With case studies contributed by the various regional and state-wide CPLAN facilitators as indicated on the Contents page. The case study contributions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor.

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Metropolitan - Trish Ferrier and Amanda Margerison
South East Qld - Amanda Wright, Donna Matulis and Andrew Nash
South West Qld - Rebecca Schroder, Jenny Nothdurft and Shane Adshead
Sunshine - Howard Buckley and Naomi Rayward
Central Qld - Victoria Homer, Nyoka Henry and Kaitlyn Dales
Central West Qld - Sheree Miller and Jade Fickling
Mid-north Qld - Nikki Hughes and Suewellyn Kelly
North Qld - Sam Loy and Rachel Cook
North West Qld - Alvin Hava, Craig Hardy and Toga Volivakara
Far North Queensland - Daniel Morris and Sam Karam
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The YANQ website outlines the CPLAN Initiative in the following way:

As part of YANQ’s decentralisation across the state, YANQ have set up 10 Networks across Queensland, with Facilitators based in each of the regions. We encourage you to get in contact with your local Facilitator if you would like to have input on Workforce Development or youth policy issues.

CPLANs aim to create an ongoing and sustainable structure across ten regions in Queensland to support a consistent focus on:

- Policy issues relevant to young people; and
- Workforce development strategies for the youth sector from a local, regional and state perspective.

The ten CPLANs fall under the existing structure of YANQ and utilise and lever off the comprehensive network of youth inter-agencies and networks across the state. The ten CPLANs are made up of representatives from the youth sector in each region who have an interest in contributing to policy development and workforce issues.

The CPLANs are supported by Facilitators in each region, and each CPLAN is supported by Queensland University of Technology to undertake Participatory Action Research as part of its inquiry into the youth sector.

How does CPLAN work?
In each region, CPLANs include representatives from the youth sector. They are resourced by a regional CPLAN facilitator who is employed by YANQ for one day a month to organise and support CPLAN meetings and activities.

The CPLAN facilitator is supported by a nominated representative from the regional CPLAN. The CPLAN Co-Facilitator is involved in the implementation of the CPLAN and attends training events to provide support to the Facilitator and build knowledge of CPLAN in the region.

The structure of a CPLAN in each region depends on their youth sector structures. For example, in one region, CPLAN exists as a standalone entity, whereas in other regions, CPLAN is a subcommittee of an interagency.

They meet regularly to inquire on youth sector issues, focusing their inquiry on four key questions:
1. What will it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?

Figure 1: CPLAN regions

2. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?

3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?

4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Queensland?

Their inquiry is supported by Participatory Action Research, assisted by Queensland University of Technology. Dr Phil Crane has visited or made contact the Facilitators to discuss PAR in their region and has attended all the CPLAN forums to undertake PAR training.

CPLAN Facilitator Forums are held three times per annum, providing CPLAN Facilitators and Co Facilitators the opportunity to discuss progress of their work, YANQ priorities and key issues; as well as undertake training. Information collected at these forums is utilised by YANQ in a number of ways, including; informing its policy development process; forwarding information to relevant government agencies; and feeding information back to the youth sector across Queensland. YANQ will work with CPLANs in each region to develop Regional Workforce Plans which will inform the Queensland Youth Sector Workforce Plan.

A State CPLAN Group has also been established as a reference group for YANQ. It is made up of representatives of organisations who focus on state wide issues. This group will consider findings and recommendations of the regional CPLANs. Another aim of this group is that they coordinate their support to the youth sector.

State CPLAN Forums have been held since November 2011 to:

- induct CPLAN Facilitators and Representatives on CPLAN initiative,
- provide a briefing on YANQ policy framework process and activities,
- introduce the Youth Sector Development Plan,
- provide training on Participatory Action Research,
- assess training needs of Facilitators and Representatives to inform training program for 2012,
- introduce participants to State Wide organisations and services,
- undertake training,
- share information about regional activities and discuss emerging issues,
- commence development of regional workforce plans,
- articulate a process for identifying policy priorities for each of the regions and across the State.

CPLAN Facilitators have also undertaken training in Community Development, completing two skills set from the Diploma of Community Development. This training was an initiative of YANQ and was delivered in partnership with the Metro South Institute of TAFE. YANQ and the Health and Community Services Workforce Council funded this initiative.
The relationship of the regional and state CPLAN planning process to broader policy practice with key stakeholders is depicted below in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**
CPLAN’s envisaged contribution to state-wide planning
Section 2

The contribution of participatory action research to the development of the youth sector workforce in Queensland

This section overviews the way participatory action research (PAR) can provide an enabling process for workplace development and service improvement as part of a broader workforce development project currently being undertaken by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ).

Background
As indicated in the previous chapter, the youth sector, broadly understood, has a complex of practice, policy and organisational linkages. Dealing with complexity is seen by community sector agencies as a critical challenge (ACOSS 2010). Critical issues include:

- the capacity of regional and local workforces to provide opportunities for career development;
- the capacity for sustainable linkages between local, regional and state level policy consideration and advice aimed at improving the wellbeing of young people;
- the need to support the improvement of current youth work practice.

PAR is seen as a suitable framework to engage and work with the wide range of individuals and organisations involved in youth work and youth policy.

YANQ has indicated a collaborative approach will be used where youth workers, organisations and other stakeholders can be actively involved in shaping the questions to be asked, and be supported to share ideas for the ongoing development of the workforce. Such an approach reflects values of recognising and building on existing knowledge, expertise and good practice, innovation, continuous improvement and learning, collaborative relationships, recognising both diversity and areas of commonality in young people’s backgrounds, needs and experiences, and locating these within a broad context that includes individual, social, economic, cultural and environmental factors.

What is PAR?
PAR is a collaborative systematic and cyclic approach to inquiry which aims to simultaneously develop understandings about practice and implement improvements to practice. In social programs it is undertaken by individuals and agencies who collaboratively develop “What will it take to ... ?” or ‘How can we ... ?’ questions around key shared objectives (Crane and O'Regan 2010). It is particularly well suited to environments characterised by complexity which generates turbulence and ‘wicked’ problems (Dick 2012). It is ideally suited to social programs which respond to complex issues, which have multiple contributing factors, and which manifest in contextually various ways across locations or communities of interest. Government and non-government bodies are increasingly recognising that such issues require a ‘joined up’ approach to policy and service delivery (Crane 2009). The youth sector shares this character.

The development of skills in utilising a systematic approach to inquiry will also enhance the capacity for local or targeted initiatives to provide evidence for consideration more broadly, for example at the sector wide level, or in respect of demonstrating the efficacy of particular practice approaches. This evidence building role is critical in the current environment of resource insufficiency.

In the context of the YANQ workforce development project PAR will be designed to provide a process to link individuals and agencies at various levels to a state level inquiry effort around key questions. These questions arise from the consultations and project findings to date as well as the specific interests of regions and local clusters. The goal is for this to provide a platform not only for workforce development but for the development of a robust and sustainable communication network across the youth sector.
The simple participatory action research process is depicted below.

![Diagram of the PAR process](image)

**Figure 1: A simplified model of PAR: improving the situations of people through improved practice (Crane and O’Regan 2010: 7)**

**What does use of PAR contribute to service improvement and sector development?**
Participatory action research has been used across a diversity of program and service contexts in Australia, most notably the Australian Government youth homelessness program Reconnect, and more recently Dovetail (Qld AOD sector), Youth Connections (Brisbane North and West), and early childhood autism services. The value of PAR in Australian youth services development has been supported through a range of independent evaluations/studies (ARTD 1998, RPR 2003, Evans and Shaver 2001) and by systematic analysis of action research reports provided by services over 10 years (Crane and O’Regan 2010). PAR has been utilised in a variety of health promotion and youth service contexts over the years due to its capacity to engage networks, front line services, practitioners and clients in the process of establishing what works, what doesn’t and what should be done differently in their particular practice context.

Whilst the PAR process aims to involve those most affected by issues in seeking effective responses, the reality is that there are constraints to this. The embedding of PAR is a developmental process often beginning with a vision and a small number of key people. The goal over time is to both maximise the intentionality of the actions undertaken (the ‘action’ aspect), the involvement of those most affected (the ‘participation’ aspect) and the quality of the learnings and how widely these are shared (the ‘research’ aspect). None of this can be achieved quickly or without support. The following diagram illustrates how the embedding of PAR processes into a service context aims to move (vertical axis) from an action learning to an action research approach over time as more confidence is developed in undertaking good quality inquiry and identifying the learning. The horizontal axis indicates the ‘top down’ location of questions posing and interpretation of findings at one end with a ‘bottom up’ approach at the other. PAR processes work towards the top right quadrant.
Developing an action researching system in CPLAN
Action research has often been used in particular projects and by some services more extensively. The experience of the Reconnect program and some other program/sector contexts is that PAR can be embedded across sectors of programs with great benefits flowing from this. To move from specific to embedded use however requires a clear strategy for developing what can be called an action research system where inquiry in one part of a system articulates with and informs inquiry in another part of a system (Crane and O’Regan 2010, Burns 2012).

In the CPLAN context communities of inquiry are encouraged to develop within a larger community of practice (Friedman 2006).
Figure 3: Elements of an action researching system
Developing key (macro) questions for the CPLAN inquiry

The CPLAN strategy has emerged out of the Youth Services Workforce Skilling and Training Project undertaken by YANQ. As part of the development of the CPLAN strategy it was decided to use PAR as an enabling process across the state.

In CPLAN regional and state networks of youth workers and services are investigating what will develop youth sector capacity. This collaborative inquiry process is focused on a number of key ‘macro’ questions developed through a number of consultation strategies (outline these).

The 4 key questions developed to guide CPLAN inquiries:

- What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Qld?
- What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
- What would it take increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
- What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Qld?

Ethics approval
Ethics approval for the work of QUT researchers with YANQ and CPLAN facilitators was gained from the QUT Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number 1100001519).

Developing the capacity for utilising PAR within CPLAN
The major vehicle for developing facilitator capacities to utilise a participatory action research process was training provided at state-wide CPLAN forums, development of a PLAN PAR Workbook, and individual support and feedback to CPLAN facilitators on their processes and draft case studies. In addition some regional facilitators and regional network meetings were able to be visited including ones in Rockhampton, Mt Isa, Cairns, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Winton.

Content and processes canvassed in training were considered in the process of accreditation for research and community development aspects of Diplomas in Community Development from Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE.

Specific content included in the initial CPLAN PAR training included:

- Why take a collaborative inquiry approach for CPLAN? PAR as an enabling and capacity building process
- Orientation to the basics of PAR.
  - Engaging people locally in an action research process
  - Developing a focus
  - Asking and phrasing action research macro and micro questions
  - Cycles of inquiry
Building an evidence base

Parameters, boundaries and ethics

The role of the facilitator in a PAR process.

A CPLAN PAR workbook (Appendix 2) was provided to participants as a resource for informing a cyclic inquiry process in CPLAN.

A range of broader issues were identified and discussed in respect of CPLAN. These provide insight into the importance that was seen in recognising regional contexts were varied and the need to consider how both regional sensitivity and state-wide CPLAN coherence could be both achieved.

Specific issues discussed were:

- **The context of busy organisations**: The challenges and benefits undertaking an inquiry process might have for busy organisations;

- **Focus**: Whether to focus on one issue or multiple issues;

- **Whether the PAR process could be ‘retro-fitted’** to existing lines of inquiry underway in regions (yes it could);

- **How to interface CPLAN with existing regional networking and networks**. For some regions it made sense to incorporate CPLAN into an existing inter-agency structure whilst for others there was a need to develop a new CPLAN mechanism. Building on what is already happening locally and regionally;

- **Regional scope**: The impact of various government regional boundaries on CPLAN. What makes an area a region? Whether to try to cover the whole region or start with one part of the region that had a sense of identity and capacity to meet. The existence of multiple youth networks in numbers of regions meant there were often choices about whether to narrow to focus to one or attempt to engage more broadly;

- **How regional engagement could occur** if there were large distances that made face to face contact difficult or impractical, e.g. using IT to communicate remotely. Building local ownership of a process that started from a state-wide body;

- **How to undertake the PAR process**: Considering the difference between observation and reflection;

- **The value in scoping an issue before developing a plan. Identifying insights for specific regions, e.g. urban, regional, rural and remote – how to identify cross regional issues and learning from each other. How to get feedback on draft material**;

- **Practical issues**: Having sufficient time at particular network meetings to progress CPLAN. Challenges faced in engaging regional youth workers, services and networks at particular times of year and at particular stages of network development;

- **The CPLAN facilitator**: Continuity of CPLAN facilitators. How each region develops will vary according to the perspective of the facilitators.
Training at state-wide CPLAN forums later in 2012 drilled down further into how to undertake a PAR process with more emphasis on how to analyse and write up an inquiry process. Particular topics explored included:

- **Building energy** at the local level; start where you can get traction and legitimacy and build on that
- **Question / inquiry driven approach**, not just being problem focused. Importance of including managers as well as youth workers
- **Telling the story** of the inquiry: identifying what to say and how to say it. A structure to use. Includes outlining the context, and identifying the question or issue. The challenge of telling a story that is “part told”, that is incomplete and ongoing – there is often no specific ending in PAR. Challenges and strategies in writing up an action research narrative. Rich and thematic descriptions that other people will be interested in
- **Using data** - minutes, documents, events, research data, anecdotal evidence, observations of what has occurred in processes, email dialogue. Converting raw data into observations and practice wisdom
- **Process of trial, evaluation and adjustment**. Involves double loop learning: specific issue, abstract reflection. What are we learning here? What does this say about this process? Reflection happening at a number of levels, e.g. how do we conceptualise what is occurring as a change process?
- **Use of images** in a case study, e.g. map / location/ network mapping (an image of where the network was when you began and where it develops to)
- **Rigour**, what is the evidence I have to support that statement? Basis for claims or interpretations
- **Ethics** and complexities in the process.

Handouts for ‘Developing confidence and capacity in PAR table’, a proforma structure for a CPLAN case study structure, using social network analysis mapping (SNA), and “Doing and writing action research” (McNiff and Whitehead 2009) were discussed and distributed.

CPLAN is not just a series of regional case studies, but rather a multi-case study and multi-regional/state-wide approach to gaining insights into the four key questions identified. The PAR process provided a way for these questions to be explored in ways that allowed for, and appreciated regional diversity, proximity to local needs, and ownership.

At the September 2012 Forum, each draft case study was presented by the relevant facilitator and a process used to involve other CPLAN facilitators in identifying insights across the cases. A template for ‘CPLAN case study reflections’ (see Appendix 1) was developed to actively involve CPLAN facilitators in the analysis of themes within and across the regional case studies (see Section 4 of this report). This reflects the importance in PAR of involving participants in the research, not only in the posing of questions but in the analysis of data, and reflection of findings.

The key insights and conclusions generated through this process were then presented and discussed at the April 2013 CPLAN state-wide forum with the final report considered at the October 2013 forum (see Section 5 of this report).
Section 3

Reflecting on what has been learnt through CPLAN

In this section of the report, the experiences of the regions as indicated by the case studies and discussions at CPLAN Facilitators Forums are discussed using the 4 key state wide questions as a way of thematic organisation. The state-wide questions are:

- What does it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland? (For your regional or state-wide location)
- What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society? (For your regional or state-wide location)
- What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector? (For your regional or state-wide location)
- What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Queensland?

The synthesis draws on:

- The regional and state-wide case studies
- The reflection sheets completed by CPLAN Facilitators during the CPLAN case study presentation and reflection exercise undertaken at the September 2012 CPLAN Facilitators Forum (Appendix 2 contains the template used)
- Responses to the material tabled at the May 2013 CPLAN Facilitators Forum
- Other documented reflections and comments from minutes and notes of CPLAN Forums.

These are substantial questions, and each is composed of many component elements, some involving long standing problems not likely to be ‘answered’ in the short term. What CPLAN does do is orient inquiry to the key outcomes of access and opportunity for young people (through Question 2) and a number of key enabling factors to achieve this; namely, a strong workforce oriented to these, which is connected and collaborative, and a coherent youth policy platform.

The analysis of these questions necessarily overlaps, reflecting inter-relationships that not able to be fully disentangled. That said, there are a range of clearly evident themes able to be drawn from the experience of undertaking CPLAN in the period canvassed by the report. Reflections on Question 2 will be reported first, followed by others in the above order.

It is important to be clear that participatory action research approaches do not claim to produce insights that can be generalised to other locations of practice. Rather the inquiries and insights generated within each CPLAN are best understood as relevant for that region and to the extent that they are well grounded in action. For this reason the first part of this section gives a brief overview of each CPLAN.
The second part of this section looks across the various CPLANs for themes. Whilst what is appreciated from one CPLAN cannot be generalised to across the state, each CPLAN can be understood as a qualitative case study in which it is legitimate to discern themes across the case studies, and draw on specific case studies as support for those themes being highlighted.

3.1 Summaries of each CPLAN case study and key insights

3.1.1 Metropolitan CPLAN case study

The Metropolitan CPLAN covers the geographical area of Brisbane, Ipswich, Redlands and Logan cities. Metro CPLAN meetings are attended by a number of managers and youth workers from agencies in the Greater Brisbane region who responded to a call for expressions of interest.

In response to the question *What will it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?* the Metro CPLAN decided to explore how it could create opportunities for youth workers to come together to discuss difficult topics, an interest which emerged from the 2012 YANQ conference where one key note speaker spoke on the topic of pornography and young people, which generated substantial interest and debate.

*Members of the METRO CPLAN were of the view that there are very few opportunities for youth workers to explore 'value laden' topics and a role for the Metro CPLAN could be to create these opportunities. They decided to focus on the issue of young people and sexuality and supporting youth workers to understand how their values impact on their responses to young people. The opportunity for a forum to discuss this was seen as a workforce development opportunity by assisting the sector to improve their youth work practice.*

(Metro CPLAN case study)

A range of agencies contributed practical support to the costs, promotion and running of the event, titled *Is that an iPhone in your pocket?* An evaluation strategy was developed and a short film of the event produced. 42 people attended the event, with broad representation including youth workers, managers, consultants, and government workers from various types of services. Evaluation across a range of questions was very positive. Participant feedback indicated the topic was of interest, that the event provided an opportunity for professional development in a safe learning environment, was well organised and facilitated, and if a similar event were held in the future, it would be well attended.

This CPLAN, occurring in the context of greater Brisbane, had to answer the question of what it would take to engage youth workers and services in ‘difficult’ conversations of relevance to youth work practice, when there were numerous other (and competing) professional development options. It is concluded that the forum model collaboratively developed has value as a workforce development strategy for the youth sector in the metropolitan area.

Metro CPLAN are now working together to establish an Alliance of Youth Services to collectively fundraise for their organisations.

3.1.2 Sunshine CPLAN Case Study

The Sunshine CPLAN region includes the areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, as well as North & South Burnett. The Sunshine CPLAN is a new network of educational institutions, local government and community organisations that have chosen to come together to improve youth work practice and development in the region, initially focusing on Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast and Gympie. Later the focus was extended to the northern part of the region.
The initial CPLAN process involved selecting the first question as a key focus and brainstorming associated issues and possible responses.

The organisations present were committed to working together to help build a vibrant youth sector and decided to explore what would it take to articulate a youth work framework for our region. By listening to the stories and experiences of practitioners we thought that a framework could be used to promote youth work with Government agencies and learning institutions in the region. The foundational document would provide youth organisations across the region with an articulation of their shared values, common practice and provide a clear expectation for youth work practice and service delivery in the Sunshine region. (Sunshine CPLAN case study)

A survey was undertaken to identify key ethics statements and practice principles, followed by two workshops to inform production of a draft document called *Integrity in our Practice*. The finalised document is attached as an appendix to this report.

A second action arising from the Sunshine CPLAN was the development of stronger links with the Workforce Development Council, with the goal of enhancing professional development opportunities for youth workers in the region. A third area of action planning involved developing two way engagement and support between the Sunshine CPLAN and the educational institutions in the region that are involved in youth work education, namely the Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast TAFE Colleges, and Caboolture campus of QUT.

Following establishment of the Sunshine CPLAN in the southern part of the region an attempt was made for the CPLAN Facilitator to include the northern part of the region by attending the Wide Bay Burnett Youth Services Network; a strategy subsequently discontinued due to funding reductions.

Key insights generated are that CPLAN needs to have a high degree of perceived relevance for participants in order to be sustained, and is most easily established when there are established networks to build relationships with.

### 3.1.3 South East CPLAN Case Study

Whilst the geographical range of the South East region extends from the border with NSW at Coolangatta on the Gold Coast, north to Beenleigh and west as far as Beaudesert, the Gold Coast was the focus of this CPLAN, and the existing Gold Coast Youth Network was as the network platform.

As a result of discussions at the early CPLAN meetings, two of the broad CPLAN questions were modified for the Gold Coast. The revised questions were:

- *What would it take for the Gold Coast youth sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?*

- *What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce on the Gold Coast?*

A series of strategies were identified, and various levels of implementation achieved as depicted in the table below.
Key insights generated from this CPLAN include:

- Short, free or low-cost training that is integrated into the existing network meetings seems to be a good strategy for engaging workers in learning new skills;
- Discussion undertaken around strategies that may not themselves been successful provided impetus for other more successful strategies to emerge;
- CPLAN has contributed to a more inclusive, vibrant and action-oriented youth network, evidenced by increased numbers, more energetic discussions and sharing between those attending, as well as more services supporting projects such as National Youth Week events.

### 3.1.4 North Queensland CPLAN Case Study

The North Region extends from Bowen in the south, to Ingham in the north and Richmond in the west. Its main service centre and largest city is Townsville. This CPLAN is embedded within The Youth Network NQ Inc. (TYN), an incorporated association comprised of youth workers and those working with young people in Townsville and surrounding areas. TYN holds regular monthly meetings, and has an established reputation as a central meeting point for those who work and care about issues impacting on young people. 46 workers, managers and policy developers from 24 organisations were involved in the inquiry that constitutes this case study.

It was noted that there was an increase in presentations of young people with substance use problems, particularly the methamphetamine known as ‘ice’. On a number of occasions the young person presented whilst heavily under the influence, and an ambulance had been called. It was difficult for the workers to know what to do - these drugs are relatively new and no one has appeared to have experience in dealing with them. And so began our exploration of the substance use issue in Townsville. Over the next six months, anecdotal evidence was gathered, gaps were identified, and actions were planned and made. The success of these plans and actions has yet to be seen, however it has been a significant step forward to highlight where the issues and deficiencies lie in our local youth service provision.

(North Queensland CPLAN case study)
This CPLAN process involved a range of working groups with different foci. These included groups to examine and develop strategies around the lack of community awareness about the range of services available to young people and how to access them, the need for an after-hours youth outreach service, and the need for a coordinated approach to the delivery of Adventure Based Learning Programs.

The main emphasis in this case study is to report on a fourth area of concern, namely how to understand and respond to AOD use by young people in Townsville. A systematic action inquiry process is outlined that builds local understanding over time, acknowledging and exploring deficiencies in the data available on youth AOD use in Townsville, and building worker understandings and service responsiveness to youth AOD use. It was identified that in the past, training has often been poorly advertised, offered at dates and times that make attendance difficult, or is not responsive to the needs of services. The question to explore sharpened to become:

What would it take to utilise the CPLAN group to collaborate and address our identified needs in relation to drug and alcohol training?

The CPLAN exploration of substance abuse by young people in Townsville resulted in additional training being organised for the group, through ATODS. This training was accessed by 20 CPLAN members from 6 different services. The results from this process suggest that CPLAN is useful and perhaps vital component of the local youth work sector. CPLAN has the ability to not only identify and explore relevant issues, but also to act as a “town cryer” for important information.

3.1.5 Central CPLAN Case Study
The Central region spans a large geographic area, with different issues and challenges impacting on various parts of the region. Rather than narrowing the geographic focus of the CPLAN to a particular part of a large and diverse region, the Central CPLAN decided to engage with and involve the entire region. The first step in this was undertaking a scoping of regional issues for each of the four macro CPLAN questions. The table synthesised from this process is included as Appendix 4 of this report. As a result of further discussion the Central CPLAN resolved to inquire into “What would it take to support those working with young people in regional and remote areas?”

In order to find out what ‘support’ meant to people working with young people at the front line, it was agreed to develop a short survey. The CPLAN group simultaneously worked on developing and refining the short survey using online SurveyMonkey software, and compiling a list of people and networks that it could be sent to.

Strategies identified as potentially useful include:

- Developing a “welcome to the youth sector” style kit for new workers, to include information identified by the survey as being relevant and useful to new workers;

- Developing a volunteer mentoring scheme, informed by the survey responses. There is an initial view that it would be useful to have a variety of peer mentors who are experienced in youth work, offering their services as a mentor for new and less experienced workers;

- That the ‘buddy or mentor’ could provide one-to-one support even across geographical distances for a period of time.

The Central CPLAN plans to action one or more projects with the goal of tackling the issue of retaining new workers in the youth sector.

3.1.6 South West CPLAN Case Study
The South West region of Queensland covers a vast area, with some workers having to travel 750km to access network meetings and trainings. A number of networks are relevant to workers with young people located in the region, including the South West Youth Network (SWYN), the Toowoomba
Youth Services Network, the Local Government Association of Queensland, and the Youth Support Coordinators Network.

The SWYN provided the base for CPLAN. The approach taken to CPLAN was identify issues and possible responses across the four CPLAN macro questions and across the region with both youth workers and with young people. Consultations occurred in Toowoomba, Goondiwindi, Balonne, Charleville, Maranoa, Charleville, Southern Downs and Lockyer Valley, a substantial achievement in itself. The material generated is instructive of the breadth of need whilst highlighting themes across areas. It was through these discussions that the South West CPLAN set the priority question for the region as:

What would it take to attract and retain youth workers within the South West region?

This became the priority as it was thought that none of the other areas could be improved unless there were workers on the ground that were familiar with their roles and had access to sufficient resources and support to succeed. Worker retention was seen as critical in order to create positive outcomes for the issues young people identified.

If there is no one to ask the questions and advocate and research solutions for young people then how could there be a shift in any of these issues?

The case study outlines difficulties experienced in mid-2012 which resulted in postponing SWYN meetings whilst staying connected through the email group. The already established Toowoomba Youth Network became a site for CPLAN discussions and three areas were identified for inquiry and action. These were:

- A resource Calendar that could inform the community and workers on the programs and services within the region
- Youth Licencing - Learner Drivers logbook System
- Development of a Regional Youth Advisory Committee.

CPLAN will become a formalised part of the new Regional Youth Advisory Committee in Toowoomba. This advisory committee will update and consult the members of the Toowoomba Youth Network at their regular meetings and set new goals and priorities as the group establishes itself in the region. It is envisaged that this group will monitor the progress of the current programs, and drive future CPLAN enquiries.

3.1.7 Central West CPLAN Case Study

The Central West region covers a vast geographical area including the towns of Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall. A core group of youth workers and youth development officers from these towns regularly attend CPLAN meetings with a wider range of school principals, chaplains, family support workers and other youth related services attending more intermittently. There is an engaged email group of 50. The Central West CPLAN amalgamated with the Central West Youth Network (CWYN) which has been running successfully for a number of years.

The four CPLAN macro questions at two consecutive meetings (held in Winton and Longreach respectively) and a decision made to look at What would it take to support parents raising young people in the Central West? (a question related to macro Question 2).
The challenge for this CPLAN is that a largely different group attends each successive meeting and the process of negotiating a focus that can be collaborated around starts again. A third meeting in Blackall saw a complete change in those attending. The goals for meetings were revisited and agreed as the sharing of program information, and the development of a new initiative as a group. The decision was made to become more of a working group with the focus on what was seen as the most prevalent issue in the community; social networking (e.g. through Facebook) and the associated issues of bullying and sexting. The goal identified is to design a social networking program that could be taken around to the schools in the central west and communities promoted through CPLAN.

The context of the Central West region in terms of network development and worker support is that individual towns are not of sufficient size to support a youth interagency, yet the strategy of rotating meetings through the various towns means continuity of attendance is impossible to sustain. The challenges of adequately responding to youth issues and adequately supporting those who support young people are substantial.

3.1.8 Mackay CPLAN Case Study
The Mackay CPLAN is facilitated by the Mackay Youth Connections Network Inc. (MYCN) which has a membership of approximately 50 financial members. The network works towards increasing collaborative work practices and supporting the youth sector, leading to enhanced services for young people. Platforming on MYCN for CPLAN facilitation is seen as sensible given the limited number of youth services and difficulty there would be in establishing and maintaining an additional CPLAN network.

The Mackay case study built on work that had already been underway for several years in respect of developing a model of integrated case management for young people with complex needs for use in the Mackay area. This inquiry was seen as relevant to the CPLAN macro question *What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector (in your region)?*

The model is explained in the case study with the following accompanying text:

> *It was identified that there would a two tiered system for the ICM, the first tier being a “core panel” of members that would receive and process referral applications and a second tier of “key support agencies” that would work collaboratively to provide holistic service provision to young people. One of the findings from both literature reviews and consultations was that success of the model would require a paid coordinator position and a lead agency that had both the resources and capacity to manage the model.*

> *The MYCN Inc - ICM model also aims to provide the right mix of services at the right time for young people with multiple and complex needs through support that is coordinated and planned, and which addresses their needs and where relevant their families/caregivers needs. The aim of the ICM model was expressed as: “To ensure an effective response for young people in need of coordinated interventions through an interagency forum.” (Mackay CPLAN case study)*

Revised arrangements had to be made as a result of government re-structuring and implementation nis currently underway. Insights generated to date are that:

- Formal documented agreements between the lead agency and identified partners are required to guarantee commitment;
• This type of project requires a lead agency that has the capacity and resources within their core business objectives to provide sustainability;
• Effective consultation with all stakeholders, including young people, government and non-government organisations is imperative to ensure ownership and success of the model;
• Targeting key government decision makers to be involved in the planning of the process optimises the probability of effective implementation.

3.1.9 North West CPLAN Case Study

The North West is also a vast area in geographic terms with large distances between centres and very limited opportunities to communicate around issues and needs as a group. The first CPLAN meeting brought together about 20 youth specific workers, all from Mount Isa, where a focus on the first macro question (what would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector?) was agreed as a focus and key issues in achieving this identified.

CPLAN was incorporated into the monthly Youth Alliance and ICM agenda, and after further discussion it was agreed the group would host a Regional Youth Workers Conference in July 2012 to bring together workers and community officers who worked primarily with young people.

The first ever Regional Youth Workers Forum, a 3 day event, was subsequently held with 74 workers attending, many from outlying communities. Specific sessions focused on Youth Justice, Child Safety, Sexual Health, Police Powers, a Youth Panel, as well as Skype sessions involving State wide agencies talking about specific issues and innovative practice.

Further development of an integrated case management approach has also been a focus, though there has been limited progress made in this with a limited number of services signing MOUs. Further discussion about the Under One Roof Case Management model is anticipated.

Overall, the incorporation of CPLAN as a standing item in regular (and now separate) Youth Alliance and ICM Group meetings, and a focus on action (moving beyond ‘talk’) have been successful strategies. Plans are being made to:
• re-visit the Under One Roof case management model and unpack its potential to achieve better outcomes for clients;
• develop a whole of community Events and Programs Calendar for youth workers and their clients;
• to approach Mount Isa City Council with a view to seeking their proactive involvement in the Youth Alliance and to facilitate input into Council policies for Youth Development;
• to feed up to State Wide CPLAN group on major issues and needs identified in the region, and;
• to request from key service providers in Health, Education/Training, Employment, Health, Housing etc. greater information and dialogue on the development of key strategic outcomes for young people in the region.

3.1.10 State-wide CPLAN Case Study

The State Wide CPLAN was established in recognition of the value the other state wide organisations would bring to YANQ in playing an overview role of the CPLAN initiative. The group included staff from Dovetail, Local Government Association of Queensland, Queensland Alliance, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition, the Workforce Council, Queensland University of Technology and YANQ.
Broad Terms of Reference were established and a question for inquiry that had practical relevance to the CPLAN process agreed. This was:

What would it take for youth sector to improve its communication across Queensland utilising all technologies that are available?

The focus of inquiry was on how internet technologies could be utilised to platform communication within the group and between CPLAN participants more broadly. The process planned to identify hardware, software and human barriers to utilising various internet technologies for communication in the CPLAN context and look at ways of overcoming these.

The State-wide group experimented with a number of different technologies including:

1. Internet platform with CPLAN Facilitators and Co-facilitators
2. Teleconference with State Wide Group
3. Skype with State Wide Group utilising Macbook
4. Skype with State Wide Group utilising Macbook, Teleconferencing module and Projector
5. Skype with State Wide Group utilising PC computer
6. Use of Google Docs as a way of utilising web based technologies for a group to work together (still underway)

Data was also collected from the CPLAN facilitators at the February Forum on their use of web based communication platforms.

Insights from this CPLAN inquiry generated include:

- Participants will not necessarily have the hardware, software or skills to utilise web based technologies;
- A process of personally checking and scaffolding those involved is needed;
- At the current stage of development any option utilised needs to have a phone-in option available;
- Practice with the equipment and software prior to a meeting is needed to be confident;
- Problems may still occur during a meeting and having technical support available is a great help;
- Teleconferences generally have the best sound quality and least interruptions due to failure of technology;
- Meetings with a mix of technologies such as Skype and video call can work well once ‘the bugs’ have been sorted out;
- Different options have pros and cons and it depends on what the meeting is wanting to achieve as to which option is most useful.

Note that no case study was produced by the Far North CPLAN.
3.2 Analysis across CPLANs

The summaries of the regional and state-wide CPLANS above reveal significant variability in terms of network contexts, topics of inquiry chosen, processes used, and insights generated. Despite this it was evident at CPLAN Facilitator Forums that there were thematics that cut across these diverse experiences. The following discussion uses the four macro CPLAN questions as an organising structure.

**Question 1** What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?

Most CPLAN case studies undertook inquiries relevant to this question, some quite extensively. Generally to date, the CPLAN experience demonstrates that there is both willingness and need at the local and regional level to develop stronger capacities and more effective strategies to respond to the needs of young people as these manifest in particular areas of Queensland. The systematic engagement of services and their staff within and across regions is strongly indicated as vital for reasons of both effectiveness and efficiency.

In exploring this question, specific CPLANs focused on one or more of the following:

- Identification of one or more specific issues experienced by young people that are seen as emerging or important to address in their current regional context;
- Training of youth workers in areas critical for better outcomes for young people in a particular CPLAN catchment area;
- Strategies to improve service systems which in turn were seen as improving the outcomes for young people (these outcomes were defined in terms of enhanced inclusion and equity);

- The involvement of young people in CPLAN and other mechanisms for influence such as youth councils.

**Identify specific issues experienced by young people**

In a number of CPLANs the opportunity was taken to scope the range of issues that workers and services were seeing as most critical at that time (e.g. South West, Central).

There were four foci evident in case studies in respect of this question, the first being identification of those resources and opportunities that young people themselves have needs in respect of. Some specific issues identified included transport costs and availability (Gold Coast, South West), access to learner driving support (Central West, South West), family and parenting (Central West, Central), drug and alcohol issues (Central West, Townsville), homelessness and housing (Central West, South West, Central), mental health issues (South West, Townsville, Central), social media related issues such as cyber-bullying (South West) and a need for action oriented local projects which respond to their local and regional needs (Central West). The needs of young people for better information and support around sexual health and sexuality broadly defined, was a focus across a number of regional (Central, Central West, South West) and the Metropolitan CPLAN. Working with schools around a range of information and skill development needs young people have (such as bullying, sex education and youth mental health), was also identified as a priority, particularly across regional Queensland.
The issues identified by young people across the South West region are included as Appendix 4 to this report. These consultations and a raft of other data support the uncontroversial conclusion that young people may experience a wide range of substantial issues which affect their current and future wellbeing and which require diligent community attention and response.

Some CPLANs generated responses to selected issues or indicated this was identified for subsequent action.

**The provision of training for youth workers in respect of identified regional needs**

The second focus evident was the provision of training for youth workers in practice areas critical for young people in a particular CPLAN catchment area. Specific examples of CPLAN initiated and facilitated training include:

- Practice in respect of specific drug use related issues (North, South East);
- Training in respect of Maori and Pacific Island cultures (South East);
- Training in respect of sociability, sexuality and young people (The Metro CPLAN workshop *Is that an iPhone in your pocket?*).

What became apparent and vividly so in the North Qld CPLAN was that responding well to felt deficiencies in training involves more than the rolling out of topically relevant training events. To be well founded and targeted requires consideration of not only the nature, extent and characteristics of an issue locally but an appreciation of how local agencies might articulate with each other to provide a more effective response. The CPLAN experience provided a mechanism for regional dialogue inquiry that can create both better understanding of an issue affecting young people and the training needs across services that will enhance responsiveness. The following extract is from the North Qld CPLAN case study.

> It was noted early on that substance abuse is often only one of many presenting issues of local young people. Whether substance abuse stems from a primary issue, such as neglect or mental illness, or is the cause of secondary problems, such as homelessness or unemployment, is difficult to determine. At any rate, it was widely agreed that substance abuse was never an isolated issue. In this way, it is a fact of our sector’s working life that all services, whether focussed on employment, mental health or homelessness, will come into contact with clients who are experiencing substance use issues. However, these workers are often more experienced in the focus of their workplace, and so feel ill-equipped to handle and deal with substance use presentations. This can lead to clients being provided inaccurate information or a missed opportunity for referral because of poor knowledge and training.

> Many of the workers who feel this deficiency in their knowledge and training acknowledge that it is an area they would like improved so they are able to provide a more holistic and relevant service. However, in the past, training has often been poorly advertised, offered at dates and times that are difficult for staff to attend, or do not respond directly to the needs of their respective services. (North Qld CPLAN Case Study)

**Strategies to improve service systems**

The third foci evident in response to this question were efforts to improve service systems so as to gain improved outcomes for young people (these outcomes were defined in terms of enhanced inclusion and equity). Strategies identified by CPLANs as required included enhanced sector
mapping, better coordination across different areas of government, more direct linkage of youth services into mainstream agencies, more resources for services which facilitate and sustain vulnerable young people’s access to opportunities in critical life areas, and support for embedding evaluation and improvement processes such as PAR into youth service development. The development of a regionally relevant integrated case management model was the focus of the Mackay CPLAN. For many other CPLANs the response to this question was improved communication across services, government and non-government realised through the CPLAN processes of engagement, dialogue and action research.

Enhanced involvement of young people in regional planning and decision making

The fourth foci was on the involvement of young people in CPLAN and other mechanisms for influence such as youth councils. Some CPLANs such as South West actively engaged young people in the process whilst a number of others saw support form young people having a greater voice in their communities and in policy as a necessary component of the answer to this question. That said, this was not a strong focus in CPLANs, reflecting the strong workforce development orientation of the process.

Perhaps the important feature of CPLAN in respect of this question is its capacity to be a vertically linked networking strategy, that is, to provide a link between local and state levels that could be used in either direction. This theme is further developed below in the discussion about the question of building greater policy coherence.

Question 2 What does it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Qld?

Of the four key macro questions identified this question received the most direct attention by CPLANs, with all regions and the state-wide group exploring this to some extent. Some CPLANs brainstormed what they saw as key ingredients in a multi-faceted sector development response and reported these in their case study (Sunshine). Others explored one aspect in depth.

This is also the question that most clearly reflects the workforce development orientation of the CPLAN funding and the institutional location of those directly involved; namely youth workers, services and networks. Underpinning this question is a well-founded assumption that a range of critical outcomes for many young people cannot be realised unless there is a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce, a theme further discussed later in this report.

CPLAN inquiries to date indicate that a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce requires:

• Workers and services being engaged in collaborative networks as active rather than passive agents;

• An engagement approach which matches regional/local service configuration and network patterns;

• Developing strategies that are seen as context relevant and action oriented;

• A frame of ‘inquiry’ that encourages collaboration and problem solving;

• A focus on enhanced professional development;
Workers and services being engaged in collaborative networks as active rather than passive agents.

This conclusion is supported by a range of documented features of the CPLAN experience. It is apparent from the CPLAN case studies that each region, and sometimes sub-regional areas have distinct service configurations, types of network development, and levels of network development. In addition the work youth services (broadly conceived) undertake is typified by various intersecting dimensions of complexity, including that arising from multiple issues impacting on young people, systems and institutions which both enable and constrain wellbeing, and locational complexity in terms of what resources are available where and when. Networks, that is, the connections between those involved with young people and their communities, are important enablers of responding to such complexity, as they provide a vehicle for bridging horizontally across workers, services and communities, and vertically between the face to face practice and systems/ policy contexts which play important roles in conditioning the practice environment. It can be argued that in a state as decentralised as Queensland the character of networks and capacity to develop workforce related networks are essential for the development of coherent responses, particularly to problems which are complex and significantly influenced by contextual factors. The experience of CPLAN is that regional network development is variable and at times contested, and that greater attention and investment is needed to support collaborative network development and their capacity to consider and contribute into strategic planning at the local/ regional and state levels.

Further as the North Qld CPLAN process around responding to concerns about increased use of ‘ice’ by young people demonstrates vividly that knowing how to respond often involves scoping an issue that has been raised and that there may not exist good quality regional or locality level data to assist in this.

Of importance to our CPLAN was having an understanding of how serious the problem actually was. Apart from anecdotal evidence, there appeared to be no concrete data which could properly inform our investigation. ... Each member of the CPLAN was directed to discover what data collection methods existed at their respective services, and to report back what the data could tell us. ... some services reported inconclusive or vague data (such as client reports stating a secondary issue of substance use, but giving no indication to the type, extent or frequency), while others reported no collection method at all. ATODS then advised that no local data existed and the best that could be ascertained would be from the 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDHS) report. ... While it was noted that this information is inadequate in providing an accurate snapshot of the problem as it relates to Townsville, ATODS advised that anecdotal evidence was enough to form the basis of a needs analysis. It is enough, they advised, to trust in the reports of your workers in attempting to understand the extent and frequency of substance abuse. Although, better data collection methods are desired, this advice was taken on board and adopted, leading to a reframed micro-question on this topic. (North Qld CPLAN Case Study)

The above account reflects what many practitioners report - that the experience of local service providers combined with other available data that locates issues in a broader context, may provide the best available, efficiently accessible, insights into the nature and dimensions of local issues affecting young people. This is a powerful argument for the systematic and active involvement of youth service providers in the development of local level responses.
Workforce development strategies need to be responsive to this diversity if they are to be effective and efficient. The CPLAN process to date suggests the following key responses to the first question of how to build a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce.

**An engagement approach which matches regional/local service configuration and network patterns**

The roles particular agencies play in respect of young people and with each other is characterised by substantial diversity across Queensland.

At one end, the Metropolitan area is characterised by a high concentration of youth services, many specialist in orientation, with services often associated with a range of differently focused networks (often quite loose). A key challenge for youth service workforce development lies in engaging workers and services in an environment where there are numerous training, networking and collaborative opportunities. Time and associational preferences appear to be particularly influential in terms of network development. For the Metropolitan CPLAN this was a key challenge. The Metropolitan CPLAN successfully engaged through use of its strategy (as indicated by attendance) to identify and hold a training event around a topic seen as being of ‘high interest’. In the opportunity dense context of metropolitan Brisbane this strategy was conceptualised as ‘value-adding’ and as a way of engaging the workforce in a broader conversation about the nature, purpose and underpinning values of youth work practice.

Conversely the more geographically large a region is, the more ‘distance’ is seen as a critical impediment to network and workforce development. Distance of course translates into time when travel to meetings is involved, or in the case of regions outside the metropolitan region in SE Qld into distinct sub-regions which have their own established networks. In response to ‘distance’ regional CPLANs either attempted to engage across a large area through ICT strategies such as email groups and teleconferences/Skype (Central, Central West, Sunshine), held events that would justify travel (Mt Isa, Toowoomba), used regional travel opportunities to link with workers and services in outlying towns (South West), held CPLAN meetings in different towns (Sunshine), or deliberately narrowed their CPLAN focus to one city of sub-region (Townsville, Mackay, Gold Coast). Many combined elements of a number of these.

Key insights about how such processes undertaken involve starting ‘where a region is at’, engaging respectfully with existing networks, assisting in identifying what would ‘value add’, and using communication processes that are invitational, open and transparent across the whole region so that enhanced coverage or linkages or parallel processes based out of other ‘hubs’ can ‘emerge’ over time.

In regions where CPLAN was incorporated into a strong existing youth services network there was generally a capacity to more quickly explore specific issues and questions. Rather than focus on network development, such networks could more easily focus on strategy development and implementation. This is not a criticism of regions where CPLAN was not able to do this but rather a recognition that in some regions, network development is inherently difficult (as in large rural and remote regions) or that the relationship between CPLAN and existing youth services networks contained tensions that made articulation difficult or problematic.
There was an acute awareness that workforce development required the fostering of engagement between a range of workers and services and that both face-to-face engagement and enhanced use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) were necessary to initiate and sustain this engagement. The state-wide CPLAN identified a range of challenges in realising effective engagement using ICT strategies and this remains an area of substantial need for Queensland’s youth sector workforce development. What is apparent is that there is a willingness by the sector to engage in developing new combinations of communication strategies at and between local, regional and state levels.

**Developing strategies that are seen as context relevant and action oriented**

The high level of competition for worker and service time meant that in order for sector development strategies to be engaged with they had to develop local CPLANs that were action oriented and filled key recognised gaps in that region. They saw an observable increase in energy when there were specific events or strategies to focus planning around.

In rural/remote areas youth worker turnover and retention presents as a critical issue to be addressed. How to encourage new workers to the area and retain existing workers is a need for these areas. A range of strategies emerged as worth exploring including improved incentives, development of peer support and mentor strategies, the greater involvement of managers in CPLAN processes, and a greater emphasis in training on strategies for self-care.

The Sunshine CPLAN focused on identifying shared values, organisational principles and practice approaches for youth work practice and service delivery. The view was that shared understandings about the underlying values, ethics and goals of practice provide a foundation for regional sector development that the more topically and technically oriented available training does not.

It was apparent that many regions do not have a good understanding of the workforce needs in that region and several CPLANs needed to develop surveys or consultation mechanisms to identify key needs. Part of the answer is that there needs to be an ongoing way of identifying and responding to youth sector workforce needs. An ongoing adequately resourced and supported CPLAN or CPLAN-like strategy is indicated as needed to achieve this. Proactive inquiry by youth services networks using participatory action research was seen as providing a way of valuing and respecting regional capacities and expertise. By incorporating PAR into processes, local and regional energy could be turned to questions which had local urgency.

**A frame of ‘inquiry’ that encourages collaboration and problem solving**

CPLAN facilitators consistently indicated that the use of an inquiry approach was a distinctive and important feature of the CPLAN process. The case studies provide evidence of the cyclic approach to inquiry being used to provide structure to the collaborative process. The Townsville case study in particular demonstrates how an issue of substantial complexity can be explored by a youth services network in a way that is purposeful, iterative and robust. The contribution of PAR to building communities of practice is further discussed later in this report.

**A focus on enhanced professional development**

There is strong support to address high turnover and poor worker retention in regional areas, and the role that enhanced peer support strategies for those working with young people, and particularly for those where this work is experienced as complex, or who are new to the sector. The youth worker peer support network approach developed as part of the Gold Coast CPLAN suggests
positive potential for this focus. The suggestion has been made was for each region to undertake a project on peer support which then feeds into a state wide process of identifying insights and strategies for remote, rural, regional and urban contexts.

The Sunshine CLPLAN developed a range of engagements and strategies for enhancing professional development. Central to their approach was consultation, negotiation and production of a regional statement of youth work values and principles. This in turn provided a youth work training resource with which to engage workforce and tertiary education providers through, and develop ongoing connections. The Townsville based CLPLAN demonstrated that robust local investigations linking the emerging needs of young people and training content and processes can increase accessibility to relevant training and professional development opportunities.

Overall CLPLAN processes have demonstrated a capacity to contribute to the development and better articulation of training/ education provision with youth work and youth workers. Better supporting new workers also emerged as a key thematic across a range of CLPLANs.

**Leadership of various types and at various levels**

Qualities of commitment, tenacity, a capacity to engage key constituent networks / services / workers, skills in facilitating an inquiry process, and adopting a problem solving approach in respect of challenges were features of CLPLAN facilitators who were able to make progress over time. Leadership demonstrated by CLPLAN facilitators was at times direct and at times more facilitative. What is clear is that building collaboration requires resourcing in both human and material respects, skill development in respect of enabling processes, a willingness to allow local and regional preferred ways of doing things to be respected, whilst linking regional facilitators to each other and state-wide sources of support so they are equipped to provide the leadership that is needed situationally. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this report to evaluate the regional CLPLAN facilitator model, it is apparent that workforce development models which support people located in regional networks to be supported and resourced to play regional and state-linking roles have enormous potential to simultaneously build regional capacity in a relatively efficient way and be conduits for dialogue between local/ regional and state levels.

**Key barriers and challenges to the development of a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland**

The most common challenge cited by CLPLANs related to the level of state-wide instability in the sector arising from the Youth Services Recommissioning process that commenced after the change of Queensland Government in early 2012. A network development strategy such as CLPLAN is understandably able to develop most coherently in an environment where there is a threshold of worker and agency stability. Without commenting on the merits of the Recommissioning process itself, it is clear that instability in the sector and the loss of / projected loss of some services and programs during the period presented additional challenges to the CLPLAN action inquiry process. As CLPLAN progressed, the question posed by numbers of workers and services was *How can / should the sector reposition itself?*
Question 3  What would it take increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?

Key skills referred to across many of the specific CPLANs included the need to listen, identify where the specific local needs and energies were, collaboratively develop actions that were purposeful and relevant, all the time operating in a flexible rather than prescriptive way. The PAR process provided a context-responsive inquiry process to use which facilitators generally found very useful. The PAR process and its contribution to building collaboration are discussed more fully later in this report.

CPLAN facilitators talked of having to explain the purpose, structure and processes of CPLAN many times over as network memberships changed or were expanded. Developing CPLAN was often seen as more about developing a collaborative culture by building on existing and available connections than it was about establishing specific structures and processes. Some connections brought greater leverage than others and identifying key stakeholders whose involvement if achieved would bring legitimacy was another way collaboration was developed. Building relationships with key agencies and players beyond the immediate youth sector who can assist was of great value. For example, the Sunshine CPLAN established connections with a University and TAFE, which then allowed enhanced training of youth workers to be a realistic goal. North Queensland CPLAN in Townsville established strong links to specialist agencies (ATODS and Dovetail) with expertise in the issue that emerged as most critical in their scoping - that of problematic AOD use by young people. In many CPLANS what was found necessary was answering the question ‘what will add value in this region?’ For the Metropolitan CPLAN, this was providing a forum on a topic which was important but controversial.

The CPLAN process was itself a strategy aimed at increasing connection and collaboration across the youth sector, and as a result all CPLAN case studies have some relevance. From these it is apparent that:

• Improved network functioning and expanding network size takes time and requires active facilitation;
• Vital to engage with local / regional networks in a way that appreciates existing mechanisms, is relevant for the regional context and configuration of services, and seeks sustainability;
• There is a felt need to develop collaborative approaches to service delivery at the local / regional level, particularly in respect of direct practice with young people who have complex needs;
• A wider range of services and workers are likely to engage in aspects of CPLANs that are action oriented;
• Use of a process for collaborative inquiry such as participatory action research.

Improved network functioning and expanding network size takes time and requires active facilitation

Considerable effort was directed at developing strategies for improved network functioning and expanding network size. This was evident at both regional and state levels. It was apparent that each region had a unique mix of networks, some well-established, others less so, some generally focused across government and non-government youth services, some more specific, some with many networks, others where there was one main network. Most regional CPLANs focused their network engagement around one locality within the region. Some developed links with other localities over time or invited workers from other areas to their events and processes. Where more than one
network existed locally some amalgamated groups as in the case of Mt Isa. What is clear from the CPLAN experience is that network development is important, developmental and strategic.

Vital to engage with local/ regional networks in a way that appreciates existing mechanisms, is relevant for the regional context and configuration of services, and seeks sustainability

Each CPLAN facilitator was clearly aware of there being multiple youth network nodes in their region and that engagement with all of these in the early stages of the CPLAN was not practical or desirable. What emerged in each CPLAN region was a strategy to engage in a way that respected the existing constellation of networks, and worked in a way that was focused but open to expansion. Strategies for enhanced engagement across a region included linking other networks / distant workers in via phone or Skype, having bi-monthly meetings to allow for broader regional engagement, undertaking consultation tours of the region generally incorporated into existing commitments, and holding CPLAN meetings in other locations once established at the home. Remote locations had the most difficulty maintaining momentum even though the expressed need to address worker support and retention was very high.

Development of collaborative approaches to service delivery

There is substantial empirical evidence as well as policy support for increased collaboration between services so as to develop more joined-up responses, particularly where there is client and/or systems complexity. In CPLAN this was reflected by a keenness by agencies to develop new models of service that involve collaboration across services or to develop collaborative work practices. Examples in CPLANs included efforts to develop integrated case management approaches, respond more holistically to complex issues faced by young people around AOD use, or to organise and host joint events.

The Mackay CPLAN built on and further investigated the development of an integrated case management model for their region. The themes to emerge relevant to this question were:
- The importance of generating commitment by various stakeholders, and cementing this in through formal documented agreements
- The role of effective consultation in building ownership
- That sustainability requires having a lead agency that has capacity and resources within their core business objectives.

The North West CPLAN also tried to increase the level of formal commitment made by services through MOUs, with less than desired take up.

Many of the CPLAN network processes involved a broader range of services than would fit a narrow definition of youth sector. It was common for government and non-government services to be involved, particularly outside the metropolitan area, and for both generalist and specialist services to be involved. A number of CPLANs developed events / training for sector workers which promoted collaborative approaches to service delivery.
A wider range of services and workers are likely to engage in aspects of CPLANs that are action oriented

The CPLAN case studies identify various strategies that support the further development of such connection and collaboration. These included using an action oriented approach where there is collaboration around an agreed task. This is seen to enhance the level of engagement that time poor agencies and staff are able to commit to joint ventures.

Other strategies used to bridge across networks included the development of a shared project (e.g. training event) across inter-agency networks. Testing and refining the use of ICTs was also tried by a number of regions as well as being the primary focus of the state-wide CPLAN group.

In building collaboration and connection, some CPLAN facilitators sought input from a diversity of locations and required each sub-region write up their own input. Building collaboration required building ownership. Others sought to make collaboration more sustainable by building a commitment to collaboration into service agreements (North West).

Use of a process for collaborative inquiry such as participatory action research

Taking an inquiry approach using PAR allows for new possibilities to emerge. There was a strong view by facilitators that taking an inquiry approach in CPLAN is critical to its success. This emergent quality is clearly evident in a number of the case studies.

If you have an issue and people were interested - then something comes up that takes direction.

There is not real cap on where that inquiry goes.

[Using an] inquiry process has been part of the success of what we have learnt and done. Starting to be embedded in our practice.

Importantly, PAR is experienced as being a practical tool that can provide a structure for collaborative inquiry which invites problem solving and respects a diversity of participation.

It has given us a tool that we can use - that will continue.

PAR fosters a focus on improvement and ways of moving towards desired goals. The structuring of questions to be action oriented and practical is recognised as opening up positive possibilities, without denying complexity.

What would it take ...? Provides a more positive discussion – instead of looking at the problems.

[We] can use collective resources to address something. Generally our discussions are deficit based and we give a description of what the problem is - this has given us the freedom to move in a more positive way.

It was apparent at the CPLAN forums that facilitators also enjoyed and saw the relevance of community development processes. Community development provides a framework for engaging with communities in a respectful yet strategic way and sits well as a foundation process alongside PAR.
The requirement to do a case study was deliberately built into the CPLAN process as a way of making sure the regional process was purposeful, and consistent with PAR, developed a shared summary of plans, actions, observations and reflections. The case studies focused attention on what could be achieved at the level of a particular region, sub-region (where network configuration or distance meant a tighter focus was taken at least initially) or in the case of the state-wide group in respect of a state-wide relevant need. It is at this level that the case studies are focused. Importantly the case studies, platformed on broad guiding questions, are a key mechanism for specific CPLANs to develop direction and practical collaborative initiatives. Cross regional and state-wide sharing in turn can be grounded in the sharing of insights and challenges which have an experiential and even empirical basis. Whilst challenging to find the time for and write-up, the case study approach supports dialogue and agreement about what is happening and what this means, as well as producing a sharable artefact or output.

The narrative of the inquiry undertaken by each CPLAN was generally clearly described and communicated (as indicated in the case studies). The linkage of observations with reflections so as to provide an evidence base for the conclusions drawn or directions taken was clearly evident, and demonstrates the capacity of CPLAN facilitators to describe and communicate an inquiry process. Some case studies built on work that was already underway and with networks that were more developed or dense. They were more able to involve a wider group in the development of their case study.

The most difficult aspects of developing the case studies as reported by the facilitators related to the analysis of what happened. It is usual for groups and individuals new to collaborative inquiry and writing to find analysis, and writing that analysis up, a particularly challenging task. Such skills are developed over time, and are most easily achieved when such skills are present and welcomed within a network’s dialogue. Descriptive writing (what happened and observations related to what happened) is generally evident earlier than a capacity for more analytically grounded writing develops. Facilitators were provided with various resources and feedback to support this process though some stated they would have liked more support for this aspect. Some resources facilitators were oriented to were not utilised in the process, one example being social network mapping. The suggestion was that mapping the configuration of their CPLAN network at the beginning and then later in the CPLAN process would provide a capacity to consider what changes had occurred over time and provide a stronger basis for reflection on network development. In general, facilitators were relatively less enthusiastic about aspects of training related to analysis, theory and models. This is understandable given the substantial practical challenges they faced and the value placed on learning from each others’ experiences.

**Barriers and challenges**

A range of barriers and challenges to collaboration were unsurprisingly encountered. In terms of collaborative network development this could include the status of CPLAN at the local level and with existing networks, workers / services dropping out or not regularly attending (the ‘ebb and flow’ of participation), the challenge of maintaining sufficient commonality in membership to progress a line of inquiry, moving from networking as information sharing to networking as a platform for more strategic collaborative inquiry and action, the time needed to make progress, different levels of regional resources, variable skill and capacity in the use of ICTs, the level of support needed to do analysis and write up case studies, and in some areas clashes or disconnects between key stakeholders regionally and/or beyond.
Question 4  What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Qld?

There was much less regional CPLAN focus on this question relating to the development of a youth policy platform. Policy at the state level was seen by many as needing state-wide attention, and the state-wide CPLAN focused on the enabling processes of communication rather than on policy development per se. The imagined CPLAN planning process as depicted at the end of Section 1 of this report reflected processes at YANQ policy forums and at CPLAN facilitator forums that took place outside the PAR - CPLAN case study aspects of CPLAN that are the focus of this report.

The CPLAN case studies and inquiries do however contain a number of themes in respect of this question, these being:

- Commitment by CPLANs to contributing into regional and state level policy;
- Concern that youth policy is not currently coherent or enabling;
- A need for better data on a range of matters relating to young people and youth services at local and regional levels;
- Two way communication between state policy and program areas and local / regional networks;
- Development of enhanced ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) strategies across the youth sector.

Commitment to developing a coherent youth policy platform and range of services to support young people

The lack of linkages between local and regional mechanisms to feed information to the state level was cited by a number of regions.

Regional CPLANs and associated networks are located close to the ground and have significant insight into local issues affecting young people and those working with young people. This is evidenced across CPLAN case studies with several describing scoping exercises to gain an up to date understanding of local issues at the sub-regional level. The lack of coherence in policies is manifested at the local level in a wide variety of ways often expressed as barriers one issue presents to positive outcomes in another. For example, lack of access to adequate transport for young people is reported across numerous CPLANs as a barrier to accessing needed opportunities and supports.

CPLAN facilitators also suggested that the CPLAN process could be usefully articulated to inquire into regional issues that emerge as important, and that a process for CPLAN regional networks taking the results of their inquiries to relevant Departments for consideration and possible support would be a useful way to make policy more responsive.

The local knowledge and commitment of youth workers and services to contribute to better policy at both the regional and state levels is seen as a largely untapped resource. The collaborative capacities evident in CPLANs suggest positive engagement is wanted and likely to yield benefit around questions of how to achieve more positive outcomes for young people and the role of the youth sector in this community wide project.
There is a need for better data on a range of matters relating to young people and youth services at local and regional levels

Several CPLANs found they were hampered in developing well founded strategies because of the paucity of good local and regional data, and a need for further research and policy development around critical issues faced by young people in their region. In some respects the quality and scope of data will necessarily continue to be variable. However as demonstrated in a number of CPLANs, and most clearly the North Queensland CPLAN, there is an important role for youth networks in identifying emerging local issues and gathering a level of data that can be very useful in communities responding in a timely way.

The need for two way communication between state policy and local / regional networks

CPLANs saw their potential role as going beyond informing policy to assisting the youth sector engage in two way communication between state policy and programs and local / regional networks. For example, the South West Region consultations with staff and the North West Regional Conference demonstrated the need and value of regional networks sharing information with government bodies and departments as well as the need for having government bodies represented in regional dialogue, giving information, and responding to questions about youth related policy.

Commitment to, and ongoing funding of CPLAN, was seen as one important element for developing such two-way communication as part building a coherent and collaborative youth policy that is relevant across the state.

Development of enhanced ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) strategies across the youth sector

CPLAN case studies highlight the importance of developing enhanced communication strategies, particularly capacities in respect of virtual ICTs, the need to develop mixed or ‘blended’ network strategies which mix face to face and virtual methods of engagement and communication, as well as the need for, and the importance of, engaging more regularly with both local, and state level Members of Parliament.

The challenges faced by rural and remote regions in bringing people together present important imperatives and opportunities to explore what it would take for these communities and the youth sector workforce within them to be able to communicate effectively. That said, all CPLANs in one form or another found that improved communication strategies were needed to enable and sustain engagement. ICTs represent one of the few obvious ways of significantly addressing this issue but it is apparent from both the regional and state-wide CPLANs that there is a need for specific projects to make progress. The pace of change in ICTs means that new technologies could well emerge in the short term though implementation will require both attention to the need and the resourcing and trialling of promising strategies.

Barriers and challenges

Barriers to the development of a more coherent and collaborative policy platform for Queensland were cited as including cuts to funding of youth services (such as the Youth Support Coordinator Program), and the impact particular funding models can have on the capacity of youth services to drive to outcomes for young people whose situations are complex. Beyond this there is substantial
systems complexity which makes supporting young people, and their communities and families in respect of young people, more difficult than it could be, or impossible.

Within the CPLAN initiative, further development is needed of state-wide mechanisms and processes for engagement around broader implications arising from regional and statewide CPLANs. Tensions between collaboration and advocacy, and the various roles of stakeholders in policy processes, are evident.

Whilst there is clearly room for localities and regions via proactive approaches such as CPLAN to enhance local understandings and responses, the role of overarching policy that facilitates and lays down conditions for positive outcomes for young people cannot be underestimated.
Section 4

CPLAN case studies

Each of the following case studies has been written by CPLAN facilitators for that region.

4.1 Metropolitan CPLAN Case Study– Can of Young Worms

Background

![Map of the Metropolitan region]

The Metropolitan CPLAN covers the geographical area of Brisbane, Ipswich, Redlands and Logan cities. It is comprised of representatives from the youth sector from these areas.

It has a mailing list of 16 people who have expressed interest in the activities of CPLAN. Members who regularly attend the CPLAN meetings work in youth agencies from Ipswich, Inala, Bracken Ridge, Logan, Mt Gravatt and West End. There is a mixture of managers and youth workers. Other groups that attend the CPLAN meetings intermittently come from issue specific organisations such as LGBT/Young Women and Youth Legal Services.
The Metro CPLAN was formed from members of the Youth Sector Leadership Group which had been established by YANQ several years ago, as a reference group to YANQ on sector issues. When YANQ was funded for the Workforce Development Project, this group became the youth sector reference group overseeing the implementation of this project. This group operated for two years in this role before the establishment of the 10 regions for CPLAN. When YANQ established the CPLANs in each region, the Youth Sector Leadership Group became a natural fit with the aims of the CPLAN. A facilitator was appointed and the group was established in September 2011. The group was presented with the four inquiry questions formulated by YANQ as part of the Participatory Action Research that which underpins the CPLAN initiative.

These questions are:
1. What will it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?
2. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Queensland?

The Metro CPLAN discussions focused on responding to Question 1.

The Metro CPLAN wanted to explore how it could create opportunities for youth workers to come together to discuss difficult topics. This interest emerged from the 2011 YANQ conference where Professor Alan McKee, one of the keynote speakers, spoke about pornography. The talk resulted in a strong reaction from the delegates, some supporting the views expressed by the speaker and others not supporting his views. Delegates had little time at the conference to unpack what was spoken and discuss at any length the issues that were raised in the presentation. Given this topic kept emerging at each CPLAN meeting the group decided to follow this issue.

Members of the Metro CPLAN were of the view that there are very few opportunities for youth workers to explore ‘value laden’ topics and a role for the Metro CPLAN could be to create these opportunities. They decided to focus in the issue of young people and sexuality and supporting youth workers to understand how their values impact on their responses to young people. The opportunity for a forum to discuss this was seen as a workforce development opportunity by assisting the sector to improve their youth work practice.

The group explored obtaining funding from the Workforce Council. The vision was to have funding that would enable a series of workshops across Queensland and the South East corner. The Metro Facilitator contacted the Workforce Council Brisbane Representative however funding was only region specific and there the proposal was not a priority for the Brisbane region.

When it was apparent to the Metro CPLAN that these funds could not easily be accessed and that other sources of funding would take some time to obtain, the group decided to review its proposal. It decided to run one workshop here in Brisbane and that the different organisations involved in the Metro CPLAN would support the activity. The low key event would aim to attract 50 people. The thinking was that if the event was successful, we could then review ‘where to from here’ and how the Metro CPLAN would be able to continue to provide these opportunities to the youth sector. A subcommittee was formed to organise the event. However given the interest in the initiative, most of the Metro CPLAN members attended the subcommittee meetings, so the Metro CPLAN meetings became the organising group for the event. The group discussed how to minimise costs and a free venue was located at Visible Ink, operated by Brisbane City Council.

Two members of the Metro CPLAN met with Professor Alan McKee to discuss our idea, a topic and his availability to support this initiative. He was chosen because he was the controversial keynote speaker at the YANQ conference and his expertise was suitable for this project. He agreed to
participate and his time would be an in kind contribution from Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Once a decision was made to go ahead, the forum was organised with a six week lead in. There was a lot of ownership by the different organisations on the Metro CPLAN, so they offered their support. Ipswich Community Youth Service offered to cover the costs of the catering and the workshop administration, and YANQ agreed to support the initiative by assisting with promotion – designing a flyer and promoting the event on its website and fortnightly E Bulletin. The flyer (below) was also sent to all the youth inter agencies in South East Queensland.

![Figure 2 The ‘Is that an IPhone in your pocket’ flyer](image)

Lightworks Consultancy Inc. offered to provide a facilitator for the event. The facilitator developed 5 questions which were asked as people booked into the event (these are reported later in this case study).

Smith Family Partnership Brokers provided support by linking the project with Regional Development Australia and My Community Directory to explore synergies and possible funding options, and in concept development and implementation. Jabiru Community Youth and Children’s Services donated funds to cover the cost of a video of the event to be made of the event. The video provides documentation of the event and a promotional tool for use by the sector for subsequent events. The video can be accessed at [http://bit.ly/ZzCmsI](http://bit.ly/ZzCmsI).

An event evaluation form was developed by YANQ with input from the organising committee. The evaluation was given to event participants prior to and then again after the event. Promotion of the
event targeted key youth organisations, with members of the committee contacting managers of youth organisations they knew. Where there was no pre-existing relationship with other key youth organisations, members of the committee were given three or four organisations to make personal contact with to encourage them to send youth workers. The committee also decided to target ‘key informants’ from the sector who had particular information about the issues being discussed and would be a good resource to those attending. Those targeted included Family Planning Queensland, Queensland Health, a Teenage Pregnancy Counsellor from Education Queensland, and the Youth Advocacy Centre.

The Event Itself

42 people attended the event, with broad representation including youth workers, managers, consultants, government workers from various types of services. There was a broad range of ages. Youth services attended from across the region, including Bracken Ridge, Ipswich, Goodna, Nundah, Wynnum, Woolloongabba and the Fortitude Valley. Specialist services also attended, including Open Doors (LGBT), Family Planning and the Young Carers Project. There were government representatives from Queensland Health, Brisbane City Council and Education Queensland.

Table 1 Format on the Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>Participants were asked to fill in evaluation form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>CPLAN initiative and why we were holding the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>Professor Alan McKee – spoke for 20 mins about current research with school students on information about sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>Small Group Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>Large group discussions led by Facilitator – utilising key people in the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>Participants were asked to fill in evaluation form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was interesting to note that the majority of participants stayed and enjoyed lunch together and that people were slow to leave.

Participant Views: Preliminary Questions – Prior to the Event

When participants registered for the event, they were asked 5 questions on young people and sexuality. The responses to these are listed below in Table 2. This information was designed to provide the facilitator with information on the views of participants prior to their attending the event as a way of gauging the differences of views in the room and provided some direction for the Facilitator. There were 21 responses.
Table 2 Questions at registration (n=21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses (n=21)</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should birth control be free and readily available to young people under 18 years</td>
<td>100% Yes</td>
<td>Some cautions as to type of birth control and how young people accessed it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe the media play a role in the sexualisation of children and young people?</td>
<td>96% Yes</td>
<td>Caution in the delivery either by a professional and the role of family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should LGBT information be included in the curriculum in high schools? What about primary schools?</td>
<td>100% High School 96% Primary School</td>
<td>Caution in the delivery either by a professional and the role of family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an appropriate age for a young person to have sex for the first time?</td>
<td>10% 16 years 10% 18 years 80% can’t give an age</td>
<td>Depends on the individual and contexts – development, legal, maturity, relationships etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can pornography have a positive influence on young people’s sexual beliefs or behaviours?</td>
<td>15% No 5% Yes 70% Maybe</td>
<td>Generally the tone was NO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The audience’s views on the questions asked reflects that participants have had some level of exposure to these matters and are relatively educated on the importance of good information for young people, and that there is lots of shades of grey when considering sexuality and young people. This information was used by the facilitator to shape the discussion on the day. He utilised the results of the survey as a way of provoking discussion in the larger and smaller groups. The answers gave the facilitator an idea of the type of audience and how to proceed in facilitating discussion on the topic. A range of other questions were asked of participants on the day prior to the event. These and responses to them are detailed in Tables 3-8 below.

Table 3 What is your expectation in coming to the Can of Young Worms event (N=30)

| Youth Work Practice – professional development – opportunity to talk with other youth workers – exposed to new strategies and perspectives – contemporary sector responses (29%) Network and Information Sharing (18%) Opportunity to discuss issues regarding sexuality with other workers – ethically issues (8%) Greater understanding of how my values impact on my work with young people (2%) | Awareness on issues surrounding youth – education – understanding (18%) Opportunity to listen and reflect with other workers – openness and sharing – discussion (16%) Opportunity to have good debate on values and interesting topics – have a rave and see where it takes us (8%) |

The responses indicate that the participants all valued the opportunity to come together as workers in the Youth Sector to explore their practice with young people, through sharing information and discussing ways of ensuring young people are well supported. The key point here is that the desire to be a better youth worker and the importance of collegial support are important for youth workers and will motivate them to put aside time from their busy schedules to undertake this type of learning.
Table 4  What interested you about the topic?

| Professional development – hearing from peers – relevant to work (43%) | Sexuality Issues – in general and specific to target groups (21%) |
| Impact of values on our work – opportunity to discuss and reflect more deeply – ethics of care (18%) | Controversial topic – challenging youth workers (11%) |
| The role of technology – does it contribute to young people’s sexual behaviour? (3%) | Following up from YANQ Conference (3%) |

There were twenty seven responses to this question. The responses have been categorised into six categories.

It is interesting that there were only 21% of participants who stated that the topic was of interest to them. The remaining comments were focused around having an opportunity to talk with peers, other youth workers about their work. It appears that the topic provided a focus for that type of interaction.

Table 5  Have you ever spoken about this topic at work with your colleagues?

| 55% - yes | 28% – briefly | 17% - no |

Of the 29 responses to this question, 55% of the participants said they had discussed this topic with their colleagues at work. Another 28% of participants said they had had only brief discussions and 17% of participants said that they hadn’t discussed it. There were a number of qualifications made by respondents when answering the question – ranging from “it’s our core business – I think I talk in my sleep about it” to “limited follow through in terms of awareness raising and skills development amongst young people we support”.

Table 6  What would you need to happen at the Forum to enable you to maximise your participation in the Forum

| Open discussion – guided discussion– good conversation (26%) | Other (16%) |
| Small group discussions (10%) | Good facilitation (10%) |
| Covering a range of topics – time space good documentation and follow up – maximising my time (3) | Gain awareness – understanding (3) |
| Respect for people’s values – trust (6%) | Unsure (6%) |
| Opportunity for networking (3%) | Small group and large group discussions (3%) |

There were twenty seven responses were given to this question. The participants had a range of answers but they have been divided into 10 categories. Participants on the whole wanted the opportunity for good dialogue with their peers, in a safe environment which was well facilitated. The category ‘Other’ has a large number of responses but many of them did not really relate to the question which is why they have not been detailed.
Table 7  Do you think you have strong values about the topic of this Forum ‘Young People, Sociality and Sexuality’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes – 64%</th>
<th>Still developing – 21%</th>
<th>No – 14%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

There were 27 responses to this question. The majority of participants stated that they have strong values on this topic, which is in itself interesting given the decision to hold a forum with a controversial topic. People who attended already had well developed values on this topic.

Table 8  What level of awareness do you have of your values and how this impacts on your work with young people around issues relating to sexuality?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None at all</th>
<th>Deep awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 No responses</td>
<td>4 2 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 9 7 6 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of 24 respondents had a moderate or higher awareness of the impact of their values on their youth work. The majority of participants indicated a clear understanding of themselves and their values, and that they wanted to use the Forum as a way of learning from each other to improve their practice as youth workers. There were however a group of young youth workers who were still formulating their views and were keen to learn from more experienced youth workers.

Participant Views: Questions asked of participants on the day after the event.
The purpose of the event was to provide an opportunity for professional development as well as being a stimulating and safe way of coming together to explore a ‘value laden’ topic. The following questions were asked of respondents to gauge from them their experience of the event.

Have you been to a forum like this before? (n=20)
Of the 20 people who responded to the question, 50% stated that they had and 50% stated they hadn’t. Therefore, for many of the participants it was a new experience.

Table 9  What will you take away from this to implement into your practice? (n=22)

| Knowledge, information – people’s views on sexuality 13% | Personal Disclosure 4% |
| Improve my practice 9% – hearing from others in the sector 4% | More interest being involved in input to public policy 4% |
| A chance to reassess my values 4% | Renewed vigour for awareness raising 4% |
| Strengthened referral pathways 9% | Bringing information back to work 4% |
| Thinking more of ‘what can we do’ 4% | Media can be a learning tool 4% |
| Talk more to young people about their reality. 4% | People’s views – the differences in other workers views. 4% |
| Networks 9% | Information about CPLAN 4% |
| Other 14% | “|
There were 22 responses to this question. The majority of responses indicated that participants had obtained some value from attending the event, mostly in regard to their practice with young people.

**Has your understanding of the topic discussed today changed by attending this Forum? If so, how?**

23 people responded to the question ‘Has your understanding of the topic discussed today changed by attended this Forum?’ 48% said they had, though another 22% respondents said that the discussion had given them more information or help them understand other people’s perspectives. Therefore 70% of respondents had been assisted by the information provided at the Forum.

**Do you think it is realistic that we can get the sector to discuss values?**

25 participants responded to this question. 96% agreed that it is possible to get the sector to discuss values. The majority of responses were strongly positive, e.g. definitely!, absolutely! It’s a great idea!

**Would you come along to another Forum like this?**

Twenty six responded to this question with all agreeing. Accompanying comments indicate a range of reasons underpinning this view.

**Table 10 Why participants would come to another Forum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Comments</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Comments related to extending knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broaden – extend my knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>good to be challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informative and thought provoking Hearing other stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Comments related to the opportunity discuss and / or reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to discuss practice with other youth workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity for individual reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping up to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to discuss improve discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To hear a range of views being expressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer supervision / values checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valuable as a worker and an individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invaluable opportunity for staff to discuss sexuality and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interesting to get a mainstream perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Comments related to the forum as a useful vehicle for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A forum of this quality is good for youth workers to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good format for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Comments related to the involvement of multiple organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of multiple stakeholders maintains good energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good representation from relevant organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11 What did you think of the Forum?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>No of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the 26 respondents agreed that the Forum was a valuable professional development experience for workers. In terms of creating further opportunities for the sector to discuss values, 25 people responded. 96% of respondents agreed that it would be worthwhile. The evaluation also included questions on the format of future professional development gatherings and topics that could be covered. They also were asked how they found out about the Forum. All of this information is useful for the Metro CPLAN when organising future events.

Key insights from participant’s feedback

- Topic was of interest
- Opportunity for professional development and discussing issues with peers
- Safe learning environment
- Well organised workshop and good facilitation provided good opportunity to discuss with peers.
- Youth workers were keen to learn from others
- Youth workers would attend another training event like this one.

What were our insights / themes?

Preparation for the Forum
Collecting data assisted the Facilitator to shape the direction of the questions. It engaged participants in the workshop prior to attending the workshop, warming them up to the discussion. There were no questions in the evaluation as to whether participants thought this was a good idea, something to consider for future workshops.

Forum Format
The Forum format was very successful as the feedback indicates with 100% of respondents agreeing they would come to another forum of this style. Overall 96% of respondents rated the Forum as excellent or very good. Having expert practitioners and specialist services in the audience meant that very specific and current information could be provided as part of the discussion format, whilst also providing an good opportunity for further building of networks across the sector.

Facilitation
The Facilitation approach was strongly endorsed. 77% rated the facilitation as excellent and 23% rated the facilitation as very good. The facilitator used the registration questions as a way of prompting discussion on issues, so that the dialogue was generated by the audience’s responses to the questions. This is unusual in the youth sector, where most training events do not start with the audience’s views. There was a high level of engagement by the audience during the large group and small group discussions, indicating that participants felt able to participate and engage with the topic.

Content
100% of respondents of the evaluation survey agreed that the Forum was a valuable professional development experience for workers – and 100% agreed that they to another event. The choice of topic was successful. 70% of respondents said they got something from the Forum. It was an opportunity to discuss a topic which otherwise would not have had many opportunities to do so. 96% of respondents agreed that it was important for the sector to discuss values.
Administration of and catering for the workshop
The success of the event was enabled by the administration. The food was also of a high standard. Most people stayed to eat which contributed to the continuation of the conversations which were ignited by the discussion at the Forum.

Participants were welcomed and the sign in table was very friendly. There was a business card draw which added a sense of surprise to the event. Sign in covered matters such as privacy, photography, contact details etc.

Collaboration
The event itself was a collaboration of different organisations in the Metro Region, demonstrating that the sector can work together in this way. CPLAN provided an opportunity for the sector to play a leadership role in training of youth workers. Targeting youth organisations to send participants worked well as we had a good cross section of the youth sector at the event.

It was disappointing that our key note speaker could not stay at the event. In future we would ask keynote speaker to stay for whole event so that group has benefit of their knowledge. The contributions of targeted ‘key informants’ greatly added to the discussions e.g. Family Planning Queensland had access to statistical data that informed the discussion.

Theory of Practice
The aim of the event was to engage youth workers from the metropolitan region of Brisbane in a professional development activity, providing an opportunity for youth workers to discuss a value laden topic in a supportive environment that did not require lots of funding. The Can of Young Worms event explored a particular facilitation style and utilised a range of experts to contribute to the discussion in an informal setting. This model has proved itself as a successful way of engaging youth workers in professional development.

Youth workers in the Metro Region have the challenge of bridging between the complex lived worlds of a diversity of young people and social, community, cultural norms which may be in tension with this topic. Youth workers and youth services have to deal with this complexity (which includes values complexity) and need opportunities to explore, understand and be informed around tricky and thorny areas of practice. The topic was deliberately chosen to be controversial as a way of ‘attracting the attention’ of youth workers in a region where there a wide range of other demands on youth worker time. On reflection the initiative is a successful way of engaging with the youth sector for the Metro CPLAN. It is difficult for the Metro CPLAN to engage with the youth sector in such a densely populated area, so utilising training events in the region is a good model of engagement.

The combination of keynote speakers who created interest by having an edgy topic, and a combination of specialist services/practitioners relevant to the topic and a range of practitioners who were interest in the topic was a successful approach. The Metro CPLAN researched this style of Forum as a model for workforce development forums. The initial success of the Forum has inspired the Metro CPLAN to hold another forum in 2013.

Outstanding questions
The Metro CPLAN focused on answering the Macro Question 1 “What will it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?” In answering this question it focused on a model of practice of bringing the youth sector together for a professional development opportunity, to support their practice by providing information on a particular topic as well as providing them with information about different services available to support them in their practice. It was also recognised by undertaking the Forum that it was a good way for the Metro CPLAN to expose its operation and functions to the youth sector of the Metropolitan Region. Given the success of the Can of Young Worms Forum and the interest expressed in further events similar to it, there is support by the Metro CPLAN to explore another topic in another Forum.
Matters for consideration in another Forum
If the Metro CPLAN proceeds and holds another forum there are a number of issues to be considered, including topic, organising team and funding.

Topic
The evaluation form asked participants what other topics they would like discussed in a forum like the Can of Young Worms. This information will be provided to the Metro CPLAN for consideration.

Funding
The different youth organisations that organised the event also contributed to its cost. Without this support the event would not have occurred. There was discussion in organising a committee about whether participants should be charged to participate and if so how much. Would youth workers pay to come to an event of this type? If so, what would be an appropriate cost $20, $35, $50, $100? The facilitator donated his time to the event. Is this sustainable? Or do we need funds to pay for facilitation?

Forum length
The Metro CPLAN organised a half day event based on the assumption that we would lose participants after lunch anyway, because workers do not have sufficient time in their work schedules to attend whole day training events. However, a half day event does limit the level of content. Would it be better to organise a full day event? Another option would be a three quarter day event.

Documentation
Metro CPLAN organisers recognised that due to changes in service agreements, managers and staff are concerned about reducing service delivery by undertaking training. Perhaps in the future we need to provide a Certificate of Attendance so that participants can justify their attendance.

Conclusion
The purpose of the event was to choose a controversial topic to ‘get the attention of the youth sector’ in the Metro Region as it is an area where youth workers have many opportunities for ongoing education. The decision to hold the event on this topic in this style was deliberate to ensure people attended the event.

The event itself was very successful. There was a high level of agreement by participants that they found the event educational and engaging and that they would attend another event if organised.

Why it was successful?

• Topic was of interest
• Opportunity for professional development and discussing issues with peers
• Safe learning environment
• Well organised workshop and good facilitation provided good opportunity to discuss with peers.
• Youth workers were keen to learn from other.

Final conclusion- let’s do it again and develop this into a model for workplace development forums that meets the needs of the youth sector in the metropolitan area. Metro CPLAN are now working together to establish an Alliance of Youth Services to collectively fundraise for their organisations.
4.2  Sunshine CPLAN Case Study

This case study narrates the journey of the Sunshine Community of Practice Leaders Action Network (CPLAN) as they explore their commonalities and construct a united vision for youth work practice in the region.

The Context

The CPLAN initiative is part of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland’s (YANQ) venture to create a viable youth sector in Queensland. The Sunshine CPLAN covers the Department of Education & Training’s “North Coast” region which takes in the local government areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, and the regions of North & South Burnett. This region is very diverse, covering large portions of built-up urban areas in the south, through to coastal communities, regional towns and rural communities.

![Figure 1 Sunshine region](image)

*Figure 1 Sunshine region*

The Sunshine CPLAN is a new network of organisations that have chosen to come together to improve youth work practice and development in the region. The CPLAN began within the local
government areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast and Gympie. Meetings were initially held monthly and attended by representatives from educational institutions, local government and community organisations that support young people. In early 2012 the frequency of meetings was changed to bi-monthly and a concerted focus was made to engage with the north of the Sunshine region.

Table 1: CPLAN participants at meetings since it began in May 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristina Farrell; Chris Bell</td>
<td>United Synergies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarryd Williams</td>
<td>Redcliffe Youth Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel Rietmuller</td>
<td>Chameleon House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie Alwell; Paul Morton</td>
<td>Integrated Families &amp; Youth Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Barton</td>
<td>Intercept Youth &amp; Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Reid</td>
<td>Kids Youth Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Najlepszy</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast Youth Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Blunt</td>
<td>Worklinks Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart Hartley</td>
<td>Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi Rayward</td>
<td>Moreton Bay Regional Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindi Coinix</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Allard; Michelle Rowe</td>
<td>Gympie Regional Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette Homann; Geoff Tim</td>
<td>Queensland Youth Industry Links Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Valentine</td>
<td>Link-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik Dodwell</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast TAFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda Allport</td>
<td>Mercy Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Johnstone; Lisa Wan;</td>
<td>Community Solutions – Sunshine Coast &amp; Gympie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Cummings</td>
<td>Lifeline Community Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Ives; Sharon Kellett</td>
<td>Brisbane North Institute of TAFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Buckley</td>
<td>Deception Bay Community Youth Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Brauer</td>
<td>Community Action Gympie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Neil</td>
<td>QUT Caboolture Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett Johnson</td>
<td>Local Government Association of QLD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our Questions
At the inaugural CPLAN meeting the focus of discussions and energy amongst attendees focused on the four suggested action research questions:

I. What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?
II. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
III. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
IV. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in QLD?

A snapshot of this is included below:
Question 1: What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?
• How do we attract people to youth work in the first place? How do we make youth work a desirable vocation with young people? i.e. How do we link with schools / careers days, etc.
• What are the level of skills and training required to work within the Youth Sector?
• How do we improve the remuneration or packages offered to youth workers?
• How do we promote Youth Work as a Sector?
• Who are we attempting to engage – who do we want to become youth workers?
• Are their intrinsic values in youth work and how important are these in attracting people to this type of work?
• Why do people leave the youth sector?
• What are the pathways to employment in the youth sector?
• Is there a place for volunteerism?
• Decades ago there existed a voluntary or on-the-job pathway in youth work. Often young people who had come out of connection to youth sector – then became youth workers themselves. What is the role of apprenticeships / internships in youth work today and for the future?

Question 2: What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
• The need to embrace and become proficient in social networking / use of media applications
• Increased advocacy on behalf young people on issues affecting them with the media
• We need to improve youth engagement strategies i.e. Youth Engagement Forums or other processes to get young people’s ideas
• Increasing our capacity to do research – or link to people who are doing this (e.g. universities)
• Better understanding our communities and the resources that exist in them – rather than always expecting the sector to do everything.

Question 3: What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
• Look to developmental and collaborative projects / opportunities – recognising the skills and resources – link between services, councils, education, business etc.
• Collective funding utilising collaborative bodies, i.e. local government bodies, co-operatives, consortiums etc are difficult to pursue because they take time and resources
• Who pays for collaboration? It takes time and money and despite the rhetoric, there is minimal evidence (i.e. actual resource allocation) that government values this work
• The current trend in funding is moving towards project outputs / outcomes with minimal recognition of the cost of running sustainable entities
• Funding process works against collaboration - when funding is allocated the ‘collaboration’ component is very rarely reward by government
• Exploring relationships, opportunities, gaps, similarities – breaking down walls – the CAG model in Moreton Bay is a work in progress to model this.

Question 4: What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in QLD?
• Need to be informed about new legislation / changes to policy – what will be the impact on us (individual services) – need for streamlining of information
• Finding a unified voice – shared feedback on policy/ legislation
• State government fund a policy role at YANQ who would do this work in an ongoing basis
• Policy development is not part of our paid role and so it is another aspect of our work that we need to make scarce time and resources for
• Link to YANQ Policy Forum – can this be more regular?
• How does YANQ link with other Peaks around key youth issues (e.g. Youth Mental Health – link to Qld Alliance / or Child Safety – link to Peak Care)
• Some of the Councils are the best resourced in regards to over-arching issues / needs of young people. However there is still a suspicion towards Councils. It’s important at a local
level for Councils to lead some of this policy development work at a regional level and link their social policy/ plans, community plans to state wide policy development.

The group decided that with such a huge array of issues the best way forward was to decide on focusing on one or two opportunities and using the participatory action research method to see where that led. The two questions that became the focus were questions 1 & 3:

- **What would it take to develop a strong & vibrant youth sector workforce?**
- **What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?**

The group decided to meet monthly and to continue to engage in robust dialogue around these matters. In response to Question 1 the group started to narrow down how we can develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in the North Coast region. The following list came from brainstorming the issues raised around this question at the first meeting:

- **Career pathways** – find entry points in schools to raise awareness of youth work as a viable career for young people.
- **Lobby Government to ensure that increased wages are funded adequately** – it is not enough to have wages parity in our sector, need extra funding to ensure that hours and services are not cut and to ensure that a career in youth work is financially attractive.
- **Values in youth work** – work needs to be done to create a dialogue around the core values in youth work and articulate these so as to attract people to youth work who know and understand what it takes to be a youth worker i.e. it is not just a job that is values-free – it is driven by some core principles that people need to concur with to be successful at youth work.
- **Professional development:** Often young workers come into the sector with enthusiasm and heart but need to learn skills. Professional development is essential to ensure that the career pathway in youth work is sustainable.
- **Flexible pathways in workplaces** – utilising mechanisms such as internships as pathways into youth work so that younger workers are mentored and learn appropriate work practices.
- **Volunteering** – there was agreement that volunteering in the youth sector has diminished over the years due to the increase in compliance and accountability measures. We need to explore how we can increase the pathways for volunteers in youth work and not dismiss this valuable and untapped resource.
- **Engagement with TAFEs** – there was a need to have a more connection with TAFEs by youth services about curriculum and also to be part of lectures and showcasing youth work and good practice.
- **Engagement with Youth Justice** – Training for youth workers employed in Youth Justice, is there a role for youth agencies to work with Youth Justice to do this?
- **What is Youth Work?**
  - What is the purpose of what we are doing?
  - What are the roles and healthy youth work practices?
  - How can we re-“view” youth work to increase its appeal as a viable career pathway?
- **Does the youth work sector require too much in qualifications?** Should more emphasis be put on relevant experience?

The following meeting led to an agreed-upon action. The organisations present were committed to working together to help build a vibrant youth sector and decided to explore what would it take to articulate a youth work framework for our region. By listening to the stories and experiences of practitioners we thought that a framework could be used to promote youth work with Government agencies and learning institutions in the region. The foundational document would provide youth
organisation across the region with an articulation of their shared values, common practice and provide a clear expectation for youth work practice and service delivery in the Sunshine region.

**The Plan**
The Sunshine CPLAN developed a plan to engage and consult with the youth sector in the region. The plan proposed to:

1. Survey the youth sector to determine what the key ethics statements/practice principles and to
2. Hold a participatory forum in October – Focus of workshop to bring in our codes of ethics, organisational values statements, practice frameworks, etc and identify what we have in common and develop a shared statement that we can all commit to. It would also be a good opportunity to explore the ‘What is youth work?’ discussion paper.

**Action 1:**
The CPLAN decided to engage an external facilitator to lead and facilitate the survey and workshop. Members of the network, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council, volunteered to pay for the associated costs. The CPLAN extended an invitation to Tina Lathouras, a local community development practitioner and academic, who agreed to work with the network!

**The survey & workshops:**
Tina drafted the sector survey, collated the survey data, and facilitated two workshops with the CPLAN to analysis the data and draft the document.

Tina commenced by designing a survey aimed to identify core organisational principles and practice approaches. The survey was distributed to all network members to promote within their individual organisation and networks. Seven surveys were completed and returned to Tina for collation.

A workshop was organised by the CPLAN to bring interested members together with Tina to analyse the survey data. The workshop was held at the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre in September 2011. The venue was chosen for its central location (within the geographic region at the time) and for its relaxed and hospitable environment. Members worked together and shared responsibility to organise and cater the workshop.

The result of the survey and two workshops was the production of a draft document called *Integrity in our Practice*. The draft document was a standing agenda item at all meetings. The paper will potentially guide the practice of participating Sunshine CPLAN agencies across the region and it is anticipated that, once finalised, this document may be used as a tool to strengthen working relationships between organisations; as a training and induction tool for youth workers; and, as a tool for discussion with tertiary training organisations to better prepare students for youth work in the Sunshine region.

Following validation from the participating agencies the document *Integrity in our practice- Youth work in our region* has been released and is contained as an Appendix to this report. The document will be promoted more broadly and others encouraged to pursue a similar journey.

**Action 2: Professional development for youth workers**
Another development that emerged from CPLAN meetings was to build stronger connections with the Workforce Development Council in our region to enhance professional development for youth workers in the region. Two participants in the CPLAN were also part of the Workforce Development Council) and this was used to promote the following ideas to develop non-accredited training possibilities:

- **Developing frameworks of practice** for youth workers which would cover the underlying values, ethics and practice goals that provide a foundation to develop a skills base and
reflective practice. There are numerous training opportunities for youth workers in technical skills that focus on topical matters but the Sunshine CPLAN saw a gap in that many youth workers have not been provided the skills and space to develop their own practice framework. Most agencies involved revealed that unless a youth worker has come from a tertiary tradition that teaches practice frameworks many youth workers are not exposed to the opportunity to develop a practice framework.

- The sector could set up processes for organisations to be able to provide new workers with access to mentoring from more experienced youth workers. This could include some basic training for more experienced youth workers in how to mentor, what are the core essentials, attitudes required for effective mentoring, and then to set up a program of mentoring across the region.

- Training for youth work staff in reflective practice, understanding the role of supervision, and supportive peer networks to enhance practice.

**Action 3: Engagement with educational institutions in the region that teach youth work:**

**TAFE Engagement**

The CPLAN has enabled both the Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast TAFEs to have input into the Integrity document which has led to better engagement with youth services about the type and quality of youth work training provided by TAFEs. Some key outcomes from this engagement include:

- Cert. IV and of Diploma Youth Work students at BNIT are introduced to the draft Integrity in Our Practice document to enhance their understanding of youth work. The sections exploring values, ethics and client rights have been incorporated into their learning and assessment.

- The YANQ discussion paper “What is Youth Work” has also been incorporated into course teachings and assessment.

The CPLAN has also opened up dialogue to further the working relationship between youth services and BNIT and identified the following opportunities:

- Youth organisations may develop an elective subject for Youth Work students. The subject may showcase individual services within the Moreton Bay region and provide an opportunity for organisations to engage in dialogue with students about youth work in the region.

- CPLAN organisations have the opportunity to attend the Vocational Placement Course workshop in semester two to present to and meet with students.

**Involvement of universities**

The CPLAN initiated contact with QUT Caboolture about their role in course development for youth workers. QUT is now a regular participant in CPLAN. This has led to setting up a Professional Development (seminar/workshop) for the youth sector in our region such as:

- Ethics and Legal Frameworks, and;
- Youth alcohol and substance abuse.
Further discussion has been held regarding potential for future course offerings in Human Services / Social Work run out of the QUT Caboolture campus.

Engagement with the northern part of the region:
In February 2012, YANQ decided to increase the region to include the whole of the North Coast region. This is when the name of the region was changed to Sunshine. As the region is too large in size to expect people to come together for meetings in one location it was decided that the Facilitator would attend the Wide Bay Burnett Youth Services Network held every 6 months in the small rural town of Biggenden. These meetings are attempts to bring together the youth sector agencies (both government and non-government) to share information and work collaboratively on common issues and rely heavily on the Youth Development Workers in Local Government to organise and facilitate them. Unfortunately funding cuts meant that there was insufficient time and resources to continue this activity.

What did we find out?
Setting up the CPLAN in the southern part of the region created a ‘shared zone’ where purposeful relationships could be built and a small number of regulars (between four to seven) ensured that the momentum of the CPLAN continued.

The region is so large with about 8 – 9 established youth networks, meaning that the CPLAN needs to have a high degree of relevance for participants in order to be sustained. The southern part of the region has some very strong existing collaborative vehicles i.e. the Moreton Bay Collaborative Action Group (the CAG) which has provided an effective mechanism for Moreton Bay youth services to get things done together so the CPLAN has built on the relationships that have grown in the CAG.

Where to from here?
There are some key factors that will shape where the Sunshine CPLAN goes and how a collaborative vehicle in this region may evolve:

1. **The changing environment:** The funding cuts to youth and community agencies across QLD have had a huge impact on the capacity of agencies to prioritise and participate in strategic and collaborative processes. We have seen a direct correlation with agencies decreasing their collaborative efforts since the funding cuts were forced upon the sector. It is difficult for agencies to consider collaboration with others or to have a regional focus when their own agency is at risk of diminishing its presence or disappearing completely.

2. **The diverse, large region:** The Sunshine region is so large and diverse there are limited opportunities to come together as one. Attempts to continue engaging with the northern part of the region will require more resources than are currently available so this presents a veer real and difficult challenge.

3. **Engagement and relevance:** The challenge for the Sunshine CPLAN will be to provide a role that participating agencies will find relevant. It is hoped that the **Integrity** document may be a tool that can be used for this engagement.

4. **Outcomes for young people and their families:** For 2014 the Sunshine CPLAN members have decided to focus their attention on a project that will develop the narratives of how youth agencies respond to and support young people and their families. The project will include the use of agencies capturing qualitative data through stories, and by combining the stories across the region identify some themes that will be used to engage in a dialogue with Government and funding bodies about what works.
Note: The *Integrity in Practice* document is attached as an appendix to this report and can also be downloaded from the YANQ website at [http://www.yanq.org.au/10/post/2013/07/integrity-in-our-practice.html](http://www.yanq.org.au/10/post/2013/07/integrity-in-our-practice.html)
4.3 The South East CPLAN case study

The geographical range of the Southeast regional Communities of Practice Leaders Action Network (CPLAN) extends from Coolangatta on the Queensland/NSW border, north to Beenleigh and west as far as Beaudesert. See map below.

In practical terms however the focus of our CPLAN is Gold Coast City. Whilst Beenleigh is often included with the Gold Coast in government boundaries, we work very separately, with Beenleigh having its own networks and services. Beaudesert is a rural area and again, has limited service connection with the Gold Coast. Given this, the decision was made to confine this CPLAN process to the Gold Coast and recommend that separate CPLAN groups be established for Beenleigh and Beaudesert at a later stage.

Gold Coast Context:

What Would it Take to Establish a South East CPLAN?

In the establishment of a CPLAN on the Gold Coast, attendees at the first meeting decided that at least initially, we would utilise the existing Gold Coast Youth Network as a platform to launch.

The Gold Coast Youth Network (GCYN) is a long standing network with broad representation from across the youth sector and a strong grassroots base. It has a mailing list of over 200 youth workers and averages 25 plus attendees at meetings. Its function has for many years principally been information sharing and networking. Occasional sub-groups (or working parties) have formed for specific purposes such as National Youth Week and Youth Homelessness Matters Day. GCYN primarily attracts direct service delivery workers and a few managers of services.

Gold Coast City – the focus of existing CPLAN

A core group of around twenty members would attend on a very regular basis, with a further twenty-thirty who attend sporadically. The rest of the membership would attend infrequently but use the mailing list to promote services and programs and receive minutes of meetings to stay informed.

The regular attendees come from a variety of services and programs such as:

- Specialist youth homelessness services (3)
- Local government (1)
- Juvenile justice programs (2)
- Drug and alcohol services (3)
- Youth mental health services (3)
- Community centre youth workers (2)
- Youth specific employment programs (3)
- Programs for young people who are at risk of or have disengaged from education (4)
- Larger church organisation youth programs (1)
CPLAN was heavily promoted through the GCYN mailing list and at GCYN meetings. The initial group decided to trial holding CPLAN meetings immediately before or after GCYN meetings. All members of GCYN were invited to attend. It became clear after trialling the different times that the best option for interested workers was to be able to attend the CPLAN and stay on for GCYN.

**Developing a CPLAN focus for the Gold Coast**

Over the course of the first few monthly meetings we looked at the four questions identified by YANQ as statewide CPLAN questions:

1. What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?
2. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector
4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in QLD?

There was strong interest in Question 1 (developing a strong and vibrant youth sector). Discussion of the relevance of this question to the Gold Coast led to discussion around burnout, complexity of client issues (youth workers feeling overwhelmed), and workers feeling the need to have more skills in areas such as drug and alcohol, dual diagnosis, and early intervention. This led to discussion about collaborative case-management and the need for skills in how to undertake this well.

There was also strong interest in Question 2 (improving access and opportunities for young people). In particular discussion centred around young people and drug and alcohol use, barriers for young people disengaged from education, lack of opportunities for training, transport costs, working with young people of Maori and Pacific Island cultures who often have no access to financial assistance.

Question 3 evoked some interesting discussion, with some opposite views on whether the sector works collaboratively or not. It was generally felt that Question 4 (youth policy) was best looked at from a State level.

As a result of discussions at the early CPLAN meetings two of the broad CPLAN questions were modified for the Gold Coast. The revised questions were:

- What would it take for the Gold Coast youth sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
- What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce on the Gold Coast?
What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector

Enhance understanding and skills in youth drug and alcohol practice

Establish youth worker peer-support network for Gold Coast

Revise GCYN meetings and events

Self care training for youth workers

Understanding of Maori and Pacific Island Cultures

Scope transport costs for young people

For each of these a number of specific strategies were developed as depicted in the Figure above. Each of these strategies is briefly outlined below.

In respect of the question “What would it take for the Gold Coast youth sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?”, two strategies have been initiated.

**Strategy 1: Enhance youth workers’ understanding of Maori and Pacific Island Cultures**

CPLAN engaged with the Health and Community Services Workforce Council, Workforce Development Network (WDN) to provide training on Maori and Pacific Island Cultural Awareness. The first of two planned half day trainings by WDN in early August 2012.

The training was very well received, with all participants indicating that they would like further training on this subject. Although a second follow up was intended, the WDN was defunded and so this did not happen.

**Strategy 2: Scope transport costs for young people**

Both the lack of, and the high cost of transport were also recurring themes discussed at CPLAN meetings. Youth Network members strongly promoted consultations on the Gold Coast City Transport Strategy 2031 encouraging and supporting as many young people as possible to ‘have their say’.
Scoping the actual cost of transport for all young people will be progressed as a student project. The time frame for this has yet to be determined.

In respect of the question “What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce on the Gold Coast?” four strategies have been initiated.

**Strategy 1: Enhance understanding and skills in youth drug and alcohol practice**
An action from the discussions on drug and alcohol was to invite Jeff Buckley from Dovetail to present some training on Drug and Alcohol to the GCYN.

Observations: The training was very well received, with all participants indicating that they that they found it very valuable, including more experienced workers who reflected that there was always something new to learn. It would seem that although training is available through formal settings (TAFE), there is a preference for short trainings that are preferably free or low cost.

**Strategy 2: Self care training for youth workers**
We also formed a sub-group to plan a self-care day for youth workers which was planned over several months with input from the CPLAN and GCYN members.

We sought presenters / facilitators from within our existing networks and contacts and planned a full-day Forum including catering that would be informative, fun and focused on preventing burnout and looking after workers. We found a venue conducive to this theme and structured the cost so that it was heavily subsidized by the GCYN funds and required only a contribution of $10 per person. We decided that a small fee would ensure commitment, but not exclude people who had limited resources. We expected that we would have between 50 and 80 registrations.

Observations: Unfortunately the event was cancelled one week prior to the set date (in Feb 2012). There were at this time 34 registrations and, of those, only a handful had paid. This was felt to be insufficient to proceed.

Reflection: Although disappointing to those who had planned the event, we used the opportunity to have a discussion and reflect on why this happened. Invaluable information obtained through observation and reflection resulted in a deeper understanding of network members needs and via a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process, changes to meetings.

**Strategy 3: Revise GCYN meetings and events**
At the GNYC meeting following the cancellation, Network members confirmed that they did want to have self-care training. Discussion followed exploring why if people wanted self-care training they didn’t commit to the event and what it was that they most wanted out of an event on self-care. Themes from this discussion were:

- Not able to commit to a full day
- February was especially busy this year
- They had wanted the opportunity to network, listen to new ideas, gain new insights into self-care
- Looked forward to the outdoor activity planned
- Wanted to feel pampered.

We used the opportunity to pose a PAR question “What would it take for you to be able to access some self-care strategies?” Themes from the discussion were:

- Short sessions were preferred by most
- Inviting regular guest facilitators focusing on self-care for youth workers to the GCYN
- People from within the network then started to offer to facilitate sessions.
The discussion also raised broader questions about the role and approach needed for the Network. We posed the question “What would it take to ensure that the GCYN best meets the needs of its members?” Suggestions were made on how we could improve on the current network structure. Members were clear that they valued the information sharing and that there were consistently high numbers of attendees. Suggestions to improve the network included:

- Restructuring the meetings to allow more connecting with other workers
- Scheduling meetings away from Youth Justice sometimes – green spaces etc
- Development of a calendar of guest speakers so that youth workers can identify meetings they particularly want to attend
- Embed professional development into the meetings by inviting guest speakers to deliver short trainings through the year.

Actions we implemented from this discussion included:

- Restructuring the meeting to allow a break and also the provision of morning tea
- A meeting held at Horses Helping Humans in Tallebudgera Valley, facilitated by the coordinator who demonstrated her horse-whispering techniques that assist young people
- Two self-care and boundaries workshop
- One Mindfulness workshop,

Observations: So far these changes seem to have been well received. The self care workshops had high attendance and positive feedback.

This strategy of revising GCYN meetings and events was reviewed at the first meeting in 2013. Attendees indicated that the changes were positive, incorporating workshops worked well, and people liked the break and interaction time. Subsequently suggestions were made for guest speakers and short trainings for the coming year.

Observations: Once again short, free or low cost training that is integrated into the existing network seems to be a good strategy for learning new skills. Feedback is extremely positive.

**Strategy 4: Setting up a youth worker peer-support network for the Gold Coast**

Since mid-2012, the CLPLAN meetings have focused on discussions around the “What is Youth Work” draft paper and The Youth Sector in Qld Report. In particular, the high turnover of staff and inexpierence in the sector has been a focus of discussion. Some of the Gold Coast issues include:

- Professional supervision – not many organisations provide this. Often there is line supervision which has a different focus
- Succession planning does not happen often. This planning is important for the whole sector as there are very few workers with enough experience to manage a service
- Youth workers feeling overwhelmed by levels of client complexity
- Lack of support for new youth workers coming straight from TAFE or university
- Both government and community organisations have huge workloads which only seem to be getting bigger
- A larger percent of time is being used on accountability and reporting
- Career pathways are limited and wages bear no correlation to experience.

Lack of support, feeling overwhelmed by client issues and lack of supervision were recurring themes for our discussions and it was felt that as a group we could come up with a strategy to address these. We decided to establish a peer support group.

A high level of support for this project and recognition that we would need to be thorough in our development of such a group necessitated fortnightly meetings to plan and explore all issues.
The group explored what we hope to achieve:
- Keep workers in the sector - important for young people that there is a consistency of workers
- Support new youth workers coming into the sector on the Gold Coast
- Help reduction in turn-over of staff
- Share knowledge – experienced workers share with workers new to the field

Ideas and considerations explored were as follows:
- Use positive stories
- Have scenario questions
- Make sure it doesn’t become advice giving – but sharing
- Maybe ask if anyone has a burning topic – but also have a scenario prepared to generate discussion e.g. ethical dilemma
- Consider some people may not be able to attend but want to – e.g. on shift – would be good to have other ways to support people e.g. telephone (keep on agenda and look at later)
- Need to ensure organisations/managers are ok with people attending

Areas for further consideration/exploration:
- Confidentiality (re. stories, young people, and workers?)
- Purpose - this needs to be clear – it is a peer support group for youth workers on Gold Coast Not suitable for students.
- Needs to be safe for people - emotional safety important
- Information/discussion may be conflicting to organisational values, philosophy and protocols
- Could be existing tensions/conflicts between staff and with managers from organisations attending
- Could be conflicting frameworks/values/ways of working
- Need to ensure respect for organisational difference
- Needs clear objectives and TORs (guidelines/principles)
- Want to create a forum for shared learning and to extend professional development opportunities for people
- Create an opportunity to reflect on theory and practice
- Want it to support new workers entering the youth work sector on the Gold Coast

From discussions around these issues a Terms of Reference (TOR) was developed.

Purpose:
- To provide a forum for shared learning within a peer monitoring/support model
- To extend development opportunities for workers
- To provide an opportunity to reflect on youth work practice
- To support workers in the youth sector on the Gold Coast.

Principles:
- May include commitment to positive sharing and creating a learning environment
- Respect for different organisational and personal values, beliefs and frameworks for working with young people
- Look at developing working agreement / group deal / code of conduct with members.

Membership:
- Free (no cost)
- Open to youth workers on the Gold Coast.
Role of CPLAN:
- To promote ownership and empowerment of group
- To prepare member-driven agendas including case scenarios
- To provide two co-facilitators per meeting (rotating positions)
- To encourage a safe, supportive, non-judgmental space for all members
- To be available on the following morning for de-briefing.

The CPLAN group discussed whether there were some aspects of being a part of the group that was non-negotiable. Respect and ensuring that case studies are not identifiable was seen as critical. These were to be explored during the first meeting.

The First Meeting:

The first of the peer support meetings was held in March 2013. Twelve people attended. Of these, approximately half comprised new workers (less than a year of experience) and half had many years experience (5 years plus). The theme was predominantly around self-care, burnout and strategies used by workers to ensure care of self and also the lack of job security in the current political climate adding to stress levels. Feedback from all who attended was extremely positive.

Where to from here?

The CPLAN group will evaluate the peer support group after a year. We will look at attendance levels as one measure of success but also members experience and learning from the group. Evaluation tools considered will most likely be verbal feedback and a confidential feedback form for attendees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would seem that the Gold Coast CPLAN has focused primarily on creating a vibrant youth sector.

By asking the question “What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce on the Gold Coast” and exploring various ideas, we have identified strategies to support the youth sector and endeavour to implement these. CPLAN has contributed to a more inclusive and vibrant, action-oriented youth network. Numbers have increased. At the GCYN meeting in February, 45 attended. Over the past 12 months, there has been a higher level of active participation in discussions and willingness to share openly the challenges services are facing.

As facilitator, I have noticed more services willing to support projects such as National Youth Week events. Despite being a very time-poor sector, there have been higher numbers of services committing to be a part of projects and events.
The links between YANQ, CPLAN and GCYN have deepened and workers attending meetings are gaining a clearer understanding of how YANQ and CPLAN are strengthening the work we do. Establishing the peer support group as an ongoing project will take further monitoring and evaluation before we are ready to commit to our next strategy.

Postscript: As at December 2013, the Gold Coast Youth Network now has a regular attendance of 35 - 40 members. Youth Yak has been very successful in terms of regular attendance of 6 – 7 people per meeting and very positive feedback from participants. We will be continuing these groups in the coming year. We are also currently developing an online survey for the GCYN and CPLAN to evaluate the year.
4.4 North Region CPLAN Case Study

The context
The North Region extends from Bowen in the south to Ingham in the north, and stretches out to Richmond in the west. Its main service centre, and location of all CPLAN activity thus far, is Townsville, a regional city of approximately 200,000 people. Approximately 40% of Townsville’s population is under the age of 25 years, which is higher than both the Australian and Queensland average.

The North Region CPLAN has been embedded within The Youth Network QI Inc. (TYN). TYN is a recognised entity in Townsville and the surrounding region and is responsible for the coordination of inter-agency activities such as regular monthly meetings, networking opportunities, dissemination of information, advocacy and facilitating partnership opportunities between service providers.

The North Region CPLAN has involved in excess of 60 youth sector workers from around 30 youth service providers who have been involved in all aspects of exploration around the 4 key questions of the CPLAN including raising the issues, identifying potential partners in exploring solutions and developing models of delivery to address the issues raised. The group consisted of a mix of frontline workers, support staff, management and policy developers.

Our observations and reflections
The first 3 meetings of the North Region CPLAN were spent exploring the question ‘what would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?’

This opened a vibrant dialogue with the youth workers. Initially the focus was on the deficits in the youth sector, including funding challenges, staff retention and societal factors that are contributing the ever growing ‘at-risk’ cohort.

From this we were able to identify some key gaps in our service provision that, as a group, we would like to put some energy into. These were:

- Lack of drug & alcohol rehabilitation facilities in North Queensland and a workforce requiring more training
- Lack of community awareness around the range of services available to young people and how to access them
- The need for an after hours youth outreach service
- The need for a coordinated approach to the delivery of Adventure Based Learning Programs

The working groups were formed and led by either the Facilitator or Co-Facilitator or both, and both workers met on a regular basis to debrief on their groups progress, measure progress against the PAR framework and identify any further support required to reach the goals of the groups.

The main focus of this Case Study is on the work undertaken to address the issues around lack of drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities in North Queensland and a workforce requiring more training. But we have also provided a snapshot of activities undertaken in the other working groups.

Lack of community awareness around the range of services available to young people and how to access them
This working group spent a few meetings discussing ways of raising the profile of the youth sector in Townsville and the surrounding region. Strategies included:
• updating the TYN website and promoting it to the broader community through schools, young people and service providers
• continuing with the annual ‘Brekky Fest’ event – a networking opportunity for service providers and schools held during National Youth Week each year – but increasing the promotion of the event to include all school staff not just support staff
• ensuring the TYN brochures, which have information about all youth services, are made available to the community and on display in public spaces such as libraries, hospitals, youth services, schools
• increased utilisation of social media, where accessible, to promote service providers, their programs and activities to young people and others in the community.

The need for an after-hours youth outreach service
This issue was raised due to the increasing numbers of young people who are accessing public spaces, such as skate parks, and engaging in activities that include alcohol and other drugs, violence and vandalism.

The working group established momentum quickly as the identified need was a shared passion of the seven organisations involved. It took only a few meetings to develop a delivery model, establish a project outline and MOU and planning was well underway for a launch activity to be held during National Youth Activities.

The concept was to provide an outreach service on Thursday nights to deter young people from hanging out at shopping centres and instead engage in activities in public spaces such as skate parks. The youth workers would be provided in-kind from the various organisations and would be on a rotation across the month. The service provided would be youth engagement activities, referrals to services where a need was established and general rapport building with the young people.

Unfortunately with the incoming Queensland Government there was a great deal of uncertainty around the future of funding and organisations. This saw a withdrawal of five of the seven organisations, therefore reducing the capacity of the outreach service to be delivered successfully.

With all of the ground work already done there is a model ready to go at a time in the future when the sector has greater capacity to engage and support it. This will be revisited during monthly meetings to ascertain an appropriate time to resurrect this working group.

The need for a coordinated approach to the delivery of Adventure Based Learning Programs
Adventure Based Learning has long been identified by TYN as an effective youth engagement tool for our sector and the cohort we work with. Very few workers have undertaken the appropriate training required to deliver these programs, therefore making them expensive and out of reach for most services to deliver. This working group was established to look at what it would take to develop and deliver ABL Programs to the young people of the Townsville community.

The model proposed was to engage youth workers from a range of services in the delivery of collaborative ABL Programs to young people at-risk. The working group established a number of strategies required to make this happen:
• skill up our existing workforce
• develop a model of delivery agreeable to all organisations willing to participate
• partner in the delivery of ABL Programs at no cost to each organisation.
In the first instance, The Northern Outlook training facility was identified as the most appropriate facility to undertake the training. Based in Cairns, the facility is both accessible and affordable and has a reputation for the delivery of outstanding training in this area. Contact was made with The Northern Outlook and our training needs were discussed. A number of options were provided and it was proposed that the week long residential ‘Program Development and Facilitation’ (PDF) Training be run for a Townsville cohort. This would enable a shared group learning and program development to begin during the course of the training and build a team of workers with a shared understanding and goal.

Secondly the group saw great benefit in developing an ABL Program that would be accessible to all youth service providers and would mean that each organisation wouldn’t have to ‘re-invent the wheel’. Significant work would be put into evaluation so that each time an ABL Program was delivered changes could be made where needed. The motivation behind this second strategy was to take the burden off individual organisations in program development and evaluation and encourage the sector to get behind this in a collaborative way.

The third strategy was to partner in the delivery of ABL Programs. One of the barriers to delivering ABL Programs for smaller organisations was the staffing capacity. It is our intention to have organisations partner in their delivery in one of two ways.

1. Cluster deliver a program to a similar cohort of young people from two different organisations utilising staff members from each organisation. For example, the Flexible Learning Centre and The Youth Network NQ Inc. are both working with a cohort of 15 year olds at risk of entering the Youth Justice system. Workers from each organisation could cluster deliver a program to young people from each service and utilise the shared resources, both human and physical, from each organisation at no cost to each other.

2. Share the human resources among the organisations at no cost. For example, the Flexible Learning Centre would like to run an ABL Program for a group of young people accessing their services however they only have one staff member trained in ABL. They could approach TYN to borrow a staff member for the delivery of the program and in return loan their staff member out in the future when TYN were ready to delivery their own program.

This Working Group have recently undertaken the first step, participating in the PDF Training with The Northern Outlook, and already have plans for delivering programs in 2014. ‘What would it take to ensure their success?’ is their new question.

**Lack of drug & alcohol rehabilitation facilities in North Queensland and a workforce requiring more training**

It was noted that there was an increase in presentations of young people with substance use problems, particularly the methamphetamine known as ‘ice’. On a number of occasions the young people were reportedly presenting to Centrelink whilst heavily under the influence and hospitalisation has been required. Centrelink staff found it difficult to know what to do in these circumstances as the young people were presenting with behaviours and symptoms that were not familiar to them.

And so began our exploration of the substance use issue in Townsville. Over the next six months, anecdotal evidence was gathered, gaps were identified, and actions were planned and made. The success of these plans and actions has yet to be seen, however it has been a significant step forward to highlight where the issues and deficiencies lie in our local youth service provision.

**Alcohol and drug service delivery (or the apparent lack of...)**

In the beginning, attitudes towards the availability of alcohol and drug services were somewhat unfavourable. Or, to put it more accurately, the perceived lack of services and gaps in existing
service provision were met with hostility and frustration. It was noted on several occasions by many different workers that there is no detox or rehabilitation facility for young people in Townsville, and clients are often sent down to Brisbane to access these services at the state government’s expense. Similarly, and in the case of those with a dual diagnosis (which is very often the case), there is no local mental health unit. In addition to this, and only adding to the frustrations, there appeared to be no move to address this. The one youth focussed alcohol and drug service in town, the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Service (ATODS), was understood to have a long waiting list, and are primarily service adults. There exist two youth clinical workers and an additional two Indigenous health workers. However, apart from this information, there appeared to be little knowledge of available treatment facilities or referral pathways. A representative of ATODS reported that they had recently released a new training calendar, which included workshops on drug types, as well as recognising drug influence in young people. Training can also be catered to reflect individual service need.

OzCare also offered a substance use service, though this is only for adults. Little knowledge about this service was present in the CPLAN. On the flip side, it was acknowledged that the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service (TAIHS) offers a good volatile substance misuse (VSM) service, and has a flexible delivery model which sees diverse clients with a range of needs being treated. They original trialled a ‘rest and recovery’ service, which then evolved to the current model. It was suggested that TAIHS employees be at future CPLAN meetings.

**Key insights**
This period of our observation revealed that not only is there a lack of age appropriate services in our local region, but also our perception of the available services is quite low. In addition, our knowledge of the alcohol and drug service sector and their pathways was average.

**Micro-questions generated**

*What would it take to establish new services in Townsville that address the increase in substance abuse issues?*

*What would it take to increase the capacity of existing drug and alcohol services in Townsville?*

**The extent of the issue**
Of importance to our CPLAN was having an understanding of how serious the problem actually was. Apart from anecdotal evidence, there appeared to be no concrete data which could properly inform our investigation. Many services noted an observed increase in presentations of young people with substance use issues or those who under the influence at the time of presentation, but few services had systems in place to record this. It was argued that anecdotal evidence was not strong enough to soundly inform an investigation, and that the shock of being confronted by overt illicit drug use could be misinterpreted as an increase. There might not be an actual increase in substance abuse, but rather the potency and effects of the taken substance could mean that the user is more conspicuous. Some workers agreed with this assessment, while many others contended that even though perceptions may be distorted, they would still argue that an increase had occurred.

**Key insight**
Knowledge of the extent of the problem was low, but by using anecdotal evidence from trusted sources (i.e. members of the CPLAN), a snapshot of youth substance abuse could be formed.
**Micro-question**
What would it take to develop and record an accurate snapshot of substance use issues at a local level?

**Knowledge and training of sector workers**
It was noted early on that substance abuse is often only one of many presenting issues of local young people. Whether substance abuse stems from a primary issue, such as neglect or mental illness, or is the cause of secondary problems, such as homelessness or unemployment, is difficult to determine. At any rate, it was widely agreed that substance abuse was never an isolated issue. In this way, it is a fact of our sector’s working life that all services, whether focussed on employment, mental health or homelessness, will come into contact with clients who are experiencing substance use issues. However, these workers are often more experienced in the focus of their workplace, and so feel ill-equipped to handle and deal with substance use presentations. This can lead to clients being provided inaccurate information or a missed opportunity for referral because of poor knowledge and training.

Many of the workers who feel this deficiency in their knowledge and training acknowledge that it is an area they would like improved so they are able to provide a more holistic and relevant service. However, in the past, training has often been poorly advertised, offered at dates and times that are difficult for staff to attend, or do not respond directly to the needs of their respective services.

**Key insights**
Workers generally feel ill-equipped to deal with substance abuse issues. These workers rationalise that this is due to their lack of knowledge and training in the drug and alcohol sector, and wish to address this.

**Micro-question**
What would it take to ensure the local youth sector workforce felt adequately trained and knowledge in order to handle youth substance use issues?

**Our plans and actions: Alcohol and drug service delivery**
The North Region CPLAN sought to clarify their awareness of the local drug and alcohol service sector, as well as have the opportunity to voice their concerns at the apparent gap in services in relation to the perceived needs of their clients. This was done by inviting representatives from the ATODS youth team along to the CPLAN meeting on Thursday June 14th. The discussion that took place formed the basis for a Q&A and Mythbusters Fact Sheet that was disseminated to all those on the CPLAN mailing list. Representatives from TAIHS were invited to attend subsequent CPLAN meetings, an invitation they have taken up. Their input, knowledge and guidance has been vital to the ongoing exploration of this issue.

It was suggested that submissions be put forward to the relevant local and state government Departments, requesting an inquiry into the need and viability of an increase in services. However, a number of things have occurred to halt the progress of this plan. Firstly, it was noted by a representative from ATODS that not only do their youth team have no wait list, but the primary issue is more often one of poor help-seeking behaviours of young people. This indicates that while anecdotal evidence may be accurate, young people are not approaching ATODS for assistance.
This has led the North Region CPLAN to replace its initial micro-questions in relation to alcohol and drug service delivery with two new micro-questions:

**What would it take to increase the help-seeking behaviours of young people experiencing substance abuse issues?**

**What would it take for the local youth sector to better utilise existing referral pathways to drug and alcohol services?**

No further action has taken place at the time of writing in regards to these new micro-questions.

**Our plans and actions: The extent of the issue**

Through conversations with Dovetail, the state-wide support body for the youth drug and alcohol service sector, it was decided that they would collaborate with the North Region CPLAN in developing a hitherto non-existent data collection method. This would involve developing an accurate snapshot of the problem at a local level, which could be used to provide context into future explorations of the issue. However, upon the election of a new state government, Dovetail were no longer able to assist our CPLAN in this matter.

Each member of the CPLAN was directed to discover what data collection methods existed at their respective services, and to report back what the data could tell us. Although this was not carried out in all instances, some services reported inconclusive or vague data (such as client reports stating a secondary issue of substance use, but giving no indication to the type, extent or frequency), while others reported no collection method at all. ATODS then advised that no local data existed and the best that could be ascertained would be from the 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDHS) report. Although Townsville or the North region was not explicitly included in the survey, perceptions could be gleaned from state comparisons and geographical location. For the purposes of this, and in line with the survey’s reporting, Townsville was understood to be in an inner regional area within Queensland.

The following information, relevant to illicit drug use, was gathered from the NDHS report:

- Young people in Queensland aged 18-19 (24.8%) and 20-29 years (30.7%) were the most common to report using illicit drugs in the 12 months prior to the survey;
- The rate of illicit drug use for young people in Queensland aged 12-17 and 18-19 were lower than the national average (9.4%:10.4% and 24.8%:25.1%), while the rate for those aged 20-29 years was higher (30.7%:27.5%);
- Queensland males (17.4%) had a higher proportion of drug use than Queensland females (12.8%). Both rates were higher than the national average;
- There was a statistically significant increase (from 2007) in the proportion of recent drug users for those living in an inner regional area (13.9%), while there was a statistically significant decrease (from 2007) in respondents who reported never using illicit drugs (61.2%). Both these proportions were more positive than the national averages (14.7% and 60.4% respectively).

While it was noted that this information is inadequate in providing an accurate snapshot of the problem as it relates to Townsville, ATODS advised that anecdotal evidence was enough to form the basis of a needs analysis. It is enough, they advised, to trust in the reports of your workers in attempting to understand the extent and frequency of substance abuse. Although, better data
collection methods are desired, this advice was taken on board and adopted, leading to a reframed micro-question on this topic:

What would it take to utilise our existing understanding and available information on local substance abuse to inform our exploration?

Our plans and actions: Knowledge and training of sector workers
As mentioned above, there was an initial intention to collaborate with Dovetail to address local issues and concerns. In addition to establishing a data collection method, the North Region CPLAN also intended to utilise Dovetail’s education and training services, but due to funding cutbacks, this plan was also shelved. As a group, we then returned to the idea of ATODS running training days that were specifically catered to our requirements, including availability and educational needs.

Information was collected from the group, relating to what we perceived our needs to be, and was forwarded to ATODS. These needs were:

• A need to identify different drugs, their effects, and best-practice immediate treatment;
• Filling the gaps - how can frontline workers, and non-dedicated Alcohol and Drug services, best support young people in need when there are limited referral pathways?
• Data collection methods - how can the local sector obtain an accurate snapshot of the issue?
• Referral pathways - navigating/working within the local sector, especially with dual diagnosis;
• Understanding substance use in context - what other presenting issues does a young person with substance use problem have, and how should this range of issues affect our practice approach?
• Developing peer-support programs and other intervention/prevention programs, and engaging young people in them;
• Building on existing skills and capabilities of services to best support young people.

We were advised that many of these needs could be solved without outside assistance, that by collaborating and sharing information within the CPLAN we could address many of these needs. This has led to the identification of another micro-question:

What would it take to utilise the CPLAN group to collaborate and address our identified needs in relation to drug and alcohol training?

Beyond this, ATODS suggested that their Bridging The Gap training program would be a good place to start and would address many of the identified needs, including identification of different drugs, and an understanding of substance use in context. Unfortunately, given the format of the training and the restrictions of ATODS, no special allowances for the date and time of the training could be obtained. This resulted in many of those workers who initially noted attendance concerns relating to shift and casual workers, would still be unable to access the training. However, by using the North Region CPLAN group, 20 local youth workers have been able to access the training provided by ATODS who might have otherwise be unaware of it. ATODS also planned an extraordinary training day in September 2013 that has been accessed by CPLAN members and their contacts.

Subsequent observation
The CPLAN exploration of substance abuse by young people in Townsville resulted in training being organised for the group. This training was accessed by 20 CPLAN members and their contacts, from 6 different services. Although evaluations of the training have yet to be obtained, the results from this process suggest that CPLAN is useful and perhaps vital component of the local youth work sector.
CPLAN has the ability to not only identify and explore relevant issues, but also to act as a “town cryer” for important information.

**Where to from here?**
Regular emails, updates to the mailing list and regular attendance by a range of youth services at CPLAN meetings provide some mechanisms for engagement. There is more to be done to develop this which leads to a more holistic micro-question to take forward:

*What would it take for the local youth work sector to make engagement with the North Region CPLAN a regular part of their work practice?*
4.5 Central CPLAN Case Study: Early Beginnings

The Regional Context
The Central Queensland Community of Practice Leaders Action Network (CQ CPLAN) was established in November 2011 after endorsement by the Central Queensland youth workforce sector. After an initial information session from YANQ project consultants, the youth sector got behind the project concept and stepped up to participate. Like many of the other CPLAN regions, the Central region spans a large geographic area, with different issues and challenges impacting on the various locations within our region. The Central Region covers a diversified landscape that includes areas heavily impacted by the resources sector, a wide range of regional and remote locations, small towns and substantial regional cities, and vibrant indigenous communities.

![Figure 1: The Central Region](image)

The Discovery Coast
The Gladstone Region is 10465sqkm and encompasses Gladstone, Tannum, Boyne Island and Calliope (also known as the Discovery Coast). While there is minimal distance from local level minor services, the residents who reside on the Discovery Coast are classified as rural/remote and can travel approximately 1.5hrs to reach any major services. Local issues that impact young people and the workforce on the Discovery Coast include lack of transport (public and private), travel distance, social isolation, and minimal business opportunities. This impacts on young people as they are vying for jobs with a smaller amount of business in their areas. Generally, young people who reside closer to the major centers have better employment opportunities (Gladstone Regional Council 2012).

Rockhampton
The Rockhampton region encompasses the Capricorn Coast, Mt Morgan, Gracemere and Rockhampton areas. The population in Rockhampton is approximately 105,000 (2011 figures) and is expected to grow by 37,435 between 2011 and 2031 (Lailani, 2011). Despite Rockhampton being a hub for services, there are services that are needed and not present. Some local issues identified by youth workers that are impacting on young people include, limited transport options (particularly for employment with early starts or late finishes); low literacy and numeracy skills and the struggle to develop those skills in class room settings; and finally homelessness and mental health issues also impact on young people entering the workforce or being accepted into a workplace or education.
Indigenous Communities

Central Queensland has an active and visible Indigenous culture. Indigenous communities are present throughout the region, with strong ties to the land and their history. The Aboriginal Community of Woorabinda, about an hour and a half’s drive from Rockhampton, is home to a vibrant community of Aboriginal people who access services across a number of regions. In Rockhampton, there are a number of specific Indigenous services, in particular, 3 services with a youth focus, that work closely with the community. Issues identified by workers at a local Indigenous organisation that work primarily with marginalized and disengaged youth include:

• Limited alternative educational opportunities
• Not enough support for those who remain in mainstream schooling
• The attraction that Juvenile Detention has to disengaged /disadvantaged Indigenous youth, as it supplies a young person’s basic needs and wants - things that aren’t always available to these young people at home. Needs such as daily healthy food; a good, safe place to sleep; a safe education; 1 on 1 support; good facilities; counseling; and sport. Members of these young people’s family and friends may also incarcerated.

Getting Started

When we first attempted to establish the Central CPLAN, there was a lot of initial enthusiasm and support, however we found that the timing made it difficult to get going. It was only a month or so until Christmas. Participation in the November 2011 Inaugural meeting was strong, however December turned out to be busy for most people so we were not able to have a follow up meeting. In January 2012, people were only just returning to work and so we were not able to find a suitable date. By February the initial enthusiasm had really waned and it was very challenging to try and pull the group back into action. In the early months of the year meetings had few members participating, and once a meeting had to be cancelled for low numbers. So the major challenge for our group was actually getting established and getting a steady presence at meetings.

The CPLAN facilitator took some time out to reflect on her observations of the progress to date and quickly recognised that there were some distinct barriers that were inhibiting attendance at the meetings, and therefore impacting on the motivations of the group. The action our facilitator decided to take was to call the CPLAN members personally to discuss any issues or barriers they may have been experiencing that prevented them from prioritizing or attending the meetings. For one member it was a difficulty in travelling such a distance in order to attend a meeting (a 3 to 4hr drive depending on traffic and road works). For others it was clashes with other appointments.
Once the facilitator had spoken to all the members and gathered the information, this data was presented to members at the next meeting. With the key issue of travel time clearly articulated we were able to start brainstorming a solution. As a group we decided that we needed to make the meetings more accessible and accommodating so that we could aim for greater numbers. We offered the option of a phone-in if travelling to attend meetings was not possible. And for those who could not always attend due to other reasons we asked for proxies who may have been able to attend in their stead. These seemingly small actions opened up the doors for participation and almost immediately the attendance at meetings increased. From that point on there was no stopping us!

**Scoping issues in the region**

One of the first activities we undertook was a brainstorming activity to help us identify the key issues for both the youth sector workforce, and young people themselves. This activity became necessary as the group tried to agree on the most pressing issue for young people only to realise that each regional area had some distinctive challenges. The activity involved a highly dynamic session where members wrote down any and all issues they felt faced the youth sector and then the facilitator stuck them up on the wall where they were sorted into relevant categories.
This activity was written up into a table and sent around to all members of our CPLAN who then, using feedback from their various networks, added input where appropriate. Once this process was complete, the CPLAN members reviewed the completed list and distilled the core issues that impacted on the youth sector in our region down to two main areas:

• recruitment/retention of workers, and
• support for those working on the front line with young people.

Key themes from the consultations for this region in respect of the 4 state-wide questions were:

Q1 What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?
• Staff Development Training/ recruitment
• Funding.

Q2 What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
• Parent and family support and capacity
• Mental health and well-being
• Reduce policy and procedure restrictions
• Education
• Community issues - particularly employment and community leisure options
• Access to affordable appropriate housing
• Teen pregnancy – sexual education reductions in schools.

Q3 What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
• Address a range of workforce issues
• More access to youth spaces
• Improved collaboration between NGOs and Gov. Services
• Better communication between services.
Q4  
\textit{What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in QLD?}

- Address sex education needs in schools.

A full list of key issues identified can be found in Appendix 1 for the Central Case Study at the end of this report.

\textbf{Identifying a focus}

Further discussions around these issues resulted in the group agreeing to focus on developing a project that would begin to tackle some common concerns. There were many options that appealed and narrowing down to a specific project required further thought. During the April meeting, the Facilitator provided the group with an overview of what each of the other CPLANs were up to. This included discussing the projects they were currently involved with, but also highlighting the areas that many of the regions struggled with. What caught the attention of our CPLAN were the similarities with other regional CPLANs that reported issues with attraction and retention of workers, and in particular how to support new workers who are often working in isolation of each other.

After another vibrant discussion, the Central CPLAN resolved to help address the issue of supporting isolated workers and asked themselves, \textit{“What would it take to support those working with young people in regional and remote areas?”}

Settling on a question was only the first step. As with all PAR processes, once you’ve nailed the strategic question, a whole range of micro questions fall out of it. We then had to go through a process of asking our CPLAN to work through those emerging questions until we identified a clear path to follow. Once we had a clear focus we were able to develop a strategy that would begin to answer our key strategic question.

The group identified that ‘support’ could look different to different people, working in different locations. As a result of that observation, the first thing we decided to do was to find out what ‘support’ meant to the people at the front line. It was agreed that we needed to develop a short survey to send out to as many people working with young people as possible and get their input in defining ‘support’. Our group simultaneously worked on developing and refining the short survey, as well as compiling a list of people and networks that it could be sent to. We agreed to utilise SurveyMonkey as the platform to distribute the survey. Once the survey is ready it will be sent out across the region’s networks. As one of our neighbouring CPLAN regions is also affected by isolated workers (Central West), we have had some discussion about including this region in our survey to broaden the depth of input.

\textbf{Next Steps for the Central CPLAN}

So where to next for our CLAN? The survey is almost complete and ready to be distributed. Some of the group members who have been exploring the Survey Monkey format will get it ready to be used. Once we have the responses back and collated, the group will review the data and develop a list of what makes up ‘support’ for our youth sector. This list will then be utilised to develop further strategies to address our key strategic question. Some of the strategies we have already discussed include:

- Developing a “welcome to the youth sector” style kit for new workers. Incorporated into this welcome kit could be information identified by the survey as being relevant and useful to new workers;
• Developing a volunteer mentoring scheme. Again this would be informed by the survey responses, however initial ideas include having a variety of peer mentors who are experienced in youth work, offering their services as a mentor for new and less experienced workers;

• Connecting new workers with a ‘buddy or mentor’ who would provide one-to-one support (even across geographical distances) for a period of time.

These are just some of the ideas that Central CPLAN has developed, and we are hoping that responses to the survey will provide much more material for discussion and innovation. Once ideas have been generated, the group will action one or more of the projects so that we can begin to tackle the issue of retaining the new workers in our youth sector. As we begin to address the strategic question, we will be undertaking regular reflective activities to discuss our collective observations of the process. This will then enable us to make adjustments to our activities so that we are continuously improving and learning.

References
4.6 South West Region CPLAN Case Study

This case study explores the CPLAN enquiry process into two established networks within the South West Region; the South West Youth Network (SWYN) and the Toowoomba Youth Network.

The Context:

SWYN is a network group that brings together rural and isolated workers from across South West Queensland. The employment context for these workers is that the majority work in isolation or in agencies that have minimal resources, and often their supervisors or managers have a minimal understanding of youth work. Some of these workers are in part time or split roles of administration, community development and youth work which restricts the outcomes for both the worker and young people of that area, but are often the only youth worker accessing that community on a daily basis. The other issues faced by these workers and communities is that due to the isolation of these communities some staff have either been employed directly out of school or from the community with no prior experience. As a means to try and retain workers in these rural settings, as new workers in these rural communities often don’t understand the community or have the local connections and find the distance isolating.

The South West CPLAN covers the department of Education and Training “South West” region. This region captures the youth workers in the Local Government areas of; Balonne, Bulloo, Goondiwindi, Lockyer Valley, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpe, South Burnett, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and Western Downs. This region is the one of the largest in the state and spans the entire NSW border from Southern Downs regional council area west. The South West region is diverse with differing issues and opportunities in each of the regional locations. The South West encapsulates vibrant communities and townships, cities and extremely rural and isolated communities. They are heavily impacted and reliant on agricultural industries and are seeing an increase in impacts both positive and negative from the resource sector boom. This representation has been mostly captured within the SWYN network discussions.

The Toowoomba Youth Network on the other hand is the monthly network meeting of the services that are based within Toowoomba. With the majority of attendees delivering services with the Toowoomba Regional Council area, even though an organisation might have a south west region focus the content of this meeting focused mostly on the issues faced within Toowoomba and the immediate surrounds.

Both of these networks have allowed for interesting discussions and we have been able to explore issues that have looked at regional youth sector issues as well as being able to have some outcome within a localised contest.

SWYN CPLAN

SWYN was first established in 1998 as a professional development network to support rural and isolated youth workers within the South West region. This network was developed by the workers in the region and has been supported by the Queensland Government Department of Communities, the Local Government Association of Qld (LGAQ) and Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS). In its peak the group would meet four times per year, but due to funding changes and collaborative projects, such as the South West Youth Engagement Forum (SWYEF), they have reduced these meetings to twice per year. Due to the distance that workers have to travel to attend the meetings (can be up to 720km) most meetings run for two and a half days to ensure workers receive training.
and networking opportunities to validate the time away from their communities. The meetings average 15 -30 people in attendance, and have an email group of over 50 people.

The SWYN group discussion came up with these initial discussion points under each of the Macro Questions on the 23rd June 2011, at the Toowoomba SWYN meeting:

1. **What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?**
   - Co-location of youth services - this would include visiting services
   - Sophisticated policy and hierarchy which connects people under a state-wide youth plan, with state-wide resources, and state-wide money! This would result in connected organisations, connected workers and connected opportunities for professional development and employment.
   - Connection between Federal and State funding dollars, whole of government approach to youth works and the youth sector, agreed partnerships, outcomes and education and training, whole of government funding for core work and core projects while still having access to state dollars for localised projects
   - Improved access and partnerships between all sectors for youth work delivery (youth justice, education, health)
   - Mapped services and roles
   - Better access to training, and basic resources (phones)
   - Equal pay and opportunities across the service sectors
   - Improvement of remuneration packages. Possibility of accrual of long service leave and other bonuses being able to shift between organisations (like education, health and QPS)
   - Money – increase in pay
   - Better interconnectedness between regional networks across the state
   - Marketing
   - Support
   - Easily accessible resources, “Toolkit”
   - Online information
   - Getting into the high school career nights, “letting young people know it is a possible career choice”.

2. **What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?**
   - Bridge the gap between school life and real world opportunities
• Mentoring roles to support disengaging young people - like personal helpers and mentors programs, big brother / sister program
• Strengthened networks of workers to identify each services capacity and roles
• Opportunities outside of sport (having a variety)
• Consultation with young people – where is there interest?
• Promoting (target groups)
• Online networking (Facebook etc.)

3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
• Identification of services that work with or are funded to work with young people
• An updated resource of key community staff across the state, including key projects
• Increased support of community based CYO, YDW’s based in councils and community organisations
• Maintain and resource the Youth (worker) Networks
• Allow funding dollars for full time staff, training and networking costs
• “Toolbox” – available resources
• Facebook page or contact across the state though YANQ Website for youth workers (open forums etc.) + State wide calendar for all to view
• CPLAN workers (meet once a year, teleconferencing and video conferencing).

4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Qld?
• Get young people interested
• Using SWYEF (South West Youth Engagement Forum) to feedback information to government bodies
• Use current youth events and get government representation at these events – get them to ask the questions or tell the youth workers what they would like to know
• Have a Queensland Minister for Youth
• CPLAN workers – feeding back information from the networks
• Workers attending or responding to questions asked about youth policy
• Process with government bodies – giving feedback, receiving results, where to from here?
Follow up discussions were then had with the SWYN members when the CPLAN facilitator (Rebecca Schroder) had the opportunity to take a road trip and meet the new regional workers face to face. In this process we were able to meet with a group of young people from the region, as well as key workers from each community to discuss the macro questions and map priority areas for development in our region. This list of issues was then revisited at the last SWYEF and projects were developed by young people to help raise awareness of these issues and the support services in each region.

*The issues identified by young people from various parts of the region are listed below in Table 2*

**Table 2 **Issues identified by Young People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-region</th>
<th>Issues and ideas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goondiwindi</td>
<td>Schooling – big use of Get Set For Work Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transport – work/events/programs – accommodation on farms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>License $$$ to get this – log books, access to cars, access to NSW/QLD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Underage drinking</td>
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<td>Drugs/Alcohol</td>
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<td>Teen Pregnancy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accommodation – homeless because of work or education – no cheap accommodation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth Space?? No safe hang out space</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Skate Park – no Council discussion with Young People</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promotion of services to young people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Access for workers to bus (transport) – Goondi youth studio</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Graffiti wall/centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
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<td>Who’s who in the zoo!! – issues and who do we see for that issue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Who stole the sole?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lovebites program no longer being delivered</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sexual Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balonne</td>
<td>Cultural Awareness/Identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Non-attendance at school – doing art programs to engage young people in education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyber Bullying (Massive), parent education, students, teachers/principals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defensive Driving – what’s the age and other requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Underage Drinking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Hygiene (young women)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charleville</td>
<td>Sex Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyber Bullying (Parent Education)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-school bullying – general (bullying policies)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Council or group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs and Alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 suicide attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of employment -&gt; trying to up-skill -&gt; max employment (what is available to YP)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(resume writing)</td>
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Maranoa
- Accommodation – Rental unaffordability (couch surfing)
- Access to training (distance etc.) how to improve through webinars etc.
- How to promote the positive things that YP are achieving
- Transport
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Depression and other mental health issues
- Sexual Health
- Western Downs Transport
- Mental Health
- Bullying
- Sexual Health including self-esteem
- Housing

Southern Downs
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Transport
- Violence and Bullying
- Mental Health Issues
- Lack of services providing support to young people

Toowoomba
- Drug and Alcohol abuse
- Transport including obtaining a licence
- Affordability of sport and community activities
- Housing (affordability and overcrowding issues for refugee families)
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Violence and bullying

Lockyer Valley
- Arson
- Bullying

Where to from here?

The attraction and retention of Youth Workers in the south west became the focal discussion for SWYN as it was decided that no other issues could be successfully improved unless we had workers on the ground that were comfortable in their positions and given the resources and support to succeed. The youth issues were also taken into consideration and it was agreed that the worker retention question was critical in order to meet the outcomes of this question. If there is no one to ask the questions and advocate and research solutions for young people then how could there be a shift in any of these issues?

It was through these discussions that we set the priority question for our region as:

*What would it take to attract and retain youth workers within the South West region?*

The Future of SWYN

The SWYN ran into some difficulties in mid-2012 with a number of services losing workers with the changeover in funding from the state government placing restrictions on travel and wages for a number of organisations. It was also through this period that the network had a high turnover in workers again and collectively decided to postpone future SWYN meetings and allow organisations and workers to settle into their new roles. The group is still connected through the email group and continue to support each other through this mechanism and resource sharing. Through discussions with regional services and workers it was decided that the SWYN group will try to reconvene in early 2014 once there had been some clarification from the state government on the future direction of youth services in Queensland.
Toowoomba Youth Network CPLAN:

It was due to this change and the turnover of another group of youth workers within the South West Youth Network that prompted the CPLAN facilitators to focus on establishing a core group of people to discuss issues within the Toowoomba region, and put on hold the outcomes from the SWYN group. The decision to approach the Toowoomba Youth Network (TYN) came through the facilitator and co-facilitators being members of the TYN and seeing opportunity to be able to investigate and resolve some identified issues from this group due to the frequency of meetings and ability to meet with subcommittees more frequently. The CPLAN questions were proposed at the Toowoomba Youth Network with a number of issues being explored.

The Context

The Youth At Risk Network and now the Toowoomba Youth Network has met on a monthly basis for several years. This group investigates ways to better collaborate, refer and respond to developing youth trends and issues.

The network comprises over 100 representatives from various roles within the Toowoomba region and although not all members attend on a monthly basis, they are kept up to date with the distribution of minutes and other updates via a heavily connected email group supported by Mercy Family Services.

It was through these monthly meetings that we were able to first introduce the CPLAN concept and gained support to investigate the four enquiry questions. The passion and direction from the group was to explore three issues that we continue to face;

• A resource Calendar that could inform the community and workers on the programs and services within the region

• Youth Licensing - Learner Drivers logbook System

• Regional Youth Advisory Committee
Youth Connect – 6 Month Calendar

It was discussed at length that a calendar could help support not only the small organisations to better plan and coordinate and collaborate on regional projects, but to also have a document that would provide a platform for young people, families and community members to receive not only information about local services but a planned program of community participation and engagement opportunities. All of the activities developed for the calendar have been identified by young people through the survey and data collection completed by the youth workers of the region through previous and current program and engagement opportunities.

The concept of a regular calendar being created and distributed was discussed as a way to address two of the CPLAN enquiry questions from a Toowoomba Regional Council area:

- What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?, and;

- What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the Toowoomba Youth Sector?

Through continued meetings we developed and distributed the first calendar which was fully funded through the Toowoomba Regional Council Youth budget. The program was delivered to the region’s schools after letters had been sent from the mayor explaining what the calendar was and if the schools could please distribute to their students and staff. This received mixed reviews, as a number of schools were unwilling to support this process. The second edition saw similar success even after further discussions with the region’s schools about the relevance and importance of this information to their students.

We are currently into the 3rd edition of the calendar and have received great reviews as council has seen the value in the program and the increased participation by not only young people at the events but also by services in planning and contributing to the calendar. We now distribute the calendar via post to all residents within the Toowoomba Regional Council area, and expect to see a growth in Facebook likes, community requests for programs in their communities and an increase in attendance in all programed activities. There are 12 youth focused services and groups that regularly promote their service and activities and this is continuing to grow with these services contributing to a calendar promoting over 140 separate activities within the Toowoomba region.

While this only addresses one aspect of the minor questions we had identified in the South West CPLAN, it has generated conversations and regular connections between services and young people. These Questions will be reviewed and new actions set once the Regional Youth Advisory Committee is established.
**Youth Licensing- Learner Drivers Logbook System:**

During the initial CPLAN discussions, the Toowoomba CPLAN has also based its enquiry questions around the Learners Driving Logbook System and the local and state issues this presents. This issue had been highlighted through a number of services with direct client support as they were seeing the legal and safety implications of young people being unable to gain appropriate support from family and services to obtain the logbook hours necessary to complete their learner’s logbook.

Issues surrounding the logbook system include:

- Young people driving illegally
- Young people don’t have access to supervisors
- Young people forging logbook entries
- Marginalised young people see driving as “unobtainable” and “out of reach”
- Logbook exemptions only compound the problems by extending the Learner license period
- Limiting labour force job prospects
- Is the logbook system another means to generate funds.

**Drivers Safety**

The enquiry into the log book system prompted the group to research if these new changes were having an impact on the youth road toll.

**What did we find?**

![Figure 1 Fatalities by age groups- Qld road toll for 2003-2009](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Safety/Transport-and-road-statistics/Road-safety-statistics.aspx)
Statistics provided by Queensland Transport documents that the Queensland road toll has been on a steady decline since the logbook inception in July 2007. The CPLAN group were happy to see that this system was saving lives and understood that any large scale changes to the logbook system would be a difficult task due to this excellent outcome. This led to a new enquiry question.

*What would it take to improve the system of access and opportunity to obtain Learners licenses for safe/experienced young drivers/individual assessment?*

In taking into account that unsafe drivers are being saved, there is still a need to provide a fair system to reward safe and experienced drivers with easier access to driving unaccompanied. Current logbook exemptions only disadvantage young drivers further by increasing the logbook period. The enquiry prompted local services to investigate if there was anything happening locally to support these young people to complete their log books and if so how was this promoted and how are young people identified for these programs.

**Local Models**

There were two local models identified through their enquiry process. While both of these programs are still in the process of being finalised it was reported that there has been an identified need for this training and a localised program being implemented.

*Drive for Life Training Facility*

The aim of the Driver Training Facility located within the Toowoomba Showgrounds is to provide a safe and secure location for young drivers to gain the appropriate skills and levels of confidence prior to driving in the public domain. The facility will include 6km of sealed roads, roundabouts, give way signage, traffic lights, manouvering areas and parking bays.

The Drive for Life program structure was to provide a dual control car with volunteer instructors to teach at risk and disadvantaged young people who had limited means and opportunity to learn to drive. The Drive for Life program is currently supported by several members from both the business and community sector with the final stages of the program due for completion in 2014.

Drive for Life Program Partners are:

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<td>Enough is Enough</td>
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<td>QFRS</td>
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<td>DD Radio</td>
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<td>S&amp;RQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>RACQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>TK’s Driving School</td>
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<td>Kenmanwill Group</td>
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**TOMNET Learn to Drive**

A retired magistrate attended the February Youth Network meeting and spoke about developing a driving program for young people. The pilot program would be supported both physically and financially by the TOMNET (Toowoomba Older Men’s Network) group.

Students studying at the Toowoomba Flexi School were the first group of young people offered the program as the TOMNET group have strong ties to the Flexi School through their mentoring programs and the initial insurance issues could be alleviated through this current partnership.

Whilst the outcomes of this enquiry may not have been the expected or intended outcomes of the group’s initial enquiry, the Toowoomba Youth Network was happy with the outcome and will continue to support these localised approaches.

**Regional Youth Advisory Committee**

Whilst we had some success with people volunteering to support a number of working groups and to get these projects under way, further discussions were had with the Toowoomba Youth Network and it was decided that while the network had good intentions, the consistency of people in attendance and the small number of organisational decision makers involved in this group would ultimately be the cap on the effectiveness of the CPLAN process. As a means to investigate the more pressing issues for youth and the youth sector we would need to form a separate and more formalised group which targeted managers and organisational decision makers.

It was through this discussion that a small working group developed the concept of the Regional Youth Advisory Committee. Initial discussions looked at ways that we as a youth sector could better collate information on not only youth issues and trends but also issues arising in the youth sector and better channel this information to decision makers such as local and state government, and the sector’s peak bodies. It was decided that this group would be formed as a reference group under Council so that the group could raise community and youth issues in a formalised setting endorsed by the Council. This decision was also made in light of the uncertainty of the youth sector at the moment, meaning the other members of the working group were not in a space to take carriage of this project.

Since its inception, a draft report and terms of reference have been developed, and distributed to the working group for feedback. This report then was presented to Council along with the information regarding plans for a regional youth leaders committee to be developed as a secondary process to facilitate young people being involved in decision making processes. Council agreed to the Terms of Reference and requested that applications for the Regional Youth Advisory Committee be advertised to the community. 19 community, youth and youth sector applications were received for 13 positions on the committee. Council has endorsed the report and the committee will meet in December 2013.

**Future Projections**

Toowoomba CPLAN will become a formalised part of the new Regional Youth Advisory Committee. The advisory committee will update and consult the members of the Toowoomba Youth Network at their regular meetings and set new goals and priorities as the group establishes itself in the region. It is envisaged that this group will monitor the progress of the current programs, and drive future CPLAN enquiries.
Conclusion:

The South West CPLAN group has been successful in creating some tangible outcomes through its CPLAN enquiry process. This can be attributed to a number of workers that we have in our region that are consistently looking for opportunities to improve their work practices for young people and to support the ever growing and changing youth sector. Thanks must go to the members of SWYN and the Toowoomba Youth Network, both past representatives and current, who have embedded this style of thinking in our region and supported these initial outcomes.
4.7 Central West CPLAN Case Study

Background
The Central West CPLAN covers a large geographical area and includes the towns of Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall. There are members who attend the meetings regularly from these towns, most being youth workers and youth development officers. There are also members who attend meetings more occasionally, and these tend to be principals, chaplains and family support workers. The Central West CPLAN has a large email group of 50 workers and services who welcome information about CPLAN and receive minutes from meetings. These include mental health workers, principals, guidance officers and other youth support services.

The Central West CPLAN amalgamated with the Central West Youth Network (CWYN) which has been running successfully for a number of years. The Central West Youth Network was first set up by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to support youth workers, as one of a number of youth networks they set up across Queensland. The Central West network was set up to support youth workers in the region, and provide opportunities to talk about needs and issues for them as youth workers and for the young people in their communities. When YANQ established the ten CPLAN regions the Central West Youth Network presented as a perfect fit to align with CPLAN. CPLAN shared some of the same objectives and outcomes that the Central West Youth Network was wanting to achieve.

The CPLAN was established in October 2011 once a facilitator had been appointed. The first CPLAN meeting was not held until February 2012. The reasons for this was that the facilitator needed time to gain a better understanding of the requirements from YANQ and what was involved with CPLAN. It also took time to establish CPLAN with the CWYN as people were unsure of what was required of them. There was a lot of scaffolding and discussions that took place before CPLAN was able to be set up well. February also saw the appointment of the co-facilitator who was new to the sector. She was keen to jump on board and was excited about the prospect of CPLAN.

At the meeting in February 2012 the CPLAN facilitator and co facilitator provided the network meeting with information about CPLAN, YANQ’s involvement and the CPLAN objectives. We also discussed language and broke down acronyms. We spent a lot of time discussing this as there were three new workers to the youth sector and this was their first meeting. During the meeting the group was presented with the four inquiry questions that had been designed by YANQ. These four questions would form the basis for the Participatory Action Inquiry. The four questions were:
1. What will it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?
2. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Queensland?

Time constraints brought the meeting to a close before more discussion could take place. The group decided it would be a good idea to pick up where we finished in the next meeting.
The next meeting that we had was in Longreach three months later. This was well attended and the group took time to look over the four questions again. We tried to decide what questions we wanted to look at but there was no consensus. We decided to brainstorm on sticky notes issues that were problems for young people and the workforce in the central west region. We then categorised the bullet points under main headings. These are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Issues identified for young people and youth sector workforce development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young People</th>
<th>Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sexual education</td>
<td>Lack of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Underage sexual activity</td>
<td>Overlapping of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sexual partners are under aged young people</td>
<td>More collaboration with other services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teen sex and pregnancy</td>
<td>No volunteers for events/activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drugs &amp; Alcohol</strong></td>
<td>Unqualified workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Age of drug taking getting younger</td>
<td>• No car licence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drug Abuse</td>
<td>• Lack of job skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents drinking habit influencing young people</td>
<td>• Poor literacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adults supplying kids with alcohol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficult to get funding for young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Funding activities which attract young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of praise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teenagers will always test boundaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kids under the age of 10 roaming streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of parent interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents scared to discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Afraid to discuss sex, drugs &amp; alcohol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Oblivious to child’s sexual awareness and exploration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leaving living skills, sex education up to the schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of parental supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family breakdowns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of support for families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online gambling</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homelessness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group decided that they wanted to look at *What would it take to support parents raising young people in the Central West?* As a group we decided that this would come under CPLAN question 2:

*What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?*

A range of possible strategies and principles were generated to get this off the ground, these being:
1. Surveys to establish most prevalent issues parents are experiencing with their children / teens

2. Informal workshops to educate parents about how to talk to their children about sex, drugs and alcohol

3. Workshops will be supportive, that is where parents will feel supported to voice concerns

4. Workshop will hopefully turn into weekly or fortnightly gatherings

5. Possibility of young people and parents working together and discussing issues.

We asked the group if we would like to continue with this topic or move onto something else, and the response was to stick with this question. It was decided that actioning the ideas and suggested strategies would be discussed at the next meeting.

Unfortunately we were unable to follow this up at the next meeting as no one from the previous meeting attended. At this stage three of the workers who had been at the first meeting had left the sector so were no longer attending meetings. Also attendees from the Longreach meeting were not at the subsequent meeting, where there were also three new workers. So the introduction to CPLAN started again and the momentum that had been developing was lost!

**Where are we up to?**
The next meeting in Blackall saw participants change again and a new group of members attend. Those who had attended the previous meeting were no more. At this meeting the facilitator asked the group what they wanted to achieve from these meetings. The response was:

1. Sharing of programs

2. Program development as a group.

We decided to become more of a working group. In response to the question ‘what is the most prevalent issue in our communities?’ the response was social networking (e.g. through Facebook), and associated issues of bullying, and sexting. There was a suggestion that the group develop and utilise this meeting to design a social networking program that could be taken around to the schools in the central west and communities promoted through CPLAN. Topics and tasks were brainstormed to be researchers by and discussed at the next meeting. This meeting is going to be held in the middle of September 2013 at which stage two of the planning will take place.

**Next steps for Central West CPLAN**
So where to next for our CPLAN?

- Group members reporting back on actions and research
- Developing the social media program further
- Working out how it will be rolled out in central west schools
- How to design the program to deliver it in a way that young people will be engaged.
4.8 Mid-North Region CPLAN Case Study

Introduction
Mackay Youth Connections Network Inc (MYCN) began as an unstructured network of workers who came together because they saw a need to address youth issues which were being overlooked; however with strength and determination the network became officially incorporated in 1995. Membership has grown significantly over the years to where today, in 2013, there are approximately 50 financial members of the organisation. Since the network’s humble beginnings, members have continued to work on increasing collaborative work practices and supporting the youth sector, leading to enhanced services for young people. The network has maintained strong affiliations with the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) since the network’s inception and the invitation by YANQ to join the Communities of Practice Leaders Action Networks (CPLAN) to further the input from regional areas was endorsed by the Management Committee of MYCN as a subcommittee of the network, rather than a standalone entity. The reasoning behind this decision is that Mackay is in a unique geographical area with fewer youth services than some other areas, and it would be difficult to establish and maintain an additional network and ensure maximum contribution from stakeholders.

Mackay is located four hours and forty-three minutes’ drive south of Townsville and three hours and fifty-three minutes north of Rockhampton. It takes eleven hours and twenty-six minutes to drive to Brisbane or an hour and fifteen minute flight.

![Location of Mackay](image)

*Figure 1  Location of Mackay*

This case study will present a retrospective documented reflection on the participatory action research (PAR) process undertaken by the Mackay human services sector to provide a localised response to the CPLAN macro question of:

*What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector in this region?*
Background
In 2008, after a number of completed and attempted suicides of young people in Mackay, the then Minister for Communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Disability Services, Seniors and Youth requested the Mackay Whitsunday Regional Managers’ Coordination Network set up a Mackay Youth Taskforce.

Its members comprised representation from State, Federal and Local Government departments directly or indirectly involved with developing and delivering services to young people.

The Taskforce identified that the rapid expansion of the mining industry in the Bowen Basin has had significant environmental, social and economic impacts on Mackay. Issues of housing affordability, health and family wellbeing are borne by the community as a whole. Family breakdown and dysfunction are identified by many young people who present to services.

The Taskforce further identified Mackay already receives State and Commonwealth Government funding to provide a range of services to the youth sector. While additional long-term funding would always be welcome, the Taskforce did identify areas of need that could be addressed by making better use of the existing funding.

The key need is for all agencies providing services to marginalised youth to develop collaborative approaches that provide a seamless service for young people in crisis. This includes developing assisted referral pathways to improve service integration for those in greatest need and developing mechanisms for increased involvement of young people in decision making about the delivery of services to ensure the services best meet their needs (Mackay Youth Taskforce responding to the Needs of Young People, Department of Communities, September 2008).

Taskforce Recommendations included the following:

Recommendation 1
The Taskforce suggested that there are a range of strategies that services can / could adopt to better meet the needs of young people including:

• Explore innovative accommodation models;
• Further develop assisted referral pathways to facilitate and improve service integration for those at greatest need; and
• Develop mechanisms for further involvement from young people in decision making.

Recommendation 2
• Explore service models that are integrated with existing services with consideration to extending operational hours;
• Address the needs of the Mackay Region when allocating funds to suicide prevention; and
• Focus on a range of services targeted at Indigenous and marginalised young people that include engagement, education, work ready and work based program options.

Recommendation 3
• Strengthen services, particularly early intervention models for families, Coordinated Response to Young People At Risk (CRYPAR), Indigenous services and volatile substance misuse programs;
Further explore suicide prevention and health and well being programs; and

Investigate accommodation models for marginalised young people.

In September 2008, Minister Nelson-Carr increased the recurrent funding to the Youth Information and Referral Service (YIRS) for the purpose of employing additional youth workers to collaboratively case manage with relevant stakeholders to maximise outcomes for young people at risk.

**Together We Are Stronger – Mackay Youth Sector Forum**, a joint initiative of the Queensland Department of Communities, Mackay Regional Council, Mackay Youth Connections Network Inc (MYCN Inc) and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, was held 16 – 17th of July 2009. This forum brought together over 70 stakeholders from a diverse range of organisational backgrounds (Together We Are Stronger – Mackay Youth Sector Forum Report can be obtained from Mackay Regional Council Youth Development Officer upon request).

Key forum outcomes and future directions supported by forum participants included:

- Reinvigoration of Mackay Youth Connections as an action orientated peak body for the Youth Sector in Mackay, including enhanced membership of MYCN Inc as part of each agencies core business;
- Development of a Strategic Youth Plan / Framework for Mackay led by MYCN Inc;
- Further development of a local model for integrated case management drawing from previous work undertaken by the Mackay and District Youth Crime Prevention Service (auspiced by MADEC Inc); Mackay Youth Integrated Services Team; Community Responses to Young People at Risk (CRYPAR) and the Logan-Beenleigh Young Persons Project (LBYPP);
- Recognition of the importance of research and communities of practice to support the development and implementation of integrated and innovative practice;
- Enhancing linkages between the youth and early years sectors in recognition of the need for early intervention.

At this forum it was agreed that MYCN Inc would take the lead role in the community sector to progress youth and community issues that were identified.

On 23 November 2009, a Planning Workshop was held between MYCN Inc Management Committee and the Youth Taskforce Working Party to discuss the way forward in order to continue the implementation of outcomes and strategies identified through the Mackay Youth Taskforce working groups and the Together We Are Stronger Forum. At this meeting, it was confirmed that MYCN Inc would enter into a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the MYCN Inc Executive and the Human Services Sub-group of the Queensland Government Regional Manager’s Coordination Network to support the work of MYCN Inc in continuing to progress work on identified priorities and recommendations.

The priorities identified at this meeting were tabled at the Mackay Youth Connections Network Inc Planning Day held in March 2010 for consideration by youth sector agencies attending the meeting. The Planning Day voted that a working group is established to develop and implement a local integrated case management model.
Establishing the working group
People interested in joining the working group expressed their interest on the day of the meeting with the condition that at least two Mackay Youth Connections Network Inc Committee Members committed to facilitate the process.

In March 2010, the working group was established and developed the Integrated Case Management Working Party Operational Plan to guide the process. The Working Party was comprised of membership from the following:
- Mackay Youth Connections Network Inc Management Committee
- Department of Communities
- A young person
- Interested Youth Agencies
- Mackay Regional Council
- Youth Justice Service Centre
- Child and Youth Mental Health Service
- Department of Education and Training
- Centrelink
- Queensland Police Service
- TAFE Community Work Students

Developing the integrated case management model
As there had been an unsuccessful attempt to develop this model over a previous five year period, the initial meeting of the working group focused on discussions and agreements on the purpose of the working group and as a group determined perhaps that the following micro questions had not been considered previously in guiding the developmental process:
• What would it take to develop an integrated case management model localised to the diverse needs of the Mackay youth sector?

• What would it take to implement the integrated case management model?

• What would it take for the youth sector to actively support the integrated case management model?

The first stage of the project was to conduct a literature review of available models of integrated service delivery from state, national and local publications including:

• Melbourne Citymission – Integrated Service Delivery Model
• The Logan-Beenleigh Young Persons Project
• Queensland Health - Care Coordination Model
• Helping Young People Pursue Options (HYPPO - Mackay Model)
• Mackay Community Crime Prevention Action Team (CCPAT) Discussion paper for an integrated case management approach to juvenile offending
• The Final Report on the Background Research and Literature Review for the Turnaround Program - ACT Government.

The working party developed a draft proposal model based on the following PAR reflections and questioning:

⇒ **Observations** of what was already happening in the context of both current and previous practice models,
⇒ **Reflection** on the interpretation of these practice models for a localised approach
⇒ **Planning** and scheduling working group meetings to develop a draft proposal.

**The Integrated Case Management Model proposed**

The Mackay Youth Connections Integrated Case Management (ICM) Model intent is to provide a localised practice response that may provide assistance to vulnerable young people and youth service workers in working collaboratively to increase access to relevant services in Mackay.

It was identified that there would be a two tiered system for the ICM, the first tier being a “core panel” of members that would receive and process referral applications and a second tier of “key support agencies” that would work collaboratively to provide holistic service provision to young people. One of the findings from both literature reviews and consultations was that success of the model would require a paid coordinator position and a lead agency that had both the resources and capacity to manage the model.

The MYCN Inc - ICM model also aims to provide the right mix of services at the right time for young people with multiple and complex needs through support that is coordinated and planned, and which addresses their needs and where relevant their families/caregivers needs. The aim of the ICM model was expressed as: “To ensure an effective response for young people in need of coordinated interventions through an interagency forum.”

The following outcomes and deliverables were developed by the working group to assist in guiding the consultation process:
Table 1  
ICM model deliverables and intended outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverables</th>
<th>Intended outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client Level</td>
<td>Better life chances for young people and their children by providing support, in the context of their family where appropriate to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive, ongoing support to eligible young people</td>
<td>• Remain in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reduce their level of involvement in the criminal justice system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop skills to obtain and maintain appropriate and stable accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop parenting skills and increase the safety and health of their children’s that the need for statutory interventions is minimised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improve health, safety and well being through addressing homelessness, substance abuse and family violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop and enhance young people’s skills to increase their capacity to manage a range of life issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service System Level</td>
<td>• Evidence based practice and service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement of the service system</td>
<td>• Improved workforce capacity to provide services in a more seamless and holistic way to young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overcoming barriers to collaborative working and maximising effectiveness of available resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The working group members were assigned designated agencies/organisations to discuss the proposed model and obtain feedback for input into the final version of the model. Consultation was sought through individual agency/organisation meetings, network meetings and relevant public events. Consultations with young people were conducted by the young consultant representative through focus groups, social media and the 2010 NAIDOC celebration.

Questions posed to young people were adapted to ensure meaningful responses and focused on two main questions, namely, *If this service was available would you use it?* and *What do you think could be changed in this proposal?*

The questions asked of identified agencies/organisations were as follows:

1. *Is the proposed model achievable / suited to Mackay’s needs?*
2. *Would your service / agency utilise this model e.g. refer young people and when necessary participate in the process?*
3. *What are your thoughts on the most appropriate way to fund this model?*
   • Service/Agency support (internal funding)
   • Appropriate funding opportunities (external funding)
   • Corporate Funding/philanthropic funding opportunities

The model as outlined in the consultation document is depicted below in Figure 3.
**Model of Management**

Funding options:
1. Service / agency support (internal funding)
2. Appropriate funding opportunities (external funding) corporate funding / philanthropic funding

**Figure 3** Integrated Case Management (ICM) Model Proposed

All the agencies/organisations and young people that engaged in the consultation process agreed that the model was achievable for trial in Mackay and that they would utilise the model. The consultation document also served to explain the need for formalised memorandums of understanding between government and non-government services. It was decided that in order to implement the model expeditiously and to provide a level of sustainability, that the model would progress under the Service/Agency internal funding option. A specific youth agency was identified as the most suitable organisation to trial the project as the proposed model aligned with objectives of the organisation’s core business. It was agreed by the working party that the model would be trialled for a period of 12 months with evaluations conducted monthly throughout the trial period, to guide the future direction of the model.
Initially one youth service organisation was identified as being the lead agency to commence the trial; however, due to government funding restructuring, this option was no longer viable. As the working group included a key government decision maker, the project was then formally allocated to another youth service during the funding restructuring process.

At this stage, the project re-entered the PAR cycles of Observation ⇒ Reflection ⇒ Re-planning and is now in the Action phase.

**Conclusion**
The integrated case management project is still in the ‘action’ phase of the PAR process and will be explored as depicted in the Extended PAR cycle for the foreseeable future until a full review has been conducted.

![The PAR cycle](image)

**Figure 4**  **Extended PAR Cycle**
(Participatory Action Research Workbook 2011)

**What have we learnt so far?**

- Formal documented agreements between the lead agency and identified partners are required to guarantee commitment.

- This type of project requires a lead agency that has the capacity and resources within their core business objectives to provide sustainability.

- Effective consultation with all stakeholders, including young people, government and non-government organisations is imperative to ensure ownership and success of the model.

- Targeting key government decision makers to be involved in the planning of the process optimises the probability of effective implementation.
4.9 North West CPLAN Case Study

Background
The North West CPLAN region is a vast area the size of Great Britain, with a population of around 75,000, and with the commercial capital based in the city of Mount Isa, population 22,000 people.

North West Queensland is one of the largest mining regions in the world, as well as having a strong cattle industry. Being located so far from the east coast, the city of Mount Isa is a 2 hour plane flight to Brisbane and about a 10 hour drive to Townsville on the eastern seaboard; longer for other communities in the Gulf.

In the region there are in place a number of youth services, most based within Councils and / or NGOs, with a large percentage of the youth specific services located in Mount Isa. As a CPLAN group the North West region faces a number of challenges, namely distance and an opportunity to regularly communicate issues and needs as a group.

In October 2012 the CPLAN working group organised its first meeting, and brought together about 20 youth specific workers, all from Mount Isa. Slightly more than half were from non-government services, others from government agencies. This group began the process of talking about the 4 discreet questions below.

1. What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?
2. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in QLD?

From this initial meeting people were asked to reflect, then make comment on which one of the key questions above they could relate to, and which one was the most significant for the local youth sector. After some robust discussions a group consensus was decided to pick Q1, but changed it to “What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in North West Qld”.

From this the group then went about generating possible answers to this key question. These are displayed in Table 1 on the next page.
Table 1  What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in North West Qld?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offer more incentives for workers</th>
<th>More pay at the end of the day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger MOU’s with services</td>
<td>Professional development opportunities across services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports from management</td>
<td>Career progression to senior levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become proactive not reactive</td>
<td>Contingency plan on work practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the great work</td>
<td>Community achievement awards night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular and consistent monthly meetings</td>
<td>Less talk more action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker get togethers</td>
<td>Need to bring regional workers in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of an overarching consent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is needing to be improved?
CPLAN discussions identified a range of areas that needed improvement. Access to basic community services by young people has been identified as a major need to be addressed, as well as a greater investment in Integrated Case Management (ICM) of “at risk” clients within the community by both Government and Non-Government agencies.

Access by young people at risk to most community services is difficult, with transport often not conducive to easy access. Most workers tend to go on outreach to do home visits and see the young person in their own setting. Though this is a good practice in essence, it does not set up pathways for these young people to access adult services.

It is also important to note that in Mount Isa alone, there is a waiting period of around 3-5 weeks to see a specialist worker i.e. Counsellor, Psychologist. This does not lend itself to addressing key social and emotional issues that go beyond the therapeutic care that most workers in the community have capacity to respond to. Young people who access services, and become quite dependent on workers, more often than not fail to thrive when they come of age. One view is that this is because workers are not trained properly to ensure that they (as workers) have the skills and knowledge to empower their clients rather than disempower them by doing everything for them.

Evidence of this comes from discussions with case workers in the community, both non-government and government, who have multiple co-clients with other workers/services. It is seen as advantageous if workers who share the same clients could take a more strategic approach to addressing specific needs, i.e. some looking after housing needs, transportation, counselling and possibly a lead case worker to develop the case plan at the overall level.

Interest, opportunities and needs
There are a number of youth funded programs in the community, but little to no coordination of programs, projects and or events that bring the sector together. Youth workers in general are passionate about their work, but it has been identified that time constraints and limited resources have hindered many being able to participate actively in the Youth Alliance and Integrated Case Management (ICM) group.
An opportunity exists for the Youth Alliance and ICM group to focus on youth issues and needs more proactively, and to support workers at the grassroots level in the betterment of clients. There is a genuine consensus from workers that a coordinated body needs to be in place to support workers on the ground. However youth integrated case management has been difficult to achieve, with many finding it hard to participate in the ICM process due to work constraints.

What did we find out
Instead of having stand-alone CPLAN meetings, it was identified by the group that it would be most effective for CPLAN to be amalgamated into the monthly Youth Alliance and ICM agenda. Further discussions were had within the group to concentrate efforts on the key CPLAN question relating to strengthening the sector. It was agreed the group would stage a Regional Youth Worker’s Conference in July 2012, to bring together all workers and community officers who primarily worked with young people in their communities.

Action 1: Regional Conference
A working party was established to oversee the coordination of planning for the first ever Regional Youth Workers Forum, and it wasn’t long before registrations were sent out. Over 80 attendees showed interest to come along to the 3 day event, with 20% coming from outlying communities. After two months of working together the event was held with 74 workers partaking in group work activities, specific sessions involving Youth Justice, Child Safety, Sexual Health, Police Powers, a Youth Panel, as well as listening in on Skype sessions with State based agencies talking about innovative practice and specific issues within the sector. A contact register was distributed at the conference and service visits facilitated across agency understandings.

Feedback from the conference indicates closer working relationships between outlying workers and services in Mt Isa were one result. Examples include the ongoing links between volatile substance use services in the region (including Mornington Island) and diversion programs.

Further investigation is needed into how to foster ongoing communication between those working across what is a very large geographic area. Exploring how technology might assist (Skype, teleconferencing etc.) is considered important. Whilst the greater use of information and communication technologies is indicated, the experience of the Conference emphasises that periodic face-to-face engagement of services and workers across the region is also very important.

Action 2: Strengthening integrated case management
Prior to integration with the CPLAN, Youth Alliance and ICM Group meetings had predominately tabled and discussed projects and or events, with little focus on developing more integrated case management strategies across services. The suggestion has been put to include some focus on case management at meetings. The CPLAN facilitators plan to table the suggestion for a re-focus on the
meeting agenda to include the development of strategies for workers to work more proactively around case management. It will be suggested the group re-visit the Terms of Reference and look into developing a strong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure greater participation and commitment from sector workers, as well as taking a closer look at what could be done to progress Integrated Case Management for young people in Mt Isa.

A model that the group has been looking at is the “Under 1 Roof” model being run out of Brisbane, whereby two separate groups meet regularly – a workers group and a leadership group. The Under 1 Roof model focuses on integrated case management of housing clients, but can be easily adapted to be more youth focused. The workers group meets up once a month to discuss issues and/or needs, and actions them accordingly. The leadership group meets once every two months to progress matters which the workers group are unable to progress, and or want assistance from. It was also identified that a greater investment in getting the outer regional workers involved in meetings is a must, with the group wanting to trial a Skype link-up in upcoming Youth Alliance and ICM Group meetings.

In October 2013 a decision was made to split the Youth Alliance and ICM Group into two separate groups. The Youth Alliance continues to have a broad sector development role with the ICM Group continuing the more focused interest in developing a more integrated case management approach across youth services in Mt Isa. It is felt the stand alone focus for the ICM Group will allow for a greater focus on developing an integrated case management approach, undertaking associated discussions about the Under 1 Roof model as a way of achieving this, and considering how this model could be adapted to the local / regional issues and needs within the youth sector. As an advocate for all youth programs in the community / region the network will be encouraged to have a signed MOU in place, discuss and revise the Terms of Reference, and ensure that worker position descriptions include workers being actively involved.

In respect of CPLAN there will continue to be a separate agenda line item purely for CPLAN discussions within the Youth Alliance. Meeting minutes are kept and information coming out of the CPLAN discussions is disseminated back out to the group as well being shared with YANQ, the larger State-Wide CPLAN groups, and hopefully through to other networks and policy makers, i.e. Government.

Reflections to date
What worked?
• Regularity of monthly meetings becoming more evident
• Integration of the CPLAN concept as an agenda at Youth Alliance and ICM meetings
• Re-focus on less talk more action i.e. Regional Youth Workers Forum, TOR, MOU’s, Consent forms

What didn’t work?
• Involvement of other workers in the other regional communities
• Further unpacking the Under One Roof Case Management model
• Services investing their time to be more actively involved in ICM
• A limited number of MOUs have been signed (3)
Next steps
A number of strategies have emerged for the next period of the CPLAN. Firstly, the ICM Group will re-visit the Under One Roof case management model and unpack its uses and how best it can assist workers on the ground as well as achieve better outcomes for clients at the end of the day. Secondly, the group will initiate development of a whole of region Events and Programs Calendar for all youth workers to have so they and their clients are aware of key dates and events to be involved in. This is planned for mid-December 2013. Thirdly, the Mount Isa City Council will be contacted with a view to seeking their more proactive involvement in the Youth Alliance, and to facilitate the group’s input into policy and decision making processes as these relate to the Youth Development Strategy in the city. Fourthly, the group will feed up to the State Wide CPLAN group on major issues and needs identified in the region. Finally, the Youth Alliance will request from key service providers in Health, Education/Training, Employment, Health, Housing etc. greater information and dialogue on the development of a community youth support strategy across these important life domains.
4.10 State-wide CPLAN Case Study

Background
The State Wide CPLAN was established in February 2012 in recognition of the value other state-wide organisations would bring to YANQ in playing an overview role of the CPLAN initiative. The group was made up of representation from Dovetail, Local Government Association of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland Alliance, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition, Workforce Council and the Director, Project Worker for the Workforce Project and Policy Coordinator, YANQ.

At a later stage, the State Chairs of the Partnership Brokerage and Youth Connections Programs were invited to participate in this group, though they have never been able to attend any meetings.

The Terms of Reference for the group were established using a collaborative process. They are:

2. Inquire on youth sector issues – from a state wide perspective, focusing their inquiry on the four key PAR questions:
   1. What will it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?
   2. What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
   3. What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
   4. What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Queensland?
3. Act as a reference group to YANQ, assisting with the analysis of information generated by the Regional CPLANs
4. Facilitate links between regional initiatives
5. Coordinate state wide initiatives in the 10 CPLAN regions, where possible
6. Support Youth Sector in raising issues with Government
7. Support YANQ to develop a State Wide Youth Sector Plan
8. Communicate with Regional CPLANs on activities of State CPLAN
9. Participate in discussions on key issues with Regional CPLANs.

Four inquiry questions
At the State CPLAN meeting on 2 February 2012, the group discussed the four inquiry questions.

In respect of Macro Question 1 What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Queensland?, the group decided that YANQ’s research, The Youth Sector in Queensland 2010, had already provided a framework for a state wide approach to answering the question. All of the members of the State CPLAN had contributed to the research. YANQ would use the State CPLAN as a group to assist in over viewing the implementation of the recommendations in the report.

For macro Question 3 What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?, YANQ established the CPLAN from the recommendations of The Youth Sector in Queensland in many respects to answer this question. The group discussed that it would be useful to follow an inquiry on ‘what would it take for youth workers to appreciate the connection between service/research/policy development and advocacy’.

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In respect of macro Question 4 *What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Queensland?,* the group decided that at a state level YANQ covered this role with its day to day functions, conferences, policy forums and CPLAN. It was important that YANQ made the connection of CPLAN to its policy processes more explicit.

The group then discussed a proposal for an inquiry to a micro question *What would it take for the youth sector to improve its communication across Queensland utilising all technologies that are available?* given YANQ was in the process of establishing the CPLAN network and establishing communication systems for participants.

The decision was made to run an inquiry about *what would it take to use the CPLAN Facilitator and Co-facilitator group as a trial group to utilise internet technologies so they can more easily communicate?* The project would identify hardware, software and human barriers to utilising internet technology and look at ways of overcoming barriers. Initial efforts by staff at YANQ identified that there were a number of barriers preventing easy communication between CPLAN participants.

**What did we do?**
The State-wide group experimented with a number of different technologies throughout the year:
1. Internet platform with CPLAN Facilitators and Co-facilitators
2. Teleconference with State Wide Group
3. Skype with State Wide Group utilising Macbook
4. Skype with State Wide Group utilising Macbook, Teleconferencing module and Projector
5. Skype with State Wide Group utilising PC computer
6. Use of Google Docs as a way of utilising web based technologies for a group to work together (still underway)

We also collected data from the CPLAN participants on their ability to utilise web based communication platforms via a survey at the February Forum.

**Observations: What worked? What challenges did we have? How did we solve them?**

1. **Internet platform with CPLAN Facilitators and Co Facilitators**
   After initial research into web conferencing solutions, we utilised the commercial web software *Webex* as the platform. *Webex* is designed to provide a Skype like platform with the ability to share files and desktops, which YANQ assumed would be useful to the participants.

   With this choice and in setting up the initial meeting, YANQ made the assumption that most participants would have access to a computer with good quality internet, microphone and camera. We also assumed a high level of competency of participants. In setting up the induction meeting, we found out that in fact only one person had access to a computer with camera and microphone. All the other participants phoned in to the meeting.

   Due to other office uses, the bandwidth of YANQ’s internet access was seriously compromised at the time of the meeting. This resulted in the functionality of the platform being very slow. YANQ then attempted to utilise the laptop with its own internet connection (via a dongle) – however, the
wireless available via the dongle was not strong enough to support the platform. When the meeting was underway participants could only hear every second or third word, and half way through the meeting it had to be abandoned.

2. Teleconferencing
YANQ had already been using teleconferencing for its management committee meetings for some time. In 2011, it purchased a new speaker module system to support this communication. When the State Wide CPLAN utilised this technology, the meeting went smoothly – it was stress free as everyone was used to utilising it and the sound was very good.

The downside for those not in the room and utilising the phone was that no one could see the others involved in the meeting, which led to a more stilted meeting. Also, there was no way to share documents via the system.

This technology does cost YANQ for the conference call, and the cost can be significant at around $10 per participant per hour.

3. Group Skype – Macbook
YANQ set up a State Wide CPLAN meeting via Skype. A Macbook was utilised for this purpose, relying on YANQ’s wireless connection. Skype was downloaded onto the computer and a Group Skype account was set up and paid for at $9.99 per month to enable group video calling. After some brief initial testing, it was assumed it would work easily. However, early on in the meeting, problems emerged with the set up on the computer, meaning that we could not use the pop ups that were there to prompt us to take action. As a result the meeting had to be aborted.

Another problem was reverb by participants using a laptop where the microphone was located near the speakers. Every time they spoke we would hear them twice, making it very difficult to understand and stressful for discussion. While ameliorative action was attempted by asking participants to mute their microphone when not talking, only some participants remembered to do this.

Another issue was using a small laptop screen to see the participants who were Skyping in. A projected image would have been better of seeing participants.

4. Group Skype - Macbook, Teleconferencing module and Projector
YANQ set up next Skype meeting with State Wide CPLAN group. Considerable effort was made to test the equipment. A webcam was purchased and placed on the wall so that participants who were not in the room would be able to see people sitting at the table. The teleconferencing module was linked into the computer so that the sound was easy to hear and reverb from the meeting was minimised. While the Macbook was still required to run on YANQ’s wireless, the test worked well and before the meeting those who had Skyped in were chatting informally with people at YANQ.

However, once everyone logged into the meeting, the ability of the bandwidth to cope with the number of people decreased dramatically. We began to experience more and more reverb, and then a participant pressed a function button and then we lost all of the Skype software from the computer. It took some time to re establish functionality but the reverb problem continued.
We set up a projector for the participants to be seen well, and this worked relatively well, apart from it being situated in the middle of the table so all those physically at the meeting had to talk over the top of a box and projector.

5. Group SKYPE – PC
Realising that the main concern we were having was bandwidth, the Communications Officer of YANQ went to considerable trouble to set up a wired PC in the YANQ meeting room designated for conferencing communication. They downloaded Skype and ensured that the computer was cabled into internet rather than rely on wireless. The teleconferencing module was permanently connected and a webcam mounted permanently on the wall. The PC was set up with Windows 7, providing a more stable environment for Skype, and was installed with minimum software as to provide maximum bandwidth.

A meeting was organised for a subcommittee established for developing the agenda of the September CPLAN Forum. Two people were Skyped in via their phones and one person video called – all via Skype so there was no cost to YANQ.

The participant who had previously had the reverb problem had purchased a headset so the problem disappeared at their end. A large screen was utilised so the group did not utilise the data projector for showing participants. While this was not as large as a projected image, it meant that the table space was clear and the projector did not need to be set up and packed up every time Skype was used.

Participants who called in had average sound quality and could not hear participants who were softly spoken.

YANQ Online Space for CPLAN Facilitators and Co-Facilitators
Over the last year, we have utilised three types of online spaces for communicating with CPLAN participants.

Firstly, we utilised the QCOSS Community Door site as a communication tool. On the whole, participants found it difficult to use. The main problem was locating the group on the Community Door site. Participants then suggested that we use the new LGAQ site CollectV to network the CPLAN, however, this was only available to Local Government workers and would have required a remodelling of the site, and opening up the ownership of the site to suit most participants.

We then decided to develop an online space for the CPLAN via YANQ’s own servers. This was an exciting development, as it allowed us to develop the space exactly as we wanted it with the help of external IT consultants. At the CPLAN gathering in September, a questionnaire was developed to find out what the CPLAN wanted in terms of an online space, which turned out to be simply access to shared resources and an e-list. This was developed by the IT Consultants, however, due to the very poor build of the YANQ website by the previous web developer, this space was hard to find and use, and had multiple bugs. It also cost YANQ a significant amount of money to develop.

After the crash of YANQ’s website in November 2012, the YANQ Communication Officer build a new website using the free online software Weebly. A CPLAN space was built in as a webpage, and an Google elist set up and managed by the YANQ Communication Officer. All resources were uploaded
to the space, and the elist forum embedded on the page. While it has not been extensively used as yet, we now have the capabilities of easy sharing and communication.

Reflections: What did we learn?

- We can’t assume that participants will have the skills or the hardware and software to utilise web based technologies.
  - This requires checking and scaffolding participants so they can participate via a web based technology. You need to have someone who can ring individual participants and walk them through the technology so that they can participate.
  - If YANQ is to use these technologies with Facilitators and Co-facilitators they may be required to send them headphones with microphones so they can participate and assistance to set up this equipment.
- For some participants, phoning is as good as it gets if they don’t have access to a computer. Any option we utilise needs to have the phone-in option available.
- When utilising web based technologies, you need to practice with the equipment and software prior to the meeting so that you are confident the equipment will work.
- Even when you have practised with the equipment, problems might emerge when undertaking meeting. Having technical support is a great help.
- Teleconferences generally have the best sound quality and least interruptions due to failure of technology.
- When utilising web based communication systems such as Skype, participants need to ensure their microphones are not close to speakers to avoid reverb. If this is a problem it is best to use a headset.
- Meetings with a mix of YANQ utilising Skype to phone participants and video call participants that have access to a computer with head phone and microphone work well once all the bugs of set up have been sorted.
- All the different options have pros and cons and it depends on what the meeting is wanting to achieve as to which option you want to utilise.

What is the experience of other networks?
The two case studies below are from minimally funded and non-funded community networks in Australia. They are decentralised networks that communicate via telecommunications software to make national decisions and have been using this technology for many years.

Friends of the Earth Australia [http://www.foe.org.au/]
FoEA has been around since the 1970s as an autonomous network of environmental organisations based in cities and towns around Australia. Each group is structured differently, from organisations with Directors and Management Committees, to consensus based workers' co-operatives. The FoEA network meets annually, but also has monthly teleconferences to make interim campaign and network decisions. The technology used as developed over the years, existing as conference calls from the 1970s to the mid 2000s, and from then on utilising web based technologies to 'meet' people online and collectively work on documents and resources. The network now uses Skype as a cost effective solution, and encourages all those that call in to purchase headphones and use wired computers rather than WiFi. The FoEA office in Melbourne calls all participants in to the meeting and has a social media room dedicated to Skype calling. The conference call system is used as a back-up if Skype fails.

ASEN is a network of affiliated student environment collectives across Australian universities and operates from a decentralised model where delegates are nominated by their local group to represent the group at a National Council. National Council used to meet monthly via a teleconference system, used because many of the members do not have access to an adequate internet connection. Skype was used for a short while, but due to most participants and the host using WiFi, the meetings were always disjointed, had technical issues and often failed. Even with teleconferencing, however, many people did not have access to a landline and had to use Skype to call in, which meant that there were still sound issues. This resulted in less and less people attending the National Councils and some problematic relationships between the groups.

In 2012, there was a radical new proposal to scrap voice meetings all together and instead have 'incubator' sessions on the open source wiki space that had been set up. This worked as a working session where all people logged on to the wiki and worked collectively with google documents, making collective decisions as they arose via email chains. It has been working relatively well until March 2013, however, some meetings still need to be held via teleconference to make important decisions.

**Where are we up to now?**

The Communication Room at YANQ is still evolving. It has taken since February 2012 to July 2012 to experiment and explore solutions to the various problems that have arisen in testing the different technologies. There are still a few existent issues that we are dealing with. One is the teleconferencing module communicating with the PC – this currently works around 50% of the time and needs to be checked before every meeting, unplugged, restarted etc. until it works. Another is training of YANQ staff members to use the system without the help of the YANQ Communications Officer.

The Skype technology can work but it still has some problems around sound quality. Teleconferencing generally doesn’t have the sound problems but it can have a significant cost. We have yet to experiment on a larger scale on the size of the group and the effectiveness of different technologies.

**Conclusion**

Overall this is a detailed record of the strategies tried, focusing on the technical aspects of implementation. We may benefit by looking at types of communication and associated processes that it does well, as well as what exactly participants are looking for in a meeting space rather than just trying to replicate face to face meetings in the virtual world. However, it gives us a good basis for building on.

The Case Study outlined the learnings from utilising different phone and internet technologies. The inquiry has had an important impact on YANQ’s use of technology, resulting in a communication room being established to enable phone and internet technology to be used together or separately for meetings.

The biggest lesson learnt is that one can not assume everyone has the technology available and the skills to use it. It is an iterative process, learning as you go, adjusting and at times time consuming. Patience is a key virtue.
**Section 5**

**Implications and conclusions**

Queensland is a highly decentralised state with substantial variation between different locations. Whilst there are a range of local and regional networks which constitute the youth sector, CPLAN grew out of the recognition that a much more proactive engagement with and involvement in these widely spread networks was needed. A goal of CPLAN is to link regional and state levels of the youth sector though a process which recognises variations in regional and sector character, the needs of young people, and the strategic development of practice and policy. In practical terms this meant the provision of a resource for each region/group (a CPLAN facilitator and co-facilitator supported through YANQ) to engage existing youth services related networks, services and workers in a conversation about CPLAN, and collaboratively develop a view as to what would be needed in that region to respond to a number of broad core questions related to youth sector and workforce development, and the needs of young people. On the basis of this, CPLAN networks were invited to focus their collaboration around specific strategies and actions, which they then observed, reflected on, and used to determine next steps. The method used to support this process of inquiry was a form of participatory action research tailored to the CPLAN context.

Four broad questions had been negotiated at the state level within which to orient, but not control, the directions groups took with this. Each region or CPLAN group could develop their own context-relevant questions within the broad parameters of the four state-wide questions. CPLAN facilitators were provided support and training in participatory action research and community development processes which were seen as enabling of this ‘bottom up’ approach.

The following reflections were generated at the May 2013 CLAN Facilitators forum held at The Outlook, Boonah.

**The context of CPLAN**

It was apparent that CPLAN needs to have time to develop, that it involves a journey, and that such a developmental journey cannot occur quickly. That regional processes of engagement and network development take time is evidenced by the variations in experience across the particular CPLANs.

There is a strong view amongst CPLAN facilitators that a decentralised process which actively involves those working with young people across the state is an effective way to build a strong voice – one where each region is able to engage and talk with their key stakeholders including local MPs. And a strong view that this regional capacity development requires state-wide support. The CPLAN facilitators see the support provided by YANQ as integral to this.

**CPLAN strategy**

CPLAN is a strategy which links this appreciation of local and regional diversity and understanding with the state-wide network support and policy role of YANQ, and was developed by YANQ in collaboration with others as a way of creating a platform for enhancing youth policy and the capacity of the youth sector. As well as YANQ, the cluster of support for CPLAN included the Metropolitan
South Institute of TAFE (MSIT), the Health and Community Services Workforce Development Council, and Queensland University of Technology.

CPLAN facilitators described the impact of CPLAN as ‘reinvigorating’. The CPLAN structure provides a space for dialogue and communication about issues facing the youth sector, and for the development of peer support strategies at a time when funding is uncertain. CPLAN is seen as having created a democratic participatory structure that enhances the capacity of the youth sector by building linkages between local regional and state levels, and between regions.

[There is] a strong network between the regions now - peer support - not standing alone - sharing information - strengthening our own practice.

Great connections across the state/regions – learning from each other, sharing resources.

The main mechanism for this is the fostering of purposeful relationships between people and services across the CPLAN that links those within and outside regions in a way that helps those involved in working with and supporting young people to gain a better understanding of their work. By posing important macro questions facing the sector, CPLAN can provide a platform for purposeful discussion about how the youth sector workforce, broadly conceived, should develop – and provides a mechanism for a wide range of people and stakeholders to have ‘buy in’. CPLAN is seen as a space for collaborative practice - an invitation – and a process for how people can be involved.

CPLAN seems to work best when both the purpose of CPLAN is understood and when the region’s purpose for meeting – their goals or focus – are known and agreed by all attendants. Members seem to be more involved and are passionate when they have a target- an action / task or milestone to achieve by a certain date.

Embedding training into the CPLAN process is seen as successful, with aspects relating to working with a training institution that provided flexible accredited training (Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE), community development and using participatory action research all seen as valuable.

CPLAN facilitators see the CPLAN approach as successful. They point to the sustainability of their own engagement in the process and the case studies as providing evidence for this. Facilitators consider the CPLAN structure of working at both the regional and state levels as critical to its success, as this allows for the location of regional and local situations to be shared across regions and considered within a broader context. At the same time, they see CPLAN as work in progress, needing further time to develop.

We achieved a lot in short time and CPLAN needs to be an ongoing process - workforce issues are important – they come through the inquiry process as the predominant issues - they were the issues where there was energy.

CPLAN helps us think wider - sharing ideas - bring information back to reinvigorate each other - I have really got good information from other participants.
Summary of insights

In respect of the four key questions a number of themes across case studies were apparent.

Question 1  What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?

Most CPLAN case studies undertook inquiries relevant to this question, some quite extensively. At a general level, the CPLAN experience to date demonstrates that there is both willingness and need at the local and regional level to develop stronger capacities and more effective strategies to respond to the needs of young people as these manifest in particular areas of Queensland. The systematic engagement of services and their staff within and across regions is strongly indicated as vital for both the effectiveness and efficiency of sector responses to young people.

CPLAN inquiries to date indicate that improved access and opportunities for young people require:
• The identification of specific issues experienced by young people within and across particular localities and regions;
• The provision of training for youth workers in respect of identified regional needs;
• Strategies to improve service systems so as to reduce barriers to access by young people, particularly those with complex needs;
• Enhanced involvement of young people in regional planning and decision making.

All of these were actioned by CPLANs; some more than others.

Question 2  What does it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Qld?

This is the question that most clearly reflects the workforce development orientation of the CPLAN funding and the institutional location of those directly involved, namely youth workers, services and networks. Underpinning this question is a well-founded assumption that a range of critical outcomes for many young people cannot be realised unless there is a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce.

A range of practical strategies were developed by particular CPANs to progress this. CPLAN inquiries to date indicate that a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce requires:
• Workers and services being engaged in collaborative networks as active rather than passive agents;
• An engagement approach which matches regional/local service configuration and network patterns;
• Developing strategies that are seen as context relevant and action oriented;
• A frame of ‘inquiry’ that encourages collaboration and problem solving;
• A focus on enhanced professional development. CPLANs were quite successful in collaboratively negotiating and delivering a range of professional development events;
• Leadership of various types and at various levels.

In the context of the Recommissioning process the question posed by numbers of workers and services was How can/should the sector reposition itself?
Question 3 What would it take increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?

Key skills referred to across many of the specific CPLANs included the need to listen, identify where the specific local needs and energies were, collaboratively develop actions that were purposeful and relevant, all the time operating in a flexible rather than prescriptive way. The PAR process provided a context-responsive inquiry process to use which facilitators generally found very useful. The PAR process and its contribution to building collaboration are discussed more fully later in this report.

CPLAN facilitators talked of having to explain the purpose, structure and processes of CPLAN many times over as network memberships changed or were expanded. Developing CPLAN was often seen as more about developing a collaborative culture by building on existing and available connections than it was about establishing specific structures and processes. Some connections brought greater leverage than others and identifying key stakeholders whose involvement if achieved would bring greater legitimacy was another way collaboration was developed. Building relationships with key agencies and players beyond the immediate youth sector who can assist was of great value. The CPLAN process was itself a strategy aimed at increasing connection and collaboration across the youth sector, and as a result all CPLAN case studies have some relevance. From these it is apparent that:

- Improved network functioning and expanding network size takes time and requires active facilitation;
- Vital to engage with local/ regional networks in a way that appreciates existing mechanisms, is relevant for the regional context and configuration of services, and seeks sustainability;
- There is a felt need to develop collaborative approaches to service delivery at the local / regional level, particularly in respect of direct practice with young people who have complex needs;
- A wider range of services and workers are likely to engage in aspects of CPLANs that are action oriented;
- Use of a process for collaborative inquiry such as participatory action research.

A range of barriers and challenges to collaboration were unsurprisingly encountered. In terms of collaborative network development this could include the status of CPLAN at the local level and with existing networks, workers / services dropping out or not regularly attending (the ‘ebb and flow’ of participation), the challenge of maintaining sufficient commonality in membership to progress a line of inquiry, moving from networking as information sharing to networking as a platform for more strategic collaborative inquiry and action, the time needed to make progress, different levels of regional resources, variable skill and capacity in the use of ICTs, the level of support needed to do analysis and write up case studies, and in some areas clashes or disconnects between key stakeholders regionally and / or beyond. The process of participatory action research was used to varying degrees with CPLAN facilitators generally using what can be seen as a question driven collaborative action learning approach. Further growing the skills and confidence in using these processes is an important aspect of workforce and sector development.
Question 4  
What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Qld?

There was much less regional CPLAN focus on this question relating to the development of a youth policy platform. The CPLAN case studies and inquiries do however contain a number of themes in respect of this question, these being:

- Commitment by CPLANs to contributing into regional and state level policy;
- Concern that youth policy is not currently coherent or enabling;
- A need for better data on a range of matters relating to young people and youth services at local and regional levels;
- Two way communication between state policy and program areas and local / regional networks;
- Development of enhanced ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) strategies across the youth sector.

The lack of linkages between local and regional mechanisms to feed information to the state level was cited by a number of regions.

Regional CPLANs and associated networks are located close to the ground and have significant insight into local issues affecting young people and those working with young people. This is evidenced across CPLAN case studies with several describing scoping exercises to gain an up to date understanding of local issues at the sub-regional level. The lack of coherence in policies is manifested at the local level in a wide variety of ways, often expressed as barriers one issue presents to positive outcomes in another. For example lack of access to adequate transport for young people is reported across numerous CPLANs as a barrier to accessing needed opportunities and supports.

CPLAN facilitators also suggested that the CPLAN process could be usefully articulated to inquire into regional issues that emerge as important, and that a process for CPLAN regional networks taking the results of their inquiries to relevant Departments for consideration and possible support would be a useful way to make policy more responsive.

The local knowledge and commitment of youth workers and services to contribute to better policy at both the regional and state levels is seen as a largely untapped resource. The collaborative capacities evident in CPLANs suggest positive engagement is wanted and likely to yield benefits around questions of how to achieve more positive outcomes for young people and the role of the youth sector in this community wide project.

**Implications for the future**

There was a strong view that CPLAN has achieved much in a short period of time, and that it has demonstrated a capacity to be sustainable in challenging contexts.

>`Great that we are still continuing - being resilient like we ask our clients to be resilient.`

There was also an appreciation that whilst CPLAN has achieved a great deal with very limited resourcing, and represented great investment value, that it cannot be sustained without clear
material state-wide support for its infrastructure: facilitation, training, communication and the development of sharable outputs. CPLAN was not uniformly successful and faced greater challenges in engaging with sector networks in some regions. The resources currently provided to support CPLAN facilitators may well not be adequate for ongoing sustainability.

The CPLAN case studies indicate the work that has occurred in regions and clearly suggests that if supported, most regions have relevant strategies that they are keen to pursue. There is clearly a need to assist rural and remote regions to have a greater capacity for sustainable connection between workers and services, and a clear need at all levels to better utilise information and communication technologies to enable collaborative practice. The potential for peer support strategies to address some front line workforce issues is accompanied by the need to better address broader factors affecting worker retention.

There is a clear benefit in engaging the youth sector in an ongoing process of inquiry and dialogue around core questions that if answered through action research will deliver benefits to young people and their local communities and across the state.
References


Appendix 1
CPLAN Participatory Action Research Workbook

Participatory Action Research Workbook

A workbook designed to support the recording of a Participatory Action Research process in the CPLAN project

August 2011

Written by Phil Crane
Acknowledgements
This workbook has drawn on experiences from various PAR initiatives including those of the Reconnect program, and Brisbane North and West Youth Connections. Also acknowledged is the contribution to the action research work which this workbook has grown out of from colleagues Maureen O'Regan (who co-authored the On PAR resource), and Jenny Kaighin. The PAR questions on page 10 were developed through the CPLAN process and reflect the consensus arrived at by participating youth workers with the support of YANQ staff and John Flanagan from How Now Solutions. This workbook will be open to revision as youth workers and networks undertake their action research during the CPLAN project.
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About this workbook

The youth sector, broadly understood, has a complex of practice, policy and organisational linkages. Dealing with complexity is seen by community sector agencies as a critical challenge (ACOSS 2010). Critical issues include:

- the capacity of regional and local workforces to provide opportunities for career development;
- the capacity for sustainable linkages between local, regional and state level policy consideration and advice aimed at improving the wellbeing of young people;
- the need to support the improvement of current youth work practice.

The CPLAN project has been developed as a response to these issues. For more information on the CPLAN project and associated workforce development resources see the YANQ website at www.yanq.org.au.

PAR is seen as a suitable framework to engage and work with the wide range of individuals and organisations involved in youth work and youth policy.

YANQ has indicated a collaborative approach will be used where youth workers, organisations and other stakeholders can be actively involved in shaping the questions to be asked, and be supported to share ideas for the ongoing development of the workforce. Such an approach reflects values of recognising and building on existing knowledge, expertise and good practice, innovation, continuous improvement and learning, collaborative relationships, recognising both diversity and areas of commonality in young people’s backgrounds, needs and experiences, and locating these within a broad context that includes individual, social, economic, cultural and environmental factors.

The approach taken to action research

Participatory action research is a way of working together to make things better (Frazer, Gehan, Mills and Smart 2003).

Action Research combines getting a better understanding of a context we are part of with trying to improve aspects of it. The participatory approach to action research applied to human services and systems takes a maximising and developmental approach to the building of action research capacity. In other words over time the goal is to build and deepen the involvement and voice of those affected by what is being researched, and over time to develop more robust and well founded understandings.
In other words participatory action research starts where you are at and develops as you, in dialogue with others, try to understand and improve your practices and the situations of people.

Expanding our way of doing things into the context of research (Participatory Action Research) involves a singular person or small group of people realising that something in our lives needs changing. A difference is noticed, an ideal is not met, a loss of quality, a foreshadowed change of direction, or perhaps the need for innovation. (Goff et, 1998, p.65 in Crane and Richardson 2000,p1.7)

This workbook should be used in conjunction with the guide to the application of participatory action research in human services and systems On PAR: Using Participatory Action Research to Improve Early Intervention. This and some other relevant resources (such as the Action Research Card Set which the section on questions for each part of the cycle has drawn on) can be found at http://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Crane,_Philip.html
The PAR Cycle

This workbook uses an inquiry cycle consisting of moments of observation, reflection, planning, action, observation, reflection and sharing, undertaken in a dynamic and often overlapping way. This cycle is a tool for understanding different elements in the PAR process rather than implying a linear sequence necessarily occurs from one to another. In reality these moments of PAR overlap or can occur in parallel. There can also be cycles within cycles as the exploration of larger questions throws up other questions and challenges. The implication for documentation is that there is a need for some structure yet a need to appreciate that any structure will not entirely reflect the complexity of practice. It is with these qualifications that the cycle of PAR has utility as an organising concept.

The figure below is from Crane and O'Regan 2010, p.11):

In addition to having this cyclical character PAR is:

- Participatory
- Systematic
- Dynamic
- Developmental, and
- Critical

You are encouraged to use this workbook as a tool for achieving this character in the action research you undertake.

For an in-depth outline of this character of PAR see Crane and O'Regan 2010 Section 1.
Documenting PAR

Those beginning in their use of PAR are often concerned, even daunted by the requirement to systematically document the process that is used. In some ways this passes as a degree of comfort develops that the form of PAR promoted here fits well with being woven into good quality everyday human service practice, which should be client centered, consultative, empowering and improvement oriented.

This said PAR can seem to bring with it a requirement to document individually and collectively that goes well beyond what we might otherwise do.

Documentation in PAR is important for a number of reasons. First it means we have a record of what we are doing and what we are finding. Good documentation is part of the research side of the process and means we can collect our observations and reflections in a more systematic way than we could otherwise. This workbook is designed to assist collect and preserve information and insights along the way, with the goal of being able to use this record to produce a narrative that can be shared. Whist the format of the narrative may often be a written report, it may also use other communication mediums such as an audio-visual product or a performance.

This workbook is also designed to be something that can be a log of where key information is located. It can be used as a collaborative tool which is contributed to by various participants.

Feel free to use as a hard copy to write on or as an electronic file to write into and adapt to your needs. You could give each person who is a co-researcher on a particular inquiry a copy and then periodically combine/collate and negotiate what each person has recorded.

The following pages contain prompts and suggestions. Add your own as you use this resource - it is meant to be built on and owned by you and your co-researchers.

Documentation is about preserving information and insights, and building an evidence base. The complexity of human service practice and systems and the significant demands on workers and organisations, makes the ability to document PAR ‘on the run’ a key part of producing well founded change.

There are many examples of types of documentation, such as:

- Notes and relevant materials put in box for later sorting
- PAR project folders

What types and sources of documentation are you using in this PAR inquiry?
- Journaling in this workbook
- Minutes from meetings
- A large board in the office that records what different people say about a key question. If in a suitable area it can invite comment from the public or clients
- Case notes or other running notes from discussions with clients
- Drawings, photos, ‘graffiti’ boards, and other visual/ non-verbal sources
- Statistics, surveys, questionnaires (formal or informal)
- Notes, butchers paper sheets with brainstorming
- Various documents, including brochures, policies, information from other services, newspaper clippings.

You can use this workbook as a central point to record what you have and what significance it has for your inquiry. To keep track of what documents you have there is a section later in this workbook where you can record what documents and evidence you have collected.
Starting the PAR process

Key aspects of our context are:

Broad economic, social, cultural and policy contexts

Funding context

Local context

Organisational context

Who should or is involved, and what are their work/community roles?

Being clear about the central purpose of the inquiry - What aspects of people’s lives are we trying to improve?

Start with ‘Observation’: Stop and consider, in dialogue with others, the character and strengths of the context you are located in. How would we describe our agency/community context (strengths/resources, gaps, opportunities etc)? See the PAR Strengths and resources scanning tool (Crane and O’Regan 2010, p.51-53).

What skills for doing PAR already exist in your context? See PAR skills audit in Crane and O’Regan (2010, p.55-61)

Then Reflect: Given our context are there any really critical things we need to keep in mind in undertaking our PAR? What are these?

Who should we try to involve in this inquiry process?

What questions should we ask to appreciate our context?
In CPLAN there are 4 questions which have been refined through consultation with the Queensland youth sector. These are:

- What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Qld?
- What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?
- What would it take increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?
- What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Qld?

See Crane and O'Regan 2010, pp.27-29 for tips in developing macro and micro action research questions.
Our questions

What is my/ our interest? What do we see as the problem or issue?

The Youth Services Workforce Skilling and Training Project has laid the foundation for the CPLAN project.

In CPLAN regional and state networks of youth workers and services are invited to investigate and share what will develop youth sector capacity. This collaborative inquiry process is focused on a number of key ‘macro’ questions.

The Macro (BIG) question/s?
Regional/local question/s? What are the questions we need to address here in our particular regional context? In other words, how can we try to contribute to answering the broad "macro" questions at least in some small part? ... over the next months and year!

(Brainstorm with your colleagues around what your regional local situation is, what opportunities there are, and what you could have a close look at).

Who do we need to involve in this?

What hunches do we have about what might make a difference if we put some energy and investigation into it?

Now turn these thoughts into a small number of regional/local questions (which you can change and refine over time).

These regional questions may still be quite broad. You may now need to develop a series of more ‘micro’ questions or contributing lines of inquiry for each of these regional/local questions.

Check for how these questions link back to improving the situation of young people. (So you can be sure you are not just trying to reinforce your existing practices or agency perspective)
Regional/local question that links to the state-wide 'macro' question

Micro question 3

Regional/local question that links to the state-wide 'macro' question

Macro state-wide question: the 'trunk'

A question tree

(Developed from Crane and O'Regan 2010, p.28)

You may find it useful to visually map a cluster of related macro and micro questions that you are asking.
Documenting along the way

The following proformas contain questions to help you undertake one particular element in the inquiry process. You will need to move back and forth between different elements as your inquiry develops depth and greater complexity. There are proformas for two questions provided. For second and subsequent cycles use fresh proformas.

### Implementation!!

What did we actually do?
- Who
- What
- When
- How?

How are we recording what happens?

Is it what we planned? If not what differed?

How do we keep, people informed/ share what happens?

Anything else?
Putting the plan into action

Question 1: .................................................................
Observing what happens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1: ........................................................................................................</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not our interpretations!</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What descriptions/ data/ feedback do we have of what actually happened?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What did we observe?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What did different stakeholders observe?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What happened when we tried X?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can we describe the outcomes/ effects of the strategy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did anything new or different happen to what we expected?</td>
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</table>
Reflecting on what this meant

Question 1: ...........................................................

How should we analyse the observations we have?

What themes did we notice?

What conclusions are supported by evidence?

What worked?

What didn’t work?

What should we do differently?

What do we think the critical factors/relationships are?

What insights and answers do we have about our question?

Are our interpretations well founded?

What model of practice or ‘theory’ does our experience and evidence lend itself to?

Have we checked our interpretations out with others?
Sharing the story

Question 1: ........................................................................................

How can we keep people informed about our inquiry along the way?

Date: ..............................................

What happened:

My reflections:

Refer to for more info:

Date: ..............................................

What happened:

Reflections:

Refer to for more info:
For those thoughts you don’t want to lose.
This a place to draw or indicate the key relationships or factors in something. Modelling can help us make complexity discussable. An important part of the PAR process is building a ‘theory’ or model of what you think the critical considerations are in answering your question. Have a go! Models and visuals have an important place in analysing and communicating.
Model building
## Record of key documents and evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of document/ evidence eg</th>
<th>Contribution to the inquiry eg client input to plan for Q1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus group notes, video of event</td>
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Case study proforma

The following headings and questions have been developed to assist in the writing up of PA case studies. These are meant as a guide only. You can use these topics and questions to progressively write up your PAR narrative.

The Context

What is our practice context?

What is my role? And that of others involved/affected?

What aspects of people’s lives are we trying to improve?

What are our interests/opportunities/needs?

Our Questions- and why they are important

What is our broad (macro) question? What would it take to ...?

What smaller (micro) questions need to be answered as part of answering this bigger question?

What are our hunches? How could we express these as questions? (our hunches become part of the plan we will try).

How do these questions link to the improved situations we are (funded to) work towards? Eg reduce homelessness

The PAR journey- how did we do our inquiry?

This section describes the PAR journey. Elements of the PAR cycle can be used to structure this though these should not constrain or confine the telling of a ‘thick’ and meaningful story.

What strategies did we use to explore the question?

How did we undertake each element of the PAR cycle?

   Observations of context

   Reflections on context
Plan 1

Actions 1

Observations on actions 1

Reflection on actions 1

Sharing the story and insights 1

Repeat for each cycle undertaken or question explored (Plan 2, Action 2 etc)

How many cycles did we undertake and why?

What did we need to do/ keep in mind to do our PAR ethically?

What did we find out?- key insights/ themes for practice

How do we now answer your questions?
List and explain the themes and insights for each

What is our evidence to support your insights and/or improved practice?

Is there a model or ‘theory’ or addition to your original understanding you can now specify or suggest?

How can we display our understanding so that it can be clearly shared with others?

Where to from here?


Sharing at a broader level?

What have we learnt about doing PAR?

What worked? What didn’t work? What should we do differently to improve our approach?

How can this inform how you do things next cycle or next time?
References and resources


Crane, P. and Richardson, L. (2000) Reconnect Action Research Kit, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

These and some other relevant resources (such as the Action Research Card Set which the section on questions for each part of the cycle has drawn on) can be found at http://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Crane_Philip.html


Crane and O'Regan (2010) contains a long list of other relevant references, some annotated.

The Action Research and Action Learning Association (ALARA) provides access to a network of people interested in action research and to a large range of resources including the ALAR Journal. The web site for ALARA is http://www.alara.net.au/public/home
Appendix 2

CPLAN Case Study Reflection Proforma

CPLAN Case Study Reflections  Name/ Region:

Reflecting on your own region: Indicate your insights (regardless of how small) to these questions.

☐ What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in Qld?

☐ What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?

☐ What would it take increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?

☐ What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in Qld?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the case gives insight tick and comment</th>
<th>Develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce</th>
<th>Improved access and opportunities for young people</th>
<th>Increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector</th>
<th>Create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform</th>
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<td>State wide</td>
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<td>Metro</td>
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<td>SEQld (GC)</td>
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<td>SWQld</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td>CenQld</td>
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<td>CenWestQld</td>
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<td>Mackay</td>
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Which other cases experience adds something to your insights? What is the overall conclusion that can be drawn?

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<tr>
<th>If the case gives insight tick and comment</th>
<th>Develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce</th>
<th>Improved access and opportunities for young people</th>
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<td>NWQld</td>
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**Broad analysis:** What deeper analysis and concepts do you think are relevant to the CPLAN inquiry?
Is there a model/framework or ‘theory’ that you think is supported by the CPLAN experience so far? Can you draw this?
Appendix 3

Integrity in our practice: Youth work in our region
INTEGRITY IN OUR PRACTICE
YOUTH WORK IN OUR REGION

[The Sunshine CPLAN is part of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland’s commitment to developing a strong youth sector across the state that will lead to better collaboration and coordination of services, improved policy development and enhancing advocacy on youth issues. The Sunshine CPLAN covers the Department of Education and Training’s “North Coast” region which takes in the local government areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, and the regions of North and South Burnett.]
The following organisations support the development and promotion of this document as a way to enhance youth service collaboration and leadership in the Sunshine region:

Deception Bay Community Youth Programs

Integrated Family & Youth Services
The Sunshine Communities of Practice Leaders Action Network (CPLAN)

The Sunshine CPLAN is part of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland’s (YANQ) commitment to developing a strong youth sector across the state that will lead to better collaboration and coordination of services, improved policy development and enhancing advocacy on youth issues. There are ten CPLANs across Queensland. As Queensland is such a diverse and large state each CPLAN will develop a unique structure, plan and strategies that are responsive to their local needs and that work towards the broader CPLAN objectives. Each CPLAN region will be supported by YANQ to document the strategies and actions that unfold, and to feed into YANQ so that YANQ (in its role as the state peak body for youth services) can represent the sector more effectively.

The Sunshine CPLAN covers the Department of Education and Training’s “North Coast” region (see map) which takes in the local government areas of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, and the regions of North and South Burnett. This region is very diverse, covering large portions of built-up urban areas in the south, through to coastal communities, regional towns and rural communities.
Membership in the Sunshine CPLAN is voluntary and is determined by those who choose to participate in meetings, workshops, forums and email dialogue. Obviously, the youth organisations in the region were invited to participate as well as Local Government, educational institutions that provide youth work training and other agencies that provide services to young people.

Table 1: CPLAN participants at meetings since it began in May 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristina Farrell, Chris Bell</td>
<td>United Synergies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarryd Williams</td>
<td>Redcliffe Youth Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel Riethmuller</td>
<td>Chameleon House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie Alwell; Paul Morton</td>
<td>Integrated Families &amp; Youth Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Barton</td>
<td>Intercept Youth &amp; Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Reid</td>
<td>Kids Youth Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lydia Najlepszy</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast Youth Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Blunt</td>
<td>Worklinks Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart Hartley</td>
<td>Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi Rayward</td>
<td>Moreton Bay Regional Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindi Coinix</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Allard; Michelle Rowe</td>
<td>Gympie Regional Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette Homann; Geoff Tim</td>
<td>Queensland Youth Industry Links Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Valentine</td>
<td>Link-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik Dodwell</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast TAFE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda Allport</td>
<td>Mercy Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Johnstone; Lisa Wan</td>
<td>Community Solutions – Sunshine Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Ives; Sharon Kellett</td>
<td>Brisbane North Institute of TAFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Buckley</td>
<td>Deception Bay Community Youth Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Brauer</td>
<td>Community Gympie Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Neil</td>
<td>QUT Caboolture Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett Johnson</td>
<td>Local Government Association of QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Cummings</td>
<td>Uniting Care Community - Gympie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Sunshine CPLAN began with a focus on the youth organisations in the three regional councils in the south of the region: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast and Gympie. In May 2011 about twenty youth organisations from across this area began meeting to develop their CPLAN. One of the key focus areas was ‘What would it take to create a vibrant youth sector in this region?’ To respond to this question, the Sunshine CPLAN members felt that it would first be valuable to create a foundational document that would provide all youth organisations across the region with an articulation of their shared values and common practice, and provide a clear expectation for youth work practice and service delivery in the 
Sunshine region.

The starting point for this exercise was to survey participating organisations to identify their core organisational principles and practice approaches. Individual responses were collated and workshopped with a CPLAN working group to identify commonalities. These commonalities were further explored which became the basis for the development of this document.

It is anticipated that this document will be used as a tool to strengthen working relationships between organisations; as a training and induction tool for youth workers; and as a tool for discussion with tertiary training organisations to better prepare students for youth work in the Sunshine region.

The agencies who have participated in the development of this document appreciate and understand that a cursory glance at the history of youth work reveals that it is quite different to many other professions as it has drawn youth workers from a variety of fields - i.e. from untrained voluntary community members to fully trained social workers, psychologists and community development workers. It is therefore difficult to unequivocally state exactly what youth work is and what youth work is not, and even more difficult to locate youth work within one articulated specific body of knowledge and practice. YANQ has developed a discussion paper in which these matters are explored called What is Youth Work? A Discussion Paper (October 2010). We encourage anyone with an interest in youth work to join this discussion.

The Sunshine CPLAN members have not developed this document to define or prescribe youth work practice in our region but to create the parameters for an on-going dialogue within our sector and with those connected with our sector to enhance the work we do with young people.
The Unique Qualities of Our Organisations

We, the youth organisations in the *Sunshine* region:

- are passionate about improving and creating positive outcomes for young people;
- endeavour to be creative and innovative in our responses to the needs and aspirations of young people;
- work from a core belief of unconditional positive regard;
- have a connectedness to our communities which is empowering and quality service focused;
- work within local geographic areas and value the communities in which we work;
- recognise that each community is unique and we celebrate, support and enhance those communities;
- operate in a somewhat chaotic atmosphere, which is inherent in youth work, but in this environment we create positive and strong outcomes for young people;
- share a common purpose to improve the outcomes for young people and we respect our differences (our traditions, our beliefs, the size and structure of our agencies, etc.);
- recognise that our roles are diverse. Some of us deliver services and programs specifically targeting marginalised and disadvantaged young people, some offer mainstream services and programs for all young people;
- offer reliable and consistent services;
- recognise that governments and their agencies frequently change and so do their policies and programs. We have our own goals and objectives that may differ from prevailing government agendas. However, we always attempt to build good relationships with government bodies and seek to ensure that funding is directed to achieve the best outcomes for our clients and their communities;
- seek to build healthy relationships with elected representatives, but will never be vehicles for political purposes.
What We Do

We, the youth organisations in the Sunshine region:

- **Support young people** to participate in their communities by:
  - addressing barriers to their engagement, both at an individual level and at a systems level;
  - ensuring young people are provided with opportunities to provide input into planning and development.

- **Provide services** that:
  - empower and strengthen disadvantaged and vulnerable children, young people and families through quality, innovative services;
  - span the spectrum of intervention:
    - Primary Intervention – this includes prevention and education;
    - Secondary Intervention – this may also be referred to as early intervention;
    - Tertiary Intervention – this may include responses to individuals, crisis intervention and long-term support.

- **Work developmentally** by:
  - being proactive, not just reactive, to create sustainability and community resilience (to prevent issues from emerging);
  - taking an active role in educating the wider community (e.g. community members, business and government) regarding the issues experienced by young people and create opportunities for the wider community to connect with and support young people;
  - promoting and valuing young people as positive and contributing citizens.

- **Advocate** for young people at both an individual and systems level.

- **Work to sustain our organisational structures** to enable daily work, including:
  - Governance;
  - Administration;
  - resource management;
  - human resource management and workforce development & training.

- **Collaborate** by:
  - forming partnerships to address the needs of young people;
  - developing regional communities through the initiation of sustainable and innovative community projects and services.
Our Values

We, the youth organisations in the Sunshine region share the following values:

- **Respect**
  - Dignity
  - Privacy and confidentiality
  - Commitment to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and culture
  - Acceptance and understanding of diverse cultures
  - Honesty and trust

- **Social inclusion**
  - Valuing diversity
  - Valuing identity
  - Sense of belonging
  - Connected to place

- **Human rights**
  - Emotional and physical safety
  - Youth voice
  - Active citizenship
  - Non-discrimination

- **Social Justice**
  - Equality
  - Equity – fairness in the distribution of resources to level the playing field for disadvantaged people which includes a commitment to affirmative action
  - Access
  - Participation
  - Self determination

- **Cooperation**
  - Active collaboration
  - Mutual partnerships

- **Quality**
  - Accountability
  - Responsiveness
  - Continuous improvement
  - Innovation

- **Sustainability**
  - Capacity-building
Ethics / Code of Practice

We, the youth organisations and youth workers in the *Sunshine* region, share a commitment to demonstrating the following ethical principles and practice approaches in our youth work:

- Providing culturally competent work practices that ensure young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and young people from other cultures have opportunities and access to our agencies and services;
- Upholding standards of professional behaviour and fiduciary duties (both organisationally and personally) that not only comply with all relevant legal expectations but are exemplary in demonstrating effective boundaries, accountability, transparency and due diligence;
- Ensuring that each organisation has clearly articulated policies, and associated staff training plan, on the following matters:
  - Confidentiality & Privacy
  - Conflicts of interest
  - Child protection and safety
  - Equal opportunity
  - Access and Equity
- Being responsive to the needs of young people and flexible in our delivery of high quality services and programs;
- Using reflective practice and evaluation as a mechanism of continuous improvement to ensure staff are equipped to undertake the work required.
Qualities of Potential Employees

There is a diversity of youth work roles within the *Sunshine* region. However, despite their diversity the *Sunshine* CPLAN identified generic qualities that are desired by youth workers in the region. These include:

**Commitment to better outcomes for young people**
Youth work employees in the *Sunshine* region need to have a particular leaning in their values, beliefs and attitudes that is committed to seeking better outcomes for young people.

**Relevant experience and skills**
Individuals employed as youth workers in the *Sunshine* region are expected to have experience working with young people within community settings and to have developed specific human services skills, particularly in communicating with young people. *Sunshine* CPLAN agencies are committed to providing opportunities for new and fledgling youth workers through student placements and voluntary work.

**Relevant qualifications**
There are many tertiary and VET qualifications that provide a foundational ‘body of learning’ that can prepare a person for working with young people. *Sunshine* CPLAN agencies have identified that 1.5 years study in one of these areas is a minimum requirement to have the necessary foundation for working in the youth sector in the *Sunshine* region.

Whilst this requirement effectively sets the minimum requirement as a Diploma in Youth Work, the youth agencies in *Sunshine* CPLAN have a commitment to working with each prospective employee (or existing employee if upgrading of qualifications is required) on a case-by-case basis to work towards this minimum requirement. It will also depend on the amount of autonomy and complexity that the particular position requires (and therefore on occasions a Certificate IV in Youth Work may suffice). As each position’s requirements and each potential youth worker’s experience and skills will vary from job to job and person to person these variances will need to be considered by each employing agency in the selection process.

Therefore, the matter of minimum qualifications is not ‘set in concrete’ but rather is an aspirational guide for agencies to work towards a common standard in the region.

**Commitment to learning**
Youth Workers in the *Sunshine* region are expected to commit to a process of professional development that begins with a ‘life-long-learning perspective’, to build professionalism in their practice, and a commitment to continuous improvement through reflective practice.

**Knowledge of the context in which youth work takes place**
This includes knowledge of:

1. The history of youth work and the development of the Welfare State in Australia;
2. The history of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders and colonisation in Australia;
3. A current understanding of young people and society;
4. An understanding of how Australian multiculturalism has evolved to the present day.

**A Commitment to Developmental Practice**
The *Sunshine* CPLAN defines Developmental Practice as “building relationships with young people that lead to developing connection that leads to empowerment.”

**Ability to support others in crisis**
Understanding the processes and skills required to respond to young people in crisis. These include as a minimum:

- Effective interpersonal communication that includes active listening, empathic listening and strategic questioning;
- Demonstrated understanding of clearly articulated agency policies and procedures for duty of care and client rights;
- Knowledge of internal and external referral processes that can assist; and
- Debriefing processes.

A high level of self awareness around the purpose and responsibilities of the role of a Youth Worker
Youth Workers in the Sunshine region are expected to have the self-awareness of what are their own personal issues and to be able to separate them from work situations that involve the disclosure of personal information from young people. Youth Work is personal work and therefore impacts on workers emotionally, so this requirement is not just a matter of professional boundaries but one where clear discernment and judgement is required.

A commitment to a young person’s right to self determination
Youth Workers in the Sunshine region are expected to provide guidance and assistance to young people to seek out their own chosen opportunities and pathways. Youth work is not an opportunity for agencies or staff to engage with vulnerable young people in order to promote their own beliefs or ideals. Proselytising, advising and the projection of a worker’s own values and beliefs that intentionally seek to persuade or influence a young person towards these values or beliefs is a form of colonisation and is not acceptable practice in the Sunshine youth sector.

Personal attributes including reliability, integrity, passion and the ability to be a team player.
Each Client Has a Right To...

Each organisation within the Sunshine region has a commitment to the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child. To complement these rights, children and young people can expect these additional levels of service and support from our organisations:

• Unbiased, non-judgmental support;
• Involvement in decisions that affect them;
• Appropriate levels of community and political advocacy;
• Adherence to confidentiality and privacy laws and principles;
• Courteous, respectful, considerate, open, approachable and friendly support (note: being “friendly” doesn’t mean “become friends with”);
• Use of appropriate language (for example: language that is understandable to young people and culturally and contextually relevant. This does NOT mean “trying to be hip and young”);
• Accountability (To be accountable to young people, stated services need to be actually delivered. For example: we’re not accountable for meeting every need that a young person has, because we can’t. We need to be clear and transparent with young people about what we can and cannot do, and legally, what we need to report);
• To be informed of all options available; and
• The ability to express grievances and seek redress without fear.
Collaboration, Cooperation & Coordination

The Sunshine CPLAN Region is committed to working within a framework of collaboration, cooperation and coordination. This framework encompasses all “types” of partnerships that bring people and organisations together to improve the lives of young people living across the Sunshine CPLAN region. While our partnerships have unique qualities, all are based on the notion that most service objectives cannot be achieved by any single person, organisation or sector working alone.

It is recognised that this framework can also achieve economies of scale by pooling resources that can bring new insights and experiences as well as create new pathways to reach out to young people in the region. Such partnerships can take many forms and vary in their intensity from individuals coming together to share information, through to agencies working to form coalitions to address specific issues. It is possible that this form of coordination and collaboration can address short or long term goals and vary in their mission.

Each participating organisation in the Sunshine region has its own mission that it seeks to advance. However, it is our intention to build trust and credibility across agencies through working in partnerships that emphasise coordination, cooperation and collaboration. The region is made up of various types and sizes of organisations – i.e. some are community based organisations that have community boards and the focus of their work is primarily to their locality; while others are large national organisations that are managed by national and state based boards. This variation in management structure and decision making processes will impact on the level and way we achieve collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

We recognise that each organisation has specific foci that include locality specific work, target group specific work, and/or regional level work. Some are youth specific organisations and some are generic organisations. We also recognise that many organisations are contracted to undertake services on behalf of government agendas. Within this complex realm of arrangements it is often suggested that collaboration is too time consuming and/or distracts organisations from their core business. We are committed to demonstrating that through our diversity we can create harmonious approaches that build innovation and creativity as well as efficiency and effectiveness.

The Sunshine CPLAN encourages all organisations to demonstrate a consistent willingness to collaborate, cooperate and communicate within local, regional and sector contexts. The youth organisations in this region make a commitment to the following principles:
1. To always maintain strong and open communication between organisations, even when differences emerge, and to be committed to working through issues in a cooperative manner;
2. To explore, seek and create opportunities that will bring organisations in the sector together, particularly in key areas of service provision;
3. To be willing to contribute resources towards to sector and workforce development.

The Sunshine CPLAN also encourages organisations to have a strategic commitment to working together. This should be demonstrated in each organisation’s strategic plan and in the position descriptions of the CEOs/Managers/Directors and Coordinators. This commitment can also be demonstrated through a minimal obligation to participate in:

- Sharing information;
- Joint submissions;
- Ensuring clear and useful referral processes;
• Pooling of resources;
• Cooperating with other services on client case management plans;
• Collaborative decision-making and choice;
• Combined training and professional development opportunities;
• Joint advocacy;
• Research projects;
• Working with government agencies to enhance the distribution of resources to meet identified community need.
Workforce Development

We, the youth organisations within the Sunshine Region, are committed to:

1. The development of our organisations to be values driven, integrity centered and client focused teams. We achieve this by:
   • Maximising participation in visioning and strategic planning processes
   • Regular team building
   • Clear induction, orientation and probation processes
   • Succession planning
   • Transparent accountability and reporting processes
   • Well-articulated policies and procedures

2. The professional development of staff. We achieve this through offering staff:
   • Accredited and non-accredited training / learning opportunities to enhance their practice
   • Internal line supervision
   • External supervision
   • Mentoring by qualified senior staff
   • Practice reflection opportunities
   • Encouragement of staff to develop professional association
   • Encouragement of staff to participate in peer support networks

3. More specifically, our youth workers will be given every opportunity to enhance their skillsets to deliver high quality outcomes for young people. For example ongoing skills development may occur in (but not be limited to) the following areas:
   • Community Development
   • Mental Health
   • Senior First Aid
   • Drug & Alcohol
   • Counselling / Communication skills
   • Family Work
   • Cultural Training
   • Disability
   • Child Protection

The National Training Package developed by the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council provides an on-going benchmark for the types of skills that youth workers in the sector will seek to acquire. Additionally, we have a commitment to utilising the skills and expertise of other organisations in our sector. This includes exploring possibilities for staff-sharing and cross-pollination in project work. We encourage the development of peer support across our regions. We define peer support as “the capacity for workers to get together, share experiences, reflect, support each other and share through difficult times”.

The Sunshine CPLAN is committed to the development of the sector by partnering with registered training organisations to enhance workforce development in the region by:
   • Offering student placements;
   • Providing opportunities for guest speakers on relevant topics;
   • collaborative project work;
   • informing and validating teaching and assessment tools to improve course curriculum and student learning outcomes.
Conclusion

The Sunshine CPLAN is part of YANQ’s long-term commitment to developing a strong youth sector across the state that will lead to better collaboration and coordination of services, improved policy development and enhancing advocacy on youth issues. As part of this movement the Sunshine CPLAN is still in its infancy stage with much work to do to engage with key stakeholders across this region. The “Integrity In Our Practice” document will assist this process and be a lever for opening up dialogue within the sector in this region about these crucial issues, but also as a model for other regions.

This document is a work-in-progress and does not claim any notion of being “right” or “finished” and will probably never be complete as our sector is constantly evolving in this ever-changing environment. If the document is useful for you to lever opportunities to have dialogue with others about how we can improve youth work in this region then it is achieving its desired outcome.
The following Sunshine CPLAN organisations have contributed to the development of this document:

Non-government Organisations

Chameleon House
Deception Bay Community Youth Programs (DBCYP)
Gympie Community Action
Integrated Family and Youth Service (IFYS)
Intercept Youth & Family Services
Mercy Family Services
Redcliffe Youth Space
Sunshine Coast Youth Partnership (SCYP)
Worklinks Inc
United Synergies
Uniting Care Community Care Gympie

Educational Institutions

Brisbane North Institute of TAFE
Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Caboolture Campus
Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE – Community Work Team

Local Government

Gympie Regional Council
Moreton Bay Regional Council
Sunshine Coast Regional Council

For further information about Sunshine CPLAN and this document please contact: sunshine@yanq.org.au
### Appendix 4: Central CPLAN Identified Issues

**TABLE OF IDENTIFIED ISSUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Question 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would it take to develop a strong and vibrant youth sector workforce in QLD?</td>
<td>What would it take for this sector to contribute to improved access and opportunities for young people to enhance their inclusion and equity in society?</td>
<td>What would it take to increase the level of connection and collaboration across the youth sector?</td>
<td>What would it take to create a coherent and collaborative youth policy platform in QLD?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Development Training/recruitment</td>
<td>Parents and Families</td>
<td>Workforce</td>
<td>Teen pregnancy – sex Ed going down in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff- need more males</td>
<td>Poor parenting skills resulting in poor behaviour of young people</td>
<td>Evidence –Based research/ service delivery and Evidence Based Practice bench mark for service coordination</td>
<td>Lack of sexual health information being accessed by youth (there but they’re not accessing it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth workers moving through ranks to take better paying positions</td>
<td>Broken Homes</td>
<td>Siloing of Govt. Dept’s not allowing holistic responses</td>
<td>Input from many organisations/areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No middle ground between on the ground youth workers and management, so limited career development opportunities</td>
<td>Lack of parental guidance</td>
<td>Sharing learning base and training levels - increasing shared language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate professional supervision</td>
<td>Lack of basic life skills</td>
<td>Information sharing (protocols and systems)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too many staff that want to save everyone last the least</td>
<td>Cycle of disadvantage being continued</td>
<td>Too much segregation between different areas of the sector not allowing holistic responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>Providing appropriate and innovative parenting/mentor training and inclusion of appropriate extended family members.</td>
<td>Lack of Shared Frameworks, tools and reporting across the sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not a promoted pathway from school</td>
<td>Educate parents</td>
<td>Competitive tender process not supporting collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employing wrong people to make numbers</td>
<td>Supply parenting information that is easily accessible</td>
<td>Shared tools and holistic assessments and case plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of qualified workers</td>
<td>Build + sustain good rapport with external organisations and society as a whole</td>
<td>Lack of Communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Under qualified, over-worked workers – available training to fit with schedules</td>
<td>Teach YP the importance of volunteer work (aged care/charitable organisations) within the community??</td>
<td>Ownership issues by govt departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low pay does not compare to minig wages</td>
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<td>Federal Vs State agendas not aligning or resulting in duplication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mines offering more money for less and less stressful work</td>
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<td>Improving the rate of external referrals from high schools/education dept.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transient employment pool due to resources boom</td>
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<td>Rewards for referrals?</td>
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<tr>
<td>People working for money rather young people</td>
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<td>Improved knowledge of organisations and what they can provide (ie: community organisation handbooks etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of volunteers</td>
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<td>Lack of community support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate (cheap/ free) training programs for YW’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate training and skill development opportunities that are reflective and build on skills. Ability to attend training and then meet again to discuss implementation of new skills - supervision and support is missing for current opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well thought out training and development calendar - what is best practice, what are ‘mandatory’ training requirements?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Mental Health and Well-being</td>
<td>Lack of Youth Space</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| • Lack of funding  
• Lack of resources to meet the need and too great an expectation on the sector to ‘fix’ community issues  
• Pay  
• Funding/ wages hours of work  
• Child care costings  
• Lots of funding, not well dispersed and not getting ‘bang for buck’. Allowing services limited ability to develop. Better planned funding proposals and allocations. | • Alcohol issues (it’s ok to supply minors)  
• Dependence on substances as a coping strategy  
• Mental Health issues including suicide  
• Low self-esteem = acceptance of situation and lack of motivation to change  
• Bullying (cyber and physical)  
• Lack of verbal skills to express emotion  
• Violence and fear – anger management  
• Need more accessible – soft entry points for young people’s mental health services (head space) | • Links with many areas across this space – mental health and wellbeing, employment, access to services etc. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy and Procedure restrictions</th>
<th>Improved Collaboration with NGOs and Gov. Services</th>
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</table>
| • Legislation prohibiting young people from accessing volunteer and trainee placements if they are not engaged in schools.  
• Information sharing restrictions | • Improved collaboration is also required in the sector...... |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Education</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support at school early for disengaged young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth not engaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>The need for alternative Ed for 10 – 16 yr olds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition to high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>National partnership YAT resulting in rise disengaging from Ed prior to senior phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young people slipping through NET, leaving school and low numeracy and literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced health and well-being content in school curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over representation of aboriginal and TSI young people in Youth Justice System and disengaging from Ed. QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of employability skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALD young people not being appropriately supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better access to education, training and employment- sustainable supports.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Lack of Communication between services</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Links with information sharing issues and possible co-location of services (youth space)</td>
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<th><strong>Community Issues</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal employment options</td>
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<td>Limited links with local and small businesses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No activities for young people to do on weekend - sport too expensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community involvement: accepting young people in community</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Housing</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Homelessness and emergency accommodation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gap between emergency accommodation and medium term</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of affordable housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Under 16 no accommodation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of appropriate accommodation transition models – supported or cluster accommodation leading to independent living.</td>
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