

Waverley Council's responses to questions asked by the Parliament of New South Wales Committee on Children and Young People. 9-14 years

1) How could arts programs be integrated further into vacation care and before and after school services.

Waverley Council's Better Futures '**Supporting young people's connection to activities (9-13) project**' has aimed at increasing arts participation through many of its supported projects. These approaches range from bringing artists into OSHC settings, which has worked well as it teaches OSHC workers arts skills, as well as getting kids involved in mural projects at two locations. Multi - media projects have been run at Pyrmont OSHC in after school hours culminating in short video projects utilising the Power House's film making facilities. Bondi Pavilion now has arts, dance and creative activities specifically for 9-13 year olds in their school holiday programs and these are becoming increasingly popular. Youth services and vacation care workers are well placed to co-ordinate special projects with art colleges or schools as well as with community arts projects via Local Govt and other agencies.

Through our projects we have developed OSHC network clusters that connect 9-12 year olds to youth, arts and sports organisations for activities in after school hours in their own communities. This is done by picking up kids from OSHC's that are in close proximity to each other in after school hours 3.30 – 5.30pm and taking them to youth services or other organisations to do a mixture of activities that have included: surfing workshops, drama, hip hop dancing, bike building, acrobatics, film making, cartooning, CSIRO Science Workshops, reading groups, environmental craft and capoeira to name a few. The Better Futures projects and the integrated planning approach taken has not been an expensive initiative; however it does need ongoing funding to maintain momentum and allow for networking and co-ordination to continue.

The children who participated in our multi OSHC programs enjoyed mixing with their peers from other schools. They felt special being in the youth service environment for their 'tweenies' programs and getting to know about support services that will prepare them for the transition from primary to high school.

The NSW Govt could initiate an Active after school **arts** program throughout NSW to provide a wider range of arts activities in after school hours than is offered within the school curriculum. This could be delivered through schools, youth services art organisations or OSHC's in much the same way as the AASC program is currently being delivered. One of the main activities of the program could be to teach children the basic art elements, to familiarise them with the basic art materials and to free their imagination through the medium of art. The children would be encouraged to experiment with different types of materials, to move away from cognitive stereotypes and limitations, often present in art culture. Through the medium of play the program would also aim to assist children to improve their social skills as well as teach them more about team work; how to listen to their friends and the people around them and how to share materials and the classroom.

Both the City of Sydney and Leichhardt Councils are good examples of interesting and popular programming for this age group. In the UK there is a scheme called the leisure

passport that involves highly subsidised passes to a huge range of cultural/ fitness, media, arts and educational facilities.

2) Are there difficulties with transporting students to before and after school care? What would you recommend to improve the situation.

The after school timeslot of 3.30 -5.30 is quite likely the worst and most congested time on the roads of the Inner and Eastern Sydney suburbs particularly from 3.30 – 4.30. This makes it difficult for the children if leaving the OSHC centre, to have enough time at any external location to do a meaningful activity and return in time for the parental pick up.

There are also costs and co-ordination issues associated with transporting children from OSHC's to (for example) youth services that add to the costs of the activity and require a level of planning that most OSHC's seem reluctant to engage in. If the student travel concession card could be applied to any carrier, children could go wherever the activity takes them on public transport which would cut program costs. It would also be helpful if school buses could be more flexible with where they pick up and drop off children in after school hours. Negotiating new travel routes can be part of children gaining increased independence and confidence; both key elements of transitioning through middle childhood.

3) To what extent are transition to high school programs in place in schools in inner and Eastern Sydney?

Primary to High School transitions:

We have no detailed information on how well or badly local schools are doing transition support but gather from anecdotal sources that it is a somewhat haphazard process left up to the discretion of each school. DET has printed resources that detail examples of schools currently carrying out best practice transition support.

DET has a set of recommendations or guidelines relating to the key elements of Primary to High School transitions. Individual schools then implement or develop their own transition processes in conjunction with feeder schools in their area. There are no mandatory requirements on schools to do transition programs in any given way, so there are no reporting requirements either. This means that the delivery is random and ad hoc with some schools providing transition support well and others less so.

The Better Futures Projects have been largely concerned with transitions from primary care to secondary services that support children in middle childhood and have some good examples in Inner and Eastern Sydney.

The City of Sydney (CoS) children's and youth services and Waverley Council have both been operating transition programs that are aimed at establishing links for activities and support for children from OSHC's to youth services. These programs assist with transition into youth programs and is continuously being developed in consultation with young people. Because City of Sydney owns and operates it's children and youth services, the integrated planning is much easier as it becomes a matter of service planning rather than service boundaries. Where CoS services are co-located they introduce Youth staff to children to assist with transition from the children's care space to the youth space. The staff from the Children's and Youth Teams run the program together. Their programs involve a mix of physical activities, excursions, centre based arts and cultural play.

Certainly there can be more done to retain the older children in OSHC ie those aged 9 to 12. However, without Youth Services being proactive –e.g. going out and inviting children leaving Primary School and OSHC into Youth activities and programs especially catering to their needs and interests in a space that's safe and welcoming, many vulnerable kids are going to stay at home or be hanging on the streets with no support and potentially only come to the attention of Youth workers when they are in trouble. We suggest the introduction of standards to lift the quality of the youth sector and its professionalism and outcomes for children 11 to 14. More needs to be done than further strengthen what OSHC sector delivers for the 9 Pluses. These services work under National Standards, qualified staff are mandatory, and are required to undergo the process of self study and continuous improvement to be accredited under OSHC Quality Assurance.

Newtown OSHC trialled an 'explorers' transition program last year which has not yet been written up into model. Their program mainly dealt with practical issues of children moving from one school (ie bus routes/ reading timetables/ making phone calls) as well as support and information.

Our Better Futures project worker has had recent discussions with NAPCAN looking at incorporating a suite of interventions involving self esteem, good communication, anti bullying and cyber awareness processes into a model transition program from primary to high schools involving youth services as link organisations.

The Shack youth services at Kingsford are currently trialling a Yr 7 program in 2009 that involves bringing children back to the youth services one afternoon a week for activities and transition support.

4) What initiatives has your library taken to service this age group and should these services be available across New South Wales?

Waverley library has a book club for 8-12 year olds once a month and does up to three holiday programs per vacation period for tweens and teens each school holidays. The activities range from Manga and cartooning workshops to CSIRO science in action shows excursions and creative writing workshops.

Most of the larger city libraries have children's librarians and have regular children's book clubs that meet to discuss books and identify titles for the libraries to purchase. Some libraries are well established with computers and play areas for the younger child and offer craft type activities during holiday periods. Many libraries offer homework clubs and teach children how to develop research skills using the internet. Many of the libraries across Inner and Eastern Sydney do holiday programs that are booked out as soon as they are advertised.

City of Sydney and Randwick libraries both have innovative vacation programs that bring interactive science shows to the library, excursions, link in with NIDA for drama workshops, and stage media/technology, photography and other creative activities that are well attended. Activities are targeted at 8-16 years children and youth.

Often the 9-13 year olds are viewed as being hard to engage in traditional library activities, but those libraries that offer programming that is interesting and age appropriate are highly successful.