

A selective Review of Literature on Young People  
and Recreation in Queensland

**MAKING SPACE FOR  
YOUNG PEOPLE**

Written by Linda Ray for the  
Youth Affairs Network of  
Queensland Inc.

1994

Funded by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing



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# **MAKING SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

## **A Selective Review of Literature on Young People and Recreation in Queensland**

### **CONTENTS**

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Definition of Terms</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Nature and Limitations of the Data</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Recreation Activities Young People Currently Engage In</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Barriers to Participation</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Types of Activities Sought or Requested</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Regional Differences</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Section 8</b>	<b>Practices and Preferences for Particular Populations</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Section 9</b>	<b>Recommendations Regarding Recreation</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Section 10</b>	<b>Young People's Involvement in Planning and Control of Recreational Activities</b>	<b>20</b>

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This project was funded by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing (DTSR). It was undertaken jointly by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) and the Youth Bureau (DTSR) in the lead up to Youth Week 1994 and the YANQ Policy Forum. The primary purpose of the project was to collate and analyse information in relation to the recreational needs and preferences of young people in Queensland.

The consultant's brief was as follows:

"The Project will collate information from youth needs assessments conducted at a local level within Queensland. It is expected that the completed report will represent a significant body of information on the recreational needs and preferences of young people in this state.

It is expected that the information examined and discussed by the consultant will include, but not be limited to:

1. Definitions of terms, including recreation, sport, culture, arts, cultural development, and community cultural development.
2. Nature and limitations of the data available. The quality of the data collected varies markedly across the range of needs assessments. The consultant will be expected to discuss the limitations of the data, e.g., use of open/closed questions in surveys, representativeness of samples. Where needs assessments have included statistical information, it is hoped that the flavour of those statistics will be reflected in the consultant's report.
3. The recreation activities that young people are currently engaged in.
4. Barriers to participation in recreation as identified by young people (transport, income, other).
5. Types of activities sought or requested by young people. The detail to which this issue can be addressed will depend on the types of data collected. However, the consultant should attempt to highlight any patterns which may be evident. For example, are young people looking for structured or unstructured activities, supervised or unsupervised; indoors or outdoors; are specialist skills required; does the activity involve particular facilities?
6. The extent to which preferences differ from region to region.
7. Recreational practices and preference for particular population groups where these are identified, eg young men, young women, ATSI young people, NESB young people, young people with a disability.
8. Recommendations made by local needs assessments re young people and recreation.

9. Information about young people's involvement in planning and control of recreational activities."

A range of documents were analysed for this report. These included:

- local needs assessments (20)
- Youth and Community and Combined Action Project implementation plans (11)
- Youth advisory forum reports (13)
- Some relevant literature on issues which were not fully addressed by the above documents (e.g. needs and preferences of young people from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds).

Only data collected since 1989 was considered. There is no central location where all needs assessments and key reports are held. It is therefore inevitable that some of these may not have been located in the limited time available for the study. Attempts were made to locate as many as possible by liaising with youth interagencies, Youth Development Officers (DTSR), Youth Development Workers in Local Government Associations, Library (DTSR) and key informants in the youth and recreation sectors. Relevant literature was also considered and referred to where appropriate.

### 1.1 WORKING PARTY

A working party, comprising of workers in community organisations and local government with an interest in recreation for young people, acted as a reference group for the project. The working party was established in response to concerns expressed by workers from around the state at YANQ's 1993 Policy Forum. The working party is developing a policy statement on recreation and young people which will then form the basis of advocacy with the various levels of government responsible for providing recreation activities and resources.

## 2.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Working Party, prior to the engagement of the consultant, arrived at definitions of recreation, sport, culture, arts, cultural development, and community cultural development. These definitions were developed for the purposes of this document and are not intended to be absolute or unchanging. They are as follows:

**Recreation:** The use of time for diversion, cultural enrichment or self-expression through experiences that promote, independently or in any combination, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being. These experiences may include active and passive pursuits, be individual or group based, and can contribute to cultural development, community development and personal growth.

**Access to recreation:** requires that the person has the skills, knowledge and opportunities to direct oneself to one's chosen activity in his/her community.

**Culture:** Culture is a key factor in giving our lives meaning. It is the way we make sense of ourselves, each other and the world. The arts (be they fine, high popular, community or part of the entertainment industry) create the symbols and images (for the individual and the community) which help define our thinking and our relationships to people, places and events.

In such an understanding there can be no single culture, only a multitude of different customs, beliefs, socio-economic backgrounds, ages, genders and classes; and that difference is as important as similarity.

**Arts:** The arts is a particular construction of culture.

**Cultural Development:** The use of the arts to facilitate a process whereby a person is able to identify his/her concerns and values and apply symbols/signs/cultural indicators to these values and concerns. The process of identifying these concerns and values and naming them better enables a person to change things.

**Community Cultural Development:** People doing things together which expand their awareness and understanding of the meanings life has for them, making images and symbols which illuminate their meaning and which express their vision of themselves, their relationship to each other and that work in ways which enhance personal and communal power.

**Sport:** Any physical activity (individual or team) played at a competitive level, including training for that activity.

### 2.1 OTHER DEFINITIONS:

In some instances the needs assessments and reports contained other definitions of recreation.

A report which considered recreation in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community arrived at the following definition:

*Recreation is the involvement of all peoples as participants, whether active or passive, in activities or pastimes that promote refreshment of health or spirit, in all areas of language, culture, fields of sport and survival, through interaction covering all ages (Atkinson 1991:2).*

At the recent 1994 Youth Advisory Forums, some groups also considered definitions. Some of the definitions of recreation young people developed are as follows:

*Anything you do outside school hours on weekends and after school in your own free time.*

*Having fun with friends and family; relaxing oneself while going out, or while being out. It is getting exercise while in an indoor or outdoor environment.*

### *Interaction with other people and doing things we enjoy.*

*To get away from every-day problems.*

*Having fun, meeting people, creating your own fun.*

*To relax, wind down, enjoyment, relieve stress. Some recreation is legal, some is not.*

*Family time out.*

### **Richness of data**

The variety of methodologies utilised for the collection of data provided a richness of data. In many instances, direct quotes from young people were recorded, as well as statistical information gathered via surveys.

### **Balance of urban and rural**

The documents analysed were conducted in a number of regions. Nine of the needs assessments analysed were conducted in metropolitan centres and 11 were conducted in isolated rural centres. Data analysed also included reports from the 1994 Youth Advisory Forums which were conducted across Queensland.

## **3.0 NATURE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA**

The various needs assessments and reports reviewed for this discussion paper used a variety of methodologies to collect their data. The quality of the data analysed varies markedly across the range of needs assessments and reports. The methodologies most commonly used in needs assessments considered included:

- surveys/questionnaires which used open and/or closed questions
- focus groups – ie data was collected during group discussions, youth forums
- individual interviews with young people

The data collected in the needs assessments and reports is primarily anecdotal data and therefore this discussion paper is largely a summary of the perceptions of young people and youth workers (rather than an empirical study).

From the data available the total number of young people consulted in the various studies totals 11 995. This is a conservative number since it was not clear in some needs assessments how many young people participated in a given study.

## **3.1 STRENGTHS OF THE DATA**

### **Strong themes consistently emerged**

Despite the differing quality and methodologies, clear themes consistently emerged. Key issues identified in needs assessments and reports were consistently similar, as were suggested responses and recommendations. Recreation was clearly a key area that needs addressing.

### **Adult speak or young people speak?**

It was in some instances difficult to determine whether needs and recommendations had been identified by young people, youth workers, parents, consultants or a combination. Some of the needs assessments that collected data via questionnaires offered a list of activities which may have pre-empted young people's choice to some degree. The extent to which recommendations contained in several of the needs assessments were proposed by young people is not always clear. In instances, however, where it was evident that issues and recommendations had been identified and proposed by young people they appear consistent with those contained in needs assessments generally.

## A failure to prioritise

In many needs assessments, young people identified a vast number and range of activities that they would be interested in participating in. In some needs assessments these were prioritised. However, several did not prioritise them, which made it difficult to determine which were the most requested activities.

### Gender Bias

Many of the activities requested (e.g. drag racing, BMX tracks, skate bowls, legal graffiti walls, video arcades etc) were activities that young men traditionally actively participate in. Although young women also participate in these activities they often do so as spectators rather than active players.

Many needs assessments did not consider the differences in activities requested by young men and young women. This made it difficult to identify the differences in preference that may exist with regard to participation in activities. Specific instances of gender bias are identified in relevant sections throughout this report.

## 4.0 RECREATION ACTIVITIES YOUNG PEOPLE CURRENTLY ENGAGE IN

### Pubs/hotels/nightclubs

In almost every needs assessment analysed, young people reported that they were currently accessing pubs, hotels and nightclubs for entertainment in their locality. In many places pubs were identified as the main entertainment where young people danced, met and established relationships, drank alcohol and took recreational drugs. These venues were also seen as a place to informally gather to engage in unstructured activities e.g. playing pool, darts, poker machines etc.

Writing nationally Sercombe suggests that

*...the main winners in the Saturday night youth recreation stakes throughout the 80s have been the hotels...the hotel has replaced the coffee shop of the 50s and 60s as the primary evening venue for young people (Sercombe 1990:30)*

Furthermore, in her national study Quixley (1991) also found that

*...the limited available [recreational] programs were seen as insufficiently appealing to provide a real alternative to "the pub" for over (and in some cases under) 18 year olds (Quixley 1992:59).*

It appears that Queensland conforms to national trends.

### Discos organised by schools/police citizens youth clubs

In localities where discos were being staged young people indicated that they attended these. There was some dissatisfaction raised regarding the infrequency in some localities of discos.

### Sport

Young people identified a number of sports they currently participated in. Most of these were competitive team sports. Many of the sports identified (e.g. football, cricket) were sports which young men generally participate in to a greater extent than young women. Young women appeared not to participate in sport as much as young men. This data is consistent with research that indicates that young women drop out of sport earlier than young men. It is also well documented

*...that resource allocation and use of playing space for boys' and girls' activities are grossly unequal (Australian Sports Commission 1993).*

Participation in some more informal sport was also identified e.g. shooting baskets.

*The lack of community-based recreation and leisure facilities has, ironically, fostered the use of 'public spaces' such as shopping centres not as places for consumption, but as gathering places for young people to spend their time socially (White 1990).*

## **Listening to and playing music**

Listening to and playing music appeared to be an important leisure pursuit. In almost every needs assessment this was a commonly identified activity that young people engaged in.

### **Community Arts**

It would seem that some young people also participate in community arts activities such as theatre, dance and arts and crafts. There are a number of agencies in Queensland that provide young people with the opportunity to participate in community arts activities. It is unclear in the needs assessments the means by which young people access community arts activities in their localities.

### **Movies/videos**

In needs assessments a high number of young people indicated that they visit local cinemas and/or rent videos to watch with friends. In centres where there were cinemas they appeared to be a common recreational pursuit.

### **Crime**

In some reports a small proportion of young people reported that they sometimes engaged in crime (e.g. graffiti writing, break and enters) as a recreational pursuit. Young people who identified this as an activity they engaged in said they did so because there was nothing else to do.

### **Skating rinks/skatebowls**

In localities where there were accessible skating rinks/skatebowls or the like young people commonly identified this activity as one they participated in. However, several reports stated that skating rinks had closed down. The reasons why this may have occurred were not identified.

### **Bike riding**

In many reports and needs assessments young people said they cycled or rode motorbikes in their leisure time. Some young people were also involved in BMX clubs and activities.

### **Visiting friends**

Visiting friends was a commonly identified leisure activity. This was reportedly occurring in a young person's home or public places.

## **Video/computer games**

Playing video or computer games and attending video arcades (where they were available) was an activity that many young people indicated that they were participating in. It was also reported that some video arcades had closed in some centres, and in several needs assessments it was suggested that this had occurred due to community pressure.

### **Outdoor activities**

There are a variety of outdoor leisure activities that young people were reportedly participating in. Some of these included horse riding, fishing, surfing and camping. There were many other activities identified, however, the activities identified above represent the most common activities. Since many of these activities were not identified in needs assessments in order of time spent on each activity it was not possible to indicate which activity young people spend most of their recreation time participating in.

A very small number of young people indicated they were participating in structured activities run by community organisations. Some young people indicated that they were participating in youth groups both church and community run. It was clear, however, that young people most often choose to engage in activities that are unstructured or semi-structured. Apart from engagement in sporting activities young people do not appear to be engaging in highly structured activities in their leisure time.

## **5.0 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION**

### **Transport**

The lack of, or access, to transport was identified as a barrier in every needs assessment and report. Young people consistently identified this as one of the most significant barriers to participating in recreational activities. In most instances public transport was identified as being inadequate due to infrequency and/or cost. Many young people rely on parents to transport them to recreational activities. This of course was dependent upon the willingness and availability of their parent/s to do so.

Transport and isolation is a particular issue for young people 13 – 15 years who perceive themselves as moving towards independence from their family but are still physically dependent upon family and adults for transport and financial resources.

## **Cost**

The costs associated with some recreational activities was commonly identified as a barrier to participation. Young people's limited income often means that whilst there may be activities available, young people are excluded from participating in them because of the costs involved. The costs of uniforms, playing fees for some sporting activities or entry fees for activities such as waterslides, gymsnasiums etc were beyond the reach of many young people and their families. Cinemas, particularly if outside the young person's local community, were often not an affordable recreational activity for some young people.

## **Fewer options for young women**

Young women commonly expressed the view that there were more sporting activities available for young men than for young women. It would seem that this resulted in them experiencing a sense of exclusion from this form of recreation. This is hardly surprising since, as indicated earlier, resource allocation for young women's sport is lower (Australian Sports Commission 1993).

This finding was also expressed in the few studies which considered Aboriginal young people. In one needs assessment it was suggested that whilst football and boxing are available for the boys, nothing is provided for the girls on the community.

## **Lack of knowledge of what recreation activities currently exist**

A general lack of awareness of what recreation activities exist was consistently identified as a barrier in young people accessing available facilities and activities. Access to recreation requires that the person has the skills, knowledge and opportunities to direct oneself to one's chosen activity in his/her community. It was identified that young people are often unaware of contact people at various sporting venues who could assist them to make bookings.

## **Peer pressure towards "non-participation"**

The pressure that some young people experience from peers in relation to participating in recreational activities was also identified as a barrier. It was also identified that "non-participation" was often the norm in initial phases of leisure projects/activities. This may result in young people not participating in a range of recreational activities that have been made available to them.

## **Sport and recreation run by adults**

Highly supervised activities run by adults were identified as posing a barrier to young people's participation. It was clear that young people want activities that they can participate in independently of adults and especially parents.

*By and large, sport and youth groups are run by adults 'for' young people and there are high levels of supervision. In the process of achieving independence from their families, young people begin to seek control over their own forms of recreation (Gillmore, Peile & Ferguson 1993:122-123).*

In many needs assessments young people expressed dissatisfaction with activities that were designed, developed and run by adults. In several needs assessments young people felt their views regarding activities were not heard or listened to by adults. The lack of opportunity to participate in the development and running of activities posed a barrier for some young people in engaging in recreational opportunities on offer.

## **Lack of parental support**

Lack of parental support was also identified as a barrier for some young people. Lack of support in transport was the most commonly identified problem.

In other cases, parental expectations of young people prevented them from spending time on recreational activities. For example, in a study of the needs of young people from non-English speaking backgrounds Seeto (1991) reported that some young people indicated that they were restricted by parents from going out altogether. Some parents' emphasis on academic achievement meant that they saw recreational activities as intrusions on study time.

## **Fears for personal safety**

In some needs assessments young people reported that fear for personal safety, for example catching public transport at night, was a factor which deterred them from accessing some recreational activities. In a small number of reports young people, particularly in the younger age groups, also indicated that they were fearful of going out at night because of street violence perpetrated by other young people.

## **Lack of infrastructure/facilities**

In several needs assessments young people reported that there was a lack of recreational facilities in their local community. These included facilities such as gymnasiums, swimming pools, skating rinks/bowls. They indicated that there were many activities they were interested in participating in but were unable to do so due to a lack of facilities. This finding is consistent with Quixley's (1992) study of the experiences of young people in rural and remote communities which suggests that not only is there a lack of recreation/social options but that this was cited as sufficient reason for young people to leave their communities.

## **Police relations with young people**

Young people reported that when congregating or "hanging out" in public spaces, such as shopping centres or parks, they were repeatedly harassed by police. In a large number of needs assessments and youth advisory forum reports young people reported that police harassment was a barrier to engaging in recreation.

*The increasing use of these centres [shopping centres] as places for social activities has in turn led to the installation of further security arrangements to monitor and regulate their behaviour (White 1990).*

## **Access for people with disabilities**

Access to sporting and recreational facilities is often difficult for people who have limited mobility. Not all sporting and recreation facilities have ramps or other facilities for people with disabilities. This was identified as a substantial barrier for people wishing to participate in activities offered by existing centres.

## **6.0 TYPES OF ACTIVITIES SOUGHT OR REQUESTED**

### **Negative public reaction to unstructured leisure activities**

Throughout Australia, the increasing surveillance of young people who congregate together in public spaces is evidence of the negative public reaction to unstructured activities. Many video arcades have also reportedly been closed due to public pressure.

*Drop-in centres, under-resourced, hard working youth centres with policies of open access to disadvantaged young people and non-coercive leisure, have been the target of constant sneer and smear campaigns by police, local government councillors and government ministries (Sercombe 1990:30).*

### **Negative youth reaction to structured leisure activities**

In many needs assessments it appeared that highly structured activities, particularly those organised and run by adults were negatively perceived.

*...the main game is still the development of relationships between people, the informal interaction, the opportunity to meet people. Structured activities, competitive sport and uniformed movements are still as passe today as they were then (Sercombe 1990:30).*

### **Discrimination**

Young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Backgrounds identified racial discrimination by both coaches and other young people as a deterrent in participating in sport. Brady (1991) suggests that despite the fact that there are better equipped and functioning sports and recreation facilities available in urban areas, they are not specific to Aboriginal young people and that this may act as a deterrent to participation particularly where there have been instances of racist abuse and discrimination.

In the few studies which have targeted young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, discrimination would also seem to pose a barrier to participation in recreational activities.

In many instances the needs assessments included very long lists of activities young people had sought or requested. Unfortunately not all of these requests were prioritised. However, common themes did emerge.

A range of unstructured and semi-structured activities were requested and, less frequently, structured activities. It was evident in most of the needs assessments that sport was generally well catered for (with the exception of some more isolated centres) although the costs associated with some sport were prohibitive for some young people.

### **A place of their own**

In almost all needs assessments analysed young people indicated a strong desire for "a place of their own". This is also reflected in the preliminary summary report from the 1994 local and regional youth advisory forums. In eight of the 13 regional forums recreation issues were identified as a priority issue. In each instance young people identified the need for a space of their own.

As indicated earlier, many young people are currently congregating or "hanging out" in shopping centres or parks. Young people reported that they were often harassed by police and shop keepers in these settings. It would seem that young people were looking for a "social space" or acceptable places where they could congregate away from the intrusions of people from other age groups and increasing surveillance by police.

Where young people or youth workers had identified this need for a social space the notion of a 'drop in centre' was recommended. It is difficult to determine from the data whether this is proposed by young people or workers or both. The data clearly indicates that young people want a space to meet informally with the option of participation in activities such as a coffee shop, video games, pool table, listening/playing music. It was clearly indicated that young people saw this space as having little to no rules, with little structure and with minimal adult supervision. Some needs assessments also called for a youth worker to be employed at such centres.

## Drug and Alcohol free activities

The desire for drug and alcohol free activities and venues was consistently raised in needs assessments across the State, despite the high numbers of young people who identified that they currently access pubs/hotels/nightclubs for recreation.

Requests for regular alcohol free disco's or nightclubs and dance parties were mentioned frequently. Options suggested included for under 18's only, regular disco's which targeted different age groups each time, disco for 16-25 year olds, 16-19 year olds and under 15's.

### No parents please

Young people expressed a need for engaging in activities that they can participate in independently of their parents. This is hardly surprising since adolescence is a life stage where young people are seeking greater independence from parents and family.

### Recreation facilities/infrastructure

In many needs assessments there were a "number of great sporting facilities" identified but a real lack of recreation opportunities and facilities. Some of the more commonly mentioned facilities that young people requested included:

- skating rinks/skate bowls
- cinema
- bike track/way, BMX track
- swimming pool
- video arcade
- gymnasium

Many of these facilities are not available in isolated and remote communities.

### Community arts

In most needs assessments young people expressed an interest in participating in a range of community arts activities. The opportunity to write and play music was frequently requested. Some of the arts activities requested included:

- music, band space
- theatre/drama
- dance
- art
- crafts

## Camping/excursions

Organised camping activities were also often requested as a recreational activity. Young people also expressed a desire to have access to day activities or excursions which included such things as:

- adventure based activities
- horse riding
- going to the beach

### Legal graffiti walls

In several needs assessments young people expressed a desire for access to legal graffiti walls.

### Legal drag racing

The notion of legal drag racing was also proposed in some of the regional youth advisory forums.

### An apparent gender bias in activities requested

It is important to consider these requests in light of an apparent gender bias. Many of the activities requested are ones in which young men are currently the active participants. In developing policy recommendations with regard to youth and recreation, emphasis on developing recreational opportunities that allow for more equal participation for both genders should be an important consideration. Young women need the same opportunities to participate in activities which expand their awareness and understanding of the meaning life has for them rather than being mere spectators and bystanders.

## 7.0 REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

The data did not reflect significant differences across regions. In most instances, young people from rural and isolated towns were requesting similar activities as young people from urban centres. It would appear, however, that there is a greater call for recreational facilities in isolated and rural centres where transport difficulties are a significant barrier to accessing recreational activities. Cheers suggests that

*...the disadvantages which many rural young people share with their urban counterparts with regard to social, cultural, educational, welfare, and employment opportunities are compounded by the fact that they live in rural locations with populations too small to support an adequate array of services and facilities and which are far distant from the offering of larger centres (Cheers 1994:38).*

## 8.0 PRACTICES AND PREFERENCES FOR PARTICULAR POPULATIONS

### Young women

As indicated earlier, in some of the needs assessments it was reported that young women felt that there were fewer sporting options available to them than there were for young men.

There were few needs assessments where particular population groups such as young people from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander or non-English speaking backgrounds were targeted. It is therefore more difficult to draw conclusions in relation to practices and preferences for these groups. There is, however, other literature on specific populations which investigates recreation.

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

A Commonwealth report which investigated recreation in Aboriginal communities is one of the few reports which specifically focuses on recreation. This report reveals that Aboriginal young people express interest in a wide variety of recreational activities. The study revealed that

*...youth in all areas expressed keen interest in youth camps, where a combination of fun and adventure activities take place (Atkinson 1991:22).*

The study revealed that recreation is viewed differently for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and young women and young men.

*...it is generally true to say that free time is defined differently (by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) for young Aboriginal women, in comparison to young Aboriginal men (Atkinson 1991:21).*

Differences between the perception of what recreation is and what recreational activities are desired, by urban, rural and remote area Aboriginal young people were also found by the study. Young people from urban areas had fewer opportunities to be involved in activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering shellfish, activities in which young people from rural settings were often engaged in. This has led to young people from urban settings engaging in more consumer orientated recreational activities.

All young people in the study indicated that music was a major recreational interest as was watching videos. Audio visual materials with a cultural content were very popular and it was proposed that, given this interest, production of quality material should be supported.

Whilst young people in the study indicated that they liked to do things together, they also expressed preferences for gender separate activities as well as participating in activities in which non-Aboriginal young people were not involved.

As in other remote communities, there are also issues in relation to obtaining funds to purchase and maintain equipment and staff facilities in remote Aboriginal communities (Brady 1991:39).

## 9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING RECREATION

There were a very large number of recommendations contained in the needs assessments and key reports, some of which had accompanying strategies. However, in most instances recommendations focused on the need to improve transport, the establishment of a social space for young people and the need to improve the recreational facilities available in local areas. Most recommendations made can be linked to the findings discussed earlier in "Activities sought or requested" (section 6.0).

#### Social Space

Almost every report, needs assessment and much of the literature raised the notion of young people needing a social space of their own. Most commonly, recommendations regarding this call for a social space referred to the needs for venues which are established, planned and managed by young people.

In many instances young people recommended that the venue contain a coffee shop, pool tables, video games, music. It was clear that young people wanted a social space that provided opportunities to engage in unstructured or semi-structured activities. In some needs assessments it was envisioned that this social space could be made available by better use of existing resources and facilities (e.g. after hours use of school facilities). In others it was suggested that new venues would need to be created (e.g. in conjunction with local government authorities). This need for a social space was also reflected in needs assessments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. In several needs assessments, recommendations were also made with regard to the need for a specialist youth worker to be based at such venues.

#### Drug and alcohol free venues

Recommendations were frequently made regarding the establishment of venues that staged drug and alcohol free activities such as dance parties, night clubs, discos and cafes.

## Transport

Most needs assessments and reports which made recommendations regarding transport called for improved public transport in the form of extended bus and rail services (especially on weekends and holidays) to improve access to recreational activities.

### Cost

Changes to income support and reduction of public transport costs were frequently recommended in needs assessments.

### Recreational Centres

Establishment and/or improvement of recreational centres was most often recommended in isolated rural settings where these facilities were frequently not available or were inadequate.

### Recommendations regarding Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Young People

Recommendations 236 – 238 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody are aimed at improving sport and recreation opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. As a result of this inquiry and with respect to these particular recommendations the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Persons Sport and Recreation Development Program was established. It is a national program and a joint initiative of the ATSI Commission and the Australian Sports Commission. The program is implemented in Queensland by DTSR. Four Sport and Recreation Development Officers have been appointed since December 1993.

At a national level at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sport and Recreation Conference in Broome in June 1994 it was acknowledged that there is a need for a national policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sport and recreation.

The report into recreation in Aboriginal communities made a number of recommendations relating to young people. These included:

- Ongoing support is recommended for locally-run, low-profile drop-in centres, youth groups and youth health services for Aborigines in country towns and urban centres.
- Aboriginal organisations should be encouraged, and financially supported, in the production of music cassettes, cartoons, comics, videos and rock bands as a media for carrying health prevention messages.

Consciousness-raising in remote communities should be promoted regarding the needs of young people for facilities, recreational hardware and staff support. At present adult-dominated councils pay scant attention to the requirements of (usually) 50% of their populations. Government departments and ATSI/C also have a critical function here to promote the interests and well-being of adolescents and to direct resources appropriately.

Church groups for Christian movements should be encouraged to relinquish hard-line fundamentalist approaches which alienate young Aboriginal people and discriminate against their interests in rock music, local bands and discos (Brady 1991:42).

It was also recommended in a small number of needs assessments that opportunities for cultural exchange between ATSI and non-ATSI young people be provided.

**Recommendations regarding young people from non-English speaking backgrounds**

There were few recommendations in needs assessments regarding young people from non-English speaking backgrounds. There were, however, similar suggestions for opportunities for cultural exchange.

In Seeto's report which considered the needs of non-English speaking background young people in Brisbane a number of issue based recommendations were made. These included:

That the Brisbane City Council (BCC):  
(i) ensure that current consultations by the Recreation Branch with NESB communities have a focus on the recreation needs of NESB young women, which remain a huge unknown;

(ii) consult with NESB workers on an information-media campaign for the NESB communities to highlight the physical, psychological and social benefits of sports and recreational activities for young people; and further that such a campaign should be conducted in a non-threatening manner;

That Youth Arts Groups:

- (i) develop anti-racist arts projects with students in primary and secondary schools;
- (ii) liaise with the BEA Multicultural Arts Officer, ECC Multicultural Arts Officer and BEMAC to organise a Multicultural Youth Arts event;

- (i) prioritise the development of youth arts projects with NESB young people  
(See to 1991:21-22)

It was not within the scope of this discussion paper to determine the extent to which recommendations made have been implemented. This may be worth investigating before a policy document is developed, particularly with regard to special needs groups. Given the small quantity of data available with regard to special needs groups it may be difficult to develop an informed policy before further research is undertaken.

## **10.0 YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND CONTROL OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.**

It was clear from needs assessments and key reports that young people feel very strongly about the need to be involved in the planning and control of recreational activities. The extent to which this is already occurring was difficult to determine. This expressed need is consistent with the problems identified by young people in relation to activities that are developed and run by adults with little or no input from young people.

In some instances it was suggested that venues such as discos and other social spaces could be managed by a committee that was made up of or representative of young people.

## **11.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Young people are currently engaging in a wide variety of activities which are, for the most part, unstructured or semi-structured. It has been found that young people face a number of barriers in participating in or accessing recreational activities of their choice. Transport and the prohibitive costs associated with some activities are the most significant of these. Other barriers include fewer options for young women, lack of knowledge of what recreation activities exist, peer pressure upon 'non-participation', highly structured activities run by adults, lack of parental support, fears for personal safety, lack of infrastructure/facilities, police harassment, negative public reaction to unstructured leisure activities, negative youth reaction to structured leisure activities, discrimination and access issues for people with a disability.

Young people indicate that they are interested in participating in a variety of activities. However, by far the greatest request is for a space of their own in which to engage in recreational pursuits, largely unstructured in nature. Young people are currently congregating in public spaces, such as parks and shopping centres, and in doing so coming under increasing surveillance by police and local businesses. Young people want a space where they can meet together and form relationships.

Although young people both under and over 18 years indicate that they are accessing pubs and nightclubs as a source of entertainment a high number of young people are expressing a desire to participate in activities that are drug and alcohol free.

Young people interviewed in needs assessments indicated that sports were generally well catered for in most centres, although some young women report that there are fewer sporting opportunities available to them and in isolated rural settings there also appeared to be fewer sporting opportunities.

Many of the needs assessments report that there are a number of sporting facilities but few recreational facilities. Young people also express interest in participating in activities such as community arts, camping and excursions, graffiti writing and drag racing.

Recommendations contained in needs assessments and reports generally focus on the need for a social space, transport, costs and improvement of recreational facilities.

Young people express great dissatisfaction with activities that are planned, delivered and supervised solely by adults. It is clear that young people are expressing a strong desire to be involved in the design, planning and implementation of programs or activities as well as having a say in the management of any social spaces that may be made available to them.

Although the data has some limitations associated with representativeness, clear consistent themes emerged from the research conducted, and these should prove a useful basis for developing policy about recreation for young people.

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