

8. YOUTH WORKERS/YOUTH AGENCIES WORKING IN BURWOOD/PEGASUS

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Corporate Plan Output: Community Advocacy	

The purpose of this report is to provide the Community Board with a record of the youth worker meetings held during August 2000 and some options in exploring the possibilities of establishing ongoing opportunities of dialogue between the Community Board and young people.

BACKGROUND

At its April and May 2000 meetings the Community Board sought information on the various youth programmes and services being provided in the Burwood/Pegasus area and to investigate the establishment of a youth forum. The need for such information was further expressed by Board members during discussions on the Community Centre Activities Plan (July), the Leisure Unit's Recreation and Arts Plan (July), the Youth Recreation Needs Study Action Plan (September) and when individual requests were received from youth work projects.

The objectives of the August 2000 youth worker meetings were for the Community Board:

- To acknowledge and express appreciation and support for the significant contribution youth workers and their agencies are making to the well-being of the local community
- To discover and learn more about the youth work being undertaken and the issues being faced by young people, their families and the wider community
- To learn more about the issues being experienced by the youth workers and their agencies in delivering youth programmes and services
- To incorporate the information gained from these meetings into the Community Board's 2001/02 priorities for community development and social well-being funding support
- To identify appropriate ways of ongoing dialogue with young people.

From these two meetings and from my meetings with other youth workers the following issues and ideas/suggestions were/have been raised:

- High levels of frustration and anger in young people, especially the boys. The bleak future being experienced/expressed by young people creates a "so why bother" attitude.
- Absence of positive adult role models, especially of dads.
- Lack of positive role models amongst their peer groupings.
- Low levels of family/household income is creating significant barriers in accessing sound education, housing, recreation, employment, health and transport.
- The poor behaviours and actions of young people cannot be seen in isolation from the social and economic realities being experienced by their families/households and local community. Often these youth behaviours are one component of multi-level crisis and poverty in the family/household and neighbourhood.
- Local kids, due to social and economic factors, stay local.

- Lack of/very limited parenting skills in the household. Often the parents themselves are still youth, children are parenting their parents or older children are parenting their younger siblings.
- Young people are very bright and talented yet “fail” in the education system.
- “Local kids” often perceive that the rest of the city has a view of how their neighbourhood lives so they act and live out that perception.
- Seemingly easy access to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs.
- The demand on the community for “youth work” is placing serious resourcing issues back on the local neighbourhood and community as well as on government agencies and local councils.
- “New” groups appear and/or an outside agency (community, central government, local authority) sets up a “new” project in the local area without any dialogue or consultation with local residents or existing groups. Such initiatives often undermine the good work already being undertaken by local people and community agencies. These people and agencies sense that their work is not of any value or is not recognised and this then often creates a “wall of resistance” by the local agencies towards the new operator or project.
- A perceived lack of co-ordination amongst community groups which creates the possibility of an “over-supply” of youth services in one locality while nothing seems to be done in another or there is a “duplication” of a particular social service while there are gaps in services elsewhere.
- Young people are discovering “new” places to meet: malls and shopping complexes; smooth road surfaces, public entranceways and car parking spaces for skate boarding; hanging about in and around public and commercial places; and after school hours at local schools. This requires a new understanding and co-operation by mall and shop owners, school boards of trustees, residents and neighbours, community groups, government agencies and local councils.
- The cost of accessing social, sporting, recreation and cultural facilities. It was suggested that the City Council/Community Boards issue community and youth groups with a “voucher” which would give them no/low cost entrance to Council owned facilities.
- Agencies are finding it extremely difficult to access funds for “overhead/infrastructure” and management costs. City Council/Community Boards could consider assisting such community group management costs through making its own infrastructure and professionals available/seconded to community groups.
- The difficulties in knowing about and accessing community funding support, and the high compliance costs in doing so, as each funder seems to have differing application requirements and accountability reporting systems. In particular it seems that there is not one common “application” system currently being used by the City Council; it seems to vary within the funding streams/funding committees.
- City Council/Community Boards to be aware of the importance of long term engagements with community groups and not just “one-off” events or spots.
- The need to use positive language and imagery. For example instead of saying youth at risk or such a place is a potential crime area, say youth with a future or creative opportunities for youth activities.

At both meetings youth workers gave strong praise for the support and partnership work undertaken by the Community Board and City Council with the community and youth projects in the Burwood/Pegasus community. They all look forward to ongoing and creative co-work with the Community Board.

Following the two August meetings a letter of appreciation was sent to the youth workers seeking their ideas and suggestions regarding ongoing ways of Community Board support for youth work and ongoing ways of dialogue between the Community Board and young people.

Based on the discussions and stories of the August meetings and through my own meetings with the Shirley Palms project, young people, youth workers, parents and community groups the following suggestions are offered for consideration:

1. That the Community Board continues to give a high priority in supporting youth work through fully recognising the goals, principles, outcomes and priorities of the Council's Community Policy and Social Wellbeing Policy.
2. That based on those two policy documents the Community Board identify specific areas of community and youth work and call for projects from the community.
3. That at its February meeting each year the Community Board sets aside a specific amount of funding support for youth projects both as an annual Project Grant for projects during the year.
4. That the Community Board establishes a "Youth Development Fund" of monies available for individual youth initiatives.
5. That the Community Board invite/host one meeting per year of the Christchurch City Council's Youth Council.
6. That based on the August meetings the Community Board host three such youth worker meetings each year. These meetings would include an invitation to the CCC Youth Council members who reside in the Shirley, Burwood and Pegasus wards.
7. That in partnership with community agencies the Community Board explore the needs and benefits for establishing a Burwood Pegasus "Community Work Co-ordinating Forum".
8. That the Community Board's holder regular public meetings away from the Boardroom and (as a suggestion) at a community centre/community hall or meeting room.
9. That staff be directed, in co-operation with youth agencies, to host focus group meetings with young people from time to time in specific localities. For example schools, a youth club night, a holiday programme, or gather a youth grouping around a mall foodcourt.
10. That the Community Board encourages Council Business Units to further explore ways of making City Council owned facilities more available/known/accessible to youth groups.
11. That the Community Board encourages City Council Business Units to explore ways of making their administration infrastructure and project development expertise available to community groups.
12. That the Community Board and City Council explore ways of ensuring that all Board and Council "community project" monies are known/accessible by the community and that common procedures are introduced in processing community requests for funding.
13. That Community Board members and staff join a youth group/agency in a voluntary capacity as a way of listening to youth ideas.

- Recommendations:**
1. That this report be received.
 2. That suggestions 1 to 13 be given consideration as part of the Community Board's ongoing project support and dialogue with young people, youth workers, youth and community agencies and the wider community.
 3. That the Community Board considers establishing a "youth development" committee to discuss these youth findings further and report to the November 20 Community Board meeting.

Chairperson's

- Recommendations:**
1. That this report be received.
 2. That a Youth Development Working Party be established and that they consider suggestions 1 to 13 and report back to the 20 November 2000 Board meeting.