

# Southern Downs Youth Policy

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# **1 Policy Background**

Southern Downs Regional Council has had a long and renowned history of its commitment to youth services and delivery of youth programs across the Southern Downs. Council's Youth Service started in 1999 and Council's Young Leader program (previously Young Ambassadors and Young Delegates) began in 2000.

The Youth Policy was first written in response to extensive community engagement with young people, which at the time was lead and facilitated by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).

In 2018, the inaugural Southern Downs Youth Council commenced, providing opportunity for youth to influence the decisions of Council.

## **2 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to guide Council and its employees in decision making and project delivery that affects young people in the region.

The Council recognises the importance of young people to the future of our community and the value of considering young people and facilities for the region. In recognising this, Council is committed to addressing the needs of youth in our community, both directly and indirectly through collaboration with other agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs). Emphasis will be on building partnerships, developing young people to have a voice and support to become self-sufficient.

## **3 Scope**

The Youth Policy applies to all young people in the Southern Downs Regional Council local government area. The policy will apply to all aspects of delivery of services to young people by Council.

## **4 Legislative Context**

- **Local Government Act 2009, S.4 Principles**
  - Democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement.
- **SDRC Corporate Plan**
- **LGAQ** – *“Whether a service is a legislative requirement of councils, or is provided by local choice, the Local Government Act requires that councils are responsive to the needs, interests and aspirations of individuals and groups within their communities”.*

## **5 Policy Details**

### **5.1 Principles**

The Youth Policy is underpinned by the following four (4) core principles.

#### **5.1.1 Communication**

Ensure effective communication and engagement with young people, including genuine and regular communication between Council, local schools and young people. The schools are integral to this process and ensure that the communication between Council and the region's Youth prospers.

#### **5.1.2 Building Community Capacity**

Increase the capacity of young people and youth organisations to respond to the current and future needs of the Southern Downs community.

#### **5.1.3 Leadership**

Provide leadership opportunities and skills development for young people and represent youth interests to all levels of government and the broader community.

#### **5.1.4 Equity and Inclusiveness**

Consider the diverse needs of young people, providing for all ages, abilities and backgrounds across the Southern Downs region.

### **5.2 Council Role**

#### **5.2.1 Advocate**

Council will advocate the local needs and priority concerns of the region's young people to all tiers of government, and within the community services sector.

#### **5.2.2 Youth Development**

Council will in partnership provide youth activities and programs to build the capacity and develop the skills of the region's young people. This will include workshops, training, recreation and events.

#### **5.2.3 Partner**

Council will partner with young people, service providers, stakeholders, and community to support and facilitate collaboration, identify service needs and opportunities for the region's young people.

#### **5.2.4 Community Engagement**

Council will collaborate with the service sector, young people and community to identify local needs and priority concerns of young people and youth stakeholders in the region. Including, facilitating actions, projects and strategies in relation to addressing identified needs and concerns.

## **5.3 Objectives**

### **5.3.1 Participation & Engagement**

Council recognises the importance of youth participation and engagement in Council processes, civic activities, active recreation and community. Council is committed to positively encouraging young people through participatory leadership processes to empower them to make decisions and actively participate in their community. Furthermore, Council will seek appropriate forms of communication to connect with young people in general.

### **5.3.2 Partnerships, Roles and Collaboration**

Council recognises the value of the Youth Council, including their role, and the importance of the retention of youth leaders in the region. Council will endeavour to consult with young people and youth stakeholders within the region in a timely and appropriate manner on matters that will, or are likely to, impact youth. Council will create effective partnerships with community and service sector in the development and implementation of programs and initiatives.

### **5.3.3 Planning and Decision Making**

Council acknowledges the importance of planning communities and public space that are inclusive of, and address the needs of young people. Council is committed to proactively involving young people and youth stakeholders through engagement and decision making processes.

To achieve this objective Council implemented a “Youth Council”, which created a conduit for input into Council activities and decisions.

### **5.3.4 Diversity**

Council recognises its role and responsibility to consider the diversity of young people and their particular needs when making decisions and considering relevant planning, policy and projects within the community. Council recognises the value of, and will encourage, young people from all backgrounds to participate in the cultural life of the community.

### **5.3.5 Employment, Education and Training**

Council is committed to working in partnership with all tiers of government and the community, to encourage the development of employment, education and training opportunities for young people within the region.

### **5.3.6 Funding**

Council will strive to attract and secure funding for youth development, recreation, capacity building and participation opportunities for young people across the region.

### **5.3.7 Recreation**

Council will continue working in partnership with other tiers of government, young people, stakeholders and the broader community to ensure that a range of affordable facilities and activities exist.

### 5.3.8 Services and Strategies

Council is committed to working with young people and youth stakeholders to plan, innovate, and support strategies that can improve the access, identification of gaps, and promotion of the range of youth services within the region (including e.g., but not limited to, Transport, Housing, and Health services).

### 5.3.9 Safety

Council recognises the need for young people to live in a safe community and will work in partnership with other tiers of government, young people, stakeholders, police, other relevant bodies, and the broader community to achieve this aim.

### 5.3.10 Health and Wellbeing

Council recognises the importance of supporting and promoting the health and wellbeing of young people across the Southern Downs including raising awareness of existing services and current health issues for young people.

## 6 Definitions

Term	Meaning
Young People/Youth	Young people aged 12-25 in the Southern Downs Local Government area.
Youth Council	An advisory committee whose role is to represent the voice of young people who live, work, study or volunteer in the Southern Downs region, to provide input into Council activities and decisions.
Council	Southern Downs Regional Council, including Councillors and staff.
Region	Southern Downs local government geographic area.

## **7 References**

- Queensland Youth Strategy – “Building young Queenslanders for a global future” - 2017
- SDRC Corporate Plan 2014-2019
- Mackay Regional Council Youth Policy
- Latrobe Council Youth Policy
- City of Greater Dandenong Youth Strategy
- Kingborough Youth Policy
- Yarra Council Youth Policy
- Cairns Regional Council Youth Policy
- City of Devonport Youth Policy
- Campbelltown City Council Youth Policy
- Ipswich City Council Youth Policy