

POLICY NO CB04 YOUTH POLICY AND STRATEGY

DEPARTMENT:	Community Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Manager Community Services
LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:	To strengthen our sense of community and lifestyle through opportunities for people to connect and feel valued
STATUTORY AUTHORITY:	N/A
OBJECTIVE:	
POLICY INFORMATION:	Adopted 19 March 2012 – Minute No 03/12.15.4.069 Amended 19 April 2017 – Minute No 04/17.14.2.96 Amended 19 December 2022 – Minute No 12/22.15.6.260

POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Youth Policy and Strategy has been prepared to reflect the changing nature of the needs of people aged 12-25 in the Break O' Day municipality. Extensive consultation and a needs analysis occurred during December 2016 and January 2017. A brief youth profile has been prepared, but it should be noted that the statistics, while they are the most recent currently available, are relatively old. It is recommended that the youth profile be updated when the Australian Bureau of Statistics releases its data from the 2016 census of population and housing. The policy priorities and strategy are to be annually reviewed and the strategic plan sets out a three-year time frame for achievement.

This document is designed to augment and support existing youth programs delivered by Break O'Day Council (BODC). The BODC delivers a Learner Driver Mentor Program (LDMP) in collaboration with the Tasmanian State Government. The LDMP provides young people with access to vehicles and mentors, enabling them to gain the necessary experience required to gain their Provisional Licence. BODC is a partner organisation in the THRIVE (Transforming Health, Relationships, Innovation, Vocation, Education) working group. This partnership delivers a broad range of services and programs that support young people in the municipality. Council recognises the individuals and local organisations that assisted in the development of this document.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

Council will work collaboratively with young people, agencies, service providers, schools and industry to respond to the changing needs of young people aged 12-25. This will involve ongoing conversations with all stakeholders to revisit and refine service delivery.

3. YOUTH PROFILE - STATISTICS

The Break O' Day municipality is a regional area characterised by high levels of social and economic disadvantage and isolation. The NATSEM Child Social Exclusion Index of dependent children (0-15) ranks the Break O' Day municipality in the 1st quintile, or most excluded. The table below

presents a range of indicators of disadvantage, highlighted in the NATSEM Poverty, Social Exclusion and Disadvantage in Australia report (Ben Phillips, 2013)

Indicators measuring disadvantage in Break O' Day municipality				
	Real number	Percentage of population		
		Break O' Day	Tasmania	Australia
People experiencing poverty	1415	23.61%	15.1%	11.8%
Children experiencing poverty (0-14)	269	26.5%	15.8%	11.8%
Households experiencing housing affordability stress	161	46.94%	Data unavailable	Data unavailable

Table1. NATSEM 2012 measures of social disadvantage for Break O' Day municipality.

Household's experiencing housing affordability stress has been included in this table to highlight the extent of disadvantage and pressure on young people in the community. The 30:40 rule is used to determine housing affordability stress. When a family or individual who has an income level in the bottom 40% of Australia's income distribution and their household expenses consume 30% or more of their income they are highly likely to be experiencing housing affordability stress. There are a range of sources that report housing affordability stress. The table above has the Tasmanian and Australian data for housing affordability stress omitted because of the inability to make a direct comparison with the data for Break O' Day (Moffatt, 2016). In an attempt to contextualise the Break O' Day housing affordability data, it is worth noting that Moffat found that when averaging household types in the north of the state, 21% of households are exposed to household affordability stress (Moffat, 2016).

The data used in the NATSEM index report (Ben Phillips, 2013) was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing 2006. Recent data collected from the 2011 ABS Census of Population and Housing continues to characterise the Break O' Day municipality in decile 1, the most disadvantaged on the index of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

4. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

The community consultation process informing this policy included; two focus groups, a survey, interviews with eight (8) key youth sector stakeholders and interviews with young people.

4.1 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted in December 2016, interviewing students ranging in age from 13 to 16 year olds. A focus group was interviewed at St Marys District School consisting of eleven (11) students and another focus group was interviewed at St Helens District High School consisting of fourteen (14) students. Both groups critically examined the current youth policy and were asked to identify areas that continued to have relevance to themselves and their peers and areas that did not have relevance. The discussion then moved to the needs of the focus groups and their peers and what changes the new policy might include. The students were then asked to offer solutions and strategies that would support change in the priorities they identified.

4.2 Survey

Seventy three (73) young people aged 13-22 responded to a survey. The survey asked respondents to reflect on a range of factors that can impact the lives of young people and invited comment on how the community could better meet the needs of young people. The survey was anonymous and conducted online. Table 1 presents the Issues impacting respondents at a frequency of 1:5 or greater, i.e. one (1) in every five (5) respondents reported the impact of a factor on their life. Due to the lower representation of respondents in the 19-22 age range, factors are reported if 50% or greater of respondents reported a factor as having an impact on their life. This survey tool was relatively unsuccessful in attracting responses from people aged 17-25. While the results of this survey are a start, more work needs to be done to engage this cohort of young people to better determine their needs.

Age	Factors that have an impact on respondent's lives.
13-14 (21 respondents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying and harassment • Things to do after school/work • Mental health and wellbeing • Housing and housing affordability
15-16 (46 respondents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to transport • Bullying and harassment • Access to education and training • Having someone to talk to • Mental health and wellbeing • Things to do after school and work • Housing and housing affordability
19-22 (6 respondents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Housing and housing affordability • Things to do after school and work • Mental health and wellbeing • Involvement in community decision making

Table 2 indicates that mental health and wellbeing, housing and housing affordability and things to do after school/work are factors that impact all age groups surveyed. Housing and housing affordability has surfaced as an impacting factor across all age ranges

4.3 Stakeholder Interviews

Eight (8) key youth sector stakeholders were interviewed during the consultation phase. These consisted of state service employees and a range of leaders of not for profit organisations who work with and provide services for young people

5. POLICY PRIORITIES

Six (6) priorities were identified from the consultation phase of this report in which respondents felt there could be improvement or that a service/initiative was lacking. The priorities are; youth participation; mental health and wellbeing; bullying and harassment; recreational activity; transport and education; training and employment. Housing and housing affordability was identified in the survey as being a factor that impacted the lives of respondents. Considering the analysis in the Youth Profile of this report, it is no surprise that young people are perceiving it as a factor that affects their lives. The question is; what are the strategies and programs that mitigate its impact? It is beyond the scope of this document to address this issue, further investigation is required in this area.

5.1 Youth Participation

There was overwhelming evidence presented during the focus groups and some evidence from the survey that young people wanted more opportunities to contribute when decisions are made that impact them and the community. Young people declared that they wanted more representation and the opportunity to express their concerns and ideas relating to youth programs and services. Suggestions included the formation of a Youth Advisory Group that could “make decisions and not be treated as ignorant. Young people know what young people want”. The Youth Advisory Group would “involve the schools, hold regular meetings and surveys and communicate appropriately through Facebook and Instagram etc.” The Youth Advisory Group representatives could “infiltrate ‘old people’ organisations” to ensure that “our voice is heard throughout the community”. It was suggested that the Youth Advisory Group move beyond the traditional models and support young people to “gain employment”, “run language classes” and investigate big ideas such as “how do you follow your dreams and make money?” Youth participation was also identified as having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing by a range of youth service stakeholders. It was noted that “Young people need to feel empowered to influence the community and to have a role in decision making so that they feel more valued and connected”.

5.2 Mental Health & Wellbeing

During the consultation phase, it became apparent that young people and service providers felt that mental health and wellbeing was greatly impacting the quality of life of young people in the community. Service providers reported that “case-loads are increasing and the complexity of need is increasing”. “Co-morbidity of factors including physical and mental health is presenting in referrals and impacting overall health and wellbeing”. “Complex trauma and family violence” are major factors impacting the mental health and wellbeing of young people. It is apparent that “young people don’t have a strong support network outside of school” and are “struggling to identify support networks outside of school”. It was reported that “mainstream kids in our area are disconnected from family, from school and the community.” Additionally, “safety planning relies on online support, not community support” which is impacting the frequency and quality of crisis support. Young people are reporting that “a sense of belonging is not there”. They are “feeling as though they are disenfranchised and not a part of the community”. Thus, it is being reported by young people that “drug use is being used as a cure for boredom”. Another major concern was that students are being well supported via counselling and social work during the school term, however over the summer break were not being supported and that this is causing issues with mental health and wellbeing.

It was suggested that youth service providers focus on collaboration, information sharing, marketing and effective coordination of outreach services that provide support within the community. “Young people need to understand what services are actually doing for young people. How are we delivering the message that services exist for them?”

Service providers reported a desire that the youth sector “be strategic about how youth mental health is promoted and advocated for, and that resources and support are accessed.” And that the youth sector “move from a reactive model to a proactive model of outreach coordination and developing long term planning and relationships with services eg: Headspace and Cornerstone.”

5.3 Bullying & Harassment

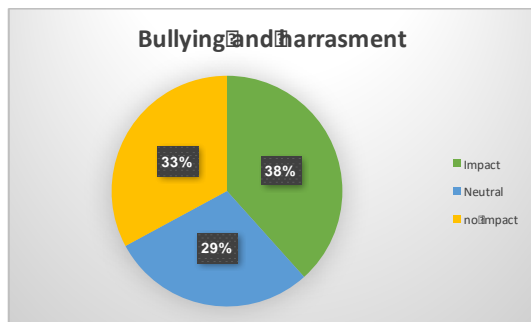


Figure1. Bullying and harassment – all ages response

Bullying and harassment surfaced as a factor that impacts the quality of life of young people in the community. The results of the survey have highlighted that this is the major concern of survey respondents with this being the only factor in the survey which respondents marked as impacting their lives more than the “No impact” and “Neutral” responses. Figure1. Presents the percentage of respondents across all age ranges who report bullying and harassment as having an impact on their life. Concerning evidence from the survey results shows

that the impact of bullying and harassment has more impact across varying age ranges. Figure2. Presents the percentage of respondents who report bullying and harassment as being a factor influencing their life aged 13-14. This result is concerning, with more than one (1) in two (2) respondents reporting that bullying and harassment impacts their lives.

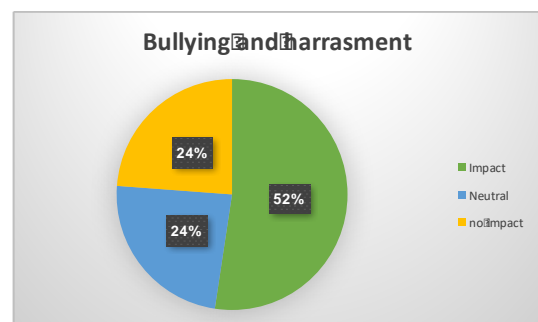


Figure2. Bullying and harassment – 13-14 age response

5.4 Recreational Activity

Overwhelmingly, during the focus groups and through the survey instrument, young people are identifying their desire to access recreational activities. For school aged young people, this was clearly named up as “after school opportunities” and for young people aged 19-23, this was named up as “after work opportunities”. Service providers who work with young people expressed concern that young people experiencing generational poverty and disadvantage were not able to access the existing community run activities such as organised sport (football, netball and little athletics). Recreational activity was directly linked to health and wellbeing by a range of service providers, one who reported that “connecting to community and feeling valued and celebrated” impacted positively on mental health and wellbeing.

Respondents to the survey who live in the Fingal Valley and service providers in that area highlighted their desire to see equitable allocation of resources to promote and run local events for young people in their communities. The focus groups made a range of suggestions regarding the types of recreational facilities they would like access to such as “better skate park facilities in St Marys and St Helens”, “community swimming pool”, “local, interstate and overseas camp experiences”, “a gaming centre”, “a cinema”, “efficient transport to and from events”, “running club”, “mountain bike club”, “swimming club”, “beach days and access”, “gym facilities”, “mountain bike trails” and “surfing clubs”. Many of these clubs and services already exist in the community, so the question was raised as to how do young people access, find out about, strengthen and help support existing funded and community run services and clubs.

5.5 Transport

Transport surfaced as a major issue during the focus group sessions and an issue for one (1) in five (5) survey respondents. The main issues were: getting to and from local events; access to

Launceston and Hobart and access to school for year 11-12 students, particularly from those travelling from the Fingal Valley to St Helens.

During the interviews with youth service providers, transport issues were related to families accessing health care services when required. One service provider commented that as a community we need to “build bridges of access to support for families. Accessing community sports and organisations is difficult for families that are disengaged, e.g. weekend sport is too hard and therefore kids are missing out”.

5.6 Education & Training

Education and training was discussed during the focus groups. Participants expressed a desire to access opportunities for more outdoor education and first aid education, language classes, mental health awareness and gender identity and sexuality education.

Youth service providers identified a gap in pathway planning for job seekers. “How do we build on the momentum from activities like the Green Army Program?” It was noted that some young people need extra support to navigate the post schooling education options available to them to best achieve their goals. Education and training was identified as a major concern in the Fingal Valley. There was a suggestion that “Council may have a role in helping to break down the perception that school finishes at grade 10”.

6. POLICY & STRATEGY

6.1 Break O'Day Council Youth Policy

Break O' Day Council will support young people by;

- Supporting them to identify and meet their needs through the development of a Youth Advisory Group and supporting volunteering opportunities (policy objective 1).
- Supporting the maintenance of good mental health and wellbeing (policy objective 2).
- Supporting them and the community to take a stand against bullying and harassment (policy objective 3).
- Providing a range of recreational activities and recreational spaces (policy objective 4).
- Supporting transport needs where it is possible and practical (policy objective 5).
- Supporting schools, the community and individuals to meet their education, training and employment goals (policy objective 6).

6.2 Break O'Day Youth Strategy

Policy objective	Strategies	Success criteria
Youth Participation Policy objective 1	Develop and maintain a Youth Advisory Group and regularly collect data that informs practice	Group convened and mission statement finished – August 2017
		Establish data collection and analysis framework – August 2017
	Seek funding to provide youth leadership development opportunities.	One development opportunity offered – July 2018
	Conduct regular consultation with young people.	Ongoing consultation and reporting – monthly report to Council

	Support and encourage young people to become volunteers.	Increase in the number of young people who volunteer in community groups – ongoing.
Mental Health and wellbeing Policy objective 2	Develop a working group to engage youth support services and organisations.	Identify needs and develop a plan to support at risk young people aged 12-25 – November 2017. Ongoing communication and information sharing to support young people. Establish lines of communication with service providers and clients to enable transport options– ongoing.
	Develop Support Service marketing and referral opportunities.	Develop and implement a social media service promoting community youth health services in conjunction with the Youth Advisory Group – December 2017.
Bullying and harassment Policy objective 3	Engage with community to understand and reduce the impact of bullying and harassment on young people	Youth Advisory Group to work within the community to raise awareness of the impact on young people of bullying and harassment – ongoing.
Recreational activity Policy objective 4	Support regular afterschool recreational activities in local centres.	Support the Youth Advisory Group to develop an ongoing program of after school recreational activities – July 2017. Work with recreation clubs to access funding to support youth participation – ongoing.
	Develop open spaces and infrastructure that meets the needs of young people in the community.	Work with the Youth Advisory Group, community organisations and Council to secure funding and support for upgraded skate park facilities, mountain bike park facilities and pump-track – December 2019.
Transport Policy objective 5	Collaborate with existing youth service providers who run transport services to meet the transport needs of young people.	Audit community transport opportunities available to young people – December 2017. Support Youth Advisory Group to determine viable and efficient transport options and routes through consultation with young people – December 2017.
	Provide transport to enable young people to access existing	Ensure that cheap/free transport is available for every youth event that

	community events/opportunities and Council organised events.	is organised using council resources – ongoing. Support community organisations to provide cheap/free transport to and from one off and regular events – ongoing.
Education, Training and employment Policy objective 6	Support young people aged 19-25 to develop learning goals, develop a pathway and secure employment.	Work with training organisations, job service agencies and industry to identify clients in need of learning pathway support – ongoing. Work with the schools to develop a pathway planning toolkit to guide the work with young Job seekers – December 2017.
	Support schools to support students.	Investigate ways to work with schools to support the needs of at risk students – December 2017.
	Support the development of small business, enterprise and entrepreneur skills programs.	Collaborate with the Trade Training Centre to extend programs offered to include small business management skills for 16-25 year olds - ongoing.
	Work with tertiary institutions, industry and business to identify future job opportunities for young people	Consult with stakeholders and write a municipality employment trend report – December 2018

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ben Phillips, R. M. (2013). *Poverty, Social Exclusion and Disadvantage in Australia*. National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra. Canberra: National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling. Retrieved from http://web.natsem.canberra.edu.au/maps/AUST_CSEv2013/UnitingCare_CYPF/UnitingCare_FINAL_111013.pdf
- Moffatt, L. (2016, April 31). *anglicare-tas*. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from www.anglicare-tas.org.au: <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/sites/default/files/RAS%20Tasmania%202016%20State%20Summary.pdf>

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years in line with the Council's Policy Framework or earlier in the event of major changes to legislation or related policies, procedures or if deemed necessary by the General Manager.