



## **Report to General Manager**

Attachments:  
Nil

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**SUBJECT:** Youth Work in North Sydney – 2018 Year in Review

**AUTHOR:** Greg Nikoletos, Youth Services and Partnerships Coordinator

**ENDORSED BY:** Martin Ellis, Director Community and Library Services

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides a summary of the outcomes for the Youth Work team for 2018. Young people were engaged primarily through Council's Youth Centre, Planet X, but also in partnerships, and other venues, with other key stakeholders in the community.

The Youth Workers engaged with a broad spectrum of local young people, a subset of whom presented with multiple risk factors.

The year's programs are briefly described, illustrating the range of opportunities Council with its partners provides to young people in need.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Youth Services annual costs amount to \$264,000 with some \$20,000 operational support contributed by the NSW government.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report be received.

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## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

Direction: 4. Our Social Vitality

Outcome: 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

## **BACKGROUND**

The Youth Work team primarily provides direct service and universal access from Planet X Youth Centre while also engaging in community development with key stakeholders to provide a variety of programs and opportunities for young people.

Planet X Youth Centre is based at the Music Shell in St. Leonards Park. It operates as a drop-in centre offering a safe space for young people to visit, socialise, participate in activities and programs, and seek assistance if required.

In essence the Youth Work team aims to connect young people to their community, provide positive, protective factors to maximise their opportunities, health and wellbeing while also developing their social, living skills and ethical and moral values.

The youth centre provides computers, internet and Wi-Fi, game consoles, a ping pong table, a pool table, board games, sporting gear and arts and crafts. Food and refreshments are also available and young people also have access to a small kitchen. The operating hours of Planet X are Tues to Friday, 12pm-6pm and Sat 1pm-5pm.

The team primarily works with the 12-18 age group; however, targeted and time limited support is also provided to the secondary target group of 19-21.

The Youth Work team is comprised of two full-time and one part-time position; and two casuals to relieve staff during leave. Regulations require a minimum of two staff to be present during the youth centre's opening hours.

The Youth Work team works with a diverse group of stakeholders either to refer young people to or to work in collaborative partnerships to provide programs, activities and assistance.

The main group of stakeholders include: Taldumande Youth Services, Phoenix House Youth Services, North Sydney PCYC, Youth Health Promotion and Sexual Assault Unit (RNSH), FACS, Department of Education, Mission Australia, Catholic Care and North Shore Police.

The team also works closely with their Youth Work colleagues from the Councils in the Northern Sydney district.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol.

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## SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The sustainability implications were considered and reported on during the initiation phase of this project.

## DETAIL

### Planet X Youth Centre Snapshot

Planet X Youth Centre has always attracted a diverse group of young people and this is reflected in data collected over the last twelve months.

The approximate annual attendance is 3,000, not counting those at major events such as Shoreshocked. At peak times, the weekly count can approach 200. Four weekly census' were conducted over the year to get a snapshot of the ages, genders, home circumstances, cultural backgrounds and schools of the young people that attend Planet X. The results were:

Age	Per day	Per week
12-13	6	30
14-16	17	85
17-18	8	40
19-21	3	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>170</b>

Gender	
Male	54%
Female	43%
Non Binary	3%

<b>Homeless</b>	<b>27%</b>
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## **Schools**

The schools from which students who attend Planet X mainly come are Marist Brothers, Cammeraygal High, Mosman High, Naremburn School, Bradfield College and North Sydney Boys.

Students also attend from North Sydney Girls, Wenona, Chatswood High and Willoughby Girls High, but in smaller numbers.

## **Cultural Background**

The young people that attend Planet X have very diverse cultural backgrounds. Some of the countries they originate from as recorded over the last twelve months include:

India (2), China (8), Mozambique (1), Israel (2), South Korea (6), Russia (1), Slovakia (1), England (3), Wales (1), Scotland (1), Ireland (1), Nigeria (1), Netherlands (1), Italy (1), Sierra Leone (1), Malaysia (1), Lebanon (1), South Africa (2), Papa New Guinea (1), Brazil (1) and New Caledonia (1), Norwegian (2), Philippines (2), Iran (1), Armenia (1), New Zealand (1)

## **Overview of 2018**

The last twelve months have been eventful and active for Planet X Youth Centre with a variety of programs implemented, and with significant assistance provided to young people, including in some instances to their families as well.

The work of the Youth Work team is guided by the “*Youth Work in North Sydney Action Plan (2016-2021)*” Council adopted Strategic Plan for this demographic.

A significant number of young people who have been attending Planet X have presented with a range of needs and difficulties, and assistance is provided in the appropriate ways. This has included:

Mental health and wellbeing	Homelessness
Drugs and alcohol	Sexual health and education
Relationships	Sexual assault
Family conflict	LGQBTIA+ support
Conflict resolution	Court support

Not all young people who attend Planet X require assistance to this degree; Planet X also nurtures life skills, social skills and consciousness of the place of ethics and values in a young person’s life, along with, of course, facilitating social and recreational opportunities.

## **Programs**

In addition to the direct service provided at the youth centre the staff also run programs and hold events and activities on site or through community development partnerships.

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These include:

- **Shoreshocked Youth Week Event**

Council's annual premier Youthweek music festival that allows for young people to contribute and learn skills in event management. Shoreshocked is the only large scale youth entertainment option in the Northern Sydney region.



- **Bradfield excursions as part of their Industry Experience Program**

Students visit a place in North Sydney to learn of its modern and Aboriginal history as well as its environment setting. The visits and lessons are then incorporated in their curriculum and a variety of works are produced. Some of the creative works are then exhibited at Council's in Transit Space. This year the students visited the Coal Loader site as well as Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden. Council's historian and a Council Environment officer, along with a representative from the Aboriginal Heritage Office facilitated talks and presentations for the students.

- **Bradfield Senior College Youth Services Expo**

Planet X is a co-partner in organising a youth services expo at Bradfield College allowing their students to learn of the various options available to them if they require them.

- **Bradfield Students Work Placement at Planet X**

Interested students attend Planet X to undertake their work placement. 2018 was the fourth year where this program was successfully implemented.

- **Save-a-Mate (SAM) workshop**

Drug and Alcohol education workshop held at Planet X to educate young people about the risks and dangers of drug/alcohol use and what to do when one of their friends requires assistance. Facilitated by Australian Red Cross.

- **S-E-A-T Project**

Planet X participated for a second year in this important program. A range of schools and community organisations participate in decorating bamboo stools which are then auctioned with the proceeds going to a charity. Planet X participated in the SEAT project as part of

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the Royal North Shore Hospital School and the two stools decorated were auctioned for \$85 each. Proceeds went to Northern Beaches Women's Shelter and Seven Women Charity in Nepal and a total of \$4200 was raised.

- **“Lost-Bird-Found” Project**

Planet X has been involved in Lost Bird Found since its inception 5 years ago. The young people attending the centre, along with Bradfield College students during their work placement, created and decorated 100 clay birds. Through this activity we were then able to discuss the importance of mental health and to assess whether any young people require any assistance.



- **Friday BBQs**

A BBQ is held at the youth centre every Friday afternoon.

- **Naremburn students and teachers' BBQ**

Bi-annual visits by Naremburn School to Planet X for students and teachers to meet the staff and to get to know more of the youth centre. A number of their students attend Planet X through the year and the Youth Workers and teachers communicate regularly to provide support to them.

- **Northern Beaches School Expo**

Planet X attends along with the majority of youth and community related services from the Northern Sydney region to promote its services and programs to teachers and students.

- **Apprenticeship and Traineeship Expo**

Collaborative partnership with neighbouring Councils, TAFE, and Mission Australia to provide information and options to young students looking to obtain a traineeship or apprenticeship.

- **Careers day at Cammeraygal High School**

Planet X staff attended to provide information about Youth work as a career as there was significant interest from some of the students.

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- **Mock Council Program**

Staff from the Youth Work team assist with participating in the Mock Council Program which is attended from students from the local schools.

- **Lower North Shore Youth Interagency**

Council's Youth Services and Partnerships Coordinator, this report's author, chairs the Lower North Shore Youth Interagency, and also organises guest speakers and training for the network. The Interagency meets on the first Wed of every month, February to November.

- **CDAT (Community Drug Action Team)**

The Youth Work team are part of the North Shore CDAT which is a collaborative partnership involving various stake holders focusing on addressing drug and alcohol issues in the community. Partners include the Police, Mission Australia, NSW Health, Mosman, Willoughby and Lane Cove Councils.

- **North Sydney Youth Volunteers** – networking and sharing of volunteering opportunities for young people through Council programs and activities.

- **Parent Support Network**

A Lower North Shore Youth Interagency program which aims to provide support and options to parents and families. This program has been in development in the latter part of 2018 and will provide a calendar of events and workshops in 2019. Council's Youth Services and Partnerships Coordinator, this report's author, has been heavily involved in developing this program.

- **Arts and Crafts**

A range of arts and crafts are available at Planet X to allow young people to express themselves creatively. This ranges from painting, using chalk, drawing, aerosol art, stencils, etc.

- **Work and Development Order**

Planet X is part of the State Government's Work and Development Order scheme where eligible people are able to work off and reduce their fines through an approved organisation. Young people are able to participate in this scheme if they have a mental illness, intellectual disability or cognitive impairment, are homeless, have an addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances or experiencing financial hardship.

- **Juvenile Justice**

Planet X provides its building for Juvenile Justice Youth Conferences. Staff will on occasion attend youth conference in other venues as a support person to young people known to the Youth Workers. Young people in the Juvenile Justice system are also sent to Planet X to complete their community services hours. This allows for a collaborative case management approach to prevent further offending.

- **Equine Interaction**

Two young girls from Planet X attended an Equine Interaction program in Belrose once a week over a period of 6 weeks. The program is facilitated by a Youth worker with 20 years' experience with horses. It has assisted the girls to learn new skills and techniques to deal with their challenges and difficulties. They have exhibited new levels of confidence,

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improved relations with their families and more effective ways to deal with stress and anxiety.



- **Informal sporting activities**

A range of sporting gear is available at the youth centre to allow for young people to participate in sporting and physical activities.

## **Conclusion**

Council's youth workers are imbedded in the community with strong links to senior staff in a range of schools, health services and other government departments and non government organisations. It is considered that this outreach approach is a primary driver of the success of the programs discussed here. Despite some illness among staff during the year service levels were maintained.

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