



RESPONSE TO THE QUEENSLAND YOUTH STRATEGY

**Youth Affairs Network of Queensland
August 2013**

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INTRODUCTION

The following response firstly considers the four key platforms or statements made in the Foreword of the 2013 *Queensland Youth Strategy* and reiterated throughout the strategy and then each of its 6 “**areas of connection**” in terms of:

- Whether each area reflects key concerns for young people and for the youth sector
- The relevance of the attached action plan in addressing each area, and
- What is missing.

This analysis clearly demonstrates that the Queensland Government, acting without any consultation with young people (especially those from marginalised groups) or with youth sector representatives, have developed a weak, under-resourced, inconsistent framework which is unlikely to benefit those young Queenslanders who most need services and supports.

FOUR KEY PLATFORMS

“Connections and support” for young Queenslanders

A key platform within the Queensland Government’s Youth Strategy is “*connections and support for young Queenslanders.*” “*Connections and support*” is highlighted in the foreword (p1) and restated at key points, especially throughout the Introduction (pp2-3) and in naming the 6 key action areas as “*areas of connection*” (p6).

It is difficult to see either connections with or support for young Queenslanders resulting from the strategy.

The Newman Government is now limiting its services to those aged 12 – 21 years (p2). This is contrary to the United Nations', World Health Organisation's and other recognised international definitions of a “young person” being someone aged between 12 to 25 years old. It also disregards current debates within the youth sector about the growing need for services and supports for 10 – 12 year olds who have outgrown children’s and family based services and who are increasingly engaged in activities more associated with being a “young person” than being an “older child”. This is especially relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and within a considerable proportion of CALD communities.

Moreover, the statistics cited on page 4 of the strategy providing “*A snapshot – young people in Queensland*” miss key data about areas of concern for both young people and for the youth sector. For example, there are no statistics about child protection, nor young people in out of home care, juvenile justice, adult criminal justice, homelessness, unemployment... All this data is readily available and required in order to develop the comprehensive strategy warranted to address real issues of concern.

Whilst stating that the Youth Strategy is “*for all young Queenslanders*” with one of 4 guiding principles including the requirement “*Programs and services must meet the different life experiences, circumstances and needs of young people,*” (p2), there are few measures contained within it to do so, or to address overall youth disadvantage or the marginalisation of large groups of young Queenslanders.

A robust Youth Strategy which **will** provide “connections and support” for young people needs to place them at the centre of it and from their vantage point, provide a comprehensive suite of well coordinated programs and services to address disadvantage and respond effectively to marginalised young people. There are very few actual services and supports specifically for young people mentioned within the Queensland Youth Strategy, nor any replacement for the successful, evidence based programs which the Government have defunded prior to formulating and releasing its strategy.

The strategy reads more as a series of vague “motherhood” statements about valuing or investing in young Queenslanders, with a conglomerate of all the possible things each state department has funded which could possibly be relevant to young people added on as an “action plan”. For instance:

- the VET and post secondary educational opportunities in connection area two relate to skills shortage areas within particular industries in Queensland rather than young people’s aspirations;
- ensuring there are places in disability or housing services for young people or programs in neighbourhood centres does not ensure these services or programs are specialist youth services, run by youth workers and offered in acceptable ways to young people.

Only 15 of 110 actions are actual “youth strategies” – the remaining 95 are as follows:

- 41 generic programs or strategies providing services or support related to young people
 - e.g. continuing Parentline & Kids Helpline (p13)
- 25 school based services
 - e.g. continuing state school funding, VET in Schools (p 15) and health nurses in schools (p20)
- 15 generic services which don’t mention young people at all
 - e.g. 500 scholarships for women to enter male dominated industries experiencing skills shortages (p15); the Queensland Music Festival (p24); the Sun Effects Booth app (p19)
- 14 services or programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - 9 of these are directly relevant to young Murris
 - e.g. mental health and substance use transition services will be delivered to ATSI clients leaving the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (p20)
 - 5 are part of broader ATSI strategies
 - e.g. consulting with young people in specified remote communities about proposed Alcohol Management Plans (p19)

Even more concerning is the actual breakdown of those 15 action areas directly relevant to young Queenslanders, as outlined in Table One (see Analysis of Action Areas: Youth strategies, p19). The **only youth-specific** actions mentioned, including for “*vulnerable and at risk*” young people are:

- new Boot Camps,
- the review of the youth justice system,
- several youth detention programs,

- prioritising young people leaving State care for affordable housing and
- trialling accommodation services for young people at risk of disengaging from education.

The remaining 10 actions are largely about the Office for Youth consulting with the sector, providing information about services & continuing the annual youth parliament.

Similarly, there are only 18 measures which mention “at risk” or “disadvantaged” groups, whether youth specific or generic. Table Two (see Analysis of Action Areas: Actions for marginalised young people, p21) outlines these, revealing vague, disconnected statements or frankly alarming new central strategies such as boot camps. Concerns about this and the lack of attention given to youth justice are discussed further throughout this response.

The right services, in the right locations at the right time

Despite claiming to provide “*the right services, in the right locations at the right time*” there is a clear lack of support for marginalised, disadvantaged groups of young people. Of 110 actions, only 18 relate to marginalised, at risk or vulnerable groups. (See Table 2, p21)

Moreover, as noted in the previous section, many of the services included in the strategy are about work which happens to be with young people (e.g. schools based or family services provision), rather than about providing youth centred, effective responses to young people’s basic circumstances, let alone supporting them to fulfil their potential.

Such approaches fail to recognise that the most vulnerable or ‘at risk’ young people are already disengaged from their families or from education or employment, and that their families may actually pose the greatest risk to their overall safety and security. Locating youth services within neighbourhood centres or providing them as an arm of generic services (such as child and maternal health or directly via schools or family based services) is not as effective as when provided by specialist youth services and according to evidence based, best practice models of youth work.

Of major concern is the replacement of the highly effective Youth Support Coordinator Initiative by cutting \$5.4 million of funding to the program and redirecting the remaining \$9.6 to the Department of Education. This shift now puts the onus on individual schools to purchase support for young people, rather than having well supported youth workers based externally to schools to support young people to continue on with education and into employment. This community based program helped maintain school attendance, was well supported by all stakeholders including young people and had demonstrated positive outcomes.

Prior to the release of the Youth Strategy there were substantial cuts to other successful programs, including for example, Skilling Queensland for Work (which assisted young people with job readiness), the loss of the Murri and Special Circumstances Courts and youth conferencing as part of ongoing restructures within youth justice. It is difficult to see how the Government can make good its commitment to appropriate and relevant services given these and other cuts to services and supports for young Queenslanders.

The bulk of youth service provision funding has been diverted into boot camps and other poorly evidenced strategies focusing on “law and order” rather than priority needs of disadvantaged young people such as accommodation, personal safety, justice and rights, and the additional barriers facing

particularly marginalised groups such as young Murris, young women, young GLBTI and young people from our rural and remote regions.

The Government's approach to "*investing in Queensland's young people*" (p5), cites the **Better Services for Queenslanders plan** as "*a key driver to change the way we invest in services.*" Essentially, this state response to the Queensland Commission of Audit and the associated recommissioning of services advocates "**contestability**", seeking to place youth and community services within an open market, competitive framework. It supports cheaper options as better options and introduces a business model to providing services and supports which essentially support young people to attain what is – or should be – rightfully theirs. Human rights and business models are generally a poor mix, resulting in decreased community capacity and participant or service user control over their own services or responses to their situations. Such approaches tend to view people as commodities and entrench them within dependent, welfare based service delivery systems which decrease – rather than increase – their probability of being able to lead the healthy, active lives envisaged in the Government's vision for young Queenslanders.

The priority areas mentioned within the audit, especially the provision of "*help earlier, before a problem gets too big*" and which "*support responsibility, resilience and self-reliance*" (p5) were already being provided in a more comprehensive way by the previous youth strategy. There is very little to support early intervention or prevention. The only references to anything approximating "early intervention" is a handful of actions to continue funding parenting programs, counselling and information/support services like Kids Helpline or Parentline, and home visits by child and maternal health, which may benefit some young parents or assist some families in better supporting their young people.

The strategy also notes that the Queensland Government will "*partner with and leverage the investment, innovation and enterprise of the community and corporate sectors*" as part of its commitment to "*investing in Queensland's young people*" (p5). The only actions related to this are a small group about education and training initiatives to address specific skills shortages within the Queensland workforce, supporting ongoing state based arts, and community based sports and recreation programs which include young people.

Information access & using emerging technologies to have a say

The Foreword to the Youth Strategy states "*we want to make sure we use emerging technologies to hear what young people have to say and give them and their families easy access to the information they need.*" This is reinforced both in the guiding principles (p2) and key approaches (p3) in the Introduction, noting the high proportion of young people who access digital technologies, including using the internet and social networking sites (p4). This reads as a significant platform within the overall Youth Strategy, designed to provide a comprehensive range of information for young people and also enabling young people increased input into matters of concern to them.

In reality this translates as 8 of the 110 actions included in the strategy. Four of these relate to generic programs including apps about schools (p16) and Sun Effects (p19), maintaining the on line road rules practice test (p23), and continuing the web based learning management system in regional schools (p17).

The remaining four actions are:

- Providing information about services and programs and links to apps for families and young people (p14),
- Apps encouraging young people to “*get involved*” (p21),
- Office for Youth using social media, as well as “*more traditional*” avenues to seek young people’s views (p 23), and
- Maintaining the annual Youth Parliament (p 21).

This is hardly a robust or meaningful action plan to increase young Queenslanders’ opportunities to “*have a say*” or providing them with the information they require in order to make considered decisions about the many preoccupations of young adult citizens.

Furthermore, emphasising the use of digital technologies as a primary means of information provision:

- Does not address the information or support needs of marginalised young people without free, ready access to the internet (especially relevant to remote and very remote Australia and to homeless young people),
- May be difficult for young people with low levels of English literacy to understand,
- Assumes that young people will only access government authorised or reliable websites – young people use many thousands of sites to access information, a lot of which is inaccurate or unreliable.

There are already many sites providing information for young people. In times of fiscal restraint, and given so many other funding cuts, it would make better sense for the Queensland Government to invest in reliable sites, already accessed by young people, and in providing the actual services, not just information about the few remaining relevant services which are available.

Working together

The fourth key area of the Youth Strategy mentioned in the foreword and at strategic intervals throughout it is the Queensland Government’s commitment to “*working together*”.

“We will continue to work with communities and the non-government sector to shape the future of services for our young people. By working together we can get the best results possible for Queensland’s youth.” (p1)

“This strategy enables the framework for the Queensland Government’s direction on engaging, supporting and working with young people, their families, with our communities, local governments and the youth sector as we know that we can be most effective when we work together.” (p2)

In fact, the Queensland Government has not done so. Instead, government representatives met early and have used a combination of popular appeal and the recommendations from the Commission of Audit to justify the de-funding of critical – and successful – youth programs and services, and the implementation of new and poorly evidenced programs such as boot camps, along with stripping vital resources from the youth sector overall. There was no consultation with either young people or the sector in developing the youth strategy, including determining the actions included as part of it. There is no partnership.

The strategy contains few, if any benchmarks and its actions are primarily based on inputs rather than real results for young people. The lack of consultation with the youth sector and the way in which the strategy has been created has resulted in a vague document with little of real substance to it. The few more substantive or specific actions likely to affect marginalised young people are unlikely to improve their situation in any meaningful way.

One of the actions states that *“the Office for Youth will work collaboratively with young people and community organisations to develop appropriate services, programs and resources”* (p21) and several relate to them improving systems or *“seeking expert advice”* (p23). YANQ is deeply concerned that there are no specific references made to “youth organisations” and that other than social networking opportunities and the youth parliament there are no other actions specifying how the government intends to seek advice from the youth sector. For that matter, there has been no invitation to provide feedback on the strategy itself nor any plans made for its review.

Youth Pathways provided \$2 million and a process to develop a robust youth strategy for Queensland. It ensured all key areas were addressed and there was ownership of the strategy by all key stakeholders. There is a need for a collaborative action plan and for genuine collaboration to underpin this.

Areas missing from the strategy

The youth strategy is clearly missing key areas of concern for young people. Here are three critical examples:

Youth Justice

Those actions relating to youth justice are mainly included in the section on health and well being and are contrary to evidence supporting best practice in the area. Given the increasing rate of young people in detention centres, especially the alarming rate of imprisonment of young ATSI coupled with evidence of a decrease in crimes committed by young people and an unacceptably high level of crimes committed against them, it is alarming to see the Government's key platform for new youth service provision is in the form of Boot Camps. "*Boot camps*" are amongst the few strategies which are not supported by international and national evidence as effective in preventing "*youth offending*" or reducing recidivism.

YANQ has already contributed to this growing body of evidence regarding effective youth justice, highlighting justice reinvestment as a clearly effective approach to crime prevention and community safety, none of which is included in the actions in the Youth Strategy. Rather, as part of service cuts young people have lost the Murri and special circumstances court and the youth conferencing program. These were among the most effective youth justice strategies enacted in Queensland and were supported by all stakeholders including by victims of those crimes perpetrated by young people and the community, as well as the young people themselves.

The strategy not only invests \$5.5 million over two years to a trial of boot camps but second-guesses its outcome by including expanding it as part of a new "*blueprint for the future of youth justice*" (p19). The blueprint is yet to be developed but the Government has already cut some of the most effective programs within it. It is difficult to see how the government can "*better manage demand for youth justice services, addressing the causes of crime and improving youth detention centres*" without investing in them.

The Government proposes to review the *Youth Justice Act 1992*, and to develop more effective sentencing options. It will be vital for the Government to consult with young people and the youth sector, however, initial signs, including basing the consultation on a single *SurveyMonkey* community survey, does little to dispel fears that this will not occur.

There is no mention of seeking to address specific injustices against young people such as the incarceration of 17 year olds in adult prisons, the inappropriate medication of young people and children in state care, and the over-representation of marginalised groups of young people such as Murris in state care or youth detention centres.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Similarly, the actions regarding ATSI young people are pulled together from a range of different sources and don't read as a coherent, integrated strategy based on Murri priorities. Table 4 (p24) contains a listing of the 14 (of 110) actions which specifically mentioned ATSI peoples.

As with the rest of the strategy, a significant number of the actions regarding young ATSI are located within broader ATSI programs and services, rather than specific ones for young ATSI. Only half (7 of 14) actions were about specific programs or services for young Murris. Two of these 7 were further restricted in that they were ATSI specific health services located within the Brisbane Youth Detention

Centre and a third had limited age restrictions (i.e. mental health transition service for 8 – 18 year olds).

As with other sections of the strategy, a number of these 14 actions regarding ATSI young people are broad, sweeping statements such as citing the ***Solid Partners Solid Futures plan*** as addressing everything related to education, training and employment or “*Place based initiatives*” being used to “*help improve access to education, employment, health and housing opportunities.*” The remainder are largely very specific, small programs such as 3 (of 14) actions about continuing the *Making Tracks* program, or maintaining programs like *Deadly Sports*.

There is no indication of the overall level of resourcing for young ATSI Queenslanders. And there are no actions specifically relevant to ATSI groups in the action area “Family Friends and social networks” and the only one relevant to them in “arts and culture” is maintaining the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts.

The description of the “arts and culture” connection area on pp 6 – 7 of the strategy states:

“the transmission of culture across generations is vital for all young people, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Participating in cultural activities inspires pride in heritage and identity. These factors contribute to the development of resilient, healthy and socially connected young people.”

Despite this important acknowledgement which would infer that the youth strategy contains actions to encourage connection with culture and with heritage, there are none specified.

Other than continuing with an Indigenous youth parliament there are no measures or actions by which the State Government is specifically soliciting input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people about their areas of concern or useful strategies in addressing these.

Housing & Accommodation

Youth accommodation barely gets a mention in the strategy, yet housing has been the key issue which both young people and youth workers consistently name as being the issue of key concern to them in reports commissioned by YANQ and other researchers for many years. Table Three (p23) lists the 5 actions relating to youth accommodation in the strategy, which mainly refer to a yet-to-be-developed generic homelessness strategy which includes young people and trialling accommodation services for young people who are “disengaging” from education or employment.

The strategy says “*those young Queenslanders who cannot live at home will be assisted to access safe, stable accommodation*” and talks about the provision of other youth services. The actions do not reflect this. The 5 actions which are concerned with accommodation are as follows:

- Community organisations will provide accommodation and support services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness (p14),
- Homelessness strategy to be released, including actions to reduce the number of homeless young people (p23),
- Supported accommodation for young people at risk of disengaging from training and/or education due to homelessness, such as Youth Foyers, will be explored as part of the realignment of specialist homelessness services (p23),

- Provide housing assistance for young people – (which is part of a generic public housing strategy, not a youth strategy) (p23),
- Prioritising young people transitioning from state care for social housing assistance (p23).

In other words, a generic housing strategy which is yet to be released will include provision of services for young people. Given the particular needs and circumstances related to youth housing and the high level of disadvantage experienced by this group in particular, the housing strategy will require a significant increase in investment to meet current demands, especially in remote and very remote locations, along with extensive and meaningful dialogue with youth accommodation service providers and their peak bodies, and other relevant stakeholders.

Six “areas of connection”

One: family, friends and social networks

The strategy seems to attribute the “*transition from adolescence to adulthood*” as the reason underpinning young people’s disadvantage or for them requiring services or supports, and then reasons that family based services are the best placed from which to provide support for most young people (p7). It completely misses the point that the majority of young people who seek out youth workers are cut off from their families – indeed, families may be a key contributing factor to their difficult circumstances (e.g. poverty, abuse, AOD misuse by parents, etc) and that marginalised young people generally prefer to see youth workers than social workers, teachers and so on.

There are 15 actions in the “family, friends and social networks” connection area. Of these, **13** are family based and/or more aligned with children’s services (8) or disability support services (2). Whilst some of these family based services may be of relevance or use to some young parents, programs such as PPP Parenting and service locations such as neighbourhood centres or general community health clinics are proven to be less effective than youth services and peer based or youth participation programs in improving young people’s connections to family, friends and other networks.

Similarly, within these 15 actions, the Helplines specifically mentioned (Kids, Regional Children’s, Parentline) are not likely to attract young people to call them and are more targeted at parents & guardians and older children than young people. And there is little use providing telephone crisis and information services if there are insufficient back-up services to address the circumstances which have led people to contact them in the first place.

One of these 15 generic actions included in the Youth Strategy states “*community organisations will provide accommodation and support services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness*” (p14). The subsuming of the youth sector within the overall community services sector, with no mention of young people as a discrete group and no mention of accommodation and support services for them being provided by youth organisations, is particularly concerning in the above statement.

Only ONE (of 15) very vague action relates to services for marginalised young people outside family support services: “*a range of targeted services for young people who experience complex challenges and/or who are vulnerable and at risk will be provided*”.

The only other action which specifically mentions young people is about downloading information and apps from the State Government youth website.

There is no mention whatsoever of services or supports for young Murriss in the first connection area of the Queensland Youth Strategy.

Two: Education training and employment

Whilst there is no doubt that strong education, training and employment pathways increase young people’s opportunities in life, the majority of actions contained in the youth strategy would be better placed in an education or schools strategy and are only indirectly related to an actual “youth” strategy. In fact 17 of the 32 actions are classified more as actions which belong to a generalist secondary education strategy than to a youth strategy.

The youth strategy misses the point that a significant proportion of young people are totally disengaged from their education or school community. These groups of already marginalised young people require specialist, targeted services to encourage them to complete their education, go on to further study or compete within highly restricted job markets which are weighted against this group of young people.

Within the 17 schools based actions, one mentions the 'Youth Support Coordinator' program receiving \$9.6 million. What the strategy omits saying is that this replaces one of the most successful youth education programs of recent times which received \$16 million and which was based on programs run through youth organisations which aimed to reconnect young people back into education and employment opportunities. As well as receiving \$5.4 million less, the new program will be based in schools, giving each school the discretionary power to purchase additional services. This is unlikely to be of direct benefit to those students (i.e. young people) most in need of it.

Another action within the above 17 relates to retaining the school based chaplain program. This controversial program once again supports the retention of other workers with young people at the expense of skilled youth workers. It is also unlikely that the most marginalised young people within schools will be as likely to seek out support from the school chaplain program as they would, for instance, from a local youth agency or community based youth workers.

An additional 13 of the 32 actions about education, training and employment are concerned with more generic training options or strategies to address specific skills shortages, not youth specific or youth driven initiatives (e.g. support for agribusiness, traineeships for flood affected areas, etc).

Only two actions pertain to ATSI young people, one of which states that the **Solid Partners Solid Futures** plan will address all the education, employment and training requirements of young Murriss. The second is an aspirational statement about reducing the gap in Indigenous and low socio economic groups represented in tertiary study.

As part of education, training and employment, the youth strategy needs to include, as a minimum:

- Engagement programs and alternative educational pathways for marginalised or disadvantaged young people,
- Dedicated education, training and job seeker services for specific groups of disadvantaged young people, customised to meet their needs,
- Acknowledgement of the level of discrimination against young people at work and by employers and measures to combat this,
- Indicators re: effectiveness & outcomes from all of the above strategies and actions.

Three: Health and wellbeing

This “area of connection” includes a jumble of different departments and services, includes sport and recreation as key vehicles for youth health and incorporates “law and order” or youth justice measures as somehow being directly related to youth health. The resulting 29 action areas reveal a shallow and flawed approach to young people’s health and the inclusion of youth justice measures which are poorly evidenced and which stand to further disenfranchise the very young people they purport to benefit.

Only 6 of 29 action areas were youth specific. They included:

- Queensland Mental Health Commission will include young people as a priority group,
- Extension of drinksafe precinct trials & evaluation of these,
- Boot camps worth \$5.5 million trialled over 2 years,
- *“Blueprint for the future of youth justice, seeking to reduce youth offending and build safer communities will be developed, This will include the expansion of the boot camp program, review of the Youth Justice Act 1992, development of more effective sentencing options, better managing demand for youth justice services, addressing the causes of crime and improving youth detention centres”,*
- Continuing the Youthful Prisoner program at Woodford, and
- Developing a “case management model for young offenders” (17 – 21 year olds).

Of the remaining 23 action areas

- 6 relate to sport & recreation initiatives,
- 4 were based in schools, with 2 of these being harm minimisation around annual “schoolies” celebrations,
- 8 relate to Murris (see Table four ATSI, p24),
- 2 are about retaining PCYCs & retaining schools based and community policing initiatives,
- 2 pertained to apps or information sites about safety in the sun (Sun Effects Booth) and natural disasters,
- The only other reference to young people’s sexual health and safety was a generic action stating that: *“counselling services for child victims of abuse will receive a \$1 million boost over four years. Non government counsellors will deliver additional services for victims of child abuse and sexual assault.”* It depends on where these are located and whether 12 – 25 year olds are likely to approach the services. Also \$1 million won’t go far given statistics on sexual abuse and rape of mainly women and children in Queensland.

There is no mention of dedicated youth health services, support around relationships, safety, alcohol and other drug use, sexuality and sexual health or the many other health and wellbeing related concerns for young Queenslanders.

Four: Volunteering and participation

It is disingenuous to release a strategy which almost completely ignores the needs of marginalised young people, places undue emphasis on service provision via schools and family based programs and bolsters law and order programs at the expense of youth safety and justice, fails to acknowledge the extent or reasons for youth unemployment... and which then extols the virtues of volunteering as helping young people *“develop their character and resilience.”* (p9). None of the actions included in volunteering and participation are relevant to or make provision to include marginalised young people.

Of the 12 actions included in *“volunteering and participation”*

- 3 are related to opportunities for young people to volunteer,
- 2 are ATSI programs (maintaining the Junior Ranger program & a youth leadership award),
- 2 are limited, once off opportunities (Duke of Edinburgh, go to Gallipoli for ANZAC commemorations),
- 2 are schools based initiatives.

The remaining 3, which are more directly relevant to young people and/or the youth sector include:

- A vague statement about using “*new and emerging online and multimedia communication technology and tools*” to “*encourage young people to get involved.*” There is no mention of which young people are being encouraged or what they are being encouraged to be involved with. Action statements such as these illustrate just how little the Queensland Government understands about the everyday reality for the young people who most need youth services and who are most disconnected from their families and communities.
- One relating to the retention of the annual youth parliament, which is of most benefit to the most advantaged young people in Queensland and which is held at the expense of other youth participation or mentoring programs which are more likely to provide a diverse range of young Queenslanders with the opportunity to input into situations affecting them and achieve some measure of change or achievement.
- A statement of the Office for Youth’s intentions to “work collaboratively with young people and community organisations to develop appropriate services, programs and resources” This has already been discussed in the section above addressing “*working together*” (p7). It is worth reiterating that the strategy does not include any review or evaluation plans, few indicators, that neither young people nor the youth sector was consulted with in drafting the strategy or in deciding upon the large amount of cuts to and recommissioning of services and that this statement does not refer to youth organisations but has subsumed them within the broader aegis of “community”.

Five: Supports and services

Arguably, “supports and services” ought to be the area of connection with the most actions attached to it, given some of the pressing issues for young Queenslanders and the level of youth disadvantage across our state, especially in regional, flood affected, remote and very remote communities. Yet it is the area of connection in the youth strategy with the **least actions**: 10, of a possible 110 across 6 areas.

The strategy states: “*Young people who need extra help require access to high quality, effective support services that meet their individual needs at a time and place right for them. We will ensure young people are front and centre of youth supports and services. This means ensuring that key information and support is available in a way that is meaningful to them* (p23). The strategy also claims “*more young people will access the right services at the right time*” This will be difficult to achieve given how few youth services remain for young people to access.

Whilst connections with young people, their families and communities, local government and the youth sector are mentioned as being important in the introduction to the strategy (p2), linkages with

Federal youth or related programs and services are omitted and there is no further mention of linkages with specific local government initiatives.

Four of the 10 actions in this section relate to homelessness. This has been discussed above in the section "Areas Missing from the Strategy" (see p9).

The strategy states that *"youth services will be more transparent and accountable: there will be less red tape."* (p10) Presumably a further 3 (of 10) actions are linked to this. Namely that the Office for Youth will:

- develop *"practical guidelines, tools and resources ... to support youth programs and organisations what work with young people"*
- *"coordinate expert advice on young people and implications for policy and service delivery"* and
- use *social media* as well as *"more traditional forms of community engagement"* to get young people's opinions on issues that affect them.

One of the 10 actions included in "supports and services" relates to retaining on-line road rules and test preparation and does not mention young people at all. Its a good example of how generic activities from a range of different state departments and offices have been lumped together within the youth strategy if they have any relevance at all to young people rather than creating a solid, youth centred approach.

Another action relates to young people with disabilities and is part of the Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to DisabilityCare Australia.

The 10th action in this group is a vague statement about ATSI services, stating that *"place-based initiatives targeting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will help improve access to education, employment, health and housing opportunities."*

There is nothing in the strategy addressing youth rights, justice, youth disadvantage (beyond homelessness), income security, safety, relationships or linking back with other areas of connection such as health or education.

Six: Arts and Culture

None of the 12 arts and culture actions promote arts or cultural participation or maintenance by marginalised young people. As with all other areas of connection in the youth strategy, it is vague and contains a narrow definition of "arts and culture" and associated activities.

The Government clearly acknowledges the importance of the transmission of culture across generations, including ATSI and CALD groups. The strategy cites the many benefits to young people of participating in cultural activities. However, only 1 of the 12 action areas relates to any of this: namely maintaining the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts.

Seven of the remaining 11 actions relate to youth programs provided by state arts institutions (2 x Screen Queensland, and access to Museum, Music Festival, Theatre Company, State Library & Art Gallery programs). There is no mention of community arts programs. There is a vague reference to an Artist-in-Residence program which appears to be school- or other educational institution based.

National Youth Week is included as one of the 12 connecting to arts and culture.

The remaining two actions are vague motherhood statements about how *“funding programs and other initiatives will actively encourage young people’s involvement in Queensland’s cultural life”* (p24) and *“Young Queenslanders will be provided with social, cultural and intellectual benefits through agreements with international counterparts, preparing them for their place in the global community”* (p25).

ANALYSIS OF ACTION AREAS

As part of analysing the 110 action statements included in each of the 6 areas of connection within the youth strategy, each was determined as coming from ONE of the following categories:

Youth = young people are provided with services or supports, or are central within the action

Schools based = services or supports provided within a school or educational institution

Generic youth = young people are provided with services or supports as part of a broader action or area (e.g. child and maternal health, sport and recreation)

Generic = general service or support, or action which does not mention young people

ATSI = all services, supports and actions specifically for ATSI peoples. Within this, they could be specific to young Murris or more general actions included as part of general ASTI strategies

A broad analysis of this reveals that very few of the strategies are directly relevant to young people, many could be included as part of an education strategy and associated the increasing trend in providing youth services through generalist agencies.

Youth strategies

Table One: Actions directly relating to Young People or Youth Services	
Area of connection	Actions
1: Friends, families and social networks 2 of 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of targeted services for young people who experience complex challenges and/or who are vulnerable and at risk will be provided • Information about services and programs and links to digital tools and apps for young people, their family and friends will be available through www.qld.gov.au/youth.
Education, training and employment 0 of 32	none
Health and wellbeing 5 of 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of Drinksafe precinct trials • Bootcamps to get \$5.5mill for 2 year trial • Blueprint for the future of youth justice • Continuation of the Youthful Prisoner Program • Development of a Case Management model for young offenders aged 17 – 21 yo
Volunteering & participation 2 of 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual youth parliament • “the Office for Youth will work collaboratively with young people and community organisations to develop appropriate services, programs and resources” (emphasis YANQ)
SUPPORTS & SERVICES 4 of 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical guidelines, tools and resources will be developed to support youth programs and organisations that work with young people • The Office for Youth will coordinate expert advice on young people and implications for policy and service delivery • Supported accommodation for young people at risk of disengaging from training and/or education due to homelessness, such as Youth Foyers, will be explored as part of the realignment of specialist homelessness services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people transitioning from state care will be prioritised for social housing assistance
<p>Arts and culture 2 of 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Youth Week events and activities will promote and celebrate young people’s achievements. • Young Queenslanders will be provided with social, cultural and intellectual benefits through agreements with international counterparts, preparing them for their place in the global community.

Marginalised young people

Table two: Actions for marginalised young people	
Families, friends & social networks – 3 actions of 15.	
Youth services	Generic services including young people
A range of targeted services for young people who experience complex challenges and/or who are vulnerable and at risk will be provided	A wide range of non-government support services including neighbourhood centres will be funded to assist young people or families address issues that impact on their personal, social or emotional wellbeing and safety
	Community organisations will provide accommodation and support services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
Education, training and employment – 5 action areas of 32	
Youth services	Generic services including young people
	The youth support coordinator initiative through funding of \$9.6 million annually, will support at risk young people to stay at school, re-engage in education or training or transition to employment
	Local government traineeships will be offered in flood affected communities, creating new employment opportunities for 15 to 24 year olds. Local government authorities will receive wage subsidies for 120 new traineeships.
	500 scholarships of up to \$20,000 will be made available to women leaving school, returning to study or changing careers in specified male-dominated fields of study experiencing skills shortages.
	The Community Learning Program, with \$47million over five years, will provide additional support for Queenslanders with diverse needs, including young people, to gain a qualification
Health & wellbeing: 5 of 29 action areas	
Youth services	Generic services including young people
Boot camps, incorporating structured activities and support designed to deter youths from re-	The newly established Queensland Mental Health Commission will include young people as

offending, will receive \$5.5million and be trialled over two years	a priority group
A blueprint for the future of youth justice, seeking to reduce youth offending and build safer communities, will be developed. This will include the expansion of the boot camp program, review of the <i>Youth Justice Act 1992</i> , development of more effective sentencing option, better managing demand for youth justice services, addressing the causes of crime and improving youth detention centres	
The Youthful Prisoner Program, for 18 to 20 year old offenders at the Woodford Correctional Centre, will continue	
A case management model targeted at young offenders between 17 and 21 years of age will be developed	
Volunteering and participation 0 of 12 actions	
There are no actions relevant to disadvantaged young people participating more actively in their community.	
There are 3 actions designed to encourage young people to volunteer their time to emergency services.	
Supports and services: 5 of 10 actions	
Youth services	Generic services including young people
The Office of Youth will coordinate expert advice on young people and implications for policy and service delivery	Young people and their families will continue to get housing assistance through Rent Connect, Bond Loans and rental grants
Supported accommodation for young people at risk of disengaging from training and/or education due to homelessness, such as Youth Foyers, will be explored as part of the realignment of specialist homelessness services	A homelessness strategy, including actions to reduce the number of young homeless people, will be released
Young people transitioning from state care will be prioritised for social housing assistance	
Arts and culture 0 of 12 actions	
There are no actions relevant to disadvantaged young people participating in arts or cultural activities. There is no mention of community arts funding.	

Housing

Table three: Actions to addressing housing or homelessness for young people	
Families, friends & social networks – 3 actions of 15.	
Youth services	Generic services including young people
A range of targeted services for young people who experience complex challenges and/or who are vulnerable and at risk will be provided	Community organisations will provide accommodation and support services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
	A wide range of non-government support services including neighbourhood centres will be funded to assist young people or families address issues that impact on their personal, social or emotional wellbeing and safety
Education, training and employment – 0 action areas of 32	
The only action which could be linked to youth homelessness is that “The Youth Support Coordinator initiative through funding of \$9.6 million annually, will support at risk young people to stay at school, re-engage with education or training and transition to employment.” It does not specifically mention supporting homeless young people.	
Health & wellbeing: 0 of 29 action areas	
Volunteering and participation 0 of 12 actions	
Supports and services: 4 of 10 actions	
Youth services	Generic services including young people
Supported accommodation for young people at risk of disengaging from training and/or education due to homelessness, such as Youth Foyers, will be explored as part of the realignment of specialist homelessness services	Young people and their families will continue to get housing assistance through Rent Connect, Bond Loans and rental grants
Young people transitioning from state care will be prioritised for social housing assistance	A homelessness strategy, including actions to reduce the number of young homeless people, will be released
Arts and culture 0 of 12 actions	

ATSI

Table four: Murri Youth Strategy	
Families, friends & social networks – 0 actions of 15.	
Education, training and employment – 2 action areas of 32	
Services for young Murris	Murri services including young Murris
	The Qld Govt will work with universities to widen participation of low socio -economic and indigenous people in tertiary study
	The Solid Partners Solid Futures plan 2013-16 will ensure ATSI Qld are supported and engaged in learning from early childhood education and care, through to schooling, training, tertiary education and employment
Health & wellbeing: 8 of 29 action areas	
Services for young Murris	Murri services including young Murris
Access for young ATSI people to sexual and reproductive health services will be increased under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development	The Indigenous Deadly Sport and Recreation Program and the Deadly Sports Program will continue
A mental health transition service for 8 to 18 year olds with early onset mental illness and complex care needs from Child and Youth Mental Health Services to clinical, community and cultural support services in their communities will continue to be implemented under Making Tracks	Key community stakeholders, including youth groups and services, will be consulted as part of the review of alcohol management plans in discrete indigenous communities
The Regional Network of Indigenous Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs (ATODS) Youth Program will continue to provide a focussed treatment model for ATSI young people with substance misuse problems in key locations under Making Tracks	Indigenous youth health workers' knowledge and skills will be developed under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development
A program to improve access to primary health care for young ATSI people at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre will be implemented under Making Tracks	
Mental health and substance use transition services will be delivered to ATSI clients leaving	

the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre	
Volunteering and participation 2 of 12 actions	
Services for young Murriss	Murri services including young Murriss
The Indigenous Youth Leadership program and Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament will develop skills and encourage a stronger voice among young ATSI Queenslanders	The Qld Indigenous Land and Sea Junior Ranger Program will promote connections to community through the ability to work “on country.”
Supports and services: 1 of 10 actions	
Services for young Murriss	Murri services including young Murriss
Place based initiatives targeting young ATSI people will help improve access to education, employment, health and housing opportunities	
Arts and culture 1 of 12 actions	
Services for young Murriss	Murri services including young Murriss
	The Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts will provide high quality, nationally accredited training in dance, music and theatre for ATSI young people, from Certificate III to Advanced Diploma in Performing Arts.