



INTEGRITY IN OUR PRACTICE

YOUTH WORK IN OUR REGION

[The Sunshine CPLAN is part of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland's commitment to developing a strong youth sector across the state that will lead to better collaboration and coordination of services, improved policy development and enhancing advocacy on youth issues. The Sunshine CPLAN covers the Department of Education and Training's "North Coast" region which takes in the local government areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, and the regions of North and South Burnett.]



The following organisations support the development and promotion of this document as a way to enhance youth service collaboration and leadership in the Sunshine region:



Deception Bay Community Youth Programs



youth affairs network qld



Integrated Family & Youth Services



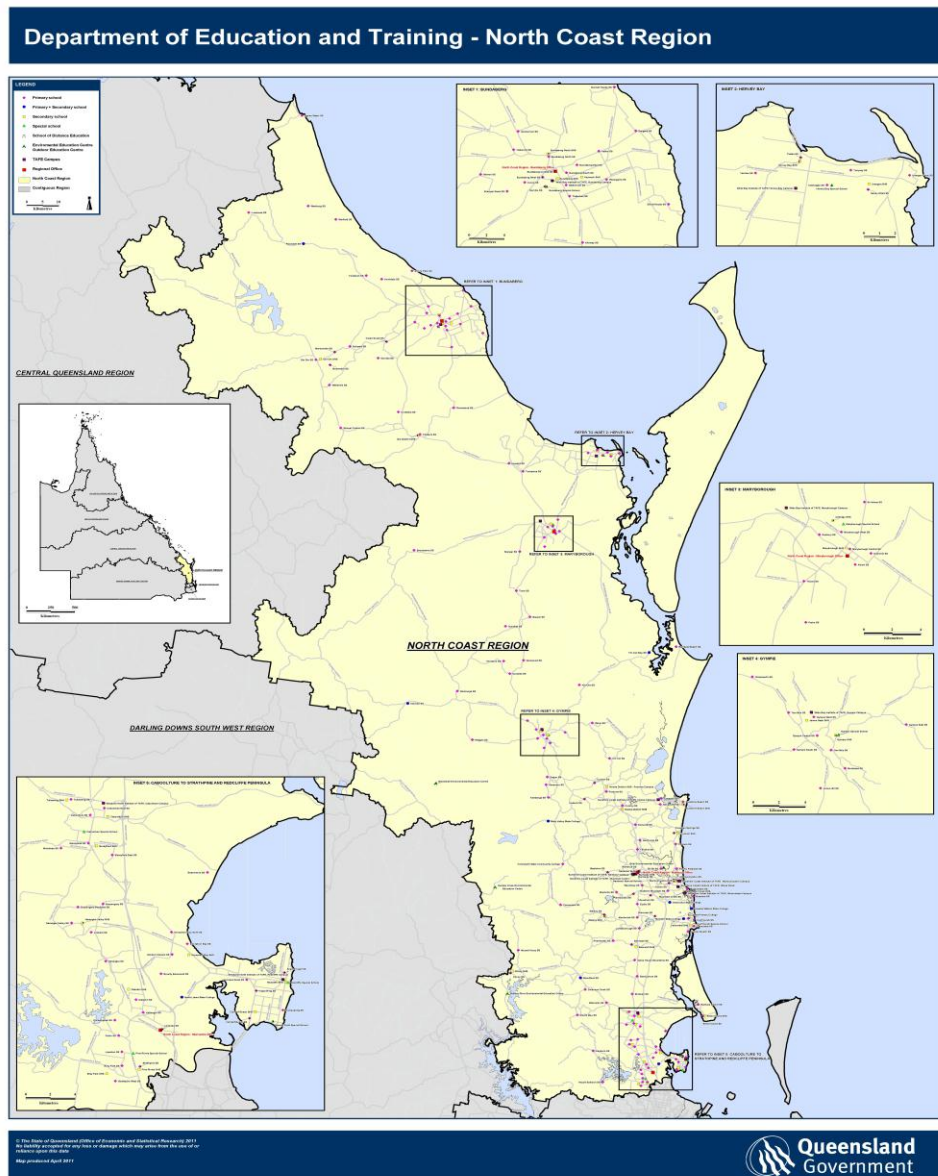
Community partnerships promoting...
enterprise, employment, education and training



The *Sunshine* Communities of Practice Leaders Action Network (CPLAN)

The Sunshine CPLAN is part of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland's (YANQ) commitment to developing a strong youth sector across the state that will lead to better collaboration and coordination of services, improved policy development and enhancing advocacy on youth issues. There are ten CPLANs across Queensland. As Queensland is such a diverse and large state each CPLAN will develop a unique structure, plan and strategies that are responsive to their local needs and that work towards the broader CPLAN objectives. Each CPLAN region will be supported by YANQ to document the strategies and actions that unfold, and to feed into YANQ so that YANQ (in its role as the state peak body for youth services) can represent the sector more effectively.

The Sunshine CPLAN covers the Department of Education and Training's "North Coast" region (see map) which takes in the local government areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, and the regions of North and South Burnett. This region is very diverse, covering large portions of built-up urban areas in the south, through to coastal communities, regional towns and rural communities.



Membership in the Sunshine CPLAN is voluntary and is determined by those who choose to participate in meetings, workshops, forums and email dialogue. Obviously, the youth organisations in the region were invited to participate as well as Local Government, educational institutions that provide youth work training and other agencies that provide services to young people.

Table 1: CPLAN participants at meetings since it began in May 2011

| Name | Organisation |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Kristina Farrell, Chris Bell | United Synergies |
| Jarryd Williams | Redcliffe Youth Space |
| Carmel Riethmuller | Chameleon House |
| Maddie Alwell; Paul Morton | Integrated Families & Youth Services |
| Michelle Barton | Intercept Youth & Family Services |
| Kim Reid | Kids Youth Community |
| Lydia Najlepszy | Sunshine Coast Youth Partnership |
| Stephanie Blunt | Worklinks Inc |
| Stewart Hartley | Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service |
| Naomi Rayward | Moreton Bay Regional Council |
| Cindi Coinix | Sunshine Coast Council |
| Matt Allard; Michelle Rowe | Gympie Regional Council |
| Annette Homann; Geoff Tim | Queensland Youth Industry Links Scheme |
| Richard Valentine | Link-in |
| Erik Dodwell | Sunshine Coast TAFE |
| Brenda Allport | Mercy Family Services |
| Christina Johnstone; Lisa Wan | Community Solutions – Sunshine Coast |
| Tracy Ives; Sharon Kellett | Brisbane North Institute of TAFE |
| Howard Buckley | Deception Bay Community Youth Programs |
| Judy Brauer | Community Gympie Action |
| Matthew Neil | QUT Caboolture Campus |
| Brett Johnson | Local Government Association of QLD |
| Heather Cummings | Uniting Care Community - Gympie |

The Sunshine CPLAN began with a focus on the youth organisations in the three regional councils in the south of the region: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast and Gympie. In May 2011 about twenty youth organisations from across this area began meeting to develop their CPLAN. One of the key focus areas was *‘What would it take to create a vibrant youth sector in this region?’* To respond to this question, the Sunshine CPLAN members felt that it would first be valuable to create a foundational document that would provide all youth organisations across the region with an articulation of their shared values and common practice, and provide a clear expectation for youth work practice and service delivery in the *Sunshine* region.

The starting point for this exercise was to survey participating organisations to identify their core organisational principles and practice approaches. Individual responses were collated and workshopped with a CPLAN working group to identify commonalities. These commonalities were further explored which became the basis for the development of this document.

It is anticipated that this document will be used as a tool to strengthen working relationships between organisations; as a training and induction tool for youth workers; and as a tool for discussion with tertiary training organisations to better prepare students for youth work in the *Sunshine* region.

The agencies who have participated in the development of this document appreciate and understand that a cursory glance at the history of youth work reveals that it is quite different to many other professions as it has drawn youth workers from a variety of fields - i.e. from untrained voluntary community members to fully trained social workers, psychologists and community development workers. It is therefore difficult to unequivocally state exactly what youth work *is* and what youth work is *not*, and even more difficult to locate youth work within one articulated specific body of knowledge and practice. YANQ has developed a discussion paper in which these matters are explored called *What is Youth Work? A Discussion Paper (October 2010)*. We encourage anyone with an interest in youth work to join this discussion.

The Sunshine CPLAN members have not developed this document to define or prescribe youth work practice in our region but to create the parameters for an on-going dialogue within our sector and with those connected with our sector to enhance the work we do with young people.

The Unique Qualities of Our Organisations

We, the youth organisations in the *Sunshine* region:

- are passionate about improving and creating positive outcomes for young people;
- endeavour to be creative and innovative in our responses to the needs and aspirations of young people;
- work from a core belief of unconditional positive regard;
- have a connectedness to our communities which is empowering and quality service focused;
- work within local geographic areas and value the communities in which we work;
- recognise that each community is unique and we celebrate, support and enhance those communities;
- operate in a somewhat chaotic atmosphere, which is inherent in youth work, but in this environment we create positive and strong outcomes for young people;
- share a common purpose to improve the outcomes for young people and we respect our differences (our traditions, our beliefs, the size and structure of our agencies, etc.);
- recognise that our roles are diverse. Some of us deliver services and programs specifically targeting marginalised and disadvantaged young people, some offer mainstream services and programs for all young people;
- offer reliable and consistent services;
- recognise that governments and their agencies frequently change and so do their policies and programs. We have our own goals and objectives that may differ from prevailing government agendas. However, we always attempt to build good relationships with government bodies and seek to ensure that funding is directed to achieve the best outcomes for our clients and their communities;
- seek to build healthy relationships with elected representatives, but will never be vehicles for political purposes.

What We Do

We, the youth organisations in the *Sunshine* region:

- **Support young people** to participate in their communities by:
 - addressing barriers to their engagement, both at an individual level and at a systems level;
 - ensuring young people are provided with opportunities to provide input into planning and development.
- **Provide services** that:
 - empower and strengthen disadvantaged and vulnerable children, young people and families through quality, innovative services;
 - span the spectrum of intervention:
 - Primary Intervention – this includes prevention and education;
 - Secondary Intervention – this may also be referred to as early intervention;
 - Tertiary Intervention – this may include responses to individuals, crisis intervention and long-term support.
- **Work developmentally** by:
 - being proactive, not just reactive, to create sustainability and community resilience (to prevent issues from emerging);
 - taking an active role in educating the wider community (e.g. community members, business and government) regarding the issues experienced by young people and create opportunities for the wider community to connect with and support young people;
 - promoting and valuing young people as positive and contributing citizens.
- **Advocate** for young people at both an individual and systems level.
- Work to **sustain our organisational structures** to enable daily work, including:
 - Governance;
 - Administration;
 - resource management;
 - human resource management and workforce development & training.
- **Collaborate** by:
 - forming partnerships to address the needs of young people;
 - developing regional communities through the initiation of sustainable and innovative community projects and services.

Our Values

We, the youth organisations in the *Sunshine* region share the following values:

- **Respect**
 - Dignity
 - Privacy and confidentiality
 - Commitment to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and culture
 - Acceptance and understanding of diverse cultures
 - Honesty and trust
- **Social inclusion**
 - Valuing diversity
 - Valuing identity
 - Sense of belonging
 - Connected to place
- **Human rights**
 - Emotional and physical safety
 - Youth voice
 - Active citizenship
 - Non-discrimination
- **Social Justice**
 - Equality
 - Equity – fairness in the distribution of resources to level the playing field for disadvantaged people which includes a commitment to affirmative action
 - Access
 - Participation
 - Self determination
- **Cooperation**
 - Active collaboration
 - Mutual partnerships
- **Quality**
 - Accountability
 - Responsiveness
 - Continuous improvement
 - Innovation
- **Sustainability**
 - Capacity-building

Ethics / Code of Practice

We, the youth organisations and youth workers in the *Sunshine* region, share a commitment to demonstrating the following ethical principles and practice approaches in our youth work:

- Providing culturally competent work practices that ensure young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and young people from other cultures have opportunities and access to our agencies and services;
- Upholding standards of professional behaviour and fiduciary duties (both organisationally and personally) that not only comply with all relevant legal expectations but are exemplary in demonstrating effective boundaries, accountability, transparency and due diligence;
- Ensuring that each organisation has clearly articulated policies, and associated staff training plan, on the following matters:
 - Confidentiality & Privacy
 - Conflicts of interest
 - Child protection and safety
 - Equal opportunity
 - Access and Equity
- Being responsive to the needs of young people and flexible in our delivery of high quality services and programs;
- Using reflective practice and evaluation as a mechanism of continuous improvement to ensure staff are equipped to undertake the work required.

Qualities of Potential Employees

There is a diversity of youth work roles within the *Sunshine* region. However, despite their diversity the Sunshine CPLAN identified generic qualities that are desired by youth workers in the region. These include:

Commitment to better outcomes for young people

Youth work employees in the *Sunshine* region need to have a particular leaning in their values, beliefs and attitudes that is committed to seeking better outcomes for young people

Relevant experience and skills

Individuals employed as youth workers in the *Sunshine* region are expected to have experience working with young people within community settings and to have developed specific human services skills, particularly in communicating with young people. Sunshine CPLAN agencies are committed to providing opportunities for new and fledgling youth workers through student placements and voluntary work.

Relevant qualifications

There are many tertiary and VET qualifications that provide a foundational ‘body of learning’ that can prepare a person for working with young people. Sunshine CPLAN agencies have identified that 1.5 years study in one of these areas is a minimum requirement to have the necessary foundation for working in the youth sector in the *Sunshine* region.

Whilst this requirement effectively sets the minimum requirement as a Diploma in Youth Work, the youth agencies in Sunshine CPLAN have a commitment to working with each prospective employee (or existing employee if upgrading of qualifications is required) on a case-by-case basis to work towards this minimum requirement. It will also depend on the amount of autonomy and complexity that the particular position requires (and therefore on occasions a Certificate IV in Youth Work may suffice). As each position’s requirements and each potential youth worker’s experience and skills will vary from job to job and person to person these variances will need to be considered by each employing agency in the selection process.

Therefore, the matter of minimum qualifications is not ‘set in concrete’ but rather is an aspirational guide for agencies to work towards a common standard in the region.

Commitment to learning

Youth Workers in the *Sunshine* region are expected to commit to a process of professional development that begins with a ‘life-long-learning perspective’, to build professionalism in their practice, and a commitment to continuous improvement through reflective practice.

Knowledge of the context in which youth work takes place

This includes knowledge of:

1. The history of youth work and the development of the Welfare State in Australia;
2. The history of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders and colonisation in Australia;
3. A current understanding of young people and society;
4. An understanding of how Australian multiculturalism has evolved to the present day.

A Commitment to Developmental Practice

The *Sunshine* CPLAN defines Developmental Practice as “building relationships with young people that lead to developing connection that leads to empowerment.”

Ability to support others in crisis

Understanding the processes and skills required to respond to young people in crisis. These include as a minimum:

- Effective interpersonal communication that includes active listening, empathic listening and strategic questioning;
- Demonstrated understanding of clearly articulated agency policies and procedures for duty of care and client rights;
- Knowledge of internal and external referral processes that can assist; and
- Debriefing processes.

A high level of self awareness around the purpose and responsibilities of the role of a Youth Worker

Youth Workers in the *Sunshine* region are expected to have the self-awareness of what are their own personal issues and to be able to separate them from work situations that involve the disclosure of personal information from young people. Youth Work is personal work and therefore impacts on workers emotionally, so this requirement is not just a matter of professional boundaries but one where clear discernment and judgement is required.

A commitment to a young person's right to self determination

Youth Workers in the *Sunshine* region are expected to provide guidance and assistance to young people to seek out their own chosen opportunities and pathways. Youth work is not an opportunity for agencies or staff to engage with vulnerable young people in order to promote their own beliefs or ideals. Proselytising, advising and the projection of a worker's own values and beliefs that intentionally seek to persuade or influence a young person towards these values or beliefs is a form of colonisation and is not acceptable practice in the *Sunshine* youth sector.

Personal attributes including reliability, integrity, passion and the ability to be a team player.

Each Client Has a Right To...

Each organisation within the *Sunshine* region has a commitment to the [United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). To complement these rights, children and young people can expect these additional levels of service and support from our organisations:

- Unbiased, non-judgmental support;
- Involvement in decisions that affect them;
- Appropriate levels of community and political advocacy;
- Adherence to confidentiality and privacy laws and principles;
- Courteous, respectful, considerate, open, approachable and friendly support (note: being “friendly” doesn’t mean “become friends with”);
- Use of appropriate language (for example: language that is understandable to young people and culturally and contextually relevant. This does NOT mean “trying to be hip and young”);
- Accountability (To be accountable to young people, stated services need to be actually delivered. For example: we’re not accountable for meeting every need that a young person has, because we can’t. We need to be clear and transparent with young people about what we can and cannot do, and legally, what we need to report);
- To be informed of all options available; and
- The ability to express grievances and seek redress without fear.

Collaboration, Cooperation & Coordination

The Sunshine CPLAN Region is committed to working within a framework of collaboration, cooperation and coordination. This framework encompasses all “types” of partnerships that bring people and organisations together to improve the lives of young people living across the Sunshine CPLAN region. While our partnerships have unique qualities, all are based on the notion that most service objectives cannot be achieved by any single person, organisation or sector working alone.

It is recognised that this framework can also achieve economies of scale by pooling resources that can bring new insights and experiences as well as create new pathways to reach out to young people in the region. Such partnerships can take many forms and vary in their intensity from individuals coming together to share information, through to agencies working to form coalitions to address specific issues. It is possible that this form of coordination and collaboration can address short or long term goals and vary in their mission.

Each participating organisation in the *Sunshine* region has its own mission that it seeks to advance. However, it is our intention to build trust and credibility across agencies through working in partnerships that emphasise coordination, cooperation and collaboration. The region is made up of various types and sizes of organisations – i.e. some are community based organisations that have community boards and the focus of their work is primarily to their locality; while others are large national organisations that are managed by national and state based boards. This variation in management structure and decision making processes will impact on the level and way we achieve collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

We recognise that each organisation has specific foci that include *locality* specific work, *target group* specific work, and/or *regional level* work. Some are youth specific organisations and some are generic organisations. We also recognise that many organisations are contracted to undertake services on behalf of government agendas. Within this complex realm of arrangements it is often suggested that collaboration is too time consuming and/or distracts organisations from their core business. We are committed to demonstrating that through our diversity we can create harmonious approaches that build innovation and creativity as well as efficiency and effectiveness.

The Sunshine CPLAN encourages all organisations to demonstrate a consistent willingness to collaborate, cooperate and communicate within local, regional and sector contexts. The youth organisations in this region make a commitment to the following principles:

1. To always maintain strong and open communication between organisations, even when differences emerge, and to be committed to working through issues in a cooperative manner;
2. To explore, seek and create opportunities that will bring organisations in the sector together, particularly in key areas of service provision;
3. To be willing to contribute resources towards to sector and workforce development.

The Sunshine CPLAN also encourages organisations to have a strategic commitment to working together. This should be demonstrated in each organisation’s strategic plan and in the position descriptions of the CEOs/Managers/Directors and Coordinators. This commitment can also be demonstrated through a minimal obligation to participate in:

- Sharing information;
- Joint submissions;
- Ensuring clear and useful referral processes;
- Pooling of resources;
- Cooperating with other services on client case management plans;
- Collaborative decision-making and choice;
- Combined training and professional development opportunities;
- Joint advocacy;
- Research projects;
- Working with government agencies to enhance the distribution of resources to meet identified community need.

Workforce Development

We, the youth organisations within the *Sunshine* Region, are committed to:

1. **The development of our organisations to be values driven, integrity centered and client focused teams.** We achieve this by:
 - Maximising participation in visioning and strategic planning processes
 - Regular team building
 - Clear induction, orientation and probation processes
 - Succession planning
 - Transparent accountability and reporting processes
 - Well-articulated policies and procedures
2. **The professional development of staff.** We achieve this through offering staff:
 - Accredited and non-accredited training / learning opportunities to enhance their practice
 - Internal line supervision
 - External supervision
 - Mentoring by qualified senior staff
 - Practice reflection opportunities
 - Encouragement of staff to develop professional association
 - Encouragement of staff to participate in peer support networks
3. **More specifically, our youth workers will be given every opportunity to enhance their skillsets to deliver high quality outcomes for young people.** For example ongoing skills development may occur in (but not be limited to) the following areas:
 - Community Development
 - Mental Health
 - Senior First Aid
 - Drug & Alcohol
 - Counselling / Communication skills
 - Family Work
 - Cultural Training
 - Disability
 - Child Protection

The National Training Package developed by the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council provides an on-going benchmark for the types of skills that youth workers in the sector will seek to acquire. Additionally, we have a commitment to utilising the skills and expertise of other organisations in our sector. This includes exploring possibilities for staff-sharing and cross-pollination in project work. We encourage the development of peer support across our regions. We define peer support as “the capacity for workers to get together, share experiences, reflect, support each other and share through difficult times”.

The Sunshine CPLAN is committed to the development of the sector by partnering with registered training organisations to enhance workforce development in the region by:

- Offering student placements;
- Providing opportunities for guest speakers on relevant topics;
- collaborative project work;
- informing and validating teaching and assessment tools to improve course curriculum and student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The Sunshine CPLAN is part of YANQ's long-term commitment to developing a strong youth sector across the state that will lead to better collaboration and coordination of services, improved policy development and enhancing advocacy on youth issues. As part of this movement the Sunshine CPLAN is still in its infancy stage with much work to do to engage with key stakeholders across this region. The "Integrity In Our Practice" document will assist this process and be a lever for opening up dialogue within the sector in this region about these crucial issues, but also as a model for other regions.

This document is a work-in-progress and does not claim any notion of being "right" or "finished" and will probably never be complete as our sector is constantly evolving in this ever-changing environment. If the document is useful for you to lever opportunities to have dialogue with others about how we can improve youth work in this region then it is achieving its desired outcome.

The following Sunshine CPLAN organisations have contributed to the development of this document:

Non-government Organisations

Chameleon House
Deception Bay Community Youth Programs (DBCYP)
Gympie Community Action
Integrated Family and Youth Service (IFYS)
Intercept Youth & Family Services
Mercy Family Services
Redcliffe Youth Space
Sunshine Coast Youth Partnership (SCYP)
Worklinks Inc
United Synergies
Uniting Care Community Care Gympie

Educational Institutions

Brisbane North Institute of TAFE
Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Caboolture Campus
Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE – Community Work Team

Local Government

Gympie Regional Council
Moreton Bay Regional Council
Sunshine Coast Regional Council

For further information about Sunshine CPLAN and this document please contact:

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