



YOWI (Youth on Wheels Ink)

Northern Rivers Community Transport Inc.

PO Box 1788, LISMORE, NSW, 2480

Phone. 02 6628 0024

Mobile. 0402627347

Fax 02 6628 6973

Email: yowi@nrct.org

Web: www.yowi.nrct.org

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Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW

1. Could you describe how the service provided to young people by YOWI operates?

YOWI is a youth specific transport programme offering information, support and assistance to young people (aged 12 to 20). YOWI provides subsidised group transport to attend social, sporting and recreational activities that are drug and alcohol free. YOWI does not have a vehicle and utilises local bus operators, U drive companies, Northern Rivers Community Transport buses or maxi taxis within the Northern Rivers region.

2. How long has the service been running and what geographical areas does it cover?

In 1993 funds were received through Area Assistance and then picked up by Ministry Of Transport that saw the start of Youth Transport service in the Lismore LGA. In 2004 YOWI received funding through the Area Assistance Scheme for 2 years to expand the service to the Casino and Kyogle LGA's. The expansion was successful with youth from rural communities booking bus trips to all sorts of places. When this funding finished in 2006 sadly it was not picked up by any funding body. Rather than take the service away from the Casino and Kyogle communities, YOWI applied for and received permission to expand the core funding to cover the LGA's covered by the auspicing organisation Northern Rivers Community Transport Inc., being Lismore, Kyogle and Richmond Valley Shires.

- Which government department and program funds the service; how much funding does it receive; and is the funding recurrent? Does the service receive any funding from other sources?

In the 2009 financial year YOWI received;

- Recurrent funding from the Ministry of Transport \$28,274.00 for a full year
- Ministry of Transport one off 2 year funding for the Tabulam and Bonalbo Youth for 5 weekend bus trips a year \$5,400.00 due to finish at the end of this financial year.
- Ministry of Transport one off 2 year funding for the Regional, State and Interstate Sport Transport for young people (aged 12 to 20) from Lismore, Kyogle and Richmond Valley Shires. \$29,000.00 due to finish in June 2010.

In the past, YOWI has received funding through:

Area Assistance

Lismore City Council, Youth Activities Fund

- What are the demographics of the young people who manly use the service?

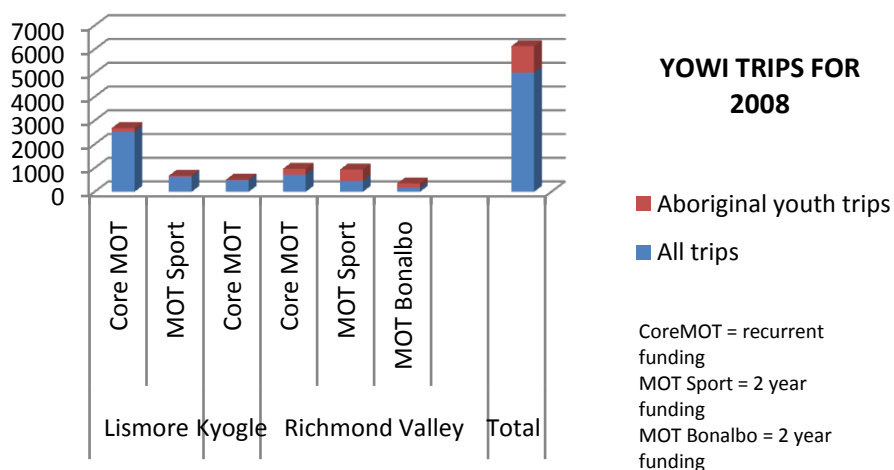
Young people (aged 12 to 20) living in the Kyogle, Lismore and Richmond Valley local government areas.

- To what extent are Aboriginal young people using the service on an annual basis?

In the 2008 financial year YOWI provided 5,260 trips and of these trips 1,118 trips were for Aboriginal Youth (a trip is one person going one way). Therefore over 21% of the trips YOWI provided were designated Aboriginal youth trips.

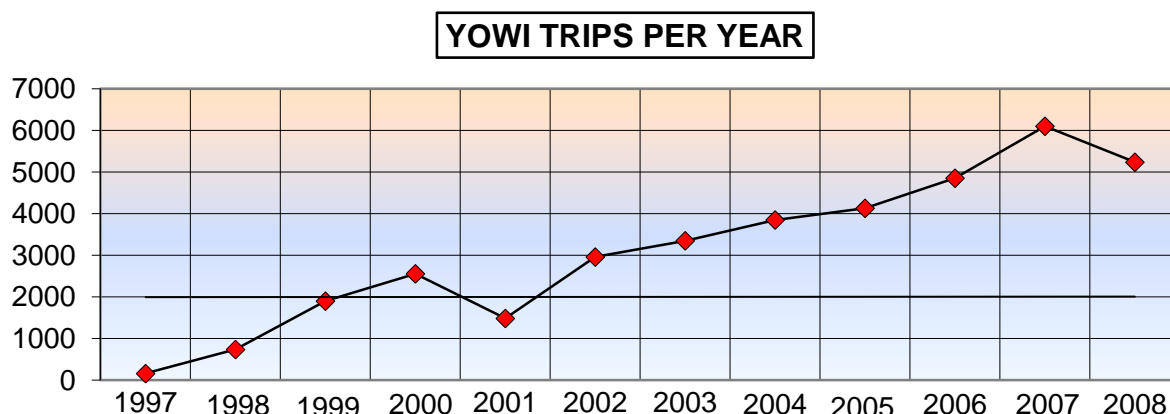
Below is a graph showing Ministry of Transport funding whether recurrent or one off and which LGA the trips were conducted in, with the division of designated Aboriginal youth trips .

(a trip is one person going one way)



6. Could you provide data about how many people use the service on an annual basis?

In the 2008 financial year 2,630 youth used the YOWI service.



(a trip is one person going one way)

The dips in the graph above relate to where one off funding finished and the service relied on the core funding.

7. What do you consider would be required to increase the effectiveness and coverage of the service?

The demand for this service is both vast and valid. With more recurrent funding the service could expand appropriately and greatly assist youth with their transport needs. There are a number of Aboriginal Communities with youth, of both sexes, wanting to go to practices and games, for their local sports teams. At the present time YOWI does not have sufficient funding to provide ongoing transport. Due to funding restraints, YOWI can presently only offer a 20% subsidy on bus hire costs to enable the funding to spread over such a wide area. Unfortunately this can be prohibitive for some communities as it is not enough support and they are often unable to raise the necessary funds required to participate.

8. Is your youth transport service able to use HACC funded buses during low-use periods?

Yes but the youth service still needs to pay the Northern Rivers Community Transport the standard bus hire fee of 90c a km. This covers repairs, petrol and bus replacement. For a youth group with no income this can still be too high a fee even if they use volunteer drivers.

9. Do you know of any other innovative transport programs for youth in NSW?

Yes

Byron BAT BUS ph: 6685 8771, batbus@norex.com.au

Ballina YAXI ph: 0404 465 109, yaxi7@bigpond.com.au

10. Are you aware of how many Community Transport Organisations in NSW have Aboriginal Transport officers?

As far as I know there are 7 in NSW.

Do you consider that there are benefits of having youth transport workers and Aboriginal transport workers co-located in the Community Transport Organisation?

Yes, absolutely. Community Transport services have an understanding of transport needs and access to vehicle information within that region. The Northern Rivers region's public transport services are very poor. In many country areas it is common that the only public transport available to youth are the school buses. With both youth and Aboriginal access issues being of paramount importance in our area, the first steps to creating equity is to offer transport to enable youth to attend the services that will enable participation in all aspects of community life.

11. What benefits do you consider youth transport services bring to young people and their families, both Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal?

The benefits are numerous. To begin with, availability of travel, as taken for granted in non rural areas, is highly valued by rural youth and their families. Where parents' vocations already require long distances be covered it is often the youth who will miss out due to time, vehicle and financial restraints on parents. The entire family will benefit from the assistance given to youth to travel by way of alleviated dependency, financial assistance and youth empowerment. The long distances needing to be traversed are prohibitive also, particularly due to the rise in fuel prices resulting in families prioritizing youth sporting and social commitments at the bottom of the scale. Equity for country areas to be well represented in sporting endeavours will often result in participants earning recognition for skills that would otherwise go unnoticed. The other issues include safe travel on country roads; it is much safer for groups of youth to travel to and from events in the comfort of a bus, there have been too many youth deaths on country roads.

12. Does YOWI have an advisory committee? Are young people involved in planning the service in any way?

There is not a committee, youth advise the coordinator directly, and the YOWI Coordinator attends Youth Interagency meetings regularly. YOWI communicates with youth via modern media technology the web: www.yowi.nrct.org , Email; yowi@nrct.org and text messaging there are plans to also extend a Myspace page as a way of advertising YOWI events.

This report was compiled by

Heather Gillard,



YOWI Coordinator