

Youth Focused Service and Facility Priorities

Fact Sheet: Increased Youth Services

Our Municipality

The City of Whittlesea is located 20km north of Melbourne. It is a large municipality covering an area of 490 square km of both urban and rural land and has a current population of over 134,000. The City includes the suburbs of Bundoora, Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Kinglake West, Lalor, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Thomastown and Whittlesea. The City of Whittlesea is a designated growth area and is experiencing a sustained period of rapid urban growth, particularly on the urban fringe. Since 2001 around 20,000 people have moved in to the municipality, over 8,500 dwellings have been built, and an additional 2000 building approvals have been issued. This growth is predicted to remain strong for the next 25 years or more with a projected increase in our population to 240,000 by 2031.

The municipality faces the distinctive challenges of balancing the dynamics of urban areas, rural areas, rapid growth, social disadvantage and high demand for services. The City has one of the most culturally diverse populations, with over 48% of residents coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. Whittlesea has also the fourth highest population of Indigenous people in metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Whittlesea is characterised by pockets of high socio-economic disadvantage, ranking the sixth most disadvantaged on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and the fourth most disadvantaged on the Index of Education and Occupation.

Currently, families, children and young people in the City of Whittlesea are disadvantaged in relation to the provision of local human services. In addition, like other Interface Councils, local residents are geographically isolated from service centres and current service provision is not keeping pace with population growth and demand.

To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing. The Council believes this can only be achieved in partnership with the State and Federal Government.

Community services, in particular services and facilities for young people, was raised as a community priority in the City of Whittlesea's 2008-2012 Community Plan consultation process.

The Need

Young people and their families at the Interface such as Whittlesea, are very vulnerable and severely disadvantaged as a result of service gaps. They have significantly lower educational achievements, demonstrate a higher prevalence of *at risk* behaviours and are more likely to be unemployed, engage in self-harm behaviours and experience depressive symptoms.

Recent research and consultation commissioned by the Interface Councils on a Statewide basis indicate that:

- There is no comprehensive, coordinated service system that enables continuity of care and responses to the range of needs of young people and their families. There are insufficient services to meet current demand, much less projected demand.
- Early intervention and youth support services are cost effective - financially, socially and emotionally – for young people, their families and the rest of society.

The Proposal

The solutions to improving the outcomes for young people who live in Whittlesea include:

- Developing a coherent and comprehensive service system that provides services across the spectrum, from prevention and early intervention to tertiary intervention, for young people and their families.
- Supporting strong communities that welcome and engage with young people, encouraging and supporting their participation in community life.

This proposal calls for a suite of services for young people and their families including the provision of:

1. Generalist youth workers.
2. Adolescent health teams and mental health services providing a continuum of care from counselling through to mental health support and intervention.
3. Strategies and support services for improved educational outcomes.

Generalist Youth Workers

Generalist youth support services are particularly effective in supporting young people. They provide an important universal service base, building on the continuum of care from the early years, through the middle childhood years to adolescence and adulthood. These services need to be universally available locally and able to respond to immediate issues and concerns of young people and their families.

Generalist youth workers support the healthy physical, social and emotional development of all young people, enhancing protective factors. By working with young people to develop their strengths, the impact of risk factors is minimised. Importantly, generalist youth services provide a strong link to the range of more intensive support services for young people and frequently facilitate partnership arrangements and networking between service providers. The provision of these services at a local level is critical for the development of an integrated, coherent and systematic approach to providing services for young people at Whittlesea.

It is proposed that the State government funds three generalist youth worker positions that focus on enhancing the capacity of mainstream and universal services to contribute to young people living successfully in their communities through capacity building, early detection and youth development. They also provide a strong link to the range of other more intensive support services for young people.

Adolescent Health Teams: Mental Health Services

Research shows the City of Whittlesea needs a base-line range of primary, secondary and tertiary mental health interventions to be accessible to young people. They would need to include experts with specialist skills in working with young people, and the families of adolescents including GPs, case workers, outreach workers, counsellors, psychologists, consultant psychiatrists, in-take workers, health promotion and prevention workers.

Improving Educational Outcomes

It is proposed that the State Government adequately funds a range of prevention and early intervention strategies to support young people to remain engaged at school and improve the educational achievements of young people:

- Focus on all young people, particularly those in transition, Years 4 to 9.
- Develop alternative curriculum options and young people's participation in negotiated curriculum and governance, and give accreditation for student involvement in community.
- Enable teachers to detect and respond to difficulties by linking young people to youth workers, counsellors and to appropriate expertise.
- Provide support to parents and develop linkages between the school and community.
- Build the school community capacity to support young people.
- Provide subsidies to meet the costs of attending secondary and post-secondary education.

Cost

These estimates are based on research undertaken by NLT Consulting in the report 'Staying Connected: solutions for addressing service gaps for young people living at the Interface' 2006 (commissioned by the Interface Councils in metropolitan Melbourne).

The principle is for locally based and managed services that are accessible and responsive to local needs in delivering a continuum of coordinated support and services for young people and their families.

	Per Annum	Over Four Years
Three Generalist Youth Workers/Counsellors:	\$285,000	\$1,140,000
Adolescent Health Teams: Mental Health Services	\$899,000	\$3,596,000
Improving Educational outcomes	\$426,000	\$1,704,000
Total cost	\$1,610,000	\$6,440,000

State Government Policy Alignment

GENERALIST YOUTH WORKERS

Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians:

HAVING RESOURCES AND MAKING

CONNECTIONS: 'Young people are resourced to build and gain access to networks in their communities;

HEALTH, SAFETY AND DEVELOPMENT: 'Young people want access to good information and advice... about managing the risks or harm associated with their behaviours. Young people care deeply about their mental health and wellbeing and are concerned about the rising rates of anxiety and depression among their peers. They want greater access to support at early stages to prevent issues escalating and to be equipped to manage their own situations';

'Interventions and programs need to be put in place early, because prevention-based approaches work best'; and

BEING SAFE AND PROMOTING SAFE

BEHAVIOURS: 'Young people feel safe in environments that matter to them and are able to negotiate decisions about their own safety'

HEALTH TEAMS: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians:

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES: 'Young people's health and wellbeing are vital to their success in remaining engaged and active in their communities. One priority for the Government has been to support both preventative and responsive health services for young people.'

Young people care deeply about their mental health and wellbeing and are concerned about the rising rates of anxiety and depression among their peers. They want greater access to support at early stages to prevent issues escalating and to be equipped to manage their own situations';

A Fairer Victoria: Building On Our Commitment: STRATEGY 11: INCREASING SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: 'Poor mental health significantly reduces life chances and can contribute to homelessness, unemployment, criminal behaviour and family breakdown. A Fairer Victoria includes substantial investment in mental health services in 2007 to improve the lives of those Victorians experiencing mental health problems';

STRATEGY 2: GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE BACK ON TRACK:

'The Government will invest \$45.6m to turn around the lives of young people at risk...'

BECAUSE MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS:

'Early in life, early in illness, early in episode -A significant proportion of people entering the specialist mental health system could have been identified and better assisted at an earlier stage of their illness. This is particularly true in relation to children and young people.'

'All Victorians have the opportunities they need to achieve optimal mental health and wellbeing, while those experiencing mental health problems receive timely, quality treatment and support to participate fully in the community,

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians

ACHIEVING POTENTIAL THROUGH INFORMED LIFE CHOICES: 'Young people are engaged with school, training or employment. They have options for staying connected to learning.'

**A Fairer Victoria: Building On Our Commitment;
STRATEGY 2: KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE ON**

TRACK: 'We need a world class education system for all abilities and aspirations so that young Victorians can realise their full potential....and we need to identify young people at risk of disengaging from education and training. Research shows that [completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification]....results in better health, greater likelihood of earning higher incomes, and less likelihood of being unemployed.'

STRATEGY 12: BUILDING STRONGER

COMMUNITIES: 'Strong communities, where people are actively involved in community life, have better health, higher school retention rates and lower rates of unemployment and crime...Communities with high levels of participation and social connectedness are better placed to deal with disadvantage.'

**A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong
Communities, May 2008**

A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:

....Ensuring that universal services provide real opportunities for all Victorians by providing support at the most critical transition points in people's lives especially for vulnerable groups and communities. This will continue with a focus on ensuring that such services meet the needs of those most at risk, including children who may start school behind others and young people less likely to complete Year 12.

Priority Area Two: Improving Education and Helping People into Work – Reducing educational inequality, supporting young people at risk and reducing barriers to workforce participation

The aim of new initiatives this year is to provide increased support for young people to maximise outcomes in education and work. Greater support will be given to early school leavers in particular parts of the state where there are risks of non-completion and unemployment.

Federal Government Policy Alignment

GENERALIST YOUTH WORKERS

An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007 'Labor's social inclusion agenda will be underpinned by its investment in our human capital. Labor's commitment to human capital is implemented through a co-operative Federal – State framework based around investment in people and communities that deliver the right interventions, at the right time, in the right place – the localised setting.'

HEALTH TEAMS – MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Senator Ursula Stephens, Address to UnitingCare Australia, Uniting Missions Network National Conference, April 7, 2008 'Committing to a Social Inclusion agenda is about making a real difference in the lives of people who face barriers to participation in aspects of Australian life most of us take for granted, barriers like living with a mental illness.'

'We want our Social Inclusion policies to achieve the following:..... To acknowledge the need for early intervention, prevention and treatment strategies which provide a pathway to inclusion and a continuum of care.'

Australian Government Mental Health and Wellbeing website 'One in four young Australians will suffer from mental illness in any one year with three quarters of all mental health problems beginning before the age of 25. Mental health problems like depression and anxiety may also lead to serious alcohol and substance abuse problems when left untreated. Half of all young people with alcohol and substance abuse problems can directly attribute this to untreated or poorly treated mental health problems.'

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Tanya Plibersek, Speech to National Youth Affairs Conference, May 2007, Melbourne. 'In a recent paper titled, 'Australia's Opportunity Challenge: What young people themselves and the research are telling us', the Dusseldorp Skills Forum found that if Australia increased the school & training retention rates of 15-24 year-olds to 90 per cent by 2040, it would result in a 1.1% increase in the size of annual GDP equal to \$9.2 billion in today's money.'

Youth Focused Service and Facility Priorities

Fact Sheet: Youth Foundation

Our Municipality

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The municipality faces the distinctive challenges of balancing the dynamics of urban areas, rural areas, rapid growth, social disadvantage and high demand for services. The City has one of the most culturally diverse populations, with over 48% of residents coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. Whittlesea has also the fourth highest population of Indigenous people in metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Whittlesea is characterised by pockets of high socio-economic disadvantage, ranking the sixth most disadvantaged on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and the fourth most disadvantaged on the Index of Education and Occupation.

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The Need

A recurring theme in local consultations with young people is their desire to participate and contribute in practical ways to the development of their community. They want to be more directly involved in planning and development initiatives (YouthPlan2030, City of Whittlesea Youth Summit Report 2006, City of Whittlesea What Young People Are Saying, 2006).

International literature (YouthPlan2030) emphasises that young people are the experts on their needs and concerns, and of those of other young people. A Youth Foundation will provide a genuine opportunity for young people to be directly involved in the planning and development of youth-led initiatives and to engage across the whole community and across sectors.

Involvement will give young people the opportunity to develop skills in leadership, networking, community planning, volunteering, project development, business and marketing. The whole community will benefit from projects that support and build on the strengths and connectedness of local young people.

Cost/Recommendation

That the State Government support the City of Whittlesea in being identified as a lead agency for the Youth Foundation funding.

State Government Policy Alignment

Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians:

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: Young people want to have a voice; they want to have a say on matters that have an impact on them and the broader community’;

CONTRIBUTING AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE: ‘Young people are valued in their communities for their contributions. Young people have opportunities, and are acknowledged and supported, to participate in meaningful ways’; and

A Fairer Victoria: Building On Our Commitment:

STRATEGY 12: BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES: ‘Strong communities, where people are actively involved in community life, have better health, higher school retention rates and lower rates of unemployment and crime...Communities with high levels of participation and social connectedness are better placed to deal with disadvantage. Communities are stronger and people are empowered when they are directly involved in making improvements in their local neighbourhoods and when they can have a say in matters important to them’.

Youth Focused Service and Facility Priorities

Fact Sheet: Southern Whittlesea Trade Training Centre

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The Need

The City of Whittlesea recognises that access to education is a determining factor in improving the wellbeing and standard of living of society in general. Post-secondary education and training build the stock of skills important to the economy and are significant determinants of the future wellbeing of individuals as well as of the nation as a whole.

Education is not solely an economic good. It provides many social benefits including that of social cohesion. This is particularly important at a time of significant social and economic change.

Compared with the metropolitan Melbourne average, young people living in the City of Whittlesea are:

- more likely to leave school early;
- less likely to complete Year 12;
- more likely to have lower TER, GAT and median VCE scores;
- less likely to attend university; and,
- more likely to disengage from school and employment.

The City of Whittlesea recognises that a variety of post-school education and training pathways is necessary to develop an educated and highly skilled society.

The Proposal

A regional partnership has been formed to develop a submission to the Australian Government for a Trade Training Centre (TTC) in the Southern Whittlesea Thomastown/Lalor area.

The partnership is committed to developing a model that will achieve the best outcomes for the young people, community and industry of this area. The TTC will be the place that either delivers a training pathway to young people, or answers the careers pathways questions for young people, their parents, and industry, and provides links to support and referral.

It will be the place that fosters the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully prepare young people for learning and for work.

State Government Policy Alignment

Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform:

This strategy seeks to align stakeholder efforts towards strengthening the role of schools in the development of young people and the learning continuum. It also supports the belief that the best outcomes for young people are achieved through school, parent, agency and community partnerships.

Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians:

Achieving Potential Through Informed Life Choices: 'Young people are engaged with school, training or employment. They (need) options for staying connected to learning.'

A Fairer Victoria: Building on Our Commitment: Keeping Young People on Track: 'We need a world-class education system for all abilities and aspirations so that young Victorians can realise their full potential...and we need to identify young people at risk of disengaging from education and training.'

Building Stronger Communities: 'Stronger communities, where people are actively involved in community life, have better health, higher school retention rates and lower rates of unemployment and crime...Communities with high levels of participation and social connectedness are better placed to deal with disadvantage.'

Federal Government Policy Alignment

Trade Training Centres in Schools Program

'The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program is an important element of the Commonwealth Government's Education Revolution. It will provide \$2.5 billion over 10 years to enable all secondary schools to apply for funding of between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million for Trade Training Centres.'

"Trade Training Centres are being established to help increase the proportion of students achieving Year 12 or an equivalent qualification to 85% by 2015 and 90% by 2020. An important step is ...to ensure students have access to high quality, relevant education and training opportunities that continue to engage them and encourage them to complete their studies."

"Through the program, the Commonwealth aims to:

- Improve student access to trade training facilities that meet industry standards;
- Improve the quality of schooling offered to secondary students undertaking trade related pathways; and
- Assist young people to make successful transitions from school to work or further education or training".

Australian Government Social Inclusion Agenda: Speech by Julia Gillard on Social Innovation, Social Impact: A New Australian Agenda 28th February 2008:

"Our long term prosperity depends on securing the full participation, economic and social, of all Australians. We have to find new ways to support that participation. That is why social inclusion matters. And that, in turn, is why social innovation matters."

Australian Government Budget Statement 2008: The Education Revolution: A New Approach to Education and Training

"Australia faces significant challenges in improving the productivity and participation of our working population and in improving social inclusion to achieve a more equitable society. If Australia is to rise to these challenges it needs a revolution in the quality of our education outcomes, the nature of our investment in education and in collaboration between governments and the education and training sectors. It is time to raise the standard.

... Beyond economic goals, educational analysts highlight that education creates social benefits. It helps build social capital. Societies with a strong commitment to education can also enjoy higher levels of civic participation, greater social cohesion and integration, lower levels of crime and disadvantage, and a more trusting, equitable and just society"

Youth Focused Service and Facility Priorities

Fact Sheet: City of Whittlesea: Education, Employment and Training Strategy for Young People

Our Municipality

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The Need

Statistical evidence shows that City of Whittlesea is performing poorly in comparison to Metropolitan Melbourne with regard to the disengagement of young people, school retention and further education. Compared with metropolitan Melbourne, the City of Whittlesea has:

- larger percentages of teenagers, 15 to 19 years old, who are disengaged.
- larger percentages of young adults in the 20 to 24 years age group are also disengaged.
- more young people whose highest educational outcome was completing Year 10.
- fewer young people whose highest educational outcome was Year 12. It is known that fewer young men than young women in Whittlesea complete Year 12.
- a lower percentage of young people attending university or attending other post-secondary education.
- a higher percentage of tradespersons and lower percentage of professionals in the 15 to 24 years age group.
- 62.8 % of our local workforce working outside of the municipality.

The Proposal

The proposal is to create a strategic planning framework that will guide the employment, education and training stakeholders to deliver the best outcomes for young people in the City of Whittlesea. The framework will be based on shared vision and goals by key stakeholders. Based on mutual respect and shared interests, it will be a means for the education, employment and training sectors to consider and respond to each other's needs and concerns.

The strategic framework will be municipal-wide, in the context of the region, overarching, comprehensive and coherent with short term and long-term goals that will deliver the best education, employment and training outcomes for local young people.

This will involve mapping existing initiatives, addressing current gaps, and indicating how the education, employment and training sectors should position to respond to the future of work in this municipality. A high-level governance structure and representative partnership will drive the strategy.

The core concept for this proposal was initiated at a recent forum on July 30th 2008, *Taking Education Forward in Whittlesea* attended by school principals from government and non-government schools, local government, the Hornery Institute and community agencies. On behalf of the attendees, it was agreed that Council take the lead role in initiating this strategy with the Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Education Network / Whittlesea Youth Commitment.

Elements of the strategy:

- Private/public partnerships;
- Agreed vision, goals and action plan;
- Development of a culture of excellence and all of life learning;
- Young people, family and community at the centre;
- Addressing diversity and disadvantage;
- Improving, expanding, extending and linking the local systems to deliver results;
- Contemporary ways of doing business;
- Application of existing evidence and the generation of new knowledge to inform the approaches and actions of the strategy;
- The strategy will address current needs and deficits as well as focussing on preparing young people for work;
- Best practices; and
- Local responsiveness.

Outcomes will include:

- The City of Whittlesea prepared for the future of labour market;
- Improved opportunities for young people;
- Improved educational and training pathways and destinations;
- Links and partnerships between young people, schools, parents, employers and the service system; and

- A local workforce with the skills, aspirations and work readiness matched to current and future industry needs.

Research that will be considered under this strategy will include:

The Future of Work in the City of Whittlesea 2010 to 2030:

- What are the emerging industries and jobs in the City of Whittlesea 2010 to 2030?
- What are the attributes, skills and knowledge needed by businesses in these industries?
- What evidence is there of current or potential skills shortages?
- What are the implications for young people in considering their career paths?

Also: Why young people in the City of Whittlesea are performing badly in comparison to metropolitan Melbourne?

They are more likely:

- To disengage from secondary school
- To leave school before year 12
- To have comparatively lower educational outcomes
- To have a higher percentage of trade and lower percentage of professional occupations
- To experience local barriers to further education and to identify strategies to address these issues;

They are less likely:

- to attend post secondary education and university

Project context

The following associated projects have recently been completed, are in progress or are currently in development in the City of Whittlesea. These will be mapped under the proposed *Education, Employment and Training Strategy*.

1 Recent consultations with young people 12 to 18 years old in the City of Whittlesea indicate that in order to succeed in their life course, young people want support in the transition from primary school to secondary school.

2 A profile of young people in the City of Whittlesea will be commissioned. The data format will be based on the 2006 Census and compiled under the same statistical areas as *The State of Victoria's Young People* report.

3 *A literature review recently conducted by the City of Whittlesea investigated:*

- Why (and when) do young people disengage from school;
- The costs of disengagement;
- What prevents disengagement;
- What, in relation to engagement and disengagement, is the role of parents/peers/ school;
- Identifying vulnerability at points of transition, change and challenge;
- Solutions for young people disengaging, i.e. the best practice strategies that successfully redress disengagement.

4 *Developing a Support Arrangement with Schools*

This project will investigate how the support service system can work in partnership with schools to improve the chances of young people remaining engaged in a career pathway. Outcomes will include:

- Defining the role of schools in supporting the non-academic development of young people
- Identifying the appropriate role for the service system with schools; and
- Identifying opportunities for entry and access points.

5 *Southern Whittlesea Trade Training Centre*

A regional partnership has been formed to develop a submission to the Australian Government for a Trade Training Centre (TTC). The partnership is committed to developing a model that will achieve the best outcomes for young people, community and industry of this area. The TTC will be a place that either delivers a training pathway to young people, or answers the careers pathways questions for young

people and their parents, and provides links to support and referral. It will be a place that fosters the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully prepare young people for learning and for work.

6 *Developing the City of Whittlesea Youth Service System: Place Based Systems of Care*

This is a proposal seeking funding to pilot three place based 'systems of care' located in the vicinity of community hubs, that are designed to support young people and their families. Each 'hub' will be designed in response to the specific social and geographic characteristics of each local area. Two of the locations have schools as core agencies. Proposed project sites:

- Thomastown Main Street
- Plenty Valley Town Centre: EDGE
- Proposed Mernda Secondary School

7 *Whittlesea Community Futures (WCF)*

WCF is a partnership with 40 human services agencies, community-based organisations and state government departments. The aim of the project is to develop innovative service models and to pursue resources for services and facilities that provide improved support for families, children and young people in the Whittlesea municipality.

8 *Youth and Community Project (YAC)*

The aim of YAC is to develop a replicable youth service system model including facilities and activities in which young people contribute to the planning, design and delivery. It is being developed within a strengths based community development framework for young people to contribute to and feel connected to their community.

Cost

Annual costs of \$200,000 per annum based on:

- 1 x senior researcher;
- 1 x executive officer; and within a four year timeframe.

State Government Policy Alignment

Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform:

This strategy seeks to align stakeholder efforts towards strengthening the role of schools in the development of young people and the learning continuum. It also supports the belief in that the best outcomes for young people are achieved through school, parent, agency and community partnerships.

Objectives include:

- System development and reform;
- Workforce reform;
- Strengthening parent and community partnerships;

Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians:

Achieving potential through informed life choices:

'Young people are engaged with school, training or employment. They (need) options for staying connected to learning.'

A Fairer Victoria: Building on Our Commitment:

Keeping Young People on Track: 'We need a world-class education system for all abilities and aspirations so that young Victorians can realise their full potential...and we need to identify young people at risk of disengaging from education and training. Research shows that (completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification)...results in better health, greater likelihood of earning higher incomes, and less likelihood of being unemployed.'

Building Stronger Communities: 'Stronger communities, where people are actively involved in community life, have better health, higher school retention rates and lower rates of unemployment and crime...Communities with high levels of participation and social connectedness are better placed to deal with disadvantage.'

Federal Government Policy Alignment

Australian Government Social Inclusion Agenda:

The Australian Government positions education, employment and training at the centre of its Social Inclusion agenda. It also stresses the need to include those who are disadvantaged and excluded from education and employment.

Speech by Julia Gillard at ACOSS National Annual Conference 22 November 2007:

"...if we are going to solve the problem of social exclusion we have to develop a new agenda that can bring social and economic policy together to complement each other... such an agenda must have two guiding principles:it must tackle the social exclusion of individuals and communities; andit must invest in the human capital of all our people, especially the most disadvantaged. ... Bringing economic and social policy together to reduce disadvantage is going to take a massive effort of cooperation between the Commonwealth, the States and the not for profit sector".

Speech by Julia Gillard on Social Innovation, Social Impact: A New Australian Agenda, 28th February 2008:

"Our long term prosperity depends on securing the full participation, economic and social, of all Australians. We have to find new ways to support that participation. That is why social inclusion matters. And that, in turn, is why social innovation matters."

Australian Government Budget Statement 2008:

The Education Revolution: A New Approach to Education and Training "Australia faces significant challenges in improving the productivity and participation of our working population and in improving social inclusion to achieve a more equitable society. If Australia is to rise to these challenges it needs a revolution in the quality of our education outcomes, the nature of our investment in education and in collaboration between governments and the education and training sectors. It is time to raise the standard.

... Beyond economic goals, educational analysts highlight that education creates social benefits. It helps build social capital. Societies with a strong commitment to education can also enjoy higher levels of civic participation, greater social cohesion and integration, lower levels of crime and disadvantage, and a more trusting, equitable and just society"

Youth Focused Service and Facility Priorities

Fact Sheet: Multimedia @ EDGE

Our Municipality

The City of Whittlesea is located 20km north of Melbourne. It is a large municipality covering an area of 490 square km of both urban and rural land and has a current population of over 134,000. The City includes the suburbs of Bundoora, Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Kinglake West, Lalor, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Thomastown and Whittlesea. The City of Whittlesea is a designated growth area and is experiencing a sustained period of rapid urban growth, particularly on the urban fringe. Since 2001 around 16,000 people have moved in to the municipality and over 9,500 extra dwellings have come on line. This growth is predicted to remain strong for the next 25 years or more with a projected increase in our population to 240,000 by 2031.

The municipality faces the distinctive challenges of balancing the dynamics of urban areas, rural areas, rapid growth, social disadvantage and high demand for services. The City has one of the most culturally diverse populations, with over 48% of residents coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. Whittlesea has also the fourth highest population of Indigenous people in metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Whittlesea is characterised by pockets of high socio-economic disadvantage, ranking the sixth most disadvantaged on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and the fourth most disadvantaged on the Index of Education and Occupation.

To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing.

Insufficient resources, because of inappropriate funding formulae, have failed to keep up with population growth resulting in a backlog of community infrastructure renewal and creation within both established and emerging communities.

Increased State and Federal Government investment in social infrastructure is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

The Need

With a major investment from Council in our commitment to young people, 'EDGE – Services for Young People' is an exciting and vibrant new youth facility which involved local young people working with architects and designers to develop an enticing space where they can access a wide range of information as well as participate in training, developmental and cultural activities. EDGE will provide accommodation and infrastructure for youth service providers and improve youth engagement and community strengthening outcomes.

EDGE is focussed on the needs of young people and operates on participatory, social justice, community development and community building principles. In addition it is a hub for parents and members of the community to be resourced in relation to young people. Partnerships with the City of Whittlesea Youth Services Team, other agencies/providers and young people themselves will ensure the space is an active, vibrant place where young people are the main stakeholders and are resourced to engage with and participate in their community.

Internet access for young people will be an integral part of the City of Whittlesea's new youth facility – EDGE. An internet 'café' will provide young people with an important resource as well as attract a wide range of users who can then interact with other activities happening in the facility.

There is a substantial body of research that highlights the role of the internet in facilitating engagement and social connectedness. Due to the current deficits in the physical infrastructure of the municipality and the gaps in the human services system, young people living in Whittlesea experience significant disadvantage, including their inability to access a variety of services that are predominantly located outside the municipality. On-line services and information, while not a substitution, may assist young people in gaining information and resources. In addition there are benefits for some individuals of being able to use the internet to express themselves when face to face interactions can be difficult. On-line communities are also important to young people. Young people can make contact and explore 'spaces' on the Internet that they cannot access in geographic space.

Lack of access to the internet is the fundamental example of the digital divide. Lack of internet access generates further disadvantage for disadvantaged young people.

Who it targets

The overall target audience of EDGE is all young people aged 10 to 25 years, who live, work, study, play in and visit the municipality. This includes significant numbers of CALD, newly arrived, refugee and ATSI young people.

Many of these young people do not have internet access at home, limiting their ability to participate and have a voice in our community.

Information and communication technologies play an increasingly significant role in the key social and economic determinants of young people's wellbeing and community connectedness. Increasingly Cyberspace represents a new sector for action; in Cyberspace young people can build supportive connections and social relationships, be involved in community and group activities and participate in some level of civic engagement.

Who is involved

The Foyer space in EDGE will create a welcoming front for young people and the community and offer an informal meeting place, internet 'café' and gallery opportunities. Yarra Regional Library Services have collaborated in the development of technology and resources to support the activities in this space.

The internet café facilities will include the ability for young people to access a fast service with printing facilities. In a world that is increasingly digital, with rapid developments in information technology it is important that Youth Services use these as tools in their work. The internet service will be supported with software to enable the production of documents, presentations and promotional material in various multimedia formats (e.g. print, photo, sound, video, graphics). At scheduled times throughout the week, youth workers and other resource staff will be available to complement the onscreen facilities.

Outcomes include:

- Providing internet access in a visible setting that improves awareness of Youth Services. EDGE is a highly accessible location
- Access in a facility and environment for young people that will be unique in the municipality
- Assistance in filling a gap in service provision that is being experienced as a result of a population growth in the region.
- A tool to facilitate young people having a voice in their communities.
- Links with other activities and programs of City of Whittlesea Youth Services and other agencies housed at EDGE.
- Links with Youth Services website and other multimedia activities.
- Acknowledging changing contexts of young people and assisting them to develop skills to cope with change. In addition young people can support the wider society to understand and adapt to changes.

Cost

Funds required: \$200,000.

This includes: \$60,000 per annum for the costs associated with the engagement of skilled professionals to train young people, and \$140,000 for the purchase of;

- 25 Computers
- Video editing/digital software
- Music editing software
- Computer software in digital art, multimedia design and development
- Digital video camera
- IT support for equipment and program/software training

State Government Policy Alignment

The State of Victoria's Young People - A Report on How Young People Aged 12-24 Are Faring: Community engagement, civic participation & transport.

"The internet and electronic media play an important and central role in the lives of young people..."

Future Directions - An Action Agenda for Young Victorians: Technology

Young people today are a technological generation, with technology being a part of their lives from birth.

They are more likely than any other age group to use the Internet, and text messaging is becoming a preferred means of communication. Access to new technologies has created an entirely new means of social and civic interaction.

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities

A Fairer Victoria Priority Area Four: Developing Liveable Communities – *Strengthening neighbourhoods and local communities*

We will help communities by funding, planning and coordinating new initiatives, particularly where these link infrastructure with positive social outcomes.

Economic and Social Participation

The evidence is clear – opportunities for social and economic inclusion bring greater levels of wellbeing for both individuals and communities.

Liveable Communities

Key ingredients for strong communities.... [include] community networks that support the full participation of their residents.

A Fairer Victoria 2008 continues to take a strong 'life cycle' approach to building capability and breaking cycles of disadvantage....to tackle inequality and disadvantage at its roots by building confidence, capacity and potential, particularly of younger Victorians.