

Submission

No 11

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

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Date Received: 30/04/2008

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**Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW**

Ballina Shire Council, 30 May 2008.

I would like to thank the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee for the opportunity to make a contribution to the inquiry. It should be noted that the following submission has not been endorsed by the elected Council and thus should not be viewed as being Ballina Shire Council policy.

The submission has however been approved by the Council's Group Manager of Strategic Services. Consequently the submission focuses upon local observations from Council Officer level.

The ages of 9 to 14 can be a challenging time in the lives of many young people. These young people can be very vulnerable and experience degrees of anxiety about a number of issues including self esteem, health concerns and relationships. The effect of these and other issues on the young person can also have an impact upon their families and even their local communities.

The Ballina Shire Council's Social Plan identifies that there is a need to increase the level of services targeting specifically the 12 to 14 age group. Young people need to have access to appropriate and timely early intervention programs. The programs should aim to assist young people to build resilience and equip them with life long skills.

Existing youth services are funded to target young people aged between 12 to 25. The practicalities of providing services /programs aimed at meeting the collective needs of the age group often makes it impossible to cater for the varying needs.

The local service providers are stretched in terms of resources and are unable to offer additional specific programs. It is common for programs to focus on needs of older young people, aged 15 and above, as they are seen to be the most in need of services.

The Ballina Youth Interagency is a collective of non Government and Government agencies which provided services to young people in the Ballina

Shire. The services offered include counselling, social and recreation activities, assisting young people who are homeless, street youth work and crime prevention.

Informal consultation, at the May 2008 meeting, of the Ballina Youth interagency identified that they felt there was a growing need to have additional programs that target specifically the younger age group. However they also indicated that there should be more services assisting the parents of the young people as well.

Youth workers reported that they are increasingly being approached by the parents of young people for parenting workshops. They reported that sometimes the parents indicated that they have no idea how to deal with the issues that are faced by their children. They also reported that requests for information and assistance are coming from many younger aged young people.

The members reported that transportation difficulties are common amongst young people. Parents and guardians, for a variety of reasons, are not always available to provide transport. This would be seen to be a significant issue with the younger group as it may not be considered safe to use existing transport options.

What would assist communities such as Ballina is to have access to age specific youth services. This would enable programs to target the specific needs of the younger age group. It should be noted that the developmental differences between 9 year olds and that of 14 year olds will necessitate the running of separate programs/services.

Ballina Shire Council and the members of the Ballina Youth Interagency would welcome the opportunity to further discuss these issues with you at your convenience.

**Roberto Kenk**  
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**Ballina Shire Council**  
**30 April 2008**