
A Proposal
to Address the Needs of
Young People
in
Rural and Isolated Areas of Queensland



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ♣ Fair distribution of resources across the State has been a perennial and difficult issue which has been inadequately dealt with.
- ♣ Queensland has a high decentralisation rate. 54% of Queensland's 12-25 year olds live outside the Brisbane Statistical division. 36.8% of Queensland's 12-25 year olds live outside the Brisbane and Moreton Statistical divisions (as of June 1994).
- ♣ Very few resources go into addressing issues for young people in communities with populations of 200 - 5000.
- ♣ *This proposal seeks to establish a cross-departmental funding program* to enable the aforementioned communities to:
 - (a) investigate community needs and establish a community plan. This would identify where services for young people would be best located and guarantee funding for programs designed to meet the most significant community supported needs of young people;
 - (b) investigate funding possibilities from established programs/sources;
 - (c) resource the establishment of the identified service where no other funding source is appropriate.
- ♣ Departments targeted for contribution to pool funding are those who provide service delivery to young people: Department of Families, Youth and Community Care; Department of Employment, Vocational Education & Training; Department of Health; Department of Justice; Department of Housing & Public Works; Department of Primary Industries; Department of Sport and Recreation and Department of Education.
- ♣ The program would run for three years as a trial program with an evaluation running concurrently. If found to be successful by the evaluation, the program would be expanded and become recurrent. Benefits of establishing this program include:
 - ♦ provision of services to young people in small communities;
 - ♦ provision of locally based services for young people
 - ♦ provision of services specifically targeting young people;
 - ♦ services which have the flexibility to respond to the range of issues confronting young people.
- ♣ Research and anecdotal evidence suggests that cross departmental funding is an efficient way to deliver services in small communities.
- ♣ The Rural and Isolated working party of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland recommends that:
 - *The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care take lead agency responsibility for developing the Cross Departmental Rural Youth Service Program*
 - *The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care establish a steering group including representation from the Office of Rural Communities and the Rural and Isolated working party of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland to develop the program.*

A Proposal to Address the Needs of Young People in Rural and Isolated Areas of Queensland

1. INTRODUCTION

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) is the independent non-government umbrella organisation of groups and individuals from Queensland's youth sector. YANQ acts to promote the interests and well-being of young people in Queensland, advocates for them to government and the community, and encourages the development of policies and programs responsive to the needs of young people.

YANQ consists of over 400 members throughout the State, including youth services, advocacy groups, church groups, community organisations and individuals with interests in areas as diverse as juvenile justice, housing, health, rural issues, young people with disabilities, young women's issues and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking backgrounds. Associate members are drawn from federal, state and local government bodies.

2. RURAL AND ISOLATED WORKING PARTY

The Rural and Isolated Working Party (RIWP) was established as a result of a directive by the membership through the annual Policy Forum. The first mandate for its establishment was in 1993 and each subsequent year its mandate has been renewed. Its continued existence reflects both the concern for the lack of resources for young people who live in rural and isolated areas and the difficulties in addressing the issues because of their complexity. The general aim of the working party has been:

To increase awareness of needs and to provide support and information to ensure that young people and workers with young people have increased access to information, resources, services and support in rural, remote and isolated areas.

The working party is made up of workers in the youth, government and community sectors in metropolitan, rural and remote areas of Queensland. Monthly teleconferences provide an opportunity for those who don't often have a lot of contact with others in the sector to raise particular issues and to gain information. The Rural and Isolated working party also encourages members to share information and educate their local community, interagency forums and young people.

3. **THIS PROPOSAL**

In mid-1996, the working party decided to use Recommendation 18 from 'Living, Learning and Working' (Quixley) as a basis to form the immediate goals of the working party. Quixley's work was concerned with identifying the needs of Australian young people (aged 15-24 years) in rural and remote communities with populations of between 200 and 5,000 persons. The working party modified the goal from Quixley's report to more appropriately fit our own purposes and resources. Recommendation 18 from Quixley's report reads:

'that the social justice unit (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) coordinate an interdepartmental process whereby Department of Employment, Education and Training, Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, Commonwealth Office of Local Government, and Department of Primary Industries and Environment each contribute equitably to a funding pool. That this funding pool provide an extremely flexible source of funding, with commitment to:

- 1. Resource community organisations or local government authorities to develop a comprehensive community plan.*
- 2. Guarantee financial support for programs designed to meet the most significant, community supported needs of young people, as identified through the planning process.*
- 3. Negotiate funding for these programs using existent State/Territory or Commonwealth government funding sources where these are appropriate.*
- 4. Negotiate funding from the 'pool' where the planning outcomes are incompatible with the guidelines or resource capabilities of existing funding sources.'*

(Quixley, p.xx)

The working party discussed with the author of the report whether the applicability of the recommendation could be translated into a funding program on the state level. The author felt it was pertinent to the state level as rural areas faced the same issues in regard to inflexibility and small population bases when it came to applying for state funding. It was then decided that the immediate work of the working party would focus on the above recommendation but modified to issues on the state level.

The ultimate goal therefore would be a state based cross-departmental pool of funding, initially as a pilot and targeting communities with small populations. The funding would still be tied to a two stage process, the first stage involving a community development focus in order to identify a community plan.

There are a number of benefits of establishing this type of framework for service provision: it offers a way of more fairly distributing services to all Queensland young people; services would be locally based and specifically target young people; services would have flexibility to respond to the range of issues confronting young people; it establishes services which are integrated in the community and through the developmental process allows for cultural inclusiveness and flexibility.

Background to the Proposal

In May 1996, the Rural and Isolated working party held its first and only face to face meeting to discuss the concept of the cross departmental funding. The whole day meeting allowed for representatives from the working party to thrash out the concept of cross departmental funding. The afternoon was used to discuss the concept with representatives

from a variety of State government departments including Health; Education; Families, Youth and Community Care, Employment and Primary Industries.

Representatives from various departments generally supported the concept but raised issues in regard to how such a program might work. These issues were seen to reflect the very different nature of funding. The working party's view was that while there was a need to address these operational issues, with thought these could be resolved.

The idea for this discussion paper was first mooted at that meeting as a method to further develop the concept.

4. CURRENT ISSUES WITH FUNDING IN RURAL AND ISOLATED AREAS

The paucity of services for young people in smaller communities is an issue which has remained inadequately addressed for a long time. According to Sher & Sher, rural Australia disproportionately produces the country's wealth and assets, however they receive proportionately less in allocation of social infrastructure and resources. Both State and Federal governments have a mandate, indeed responsibility, to fairly and equitably provide services across their whole constituency.

Barker & Milligan note that the distribution of services in all States and Territories reflects the principle of the 'greatest good for the greatest number' (p.35) which results in the density of population being the predictor of service provision. They indicated a pattern whereby youth specific services are concentrated in larger urban areas, a more limited number of services targeting young people existing in larger rural regions and smaller rural communities experiencing extremely poor service provision.

Young people, as members of their communities and our society, have a right to share in the resources and have their needs met. If we want young people to remain in their communities rather than make an exodus to the city seeking education, employment and support services, these opportunities must be available in rural communities. Young people provide the future for rural communities.

It seems not so much a lack of agreement to these principles but the difficulties faced when trying to equitably distribute resources and deliver services which have been a barrier to smaller communities.

There are a number of reports which identify the difficulties in service delivery in rural and remote areas (Quixley; Barker & Milligan; Greaney & Lees). Greaney & Lees states that the implementation of more effective styles of service delivery suitable for rural and isolated areas has the potential to significantly increase rural young people's access to services.

Some of the key difficulties faced have been:

1. Program based funding - many pools of funding are available to deliver service responses to a particular issue. However, communities with small populations find it difficult to justify the need for such a specific service.
2. Inflexibility of funding guidelines.
3. In most instances locally based services are seen as the most accessible for the community but small communities have had difficulties in accessing resources for services.
4. Services for young people are identified as being most effective when they are youth specific and not a generic service targeting young people.

1. Program based funding

The argument put forward by Greaney & Lees states that specialist or program based services suit large metropolitan areas where there is justification and a population base to support the development of a number of services responding to different issues. This program based funding model, in their view, is an urban model which cannot be presumed to suit the needs of rural Queensland.

Barker & Milligan note the frustration that program based services in rural areas experience. In most instances they are the only youth specific service in a large region and as such have young people with a range of issues migrate towards them. The restrictions around what issues can be addressed are extremely frustrating for those services let alone the young people approaching the services. Barker & Milligan conclude that the most appropriate response in the area where few youth services exist is to establish generalist youth services. That is, services specifically targeting young people which have the flexibility to respond to the range of issues facing young people.

Dale states that results of program based funding in smaller rural communities has at times lead to the non-integration of these services in the local community. This can be divisive in those communities, leading to conflicts over limited resources (p. 331).

2. Inflexibility of funding guidelines

The issue of inflexibility is raised briefly under program based funding. Where these services are the only youth specific service in an area, they are often approached by young people with a much broader range of issues than funding guidelines permit them to address. According to Barker & Milligan services, by default, often end up taking on multi-functional roles in order to respond to the issues outside of the service's guidelines. This leads to a great deal of stress on the organisation in terms of their accountability to funding bodies and their own need for training to take on these additional areas of response. Simplistically, these services are often faced with a decision over whether to respond to a young person's needs holistically or respond only to issues within the services stated responsibility. Choosing the former means facing difficulties with lack of training and meeting accountability processes while choosing the later is done so with the knowledge that many young people's needs will not be met due to lack of alternative services.

This inflexibility also relates to the increased costs associated with running services where populations may be smaller than large urban areas but distances greater. Young people may need assistance to travel to the service and the service will often face additional

transportation costs of their own in order to access clients or network with other workers/services. Further, many phone calls in the day to day work of the organisation may be long distance because of its location. There are generally no formal or standard guidelines for recognising the increased costs of service delivery in rural areas. This further limits the ability of rural based services to respond to identified needs and reflects the imposition of a model which better suits areas that have greater density of population.

3. *Locally based services*

Quixley states that young people most clearly relate to locally based services. Locally based services offer some solution to transportation difficulties and also can allow the development of services through rigorous identification of the specific needs of that community.

Respondents in Quixley's report expressed frustration when services were funded to support large regions because they were rarely resourced adequately to service the regional centre let alone the outlying communities. This frustration was voiced both by the regional service (p. 17) and by the outlying areas (p.69). The fact that services were funded in their geographic region also severely restricted the ability of outlying communities to attract funding because they were already seen to be resourced.

Quixley states there is no single barrier to young people remaining in their communities and that different factors constitute key barriers in different communities. Communities therefore need the flexibility to respond to the key issues in order to support their young people and assist them to remain in their communities if they so choose. Respondents in Quixley's report commonly identified community based and community located services as most relevant to addressing local community needs. Responses at this level allow for community consultation over needs and appropriate responses resulting in service delivery tailored for communities.

Barker & Milligan exemplify this point with the following statement:

'Service deliverers, rural communities and policy makers alike would be pleased to be presented with a collection of favourite recipes for successful rural youth service models. However, production of a recipe book would be a simplistic solution to improving service access to rural young people. Effective service delivery in rural areas has been achieved in a number of communities. But to recommend that service model in one rural community be transplanted to another would be as potentially disastrous as wholesale transplantation of urban models to rural communities'. (p.56)

Quixley indicates that the need for communities to comprehensively look at their future requires 'a developmental process, one that encourages review, vision development, challenge and new perspectives' (p.121). Dale also discusses the need for a developmental phase in planning services. He argues this need is dictated by a desire to understand the 'complexity of existing community structure and differing expectations and requirements. Important factors include the presence of a supportive local government and leadership from within the community that can get people from different sectors and with different values to work together' (p. 331). He goes on to note that an inclusive developmental phase at least partially ensures that culturally appropriate models of service provision are developed.

4. Services targeted to young people

Quixley, quoting from a Commonwealth Youth Bureau Report, indicates the themes in the Youth Bureau's listing of 'models of good service' reflect services which are: 'located in the community, are in a non-school settings and are in a familiar youth setting - on the street or at a youth centre' (p.105). Quixley goes on to say that non-Aboriginal young people often identified services which target the generic population as being irrelevant. Non-Aboriginal young people did not see the generic services as targeted to them.

Quixley notes there was some division amongst research participants about whether services should be youth specific or generic in population targeting. She indicates that most of those who suggested they should be generic in targeting were Aboriginal communities who saw the issues as relevant to the entire community and not just young people. This may reflect a dire lack of services in Aboriginal communities, cultural differences in how to deal with youth issues or a combination of both and other factors.

A strong community consultation and developmental phase, ensuring young people's views are heard, may resolve this issue within each local community.

5. DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

It is a concern of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Rural and Isolated working party that young people in many small rural communities do not have access to appropriate services. This has been an issue for a long time and is accentuated in Queensland by the size of the State and its high decentralisation rate. Young people in rural statistical divisions (ie. those outside of Brisbane and Moreton) also experience a slightly higher incidence of unemployment¹. Suicide is also an increasing problem².

The RIWP believes that the way in which services are funded in these areas needs to be changed fundamentally. Taking into account the key difficulties noted above in providing services in areas of small populations, the RIWP is pursuing a cross departmental funding pool.

This means that funds would be provided to communities to meet identified needs when there is no other appropriate funding available. It aims to dissolve the problem that in order to access funding communities must have a population base to sustain a service which responds to one particular issue.

The working party's proposition is that this cross departmental funding should be available for service provision only after an extensive identification of need/community consultation process. Once needs are identified and other funding is investigated and where none is

¹*Young People in rural areas of Queensland*, a report prepared by the Government Statistician's Office for the Youth Bureau in 1996, found that youth unemployment rates in 1995 were slightly higher in rural statistical divisions. In the Brisbane statistical division 15-19 year old unemployment was 19.8 percent compared to 20.6 percent for those in Queensland outside of that division. For 20-25 year olds unemployment in the Brisbane statistical division was 11.2 percent compared to 11.4 percent for those in Queensland outside of the Brisbane statistical division.

² The trends in suicide of 15-24 year old males in Australia through the years 1964-1993 show an ascendancy rate in almost all rural areas (ABS 1995).

accessible or appropriate, then the community would be eligible for funding from the pool of funding.

As the aim of these services is to respond to a range of issues for young people, the services will need to be resourced to allow them to attract staff with broad based skills.

In order for this proposition to work a number of departments need to contribute to the cross departmental pool of funding. The working party believes that the contributing departments should be:

- Department of Families, Youth and Community Care;
- Department of Employment, Vocational Education & Training;
- Department of Health;
- Department of Justice;
- Department of Housing & Public Works;
- Department of Primary Industries;
- Department of Sport and Recreation;
- Department of Education.

The proposal by the Rural and Isolated Working party for cross departmental funding is targeted at communities with populations of between 200-5 000 persons. The reason for this targeting is to recognise that it is the smaller communities which often miss out on resourcing. Further, it is communities of this size which Quixley based her research on. The working party notes that communities with populations of 200-5 000 is not a definition of rural and isolated but provides a contained way of trialing a new funding method. The working party believes that, if successful, this method of funding may also be applicable to slightly larger communities. Restricting the initial program is a method of containing the pilot.

The working party proposes the initial stages of such funding be in the form of a pilot program with a view to recurrent funding on the success of the pilot. The working party proposes an evaluation of the program to run concurrently. The pilot would run for three years.

6. CO-ORDINATION OF THE CROSS DEPARTMENTAL FUNDING PROGRAM

The RIWP holds the view that the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care should assume the lead agency status. As lead agency the Department should assume responsibility for discussion and coordination with other Departments, with a view to coordinating the implementation of the Program. In order to develop the process and program the RIWP believe the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care should convene a steering group which would include representatives from the Office of Rural Communities and the YANQ Rural and Isolated working party.

7. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

There will be a number of barriers to implementing such a pilot program because of the different nature of funding. The working party does not believe these difficulties are insurmountable and raises them here for further thought and consideration.

Key Issue

It is likely the greatest barrier to establishing the cross departmental funding will be gaining an agreement to contribute from individual government departments. Traditionally, governments departments fund services with a direct impact on the portfolio area for which they have responsibility. This proposal asks departments with service delivery responsibilities to contribute to the funding of services which will respond to a range of issues for young people. For instance, in one funding period, despite the Health Department contributing, there maybe no young people who access the service in direct response to a health issue. However, perhaps in other funding periods there may be. It could also be argued that health issues are being addressed in a less direct way if other aspects of young people's lives are being addressed. These youth services will pick up on issues for young people as they are presented.

It will take political will and a great deal of work with departments to convince them of the benefits of contributing to a pool of funding. This is a very different method of funding to how departments have previously operated. It will establish services which respond holistically to the needs of young people, in geographical areas where the critical mass of people are not enough to justify services responding to particular issues.

The working party is also proposing that the initial stages of such funding be in the form of a pilot program and that it target these smaller communities.

The RIWP would like to note the introduction of the new Rural youth worker program. This initiative from the 1996 State budget will introduce 16 full-time and 5 part-time youth workers into towns and cities in rural Queensland. Specifically this program was developed to assist young people in areas where few employment and/or recreation opportunities exist. The RIWP supports this government initiative and views the current proposal as a method to complement that initiative. This initiative will ensure that resources reach small communities around the State.

Accountability of Funds

The program will require that one department has responsibility for the administration of funds. Services would be accountable to that same department with copies of documents of accountability going to all other departments involved.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rural and Isolated Working Party of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland recommends that:

- The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care take lead agency responsibility for developing the Cross Departmental Rural Youth Service Program.
 - The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care establish a steering group including representation from the Office of Rural Communities and the Rural and Isolated working party of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland to develop the program.
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9. PROPOSED BUDGET

The following budget is proposed as a possible formula for funding, highlighting the minimal costs involved if all departments identified contributed to a cross departmental pool of funding.

FEASIBLE BUDGET FOR PILOT PROGRAM

TOTAL BUDGET TRIAL PROGRAM FOR THREE YEARS \$1 918 900
(Based on 7 trial programs for 3 years with 1.5 workers per service.)

Total costs for 3 years /No. of departments contributing \$ 239 862

Cost/year with contribution from 8 departments \$ 79 954

Individual program budget:

Operating Costs

- Administrative \$ 13 000
- Remote area Levy 7 800 (10% of project budget to cover additional costs associated with service delivery in remote areas eg. transport to service, mileage & additional telephone costs)
- Project expenses 5 000
- Training 2 500

Wages (1.5 workers @ SACS level 4) 47 600 (this is the mean of the 3 incremental levels. Level 4 of SACS award is seen to be the minimum level to employ on)

Oncosts 10 000

Total per annum per program \$ 85 900

One off estab. costs per project 5 000

\$85 900 X 3 years \$ 257 700

Total establishment costs 35 000

Total Trial Program Budget

\$257 700 X 7 projects \$1 803 900

total establishment costs \$ 35 000

evaluation costs for three years \$ 80 000

TOTAL COSTS FOR 3 YEARS \$1 918 900

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