

Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Support Program

What will be covered today

- Background of the Youth Support Program
- Identified need for improvement
- Best practice methods and tips
- 6 step consultation process
- Success Stories

Swan Hill Snapshot

6,117 Square Kilometers

Total Population 21,584

3,810 young people aged 12-25 years

Goulburn Mulwaree Council

3,220 Square Kilometers

Total Population 30,852

Approximately 4,500 young people 12-25

“Councils have a unique and critical role to play. Young people, more than many other population groups, are grounded in place, or the “local”. A range of council activities have a primary impact on young people, including urban planning, economic development, public space, parks and gardens, human services, libraries, by-laws, and infrastructure. Councils have a unique capacity to work from a “place-based” perspective, holistically monitoring issues, identifying gaps and responding from a broad professional base”.

Nadden, R. & Hill, R. (2004): “Connecting Young People in Local Communities – A Guide for the Development of a Local Government Youth Charter”.

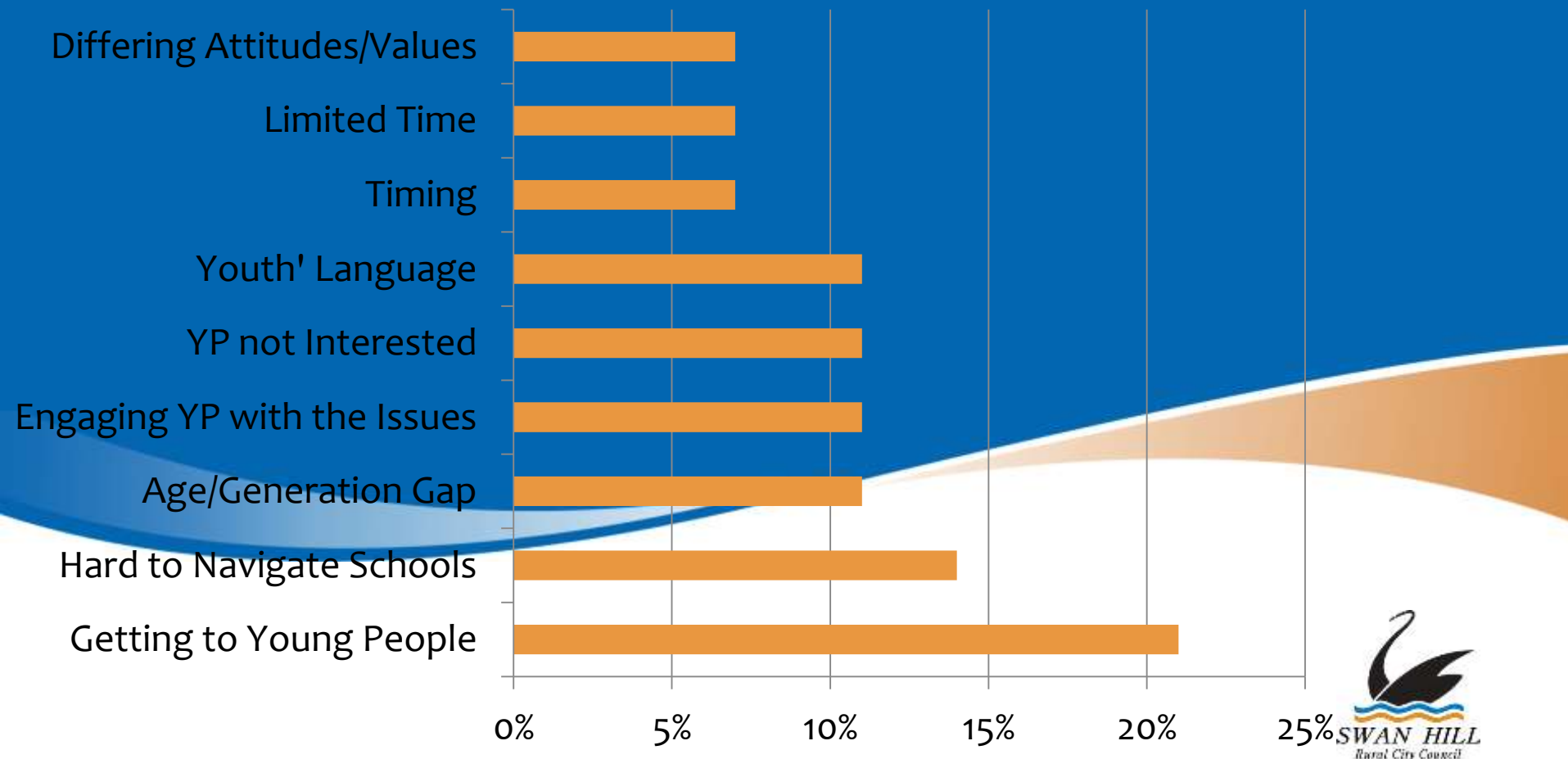
Why is this important for Local Councils

- Councils are more effective in their planning and decision making when connections are built between community and young people
- Mutual understanding is enhanced, and stereotypes are challenged
- The energy, leadership and fresh perspectives of 20 per cent of the population become more effectively engaged in social, economic, cultural and environmental renewal
- Young people and communities grow into active citizenship in order to tackle social problems and act on opportunities; and
- Inclusion and fairness is promoted for all sections of the population.

The Need for Improved Youth Engagement & Participation

Prior to the development of this Youth Engagement & Participation Guide an internal staff survey was conducted in July 2013 to assess Swan Hill Rural City Council's current picture of youth engagement.

Swan Hill Rural City Council staff that completed a survey identified a number of locally relevant barriers to youth engagement.



Youth participation is underpinned by the following principles:

- *Empowerment*
- *Purposeful engagement*
- *Inclusiveness*

What did we do with this information?

- Established an internal working group made up of council staff members and most importantly 15 young champions from across the LGA
- Up skilled our youth advisory group(19 YP) in facilitating effective group consultation, public speaking and effective leadership to enable them to become advocates of change locally
- The Young Champions became the drivers behind a sudden shift in thinking, planning and consultation processes from council, who made some significant internal changes

- All individual community plans have at least one key focus area designed by young people
- The Youth Engagement & Participation training is offered to all staff through the staff training matrix
- Considerations made when creating tenders/ projects briefs where young people will be a user group or any decisions will effect them into the future
- The Young Champions working group collectively came up with five principles for effective youth engagement for Council and community . They then road tested this with their peers via workshops in schools and after school at local youth “hang outs”

Five principles for best practice in youth engagement

- Support Young People's Access
- Seek Diversity
- Empower All Young People
- Give Rewards and Recognition
- Create a Fun and Motivating Culture

The benefits of meaningful youth engagement:

- The creation of policies, programs and services which are more relevant and more likely to meet the needs of children and young people and improve their wellbeing.
- Improved outcomes for your organisation achieved in more efficient and cost effective ways.
- Enabling children and young people to feel connected and that they belong, so they can experience a better quality of life and achievement.

6 Step Youth Engagement Process



****Successful youth engagement involves thinking through your approach for *each and every time you involve young people*. The following easy to follow 6 step process will assist with shaping **genuine** engagement of young people in your work.**

Success Stories

Youth Strategy 2009-2013

1565 young people consulted

Youth Strategy 2014-2019

1202 young people consulted

Full review of our service was implemented by councilors

Introduced parent workshops into consultation process

Development of a cross border Sub-Regional Youth Strategy

3 LGA's across the Loddon Mallee

Success Stories Cont.

Riverfront Master Plan consultations 2012

15 Young people worked with consultants to survey the community

Over 2000 community members were surveyed about what they would like to see as part of the new riverfront master plan

860 young people were apart of this process

Questions

Kane Sparks

Youth Support Coordinator

0488 164 327

ksparks@swanhill.vic.gov.au