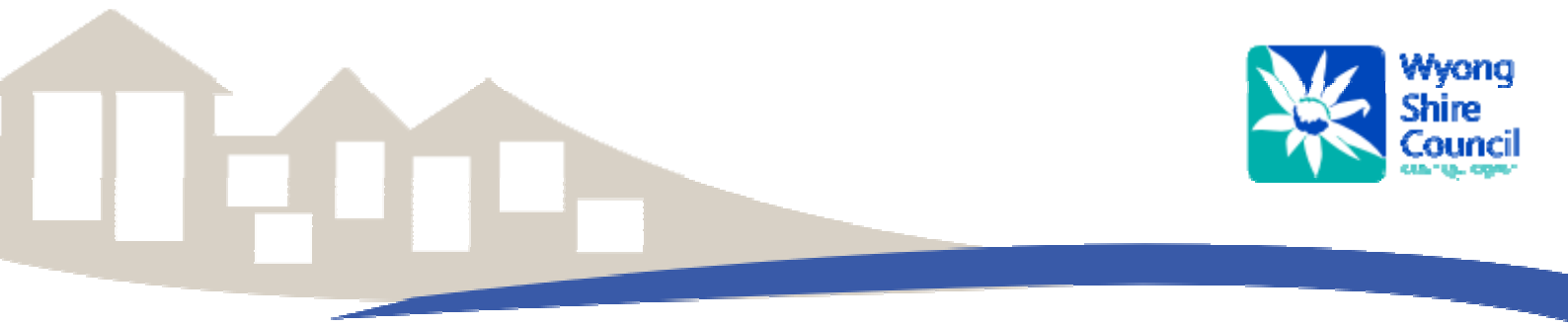


Wyong Shire Council

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

ENCLOSURES

Wednesday, 24 October, 2012



WYONG SHIRE COUNCIL
ENCLOSURES TO THE
ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
TO BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WYONG CIVIC CENTRE, HELY STREET, WYONG
ON WEDNESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2012 ,
COMMENCING AT 5:00 PM

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Executive Summary

This Youth Employment Strategy (YES) has been developed to realise three objectives:

1. Ensure the workforce pipeline for Wyong Shire Council (WSC) is adequately supplied
2. Provide the opportunity for local young people to gain experience and qualifications that can be transferred to any employer to improve their future career prospects
3. Reduce the impact of our aging workforce by focusing on activities that initiate grass root succession planning

This strategy aligns with the Council resolution on the 22 July 2009 "that Council adopt a long term youth employment target of 15%", the Community Plan and Wyong Shire Strategic Plan.

The current youth unemployment rate (30 June 2011) for the Central Coast is 12.1% compared to the National rate of 10.6% which demonstrates a higher than average level of youth unemployment on the Central Coast.

As one of the largest employers on the Central Coast, WSC has an opportunity to make a positive impact on the local youth unemployment rate. At present, WSC's workforce demographics demonstrate that this is an area that it is yet to make a real impact on, with only 2.2% (21) of WSC's permanent staff or 8.2% (101) of the total workforce (including 21 permanent, 45 temporary, 35 casual) being young people.

For the purpose of the YES, WSC have elected to define youth as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24. This decision was based on that the United Nations General Assembly defines 'youth', as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive and the Australian Bureau of Statistics commonly uses the age group of 15-24 for youth.

This strategy contains a framework intended as the leading guidance for employing youth within WSC. The framework contains a suite of activities across four elements working towards a career pathway. It is not intended that each individual will participate in all elements, nor is it intended that the elements are completed in a sequential order. The elements can be undertaken in a flexible manner as the framework recognises the needs and differing career stages for each individual.

The elements (referred to as the 4E's) identified within the framework are:

1. Exposure (Pre employment)
2. Engagement (Transition to employment through temporary appointments)
3. Employment (Integration into permanent workforce)
4. Exit (External career consolidation and transfer of skills and knowledge)

It is important to note that the 4E's within the framework include a combination of both new and existing WSC activities (some of the existing programs will be improved as a result of this strategy).

Within the 4Es there are 15 activities and 24 recommendations to be implemented by 2016. A summary of the recommendations is in attachment three.

The YES Framework notes a number of key support activities to ensure successful implementation. Each of the support activities will require ongoing implementation and maintenance, lead by the Human Resources Unit including;

Promoting Programs

To ensure the success of the YES, it will be imperative that the approaches and programs are effectively communicated to both internal and external stakeholders to ensure there is both engagement and support. It will be important that contemporary communication approaches are implemented to connect with the local youth including social media (facebook, twitter).

Embracing Diversity

To ensure the success of this strategy, it is important that WSC recognises the diversity of local youth and identifies strategies to engage with minority groups within our local community. A number of recommendations and activities within this strategy relate to minority groups and it is anticipated that over time WSC will implement further diversity strategies to continue the development of the workforce and sound Equal Employment Opportunity practice.

Communicating Achievements

Communicating achievements to the organisation and community will be essential for the ongoing support of the YES. Staff and external stakeholders will be more likely to participate in a program that is successful and results in a sound return on investment (both financially and employer brand).

Communicating the successes within the community will also create interest from youth wishing to participate. Increased interest will provide a competitive selection process ensuring only the highest calibre candidates are successful and in turn, increase the likelihood of repeated positive outcomes.

Connecting and Partnering with External Stakeholders

Partnerships with external key stakeholders will be imperative to the success of most activities. It is expected that the stakeholders will change over time as programs develop and new networks are identified on the Central Coast.

The YES has been developed to be cost neutral for the organisation, with monies to support recommended activities being provided from savings within existing budgets and programs.

The Youth Employment Strategy Strategic Objectives

This Youth Employment Strategy (YES) has been developed to realise three objectives:

1. Ensure the workforce pipeline for Wyong Shire Council (WSC) is adequately supplied
2. Provide the opportunity for local youth to gain experience and qualifications that can be transferred to any employer to improve their future career prospects
3. Reduce the impact of our aging workforce by focusing on activities that initiate grass root succession planning

It is also important to recognise that in order to deliver the highest levels of service to the community and maintain competitive prices, securing top talent (high performing staff with high potential) is essential. Securing top talent is difficult due to a significant increase in demand for staffⁱⁱⁱ and hiring experienced and qualified staff has traditionally been difficult for employers due to high demand for labour, skills shortages and employers requiring specialist skills. Skills shortage fields include; engineers, accountants, business administration managers, qualified tradesman and machine operators.ⁱⁱⁱ The impact of these skill shortage areas for WSC could be addressed, over time, by implementing activities which promote the uptake of careers within these fields by our youth.

The strategy will be undertaken in a manner that connects with Federal and State programs and our local community ensuring the positive impact will be wider than within our own organisation.

Why a Youth Employment Strategy?

National Agenda

The national agenda comprises of initiatives and programs to address youth employment across the country, one of which is the Keep Australia Working Strategy which is implemented across the country through state organisations, government sectors and local community brokers.

The Keep Australia Working Strategy is a plan designed to monitor the impact of the Australian stimulus package to ensure there is ongoing support where the economy most needs it. The final Keep Australia Working Report details Australia's current employment outlook, actions already taken and describes initiatives to address challenges of the future.

State Agenda

The NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) is a State Department with a wide scope of responsibilities including implementing actions and programs that will improve the social and economic wellbeing of the people of NSW through a responsive and innovative education and training system.

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DEC specifically holds the responsibility for implementing a number of initiatives resulting from the Keep Australia Working Strategy, including: Youth Connections and Partnership Brokers. DEC are also responsible for the coordination and implementation of the school curriculum and the parties involved in the delivery, accreditation and improvement of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

The Making It Our Business NSW Policy Statement (2006-2008) and Action Plan (2009 – 2012) on Improving Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector, together state that NSW Public Sector Agencies are encouraged to establish agency specific Aboriginal employment targets based on the agency's size, role and responsibilities, location and Aboriginal client base. For example, if the population in the area is 7%, this should be reflected in the agency's workforce. However, as part of the Commonwealth of Australian Governments (COAG), the NSW Government is committed to meeting an Aboriginal Employment target of 2.6% within the public sector by 2015^{iv}. The target represents the Government's commitment to social justice for Aboriginal people in NSW and equality of access to services and economic opportunity. This includes employers in areas where the Aboriginal population is lower than 2.6%. The Aboriginal population on the Central Coast is 6427, representing 2.02% of the population.

Local Needs

Australia's youth unemployment rate is rising, particularly on the Central Coast. The youth unemployment rate for the Central Coast is 12.1%¹ compared to the National rate of 10.6%^v. As a result of low skills, qualifications and /or limited work experience, some young people are at risk of becoming long term unemployed, leading to intergenerational disadvantage which has long term economic and social consequences.

The high unemployment rates on the Central Coast and low levels of qualifications emphasis the importance of leveraging the federal and state programs and initiatives at a local level. The federal and state programs are implemented and coordinated through a number of profit and not for profit organisations in the local community.

The Central Coast demographics reflect a higher than average indigenous population. Traditionally within our indigenous population there is higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of education; therefore employment within our local community for indigenous youth is imperative.

The Central Coast demographics also highlight a higher number of people living with a disability requiring assistance than the New South Wales (NSW) average. On the Central Coast 5% of the population is recorded as living with a disability compared to 4.25% across NSW. 2% (544/36 039) of the youth population on the Central Coast is recorded as living with a disability.

The distribution for Central Coast residents living with a disability is slightly more concentrated in the Wyong Shire far north, west region. It is important that employers provide opportunities for meaningful employment and provide those living with disability independence and an opportunity to positively integrate within the community. Offering opportunities for youth living with a disability provides a foundation for long term employment choices.

¹ This percentage comprises 15 – 24 years as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It is important to note: The United Nations General Assembly defines 'youth', as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive. ABS commonly uses the age group 15-24; this is the age range WSC have selected to define youth.

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Local External Analysis

The population of youth on the central coast is 36 039 which is 11.3% of the population.^{vi} As one of the largest employers on the Central Coast, WSC has an opportunity to make a positive impact on the local youth unemployment rate. At present, WSC's workforce demographics demonstrate that this is an area we are yet to make a real impact on.

The challenges of hiring experienced and qualified staff in skill shortage areas and securing top talent on the Central Coast are exacerbated because:

1. The smallest resident age group on the Central Coast is 25-34.
2. The highest proportion of the population on the Central Coast is 65+.

The figures above suggest that "youth flight" is prevalent on the Central Coast as the younger age groups are likely to move to higher populated areas where it is perceived there are more career opportunities, while retirees tend to move to the Central Coast region^{vii} because of the lifestyle that is associated with living on the coast.

In addition:

1. 69% of the Central Coast population do not complete the higher school certificate (This is ten percentage points lower than the NSW average^{viii} and one of the single biggest constraints on the local economy^{ix}).
2. Research demonstrates that 86.3 % of employment opportunities require some level of post school qualifications^x. This is not reflected in the level of education held within the local area as only 45.7% of the Wyong Shire residents meet this requirement.

The Aboriginal population on the Central Coast is 6427, representing 2.02% of the population^{xi}. The Aboriginal population on the Central Coast is the fastest growing region in Australia with an annual average growth rate of 3% and forecast to increase by 43% over the next 12 years^{xii}. This growth rate indicates an increase in youth within the Aboriginal population, which is the opposite of the general aging demographics of the area and therefore provides an increasing pool of youth that employers could be engaging with to build there grass root succession planning.

The Central Coast also has 5% of its population living with a disability requiring assistance. This is higher than the NSW average of 4.25% and 3.76% in Sydney. 2% (544/36 039) of the youth population on the Central Coast is recorded as living with a disability.

WSC History

Council resolved on 22 July 2009² "That Council adopt a long term youth employment target of 15% of its workforce".

Currently, the Wyong Shire Learning Communities Strategy is being developed and is intended to provide a framework for partnerships and collaboration within and across sectors to increase learning opportunities for all throughout life. The Strategy, developed as a result of an extensive community engagement phase, is the action plan for how the community will meet current challenges, improve learning opportunities and increase prosperity and learning aspirations for the Wyong Shire Community.

This YES has been developed to positively contribute to addressing a number of the emergent key issues including:

1. Inspiring and valuing learning in the Shire
2. Improving the participation and retention rates of students to year 12 (or equivalent) and into tertiary education
3. Providing clear pathways to employment for the community
4. Identifying and aligning training courses with current and future employment opportunities and encouraging the community to develop the skills required to fill these opportunities

In 2009, WSC also implemented a Youth Engagement Strategy. An integral part of this strategy was the Youth Partnership Program. This program is outlined in the Wyong Shire Youth prospectus (Attachment 1) and was established to enable local business, government agencies and community groups to champion and partner with young people in ways that will make a real difference to the future of our community.

The prospectus identifies six priority areas for engaging youth and it is important that WSC align our employment strategy with the priorities in the engagement strategy to pave the way for other local employers. The activities within the Youth Employment Strategy Framework align with the priorities, including:

1. Priority Area Three - Involving Young People
2. Priority Area Four - Learning and working
3. Priority Area Five - Young People and Places and Spaces

The WSC Community Strategic Plan is the leading document in the Department of Local Government (DLG) integrated planning reporting hierarchy. It describes the community's aspirations and priorities for the future. Accompanied with that is the WSC Strategic Plan which outlines the key objectives over a four year period which WSC will implement to ensure we are working towards achieving the Community Strategic Plan.

A key component of the WSC Strategic Plan 2011-2015 is the Workforce Management Strategy. The Workforce Management strategy outlines our approach to ensure we have the required workforce to deliver services to the community.

² At the time of this NOM, the accuracy of the stated youth unemployment rate was questioned.

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