

The Workforce Management Strategy identified opportunities in nine key people areas. Two of these specifically connect to this Youth Employment Strategy: Workforce Capability and, Recruitment and Selection.

The WSC Corporate Risk Register identifies the following corporate risks for WSC which this strategy will positively impact:

1. Attract and retain staff – Inability to attract and retain appropriately skilled staff leading to a reduced capability of the organisation and a reduced capacity to deliver services.
2. Ageing workforce – Failure to plan and implement strategies to address the impacts of an ageing workforce leading to a loss of corporate knowledge, capability and capacity of the organisation.

WSC Internal Analysis

The following statistics provide a summary of our workforce demographics (as at June 30, 2011):

Total Workforce

1. The total workforce (permanent and temporary) headcount is 1229 (including 24 apprentices that we host through Central Coast Group Training)
2. The average age of the total workforce is 44 years (excluding hosted apprentices)
3. 35.3% (434 staff) of the total workforce is greater than 50 years of age (including hosted apprentices)
4. 8.2% (101) are aged 24 years or younger (21 permanent, 45 temporary, 35 casual) - (including hosted apprentices)

Permanent Workforce

1. The total permanent staff headcount is 927
2. 24.5% (227 staff) of permanent employees could be currently considering retirement options or exiting the business (Note: based on 55 years +)
3. Of the total permanent staff, 2.2% (21 staff members) are aged 24 years or younger

Temporary Workforce

1. The total headcount for temporary employees is 100 staff (including 24 apprentices hosted through Central Coast Group Training).
2. The total employee's in labour roles is 226. Of this 40% (91 staff members) are greater than 50 years of age.
3. Of the temporary workforce, 45% (45 staff members) are aged 24 years or younger (including hosted apprentices)

Given WSC's youth employment target is 15%, the above information indicates that the current total workforce youth employment rate (8.2%) is well below the intended target. It is also important to note that the current youth employment rate has decreased since September 2010 by 3.2%. A large portion of this can be attributed to the reduction in temporary staff across the business, which traditionally has the highest level of youth representation across the business.

The current statistics and reducing trend emphasises the need to implement a strategy to further address both our aging workforce and also capture the skills and attributes that young people bring to the workplace, such as fresh innovative ideas and information management savvy approaches.

Of WSC's total permanent staff (927), 1.6% (15 staff members) have voluntarily disclosed their indigenous background. This is recorded informally by an employee of Aboriginal background. This informal record demonstrates that the employment rate of Aboriginal staff is below the Government's goal of a 2.6% minimum. (It is however, likely that there is further staff within the organisation who are not recorded who do fit within this group).

Considering the projected growth rate of the Aboriginal population on the central coast (annual growth rate of 3%), it is also reasonable to suggest WSC will require a further increase of employees of Aboriginal background to ensure the workforce reflects the local population as per the "The Making It Our Business" NSW Policy Statement (2006-2008) and Action Plan (2009 – 2012) on Improving Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector.

WSC does not currently record and track employees from identified diversity groups or have a diversity strategy. It is recommended that WSC record and track employees' diversity groups and develop an organisational strategy for employing those from minority groups to reflect the community we service.

Recommendation 1: WSC record and track employees from WSC identified diversity groups (including non English speaking, youth, Aboriginal and disability groups) and report on the number of staff on an annual basis to the Executive.

Recommendation 2: WSC develop a strategy for employing people from diversity groups and include a targeted approach to employing youth within these minorities.

WSC Previous Practice – Youth Employment

Historically WSC has not taken a strategic and structured approach to employing youth, which has resulted in a range of sporadic programs (listed below) available to youth in different areas across the business for different reasons. These programs have not necessarily been aligned to organisational objectives or budget. Consequently, mixed messages have been received across the business and the community regarding our commitment to engaging and employing youth.

The approach to date has included a number of programs that support youth 18 years of age or older. WSC has not traditionally targeted employment opportunities for those under 18 due to the perceived associated risks with employing staff under the age of 18. This has restricted the ability to create talent pools for grass root succession planning and in building effective relationships with the local high schools and community organisations.

It should also be noted that these adhoc programs haven't historically incorporated any rigor to appropriately attract or engage Aboriginal or diversity youth within our community.

The programs WSC currently provide include:

Work Experience Program

WSC has recently implemented a co-ordinated approach to providing unpaid work experience opportunities for those studying at school, university and other Registered Training Organisations for some areas within the organisation. Although the current approach is co-ordinated it requires further review to ensure it is more structured in its implementation. Prior to 2011, WSC did not formally accept work experience students or have a process for co-ordinating applications.

Scholarships

The Scholarship Program has evolved from a Councillor funded prize (\$2,500 for four students) for high schools students attending local Universities to now include the financial support and four weeks paid work experience over a 12 month period. This provides the recipients with practical experience in the workplace within their field of study and exposes them to the Local Government environment.

Internships

The Internship Program has also evolved into a 12 month program offered to university students wishing to work and study on a part time basis. The program has recently been centralised within HR and includes rotations to ensure students are provided exposure to areas within the organisation relating to disciplines within their field of study. The Internship Program is targeted at third and fourth year university students.

Apprentices

WSC currently hosts Apprentices through a Government Training Organisation (GTO), Central Coast Group Training (CCGT). The target audience for apprenticeships at WSC is not limited to any age range (as long as the previous stance on 18 years of age is adhered to) at this time and mature age students are encouraged to apply. A review of this program indicates there are potential cost savings for WSC regarding the employment of Apprentices and a more focussed effort on employing youth in this area could be very effective in providing entry level positions for our local young people.

Trainees (Indentured, non indentured, permanent and temporary)

WSC currently employ a range of "trainees". The term trainee has traditionally been used within WSC to describe a number of staff completing a nationally recognised vocational training qualification whilst working full time on either a temporary or permanent basis. The term does not necessarily indicate they are registered with State Training Services as trainees under the Apprenticeship & Traineeship Act. The term "trainee" is being phased out for any programs that do not include registration with State Training Services, to improve the ability to identify those that must comply with the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act. The previous approach provides a number

of areas for improvement, particularly regarding improved budget management while improving outcomes and opportunities for staff. The previous approach was not targeted towards any particular age group.

Education Assisted Students

WSC has offered education assistance to a number of staff to support them in varying areas of study for many years. This program has been renewed in 2011 to provide a more rigorous program that enables improved budget management, return on investment, alignment to business needs and transparency. This program is offered to all permanent staff and is not targeted to any particular age group.

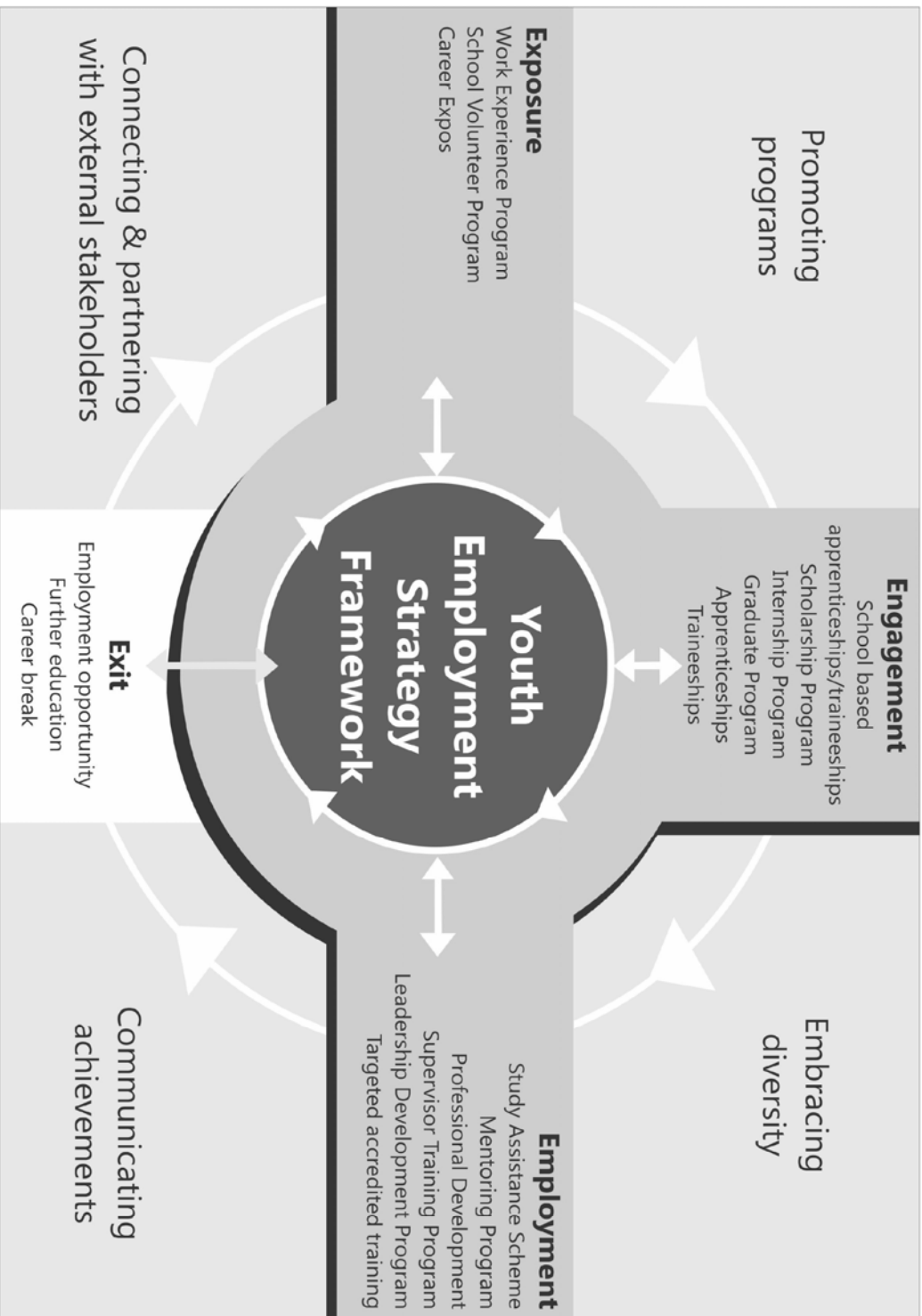
Career Expos

WSC has traditionally attended a range of Career Expos including; Newcastle University Graduate Career and Employer Expo and the Central Coast Career Pathways Expo. WSC's approach to these expos has not been targeted and there are opportunities in this area to bring a more strategic approach. It is expected that the approach aligns with this strategy regarding the development of talent pools for the proposed programs.

What is the Proposed Strategy?

In pursuit of aligning the YES actions to the Community Strategic Plan, Wyong Shire Strategic Plan and Council's unanimously supported NOM from 22nd July 2009^{viii}, the strategy recommends a framework containing a suite of activities be implemented across WSC to ensure that there is opportunity for engagement with youth through 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 are Exposure, Engagement, Employment and Exit (4E's).

The YES Framework: This framework contains 16 activities across the "4E's" and four key support activities.



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The activities identified within this framework provide a link between WSC, secondary and tertiary education institutions and other community groups providing a number of entry and exit points for both the organisation and youth.

It is important to note that the AEs 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).

This framework also includes subset programs focusing on Aboriginal employment and employment of those within diversity groups.

Exposure (Pre employment):

This element provides opportunities for youth to experience WSC prior to paid employment through three activities.

Activity one: Work Experience Program

Unpaid work experience for those studying at school, university, and other Registered Training Organisations.

This is a continuation of the current program with some improvements to the process and program implementation. It is important to note that this activity will remain open to mature age students.

Activity two: School Volunteer Program

Volunteering opportunities for secondary school students who are participating in recognised volunteer programs e.g. The Premiers' Volunteer Program, Duke of Edinburgh Award.

This is a new activity for WSC.

Activity three: Career Expos

Attendance at targeted career expos to build talent pools of youth for programs within the engagement element of the youth employment strategy framework.

This is an extension of current activity with a more strategic and targeted approach.

Engagement (Transition to employment through temporary appointment):

This element provides opportunities for youth to participate in paid employment on a temporary and/or part time basis while undertaking, or just following, completion of vocational or tertiary studies in their chosen field through six activities. It is important to note that the programs listed in this element are accessible to mature age students and contains a combination of both new and existing WSC programs (some of the existing programs will be improved as a result of this strategy).

Activity four: School Based apprenticeships/traineeships

School based apprenticeships/ traineeships for those completing their HSC wishing to undertake VET subjects as part of their ATAR or trade school completion. Traineeships are offered part time over two - five years. Traineeships are two years in duration requiring 100 work days throughout this period. Apprenticeships are five years – the first two years are part time and the following three years are full time. This activity is recommended to include Aboriginal youth and to utilise Aboriginal mentoring programs as provided by the Department of Education and Communities and/or Aboriginal Employment Strategy Ltd (AES). This is a new activity for WSC.

Activity five: Scholarship Program

Annual scholarships (four) provided to first and second year university students studying in targeted areas. This includes scholarships of \$2500 to each recipient, along with four weeks paid work experience over a 12 month period. This is a continuation of the number of scholarships with an extension of our current first year student offering to include second year students.

Activity six: Internship Program

Internships for students completing their last or second to last year of university. Internships provide three days paid part time employment per week, while rotating throughout WSC in their discipline. Working days are scheduled to align to study requirements of individuals for a temporary 12 month period. The students are also supported with study and exam leave days. This is an improved continuation of the current activity.

Activity seven: Graduate Program

Graduate program offering full time employment to candidates in targeted areas immediately after completion of their university studies. The program requires rotation throughout WSC. The program will be up to two years duration, with each applicant eligible to apply for appropriate permanent positions after completion of the first 12 months of the program. This is a new activity for WSC.

Activity eight: Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships provided to those wishing to gain a trade on a full time basis. The apprentices are hosted by WSC and employed by a local Group training Organisation. Our current approach has been evaluated as part of this strategy and indicates that WSC has an opportunity for potential savings by providing a tender approach to our choice of GTO. This is a continuation of our current activity with a recommendation to tender for the GTO.

Activity nine: Traineeships (Temporary)

Temporary full time traineeships offered in targeted areas to address skill shortages and business needs. These are registered traineeships, falling under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act on a temporary basis. During the last three months of the Traineeship, employees will be eligible to apply for permanent positions within WSC structure. This activity is recommended to include Aboriginal youth and to utilise the Aboriginal mentoring programs as provided by the Department of Education and Communities and/or Aboriginal Employment Commission (AEC). This is an improved continuation of the current activity implemented in the area of Child Care with an extension to other areas of the business.

Employment (Permanent employment):

This element provides opportunities for youth to participate in full time permanent employment in a suitable role within WSC and access programs which will support their lifelong learning through continued personal and professional development. This element contains six activities. It is important to note that the programs listed in this element are accessible by all employees of WSC and contains a combination of both new and existing WSC programs (some of the existing programs will be improved as a result of this strategy).

Activity ten: Study Assistance Scheme

Study Assistance provided to permanent employees wishing to continue their studies in areas which align to business needs. Assistance is in terms of financial (either full or part time) and study leave applied for annually. Support is determined by formal application and selection process. This is an improved continuation of current activity.

Activity eleven: Mentoring Program

Formal mentoring provided to high potential employees. This has a particular focus on those who have completed their apprenticeship, traineeship or graduate program and achieved full time permanent positions within WSC.

This is a new activity for WSC.

Activity twelve: Professional Development

Professional development opportunities provided to staff to ensure industry specific skills are maintained and current. This includes short courses, conferences, workshops and seminars. Applications are via written application and determined against business needs, alignment with current or future role and budget. This is a continuation of current activity.

Activity thirteen: Supervisor Training Program

WSC Supervisor Training Program is offered to all staff in frontline leadership roles, or those wishing to progress into a team leader position. This three day customised program is the first step in our leadership training and will provide exposure to leadership skills for our high performing youth as identified through our programs. This is a continuation of our current activity.

Activity fourteen: Leadership Development Program

WSC Leadership Development Programs (accredited) are offered at three levels for permanent staff wishing to advance their leadership capabilities. Application is via written submission and the outcome of each application is determined by a panel. The programs include the delivery of nationally recognised qualifications and employees are registered as trainees under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act for the duration of the program. A Certificate IV in Frontline Management is achieved for level 1 and a Diploma in Frontline Management is achieved at level 2. This program is open to staff of all ages where the learning outcomes align to their role within the organisation.

This is a continuation of the current program.

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Activity fifteen: Targeted accredited training

Targeted accredited training is offered to permanent staff across WSC to build their skills in areas relating to their work when opportunities arise to provide recognised training at a reduced rate. These programs are typically offered as a result of federal funding which subsidises the cost of the training. Withdrawal time from work is offered for those participating in formal classroom based learning.
This is a continuation of current activity.

Exit (External career consolidation and transfer of skills and knowledge):

This element recognises that the youth WSC employs will sometimes choose to exit our employment for a number of reasons including: career break, further education or other career opportunities. It also recognises that after temporary employment opportunities and the attainment of further work experience and skills gained during this period of employment, employees will be in a position to take these skills into other local employment opportunities.

It is anticipated that over time, WSC will be able to identify the number of staff exiting our employment to consolidate their skills and then returning with increased knowledge, capability and potential to continue their career within WSC.

Strategy Support:

The YES Framework notes four key support activities to ensure successful implementation of the YES. Each of the four areas will require ongoing implementation and maintenance including:

1. 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. It will be important that contemporary communication approaches are implemented to connect with the local youth including social media (facebook, twitter).

2. 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.

3. 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 provides a sound return on investment (both financially and employer brand).

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

4. *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. Key stakeholders include:

- State Training Services (STS) – STS is a government agency within the Department of Education and Communities responsible for managing apprenticeships and traineeships and carries out a number of functions as identified within the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001, including the provision of Commonwealth Incentives to employers.
- youthconnections.com.au (YC) – YC is a local organisation which provides activities for young people in the community and aims to strengthen services so young people are better connected to education. They assist in helping local organisations identify the challenges facing young people's education engagement and work with them to find solutions. There are a number of programs implemented by youthconnections.com.au to achieve their vision of "Turning education into jobs". These programs could be leveraged by WSC to connect with local youth for the proposed activities within the YES Framework. The programs implemented by youthconnections.com.au include:
 - Local High Schools – Providers of secondary school curriculum education within each state for year 7 – 12 students e.g. Wyong high School, Central Coast Grammar School.
 - Local Universities – Provide post secondary school qualifications to those wishing to further their education at a level above Advanced Diploma under the Australian Qualification Framework e.g. Newcastle University, University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
 - Local Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) – Provide nationally recognised qualifications for those studying areas within the Australian Qualification Framework. In NSW, RTO's are registered by the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board e.g. Wyong TAFE, Local Government Training and Newcastle University
 - Identified Group Training Organisation (GTO) – As an alternative to employing an apprentice or trainee directly a business may use a GTO to provide the apprentice or trainee. In this case the GTO is the legal employer and the business where the learner works is the "host" employer e.g. Central Coast Group Training, MEGT, YC
 - Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC) – Assists the employer in identifying appropriate training opportunities within their organisation and subsequently to establish training contracts with apprentices and trainees that are employed. The AAC explains responsibilities to all parties when employing an apprentice or trainee and coordinates any Government incentives and subsidies that may apply. AAC's are contracted by the Australian Government to provide a free service to the employer and employee.