

Submission

No 80

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

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MT DRUITT BLACKTOWN YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

13 May 2008

Committee on Children and Young People
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

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

Dear Sir/Madam

The Mount Druitt Blacktown Youth Services Network (MBYSN) would like to thank the Children and Young People's Committee for the opportunity to provide input into the 'Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW'.

MBYSN is committed to supporting youth service providers and the community of the Blacktown local government area to achieve quality service provision for young people and to promote an awareness of their diverse needs and lifestyles. We have a commitment to assisting young people improve their quality of life by advocating on their behalf for equitable access to quality services, activities and programs.

Blacktown LGA has a population of 56 335 young people aged between 12 and 25 years, which accounts for 21% of the total population of the Blacktown LGA. Our LGA also boasts the highest urban Aboriginal population in NSW.

At our last MBYSN meeting we raised the Terms of Reference for your Inquiry with our members and brainstorm some concerns for the age group. Contained below is a summary of the key issues that our members identified as being of relevance to those aged between 9-14 in the Blacktown LGA.

1. Issues specifically affecting the settlement of Refugee and Migrant young people in this age group are not being identified.
2. Homelessness and lack of appropriate (sufficient) accommodation for those in late childhood/early adolescence
3. Limited access to specialist Health services - need for a personal Medicare card
4. Inter-generational family issues including unemployment
5. Crime - assault, theft, graffiti, drug usage (mainly THC)
6. Need for early intervention services, youth workers turning under 12's away as not funded/ trained for this age-group
7. Need for free recreation centres especially for under 12's

8. Need for regular food - children not eating breakfast before school
9. Teenage pregnancy - need for data, need for analysis regarding perception and reality
10. Truancy from School - lack of transport, lack of role models within family, education not a priority for some families
11. Lack of information about hygiene issues/concerns for this age group.
12. Need for day programs for truants
13. Inappropriate clothing for children in school (not clean, not warm enough etc)
14. Cultural needs - need for Aboriginal or cultural specific mentors
15. Children coming to school sick. There are no services, or information for parents of this age group around health as well as solutions for this predicament when parents need to still go to work.
16. Under 12's displaying adolescent behaviours - sexually active, drug usage
17. Need case management funding for whole families
18. Little data on wellbeing of young people and children (only focus on disorders)

We recommend that in their final report the Committee address the above issues. The above issues arise out of a lack of appropriate services and programs for 9-14 year olds. It is imperative that the Committee consider this as a part of their Inquiry and recommend that funding be provided for specialist services for this age group. It is also necessary that increased financial and policy support be given to existing services to extend their programs to this age group, particularly if services are working with an older sibling of a 9-14 year old.

We would be pleased to provide more information should you require it.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to contribute our views to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Leanne Armstrong
Chairperson MBYSN