

Submission

No 67

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

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The Council of the
SHIRE OF BREWARRINA



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Dear Sir or Madam

Please accept our late submission into the Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW.

The Brewarrina Shire Council has been operating the Brewarrina Youth Centre (BYC) for over 6 years, during this time the centre has changed to meet the needs of the age group with the age group accessing the centre with the age group being 5 and above. Whilst this age group is not suitable for other youth centre's it suits the Brewarrina community.

Brewarrina Shire Profile

Brewarrina Shire is a small rural/isolated community which covers the area of 19,155 square kilometres in the north-west of NSW. The population is 1944 (based on the 2006 census) which includes four villages with the populations from 40 through to 370 at Goodooga. There is an estimate of 400-500 persons living on rural properties (BS source).

The majority of the population of Brewarrina is younger than 45 years of age with one third younger than 15 years. A greater proportion of these younger people are amongst the Indigenous population.

We trust that the Council's submission will assist the Committee in its current Inquiry.

Yours truly,

Glenn Schuil
Acting General Manager
Brewarrina Shire Council
8th May 2008

Issues concerning the youth of Brewarrina Shire:

Law and order

- Living at home with domestic violence and then accepting it when the youth leave home and become involved into a relationship
- The youngest person to die in Australia from relationship violence was a 15year old Aboriginal girl from western NSW, twice she sought an AVO and was denied (Wirringa Baiya submission Legal Aide and Access to Justice 2003).
- More youth are seeking ways to protect their mothers and siblings from domestic violence. One youth in 2003 picked up an instrument and killed the perpetrator to protect his mother. (Wirringa Baiya submission Legal Aide and Access to Justice 2003).
- Youth breaking and entering into businesses and homes
- Acceptance of the judicial system and lack of respect

Health

- Diabetes
- Dental
- Nutrition, when parents are drinking the older siblings are expected cook, however they do not have the knowledge of cooking or nutrition and a lot of times the children have for example bake-beans on toast

Recreation

- Sport and Recreation program will be leaving in Bre regarding lack of funds (funded by the NSW Sport and Recreation), youth in Brewarrina love their sport however with the sport and rec program finishing this will have a major impact on our youth and a major impact on law and order
- Lack of parent support and involvement
- Lack of personal sporting equipment
- Lack of transport to travel to other communities and the distances involved at times is over 95klms and the youth are required to travel back at night with the wildlife on the road such as kangaroo's and emus.

Teenage pregnancy

- Lack of understanding of your commitment to your child and partner
- Is the baby bonus a draw-card to have a baby?
- Lack of services to assist teenager pregnancy and dealing with relationships and commitments

Child Sexual Assault

- The acceptance of CSA and to keep it hidden
- Lack of services to address this horrific problem
- Lack of education within the home and in the community for CSA

The claiming of CSA as being part of Aboriginal culture is false and misleading, there are no Dreamtime stories that indicate this, in fact, children were protected at all cost.

Education

- The acceptance of truancy within the family unit and not responding and dealing with it
- Lack of value regarding education at home being passed onto the children/youth
- The need to send children away for schooling
- At times the Brewarrina Central School is classed as an Aboriginal school by the local non-Aboriginal community

Drug and Alcohol

- Drugs have been an issue in Brewarrina and will continue to be so unless more education is done
- Harder drugs are coming into town, when the harder drugs are in town there is a lot more crime and disturbance
- The acceptance of alcohol within the family and the accessibility of alcohol within the family
- Older siblings are expected to look after their younger siblings whilst the parents are drinking
- Do we need to have a community campaign?

Racism

- Lack of education for the community that racism is not acceptable
- The acceptance of calling each other names which include racism taunts

Basic services

- At times family members are required to travel for medical help. This disrupts the family unit and puts a strain on the teenagers who are expected to babysit while the parents are away.

Employment and training

- Lack of employment opportunities within the Brewarrina Shire

Family relationships

Within rural and Aboriginal communities family relationships are very strong and teenagers still abide by this by paying respect to their Elders and knowing where they fit within the family unit.

- Youth find it very hard to leave their community. This effects their employment and training opportunities.

Culture

- Being a rural, remote and isolated community the youth have developed their own culture and rely a lot on their family and friends as their support as opposed to youth within the city which have other options such as shops, theatre various sporting activities etc
- Aboriginal culture is still strong within NSW with Brewarrina having the highest percentage population of Aboriginal people. Therefore the culture is strong, such as the passing down of Dreamtime stories, local hunting and gathering,

knowledge of the family unit which at times can have over 200 aunty/uncles and cousins.

IT

- Although the internet has made the world a smaller place, in rural and remote communities where the wage bracket is lower than rest of Australia there is no funds left to have the internet on, therefore the youth miss out.
- Youth are required to access IT at Youth Centre's, libraries and schools, not within the comfort of their own home.

Brewarrina Youth Centre

Purpose

The Purpose of the Brewarrina Youth Centre is to provide a safe friendly place for youth to access and enjoy.

The Aim of the Centre is to provide;

- A positive, safe and welcoming environment for young people that is free from alcohol and drugs.
- Provide recreation and social activities, programs and projects that meet the needs identified by young people.
- Provide access to information
- Empower youth

Yearly Programs

- Camps x 2 per annual
- Video nights weekly
- Bi-weekly sausage sizzle
- Bi-weekly healthy eating program
- Pool competitions
- Table tennis competitions
- Music days
- Art and craft
- Cultural days with talks and walks
- Dancing programs weekly (still in the process of negotiating with the dance teacher)
- Fortnightly Kids from Bre radio program (still in the process of negotiating with the 2CuzFM)
- Weilmoringle Outreach Program (bi-weekly and to be accessed)
- BMX Bike competitions 1 per annual