to create planning and economic incentives that support small-scale fresh food growers.
- Council should already be familiar with the pioneering work of Josh Allen and Synchronicity Farm.
- The Coffs Harbour Greens believe sustainable, healthy (preferably organic) and diverse food staples produced locally and at scale build resilience to global and national shocks such as in the case of Covid-19 and climate change.
- We welcome council implementing a small-scale market garden strategy to support young people who lack the skills and financial resources to manage the entrepreneurial risk.



3. New Food Vendor Permit

- We call on council to implement a new food vendor regulation that treats food sellers similar to busking. Currently, busking permits are issued according to 5 designated sites and while welcome a review of this limited number we also call for the sale of cooked food to be included.

⁷ <https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/6820578/4-billion-land-management-stimulus-backed-by-70-organisations/>

⁸ <https://www.theland.com.au/story/6885885/support-growing-for-an-environmental-job-stimulus-package/?cs=4956&fbclid=IwAR06BwyN-AQL0AVxluArSGGFw948WcN0M1Hl8MbJrLJkIKCfztWntYrim2Q>

⁹ <http://www.seraustralasia.com/pages/standards.html>



- We welcome council's Trading Places Footpath Activation Initiative that has allowed busking on footpaths without a fee.¹⁰
- We would like to see the initiative expanded to support cafes and restaurants affected by the economic downturn to be allowed to set up a small serving area on footpaths and beyond for takeaway meals, providing they agreed to use sustainable packaging.
- We believe this food permit could also be extended to other areas too, not just footpaths.
- This new food permit idea is particularly focused on the refugee community and young entrepreneurs. According to anecdotal conversations, food businesses operated by recent arrivals have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 restrictions.
- Permitting refugees and young people to sell cooked food according to food handling standards and licencing allows for an entrepreneurial opportunity and reduces barriers for accessing employment.
- These food stalls could operate in a similar way to the Thursday Farmer's Market but be a stand-alone stall selling fresh healthy cooked food – something that happens around the world in particular in developing nations. A provision may also be made that encourages these stalls to offer their food discounted for disadvantaged youth, such as the Pay It Forward Scheme.
- This scheme is extended upon in Darwin where the city council coordinates a directory that maybe something council considers. However, we endorse a less complicated and informal approach as a mechanism that increases involvement not further adds barriers to employment.¹¹

4. Regional Taskforce

- Another recommendation of the Coffs Harbour Greens is to explore the potential for a targeted and multi-stakeholder regional taskforce to provide a similar evidence based intervention as that of Skilling the Bay in Geelong, whereby government, education providers and local businesses work together to investigate local needs and target responses. To date this has involved providing a skills base and investment for the Geelong regions future workforce.
- In Geelong the Skilling the Bay project initially identified that there was a need to lift the educational attainment of both young people and adults, as well as to increase workforce participation by promoting re-engagement with education and training. This was responded to with further research and consultation that identified five priority initiatives that would serve to:

¹⁰ <https://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/Business/Business-and-Industry-Compliance/Pages/Buskers-and-Community-Stall-Owners.aspx>

¹¹ <https://www.darwin.nt.gov.au/explore/out-and-about/street-food/street-food-map>

- promote the growth of existing and emerging industries; support the re-skilling of workers; build entrepreneurial capability; raise educational attainment levels in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. For more information: <https://www.thegordon.edu.au/stb/about/history>

Housing and Homelessness

- The *Youth Issues and Options Paper* states some areas within the LGA experience extremely high levels of disadvantage.
- Toormina is a concern being in the 8th percentile, meaning it is more disadvantaged than 92% of Australian suburbs.
- The safe house run by Wesley has only 6 beds and is always at capacity.
- We recommend that Council advocate for increased funding for Specialist Homelessness Services from State and Federal governments.
- Council could possibly set up a task force to work with local services to undertake research that identifies the increased need and subsequently advocates for targeted funding to provide more services this in these areas.
- Coffs Harbour Greens put forward several ideas expanded in the comments section of the *Youth Issues and Options Paper 2020*:
 - Council could be negotiating grants with the other levels of government to provide funding for the establishment of both safe crisis housing and social housing.
 - Council could also consider donating a Council-owned premises for use as a youth refuge.
 - The need for Aboriginal housing is a huge issue in Coffs Harbour, especially with the recent closure of the Wundarra Youth Centre.
 - Council could make some temporary housing available in Council-run Caravan parks for families fleeing domestic violence and young people.
 - We would also like to see Council improve zoning for social housing. Such zoning could be in the form of reserves.
 - Support Councils placed based youth policy to address disadvantaged youth in the Coffs LGA.





- The NSW GREENS believe all councils should have a youth consultation and participation strategy to ensure greater inclusion of young people in the decision making process. We also encourage local councils to set minimum standards for the provision of youth facilities and activities in their local environment plans and in major city development projects in order to provide a place for young people to feel included and valued.

Health

We recommend council engage with youth engagement officers who engage directly with young people as part of wider youth consultation and participation strategy.

We call on council to facilitate a local taskforce / work with YNET and local education providers to address the concerns raised by 2018 North Coast Primary Health Network research and demonstrate how the local health needs of young people will be met with a view to considering the following policy outcomes:

- We call on council to involve young people in the development of health policies and programs;
- Adequately fund appropriate drug education campaigns for illegal and legal drugs;
- Conduct research on youth suicide and obtain information from overseas with a view to implementing strategies, programs and services which have been found to be effective in reducing youth suicide in other jurisdictions;
- Ensure adequate funding and support is made available for specialist Youth Health Services in Coffs Harbour;
- Lobby the Commonwealth Government to automatically issue Medicare cards to young people when they attain 16 years of age;
- Ensure adequate funding for early intervention programs which provide universal support to parents of infants and targeted services for parents where infants may be at risk of abuse and neglect;
- Expand and advocate for treatment services for children and young people experiencing mental health problems;
- Expand and advocate drug treatment services for young people with drug and alcohol dependency;
- Work with local services to explore ways to expand specialist counselling services in Coffs Harbour;
- Work on strategies to increase the “youth friendliness” of generalist alcohol and other drug services, mental health services and counselling services.



Appendix: Youth Survey Contribution

In preparation for this submission we consulted a young Coffs Harbour man with exceptional expertise in the creative industries to add a further voice to the cause of young people in our area. We feel that including this unedited voice is important for effective consultation.

The person we spoke with is a 21-year-old male who studied at NIDA where they obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Theatre and Stage Management).

He currently receives government subsidies through Opera Australia as he was working on the theatre performance Bran Nue Dae before Covid-19 occurred. He is also casually employed for NIDA Theatres.

He finished School at Coffs Harbour High in 2016 and he considers himself to be a designer and technician in the arts and entertainment industry. He focuses mainly on the aspects of lighting, video and sound design within the theatre and live music industry.

This segment are his words to a questions Coffs Harbour Greens made with regards to the Issues Paper.

Q1: Why are you drawn to local arts and what do you do?

I am drawn to local arts as I really feel this is an area of stories which are underrepresented in Australian society. Coffs Harbour, the people who make up the Coffs City Council district, along with the Gumbaynggirr area have so many diverse stories which have and need to be told.

Some of these stories have been around for thousands of years whilst others are being shaped at this present time. Local arts give an authenticity to these stories as they can be told by the people who have experienced or have the background knowledge around these stories.

Local arts are also something people of the area, both young and old, can look up to and take part in. They are something which is accessible which is one of the great things about working in this industry. This gives people a voice or a platform who may have not had one before hand. At the end of the day for me to see someone come out of the theatre or a



music event with a new understanding or look on life is one of the greatest feelings which can be achieved, even if this is the artist themselves.

Q2: What's the main challenges for Coffs youth in the arts?

There is always this attitude in Coffs Harbour which is to strive to be mediocre. Don't make a fuss. Live a casual lifestyle because you are not from a big city. This idea of mediocrity in Australian society as a whole, although this is a very attainable goal as a whole nation needs to be reconfigured as it is hindering the advancement of regional and rural areas as a whole, from arts, education, health, to business opportunities.

Youth arts in Coffs has a couple of problems:

1. There is no centralised arts hub where people of all ages want to meet, hang out and perform their artistic duties, whether that be performative, on CAD programs, music, using paint mediums, film, costume, sculptural/materials etc.
2. Adding on to the centralised arts hub there is no spaces which can be booked for extended periods of time for free or cheap to experiment with your creative medium. (for example I would love a giant 20x30m room with lighting, rigging, sound, video equipment where I could experiment with these technologies in order to better my skills as an individual). This room could also be used for up and coming bands to perform for the first time, films on a tight budget to be realised, or an art exhibition.
3. There is currently no mentorship or educational programs in the community which bring in well known national and international artists to train, educate and talk to youth about creating a business from arts and how they pursue their dreams as an artist (such as game developers, musicians, lighting sound and video designers, actors, cinematographers, VFX artists, painters, dance, web designers and developers.)
4. Coffs harbour does not currently have a large venue that can support state theatre company or international productions where youth can gather ideas and base their future aspirations on. Also a lot of youth from this area currently do not have financial access to partake in art exhibitions, courses, and other arts activities. (For venue size please look at NIDA Parade Theatre, Parramatta Riverside Theatres, The Glasshouse Theatre, Opera House Joan Sutherland Theatre.)

Q3: How do you think the council can support youth arts?

It would be great for the council to promote the arts and arts courses in Coffs harbour.

Council could do this by:

1. Better advertising of what is on in venues/public spaces/museums/art galleries around Coffs Harbour
2. Having dedicated performances/exhibition times for schools when there is a discounted or free of charge price.
3. Have grants that are accessible for artists who not only want to make art for the public, but also to experiment with their chosen discipline
4. Create a mentorship program with professionals working in the industry to help educate and extend youths artistic knowledge
5. Have a day where professionals in the industry do lectures on their discipline. What they do, how they got there, projects they have worked on, insight into how their general professional practice. (They can also go around to schools and do these talks at school)
6. Create more emphasis on the power of arts in the community.
7. Recognise and support up and coming youth artists through festivals (such as what Screenwave is doing already but with more disciplines)
8. Bring in larger national or international productions to the Coffs Harbour region (such as touring shows from STC, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare, Bangarra, Legs on the Wall, Builders Association).
9. Use the Jetty Foreshores as a large festival space like Byron Bay parklands. Byron Bay parklands is currently used for Splendour in the Grass, Falls Festival, Blues Fest etc. This space could be used in conjunction with the Jetty Memorial Theatre and other venues around the Coffs City Council area to hold an international fringe festival.
10. Have a centralised precinct which is a space for artists to meet, collaborate, be educated, perform or exhibit their discipline. Part of this area should also always be opened to the public and support local businesses such as restaurants, a late night bar/brewery, locally made food and attire. It should also include but not be limited to a theatre/Dance space, cinema, gaming, outdoor performance space, graffiti wall, sculptures, video art, and interactive art.

Q4: Toormina is the most disadvantaged area in Coffs regarded as 92% worse off than other Australian suburbs. Toormina youth are also the most disengaged youth in the Coffs area. What do you think council could do to make a difference?

Disadvantaged and disengaged people I believe are people who can benefit from the arts quite a lot as it can be used as an outlet for other things that could be happening in their lives. That is why I think it is very important the Coffs City Council supports youth from disadvantaged areas such as Toormina.



Although I do not have too much experience or background with disadvantaged and disengaged youth here are some suggestions:

1. Bring the art to them. This can be through programs at school or at a youth hub/PCYC in the community.
2. Have mentors or people in the community who can connect with youth from these areas, e.g. pro sports people, musicians they listen to, members of the community they respect, to promote arts services in the Coffs City Council area which they could benefit from.
3. Set up mental health and disadvantaged people art classes (could also look at other mediums such as music or performance).
4. Set up an arts scholarship program for disadvantaged artists to pursue an arts discipline of their choice.
5. Have an outdoor arts space in Toormina which youth can take pride in and maintain with ongoing help from professionals in the industry.

I believe the reason lots of young people leave Coffs Harbour is because there are not really lucrative job opportunities available to them. Most jobs available in Coffs Harbour either require unskilled labour or for you to get a degree somewhere outside Coffs Harbour.

Once a lot of young people experience the kind of job opportunities, money and overall innovation that comes with doing a degree outside Coffs Harbour it is tricky to be persuaded back to the area as the only thing (and the reason I love coming back) going for it is the lifestyle you can live here.

There is also this continuous acknowledgement that Coffs Harbour is a growing community for old people to come and die. This creates a generally more conservative and less fun town to live in which is also why a lot of younger people move away from Coffs Harbour.

Coffs needs to change its trajectory and support young people across the board if it wants to become a sustainable town because looking at the age/population bell curve for Australia, this town will fall off a cliff real quick when all the old peoples homes and facilities have to shut down due to the dramatic decrease in the elderly population around the next 20-30 years.

Coffs City Council needs to promote the area as a place for young people to go on holiday, or have their first house, but to do this they also need to support the youth which currently lives in Coffs Harbour and I definitely reckon supporting and funding youth arts using some or all of the ways listed above is one way to achieve this.

In conclusion

The Coffs Harbour Greens call on council to implement a coherent strategy for Coffs Harbour's youth that advocates and engages in services that genuinely meets their needs.

COFFS HARBOUR GREENS

Ecological Sustainability | Social equity & economic justice
Grassroots democracy | Peace, disarmament & nonviolence



Our youth have the answers if we will consult with them effectively and the quality of life for following generations will be determined by the policies and strategies we adopt today.

We believe council are well placed to make a positive contribution to our youth.

Thank you for accepting our submission.

Kind regards,

Jonathan Cassell
Coffs Harbour Greens Convener