



## **Youth Policy**

### **Introduction – Why do we need a youth policy?**

This youth policy creates a focal point for promoting a working relationship between Hutt City young people and their Council and provides clarification on the role of Council in working with young people. The policy recognises the importance of young people for the City now and in the future.

Council's youth council, Youth Infusion, fully supported the development of this youth policy. They were involved in developing the process and giving feedback on the result of the consultation process and on the draft of the policy.

### **Background – What else was or is out there?**

In 1998 Council made a commitment to encourage the voice of young people in the business of Council. As a result Youth Infusion (YI) was set up. The first action of the group was to undertake a survey to identify the issues affecting young people. This survey revealed that young people thought Hutt City was boring with no place to go and nothing to do. In response Youth Infusion sought Council's support resulting in a youth centre (Phonic) being established. Council has made an ongoing commitment to Phonic in taking on the lease of the building.

To build on its commitment to youth and to provide direction for the City, Council agreed there was a need to develop a youth policy as a key building block in reinforcing its support for youth. This policy provides a platform for the current range of support Council provides including a Youth Development Worker for YI and enabling YI to speak at Council meetings by amending its Standing Orders.

As with any process what transpires is the identification of a next step. Following on from the youth policy which sets out Council's commitment to young people, a youth strategic plan would draw together within a managed framework the work of the various external agencies, community groups and organisations which support young people through their services, facilities, initiatives, and activities. Council would have a role in participating in this process.

### **Methodology – How did it happen?**

To develop this policy a youth consultation process was undertaken that involved meeting with young people in focus groups. In addition to these discussions each participant was asked to fill in a survey. A total of 18 focus groups were held with each group involving a range of young people representing different ages, ethnic mix, wards and socio-economic status. Focus groups were set up at secondary schools (both junior and senior levels), at alternative educational centres, with young people on training courses at marae as well as with ethnic minority groups.

Youth Infusion suggested at the beginning of the consultation process that a starting point for discussion on the age range for the youth policy would be 13-23 years. Difficulty was experienced in reaching those young people over 18 years although the Pacific and marae focus groups included a small number in the 18+ bracket. Of those young people taking part in the focus groups, the comment was made that the 18+ group of young people have plenty of things to do and therefore the focus should be on young people from 13-18 years. Until further consultation is undertaken with the 18+ group this policy will cover young people from the ages of 13 to 23 years<sup>1</sup>.

Once the information from focus groups and the survey was processed (see Appendix 1 for a summary), the project team made up of a Council Officer, YI representative, Youth Facilitator and Research person, created a draft policy in conjunction with a forum of young people. This forum created the vision for the policy and signed off the draft. In addition young people participated in writing this document. An important aspect of this project was that the process to develop this policy gave rise to and reflected the guiding principles of working with young people as set out in this document.

### **Overall Aim of Policy – How will this affect young people and Council?**

The aim of this policy is to identify ways in which Council can contribute to the holistic well-being of young people in Hutt City. Council recognises that it is one of many players that have a role to play in working towards desirable outcomes for youth. These outcomes encompass health, education, social, cultural, environmental and political needs to which many agencies, organisations and groups contribute.

Through consultation with young people across the City, it was highlighted that they share common issues, areas of concern and perceptions. These areas have provided the basis for formulating policy strands and for focusing in on

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<sup>1</sup> There is considerable variation in the definition of what constitutes a 'youth' or young person. The Ministry of Health has adopted the generic age range of 12-24 (as recognised by the United Nations). Ministry of Youth Affairs definition of young people/youth, and therefore definition of the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (YDSA) is also 12-24years (up to 25<sup>th</sup> birthday).

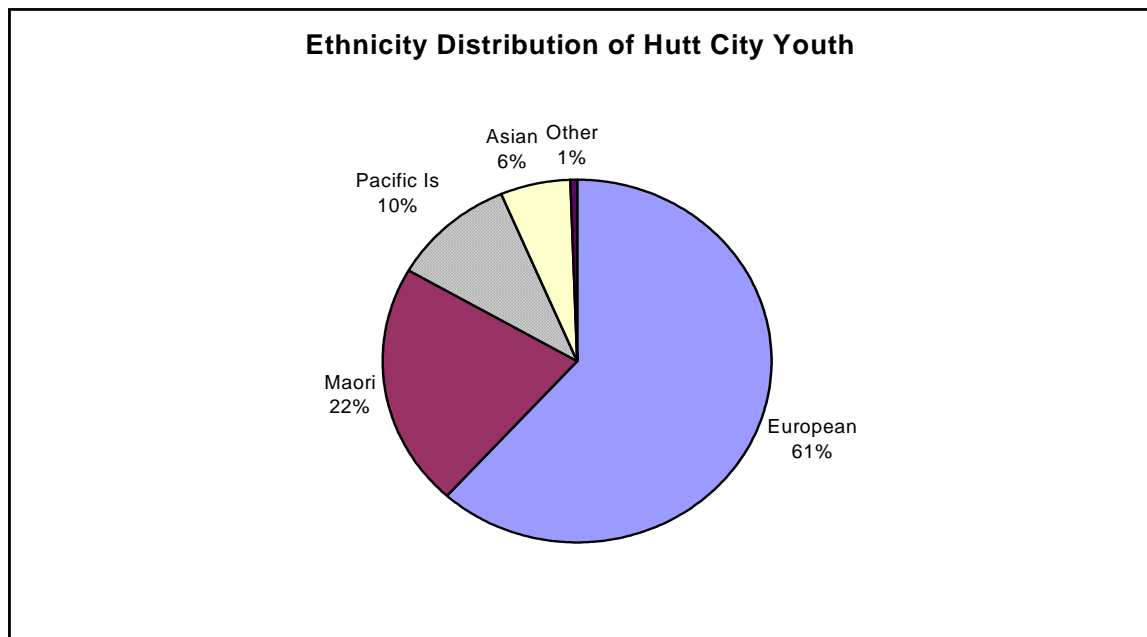
objectives and suggesting strategies. This policy provides guidance for Council's decision-making by being clear on what is important to young people, what needs to be done and how Council can help.

### Current context

For the purposes of this policy, young people have been defined as being from 13 to 23 years of age. Youth Infusion, Council's youth council, recommended this age bracket as they felt that this was the age range of young people who were not well provided for in terms of services, facilities and activities in the City.

As a proportion of the total population of Hutt City this group represents 15.6% and numbers 14,925 (source 1996 Census). Although Council does not have population projections for the 13 to 23 year age group, according to the District Health Board Youth Health Service Plan (draft) the Hutt Valley (includes both Hutt City and Upper Hutt City) youth population (15-19 years) is set to increase by 11% in the next 5 years. Both cities tend to have similar proportions within their age profiles so it is expected that this projection would hold true for Hutt City.

As with all groups of people, the diversity of cultures and sub-cultures is varied and abundant.



The Other category although not large in proportion, is growing and quite distinctive and is represented by, for example, Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Iraqi young people who bring their own unique experiences and character to the community. Added to the special characteristics of ethnicity is the influence of the diversity of youth sub-cultures that create a sense of belonging and identity unique and relevant to young people. To the uninitiated the roll call of different groups and themes and trends is vast and varied and reflects the personalised vocabulary of young people.

Young people are a vibrant and diverse group. Many of the young people participating in the consultation process displayed an amazing capacity to be involved in numerous interests and activities. For some young people opportunities are limited and they spoke of wanting to be more involved and to have more opportunities. Regardless of personal circumstances, what was most inspiring and significant was the fact that young people displayed wisdom and an ability to propose creative solutions.

This Policy endorses the application of a positive youth development approach as promoted in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa recently published by the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

## Hutt City Council Youth Policy

### Introduction

The aim of this policy is to identify ways in which Council can contribute to the holistic well-being of young people in Hutt City. This section of the document sets out the components that make up the youth policy:

- Guiding Principles set the foundation for this policy;
- Vision sets the scene; and
- Policy Strands including outcome; objective/s and recommendation/s provide the direction.

### Guiding Principles of working with young people

These guiding principles provide the basis for clarifying Council's role in working with young people.

In other words, the principles will act as a good checklist to ensure Council constantly uses the policy in every day decisions.

Council's primary focus is to work in partnership with young people providing assistance with access to resources; supporting them through advocacy, facilitation, co-ordination; and recognising and valuing the strengths of young people.

- **Ownership:** Young people are the driving force to achieve a vision for young people

- **Partnership:** Support young people to achieve their vision/goals Work with them in partnership acknowledging their autonomy
- **Recognition:** There is a diversity of young people, treat young people as people – equally, honestly - and listen to them. They are “not all bad apples”
- **Value young people:** Young people are here now and make a difference today and tomorrow
- **Strengthening** young peoples skills and capabilities. Support young people to develop to their full potential



## *Youth Empowerment*

Recognise and acknowledge young people's contribution to Hutt City and the community today and in the future

*"We're not just the future, we're here now too!"*

<b>Outcome:</b>	<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Opportunities for young people to realise their potential</b>	To recognise and value the ability of young people to identify issues and to participate in the creation of their own solutions	<p>We will support initiatives that encourage youth development e.g. PI youth projects, PANZ project at Naenae College</p> <p>We will facilitate and support current and future youth initiatives e.g. Phonic, L8 Nite Buses</p>

## *Identity*

Recognising and valuing the diversity of young people in our City

*"I want to be able to speak my mind without it being a huge risk"*

<b>Outcome:</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Celebrating the vibe of young people</b>	<p>Encourage young people to be and express themselves</p> <p>Respect and acknowledge the unique identities of young people</p>	<p>We will support young people to express themselves in ways appropriate for them e.g. Back Alley Bomb</p> <p>We will promote opportunities to celebrate the diverse cultures of young people in our community e.g. Respect Festival</p>

## *A Safe and Healthy Environment*

Create an environment where young people feel safe physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally and culturally.

*“This is our space too...”*

<b>Outcome:</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Strong and inclusive communities</b>	A City where young people can participate in community life	We will facilitate the development of a youth strategic plan alongside young people to create a safe environment for young people in our City e.g. support youth focused organisation to lead this initiative
	A City where young people are included in the range of facilities, services and activities offered	We will work with young people on any future development of public places and spaces so that their needs are met

## *Relationships*

Build a positive and caring community

*“Respect is a two way street”*

<b>Outcome:</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Recommendations:</b>
<b>Connecting the community with young people</b>	Respect for others and oneself	We will work to improve communication and understanding between each other e.g. review YI/ Councillor Buddy System
	Support positive relationships between young people and family/whanau, friends	We will advocate to the media and community for positive promotion of

## **Where to from here?**

To build on the development of this youth policy and on all the work put in by the many people, groups and organisations working with and on behalf of young people in Hutt City, a Youth Strategic Plan would be a natural next step. This Plan would build on the youth policy by proposing tangible actions. Included in the work of developing a Youth Strategic Plan would be the development of targets and indicators to measure the progress and effectiveness of the policy and the resulting actions.

In order to develop a Strategic Plan for the City a collaborative approach between young people and the network of groups and organisations including Council, which work with young people is needed.

## **Review**

To monitor this policy and its associated strategic plan, it is envisaged that a review of its effectiveness would take place every 2 years. The review would focus on what progress has been made towards achieving the policy outcomes in terms of addressing the objectives of the policy.