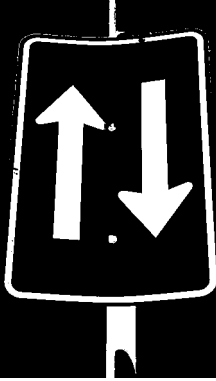


TWO-WAY STREET

How government departments can engage with young people through consultation



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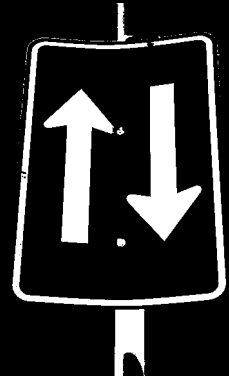
FOREWORD

Young people are key stakeholders in our State. We value young people as important community members and welcome their participation in, and contribution to, community life and government decision-making processes.

The Queensland Government firmly believes in the ability of young people to contribute to and enhance public policy. The Department of Employment and Training has a strong commitment to engaging with young people. This commitment is embodied in the Youth Participation Strategy, approved by the government in March 2000. Ensuring that young people are engaged through government consultation processes will assist in achieving the goals of the Youth Participation Strategy to engage young people, government and the broader community in decision-making processes.

I encourage other departments to consider the advantages and benefits of continuing the development of processes to effectively engage with young people through consultation. To work towards achieving this, the Office of Youth Affairs in the Department of Employment and Training has developed *Two-way Street: how government departments can engage with young people through consultation*. This handbook is a resource for government representatives seeking to effectively involve young people in consultation processes.

Ken Smith
Director-General
Department of Employment and Training



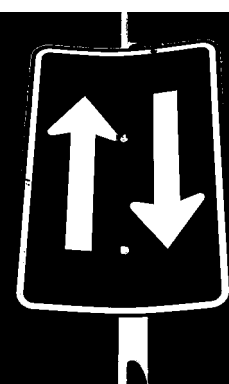
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In developing *Two-way Street* we acknowledge the existing depth of skill and commitment demonstrated by government representatives in the daily business of community consultation. The intent of *Two-way Street* is to build on this skill base by providing access to practical skills and advice on engaging young people in community consultation processes.

Sincere thanks to the young people who participated in the Six-Ways project for their honesty and invaluable input.

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design and photography by cuts creative 0412 611 745



PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to resource government representatives to effectively involve young people in community consultation processes. The handbook is divided into two main sections. The first section outlines why young people should be engaged in consultations, and the second section provides suggestions for how this can occur.

What sets *Two-way Street* apart from the myriad of other 'how to consult' manuals is its' focus on the Queensland Government context. A checklist for developing a well-designed consultation is backed up with information, resources and examples relevant to the needs of Queensland Government representatives.

Two-way Street is designed to be utilised in conjunction with the other resources in the *Youth Participation Action Kit for Queensland Government Departments*. Other resources include *Queensland Youth Charter: Queensland Government's Commitment to Engaging with Young People*, *Getting Young People on Board: how government can engage with young people on boards and committees*, and information on how to engage with young people through a number of existing mechanisms. Referring to these resources will assist government representatives in harnessing the contribution of a diverse range of young people and ensure that the issues and interests of this large demographic group are represented across government.

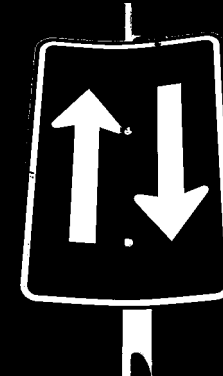


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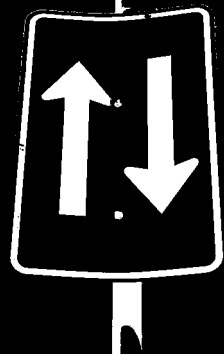
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WHY INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PROCESSES

1. WHY INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PROCESSES

1.1 Within the context of the Queensland Government

Involving young people in government consultation processes meets the following government priorities:

- It contributes to realising Queensland as the *Smart State* and securing Queensland's future prosperity, by providing young people with support, pathways and encouragement to reach their potential.
- It is a practical means of implementing the commitment to include young people in the development of programs, policy and services as stated in the *Queensland Youth Charter*.
- It supports the Queensland State Government *Community Engagement Direction Statement*.

1.2 Within the context of the Queensland community

In Queensland young people are:

- a *significant proportion of the community*, with Queenslanders aged 15-24 years making up approximately 15 per cent of the Queensland population¹
- *major consumers* of government goods and services such as public transport, public space, education, vocational training, employment, housing, health, justice, and cultural services
- *present and future community leaders* who demonstrate an active and involved concern for their communities
- *representative of the diversity* of backgrounds, cultures, opinions, interests, abilities, lifestyles and ambitions that make up the Queensland community
- *innovators* who provide solutions and new ways to tackle complex issues
- *skilled and informed* members of the community
- *effective and interested partners* in government decision-making processes.

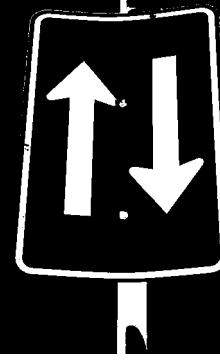
1.3 Benefits of consultation as a means of engagement

Engaging with young people through consultation brings a number of benefits to government, young people and other members of the community. Within the context of the types of strategies government can employ to engage with the community in general, and young people specifically, **consultation** provides government with the opportunity to:

- *demonstrate respect* towards young people through open, transparent, and accountable processes
- *promote goodwill and understanding*, both between young people and government, and between young people and other community members
- *build relationships* with young people
- *become more accessible* to young people
- *become more responsive* to the needs and interests of young people
- *provide opportunities* for young people to develop skills, information and experience in decision-making processes
- *recognise diversity* and that, like all members of the community, young people have preferred ways of working
- *provide ongoing opportunities for involvement* in decision-making processes, and recognise the importance of this involvement
- *build cooperative partnerships* between government, young people and the community
- *build a sense of ownership, pride and involvement* in government decision-making within the community
- *improve government efficiency* by targeting government policy and expenditure to reflect the needs and issues of importance to the community.

As a government representative your role is to acknowledge young people as a community stakeholder and engage appropriate consultation strategies to capture their opinions and involvement in the business of government. You will be tapping into a wealth of energy, insight, critique and support for government initiatives and actions.

1. ABS Catalogue No. 6227.0, 2000c

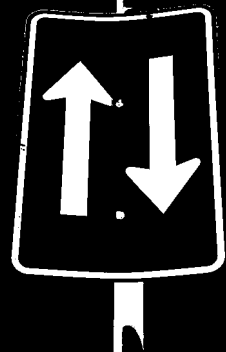


WHY INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PROCESSES

1.4 The "Yes, it's a nice idea but ..." debate

The concept of consulting with young people is accepted and welcomed by government, yet the practical aspects of engaging with young people through consultation processes becomes a barrier in itself. As a result, efforts to engage with young people through consultation could be put into the "too hard" basket or not given thought. This could result in the failure of government to capture young people's valuable contributions and insights. Some of the myths and barriers to consulting with young people are explored below.

| IT WON'T WORK BECAUSE... | BUT HAVE YOU CONSIDERED... |
|--|---|
| Young people are apathetic, indifferent, and too cynical. | Many young people are interested in community issues. Young people are already active in their communities in many different ways. |
| It takes too long / it's too hard / it costs too much. | Consulting with young people does not need to be any more expensive than consulting with other people in the community. Innovative approaches can sometimes be cheaper than traditional consultation methods. |
| Young people are stakeholders in the future, not the present. | Young people have an interest in today, the future, and the past. |
| Young people don't have the skills or knowledge to meaningfully contribute. | Young people already know how to communicate with others, and how to develop and present their ideas. Young people are fast learners and innovative thinkers. A fresh perspective is frequently invaluable. |
| I don't know how to consult with young people / I don't know where to find young people. | You can recruit consultation partners who can assist you to access young people and communicate with them appropriately. Much information already exists within government that can help you access young people and design effective consultation processes. |
| Young people wouldn't be interested in my issues. | Young people are members of a wide range of groups and are interested in a range of issues. |
| Young people want everything their own way. | Young people are able to negotiate about issues. If you give reasons for your ideas and information about constraints, this shows that you respect young people. If they are respected, young people are more likely to participate. |



HOW TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PROCESSES

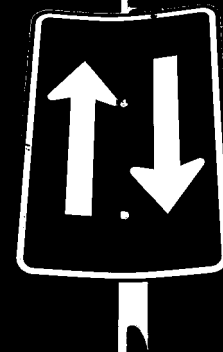
2. HOW TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PROCESSES

To engage with young people effectively through consultation, you will need a well-designed consultation process. Consider the following points to ensure your consultation with young people is a success. Information, examples and resources to assist you to meet these goals are outlined in following sections.

2.1 Considerations for a well-designed youth consultation

A well-designed consultation:

- provides benefits to government, community and young people that out-weigh the costs
- builds on existing knowledge, rather than re-discovers it
- has a clear purpose, and makes that purpose clear to those involved
- is appropriately targeted at young people who may be interested in, or directly affected by the outcome
- engages relevant consultation partners to assist in the process
- is mindful and inclusive of the diverse range of young people
- uses a method or methods of engagement that suit a diversity of young people
- takes a respectful and positive approach to the consultation topic and young people
- includes in-built opportunities to ensure mutual understanding
- utilises appropriate avenues and methods to invite participation
- allows for the provision of appropriate support and information to assist the meaningful participation of young people and consultation partners
- minimises practical barriers to participation
- is mutually beneficial for young people *and* government
- includes a review process that offers young people further opportunity for participation and shares findings with stakeholders.



SCOPING THE CONSULTATION

3. SCOPING THE CONSULTATION

To properly assess the scope of your consultation you will need to identify available resources and identify what consultation has previously been done. You will also need to identify anticipated outcomes, which type/s of young people are appropriate for your consultation topic and assess the need for engaging consultation partners.

3.1 Identifying available resources

- A well-designed consultation provides benefits to government, community and young people that out-weigh the costs.*

To assess the scope of your consultation consider the following factors:

Time

- Do you have to include this consultation with other regular tasks?
- Are there any important community events and holidays that will affect the availability of participants?
- How will department processes affect the time that is available to gather information?

Budget

- How much money has been allocated to the consultation?
- What expenses are you likely to have?

Significance

- How important is the support of young people and the community to the long-term success of the program/policy?
- What impacts will the program/policy have on young people?
- What level of support is likely to be given by your department to engage young people in this particular topic?

Existing resources

- Are there any groups in the community who can help with the consultation?
- Are there people within your department or other departments who can help with the consultation?
- What information is already available about the topic?

3.2 Identifying and building on what has been done before

- A well-designed consultation builds on existing knowledge, rather than re-discovers it.*

When you are planning your consultation consider whether there have been consultations about this topic before. Young people often comment that someone from another department, local government, federal government, or a private consultant has asked them the same questions about the same topic. It does not make much difference to young people, or the community generally, who is asking the questions. They just know they have been asked the same questions time and again without seeing results. This state of affairs is being termed 'consultation overload'.

Check within your department, and with other departments, to see if there are any previous reports or discussion papers that could give you some useful information about the consultation topic.

You may also be able to identify how your consultation will add to work that has already been done, or will contribute to a project that someone else is doing.

3.3 Identifying anticipated outcomes

- A well-designed consultation has a clear purpose, and makes that purpose clear to those involved.*

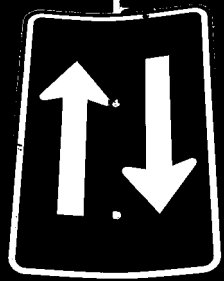
Young people will be interested in the information that is collected and how government will use it. They will want to know what you expect to achieve from the consultation. These outcomes need to be achievable and realistic.

The outcomes that you anticipate will affect which young people you decide to include in your consultation, and the methods you use to involve them in the consultation process.

Expected outcomes will also determine who will be using the information that you have gathered, and how that information will be included in policy and program development.

When planning for your consultation you need to identify:

- the outcomes that your department expects to achieve
- the outcomes that young people might want to achieve
- the expectations of the community.



SCOPING THE CONSULTATION

3.4 Identifying appropriate young people to engage

- *A well-designed consultation is appropriately targeted at young people who may be interested in, or directly affected by the outcome.*

You need to connect with those young people who are most affected by and concerned with the identified issue.

If you wish to consult with 'young people generally' be sure to keep in mind the diverse nature of this age group. Young people are students, workers, farmers, parents, sons and daughters. They are goths, skinheads, ballet dancers, footballers, rock climbers and recreational readers. They live in the city, the suburbs and the bush. They are consumers and entrepreneurs. All have interests and opinions. Be sure to have a clear idea of who you want to consult with before engaging young people in a consultation that may not be relevant or appropriate to them.

3.5 IDENTIFYING CONSULTATION PARTNERS

- *A well-designed consultation engages relevant consultation partners to assist in the process.*

It can be useful to involve other people in developing and conducting your consultation. By identifying appropriate consultation partners you may tap into already established networks of young people. Consultation partners may be able to help you:

- plan the consultation
- identify ways to consult with young people
- identify young people to include
- gain access to groups of young people
- gather the information by facilitating consultation methods
- interpret the information that you collect.

Consultation partners can be:

- young people
- community and young people's organisations
- schools

- other government departments
- other divisions within your department
- individuals or contractors

If you decide to engage consultation partners you will also need to decide what support you are able to provide them and ensure that you allow for this in your planning.

Example of engaging consultation partners:

In 'Six Ways' project - a consultation with young people about the topics of "Wellness" and "Critical Rights" using six different ways of consulting with young people - the Office of Youth Affairs identified the need to involve gay and lesbian young people. By including consultation partners who openly identified as gay or lesbian, appropriate processes for consultation with these young people were developed.

Specific resources were produced during the consultation. As a result, young people were able to participate in an environment that was safe and recognised their unique perspectives.

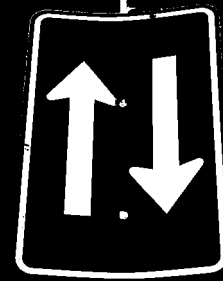
The Office of Youth Affairs also identified the benefits of using an arts-based consultation process as one of the consultation "ways". Organisations with experience in using arts-based approaches with young people were chosen as consultation partners. These groups were able to provide information about resources required as well as facilitating invitations to consult with young people in appropriate venues.

More information on consultation planning:

The *CCATS: Community Consultation Action Tool Set* developed by the Maroochy Shire Council and eKoHost
<http://www.ccats.net>

Bikes, Bands and Strategic Plans and Consultation Guide developed by the Queensland Local Government Association
<http://www.lgaq.asn.au>

Governing Queensland developed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet
<http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/governingqld/policy>
<http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/governingqld/cabinethandbook>



STRUCTURING YOUR CONSULTATION

4. STRUCTURING YOUR CONSULTATION

When planning the structure of your consultation you will need to consider how you will include a diverse range of young people, what consultation methods would be appropriate and how you would glean meaningful information from these methods. You will also need to consider how to structure the consultation so as to take a positive and constructive approach to the topic and to the young people you plan to involve.

4.1 Recognising diversity

- *A well-designed consultation is mindful and inclusive of the diverse range of young people.*

Young people, like the broader community, are not a homogenous group. Involving young people in consultation will help you link into a broad demographic group with various interests, skills, information and abilities.

Structuring your consultation to build in diversity need not make the exercise too large, expensive, or time consuming. If you are clear on what you are consulting about, and the impact the service or policy may have on young people, you will have determined the scope of the consultation, the type of young people you will need to engage with, and consultation partners who can help you do this.

Example of the need to recognise diversity:

A park is being redeveloped and young people from a nearby school have been invited to comment on the concept design via a school-based questionnaire. While this method is suitable for obtaining the views and needs of the young people at the school, this consultation method does not include the opinions of young people who have left school but still live in the area, homeless young people who live in the park, the refugee young people who play touch football in the park every month, or the young man with a disability who lives nearby and cannot currently access the park.

While a school-based questionnaire may seem to be an easy way of gauging the needs of some young people, a letter drop of the surrounding area, coupled with information displays inviting feedback in the park, local shops and cinema, and on-the-spot surveys of young people in the park would be just as cost-effective and more representative of the diverse needs of young people with regards to the park.

More information on diversity and inclusive practices:

A plethora of information exists within the Queensland Government on diversity and inclusive practices. Check with your department to see what has already been developed.

Existing resources include:

Queensland Youth Charter, available from the Office of Youth Affairs, Department of Employment and Training.
<http://www.youth.qld.gov.au/>

Multicultural Queensland Policy, Community Relations Resource Kit, Queensland Government Action Plan: Australian South Sea Islander Community available from Multicultural Affairs Queensland

http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/about/maq/pdfs/assi_action_plan.pdf

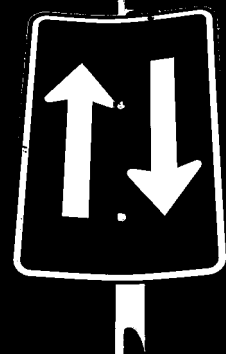
http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/about/maq/html/cr/comm_rel_kit.pdf

Multicultural Protocol for Consultation available from the State Library of Queensland
<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/>

Disability Services Queensland has information available to assist government recognise the needs of people with a disability.
<http://www.disability.qld.gov.au/>

Consultation and Negotiation with Aboriginal People, Mina Mir Lo Ailan Mun: Proper Communication with Torres Strait Islander Peoples available from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development
<http://www.indigenous.qld.gov.au/>

Public consultation policy, standards and guidelines: public consultation, the way to better decisions available from Department of Main Roads and the Department of Transport
<http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/home.nsf>



4.2 TAKING DIVERSE APPROACHES

- A well-designed consultation uses a method or methods of engagement that suit a diversity of young people.

Be aware of the diversity of processes you can use to consult with young people. Young people will respond to a variety of consultation techniques. Different consultation processes will suit different young people and different consultation topics.

Structuring your consultation to use a combination of techniques will allow young people to choose their preferred way to participate. This can help you to build effective working relationships.

When you are choosing ways to consult with young people, where possible choose ways that will provide opportunities for two-way conversations. This will allow government and young people to share information and check that they understand each other.

Using different ways of consulting provides a rich variety of information. This gives you a more complete picture of the different perspectives that young people have about the topic.

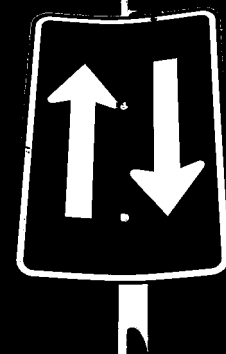
Example of taking diverse approaches:

The Office of Youth Affairs 'Six Ways' project used six different ways of consulting with young people about the topics of 'wellness' and 'critical rights'. These included a visual art project, a series of two-day workshops, meeting-style consultations, activity-based workshops, a week-long camp and an on-line discussion board.

Young people reported that having a choice of ways to participate enabled them to clearly express their opinions because they were comfortable with the 'way' they had chosen.

Traditional ways such as surveys, questionnaires, or discussion papers, can be combined with non-traditional ways such as graffiti walls, youth forums or writing a play. If you decide to use a way that you are not familiar with, engage consultation partners that can assist you.

You will need to select ways that are sustainable. That is, work on the consultation topics will continue after the consultation has finished. Be aware, you might also need to run the consultation more than once to encourage a diversity of information and to ensure you have gathered all relevant information.



4.3 ADOPTING AN 'APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY' APPROACH

- A well-designed consultation takes a respectful and positive approach to young people.

In order to produce a consultation designed with the needs and interests of young people in mind an 'appreciative inquiry' approach is recommended. Appreciative inquiry concentrates on identifying strengths, benefits, and positive experiences. Structuring your consultation to explore issues in affirmative, positive terms fosters a shared spirit of discovery and curiosity about the consultation topic.

Therefore, when taking an appreciative inquiry approach to consulting with young people it is important that the consultation is:

- mutually beneficial to both participants and government
- appreciative of what already works and accommodating of the ways that young people want to engage with government and each other
- applicable and relevant to everyday life
- provocative and encouraging of active participation and change

Example of an 'appreciative inquiry' approach:

When exploring an issue such as youth suicide through consultation, an appreciative inquiry approach would focus on identifying what makes young people well and happy rather than what makes young people suicidal. Once key factors that contribute towards a young person's 'wellness' are identified, government can use this information to develop policies, programs and services that contribute to building these key factors. Young people who participate in the consultation can use this information to develop their own strategies for building these key factors.

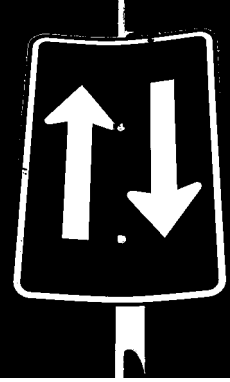
This approach provides a focus on valuing the experience of young people and encourages hopeful approaches to future changes. Affirming their experiences encourages young people to provide more detailed information, producing 'richer' data about the consultation topic.

Appreciative inquiry provides young people and government with the opportunity to identify what is working in their community and explore ways to build on these positives or transfer them to other situations.

Use questions that concentrate on identifying strengths, benefits, and positive experiences. The following table compares questions from a traditional consultation with those used in an appreciative consultation.

| TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS | APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY QUESTIONS |
|--|---|
| What are the problems with...? | What worked about...? |
| What is your worst experience in relation to [consultation topic]? | Tell me about the best experience you have had in relation to [consultation topic]? |
| What don't you like about [consultation topic]? | When was [consultation topic] important to you? What is it about [consultation topic] that makes you feel good? |
| What is wrong with [consultation topic]? | Why have you decided to do it this way? |

More information on the 'appreciative inquiry' approach:
 Appreciative Interviewing
 Appreciative Facilitation
 Appreciative Consultation
 Appreciative Mentoring
 Appreciative Project Management
 Appreciative Team Development
 web: www.mellish.com.au
www.aileadership.com



STRUCTURING YOUR CONSULTATION

4.4 ENSURING MEANINGFUL DATA

- *A well-designed publication includes in-built opportunities to ensure mutual understanding.*

It is important to structure your consultation to include methods for checking that your interpretation of data is an accurate reflection of what participants meant. Consulting with young people through diverse approaches produces information in a range of formats so identify how you will get meaning from the information you collect before settling on a non-traditional consultation method.

There is the possibility that young people may "encode" their information – they may fear being misunderstood, or feel vulnerable or threatened.

Making sense of the information you collect involves active engagement between government and young people. This includes all the steps that take place in the "arrow" between government and young people in the following diagram:

Active engagement = Government \longleftrightarrow Young People

Steps to take towards ensuring meaningful data:

- Build in checkpoints to the consultation process where you can check and clarify meanings between yourself and the young people.
- Consider how information and questions could be interpreted. Use appropriate language and a variety of formats if appropriate.
- Look for themes and patterns within the information that you have collected.
- Check the themes and patterns that you have identified with other people that were involved in the consultation. If you have used a consultation process that you are not familiar with, consultation partners will be able to help you interpret the information.

- Wherever possible, check your interpretations with the young people involved in the consultation.
- A draft copy of the evaluation report and summaries of the data gathered should be checked by participants and consultation partners for accuracy.
- Provide participants with copies of reports that are produced as a result of the consultation, or provide them with information about how reports can be accessed.

Example of the need for checking meaning:

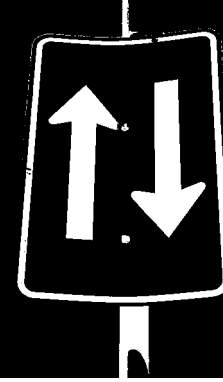
In a consultation about public transport, participants were asked to draw an image that typified their idea of "public transport". One young person drew a picture of a foot. There could be a number of different interpretations of the meaning:

1. There is no public transport so the young person has to walk everywhere.
2. The young person feels safer walking compared with using public transport.
3. The young person is concerned about their health and so walks whenever possible.
4. Public transport is too expensive so the young person walks as much as possible.

To check the real meaning behind the picture, it was important to check the interpretation with the young person.

More information about interpreting collected information:

The Queensland departments of Transport and Main Roads, in the publication Public Consultation Policy, Standards and Guidelines: public consultation the way to better decisions provide guidelines about using information collected from consultations.
<http://www.transport.qld.gov.au>



ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

5. ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people will engage in government consultations if they are invited; if the topic is relevant to them; if in the process they are respected and their opinions valued; and if they can see timely outcomes for their efforts. You will need to identify ways to attract young people to take part in your consultation, as well as gain permission to access young people where appropriate. You may also need to provide ways to overcome any practical barriers to participation, such as child care needs, wheel chair access or transport issues. Finally, when engaging with young people, it is vital that the consultation experience is a positive one with obvious benefits.

5.1 Finding young people and inviting them to participate

- *A well-designed consultation uses appropriate avenues and methods when inviting young people to participate.*

When identifying ways to invite young people to participate in your consultation, it may be useful to consider:

- locations where young people gather
- organisations who provide services for young people
- individuals who may be significant to young people
- meeting places
- events that attract young people.

You will need to use a variety of methods to invite and inform the young people about the consultation. Not all young people have an address or read or communicate electronically or speak English as their first language. You could consider newsletters, word of mouth, letters, email, telephone, and posters.

If the consultation is not taking place for some time, email, post or phone young people with updates and reminders to ensure your consultation date is not forgotten.

You will need to consider whether you need permission to conduct this consultation or undertake the consultation in a culturally appropriate manner. Be sensitive to cultural protocols. Identify the decision-makers amongst the community and seek their guidance in designing and progressing the consultation. Key community members could be family members, a worker, a young person or a religious leader.

Community organisations that support the young people being consulted will help you identify specific protocols or procedures that may need to be observed and entry points to access these young people.

Some pathways to connect with young people are through:

- schools
- community and youth organisations
- informal networks
- youth spaces
- youth councils
- the world wide web
- Regional Youth Affairs Officers

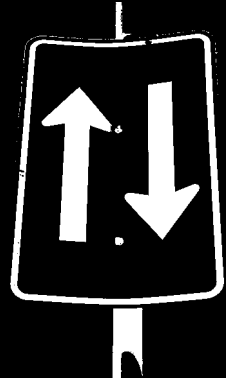
Schools:

Schools are often viewed as an easy way to connect with young people, however be aware of Education Queensland's school protocols and rules regarding outside access to students. Respect that students have busy and complex school demands. Be careful not to waste their or the schools time.

Education Queensland has specific guidelines about consulting young people in schools. Depending on the scope of the project, approval may be needed from the individual school, the school district, or central office. Information can be obtained from the Performance Measurement and Review Branch of Education Queensland. The Education Queensland guidelines on consulting young people in schools can be accessed from the Performance Measurement and Review Branch of Education Queensland.

More information on engaging with young people through schools:

Performance Measurement and Review Branch of Education Queensland
<http://www.education.qld.gov.au/corporate/pmreview>



ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Community and youth organisations:

Try working with community and youth organisations who have established links with young people. Often adult intermediaries can pull together a group of young people for you to talk to. Be aware of the protocols and respect that the young people, and often the workers, are volunteers. Contact the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, or the Youth development officer connected with the local council and/or the Regional Youth Affairs Officers, Office of Youth Affairs.

The expectations and experiences of Aboriginal communities have shaped the development by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development of the *Protocols for Consultation and Negotiation with Aboriginal People*. This document outlines specific issues to be considered in consulting with Aboriginal people including negotiating entry to Aboriginal communities.

Other government departments will also have contacts and information and networks of community organisations that you could access in order to engage with young people from specific communities. For example, you could contact:

- Department of Primary Industries to connect with rural and regional young people
- Disability Services Queensland to connect with young people with a disability
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Multicultural Affairs Queensland to connect with young people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

More information on engaging with young people through community and youth organisations:

Community Engagement Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet
<http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/about/community/index.htm>

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland
Contact: 1800 177 899 or 07 3844 7713
<http://home.pacific.net.au/~yanq/index.html>

Local Government Youth Policy Officers, Local Government Association of Queensland
Contact: 07 3000 2216
<http://www.lgaq.asn.au/>

Regional Youth Affairs Officers, Office of Youth Affairs
Contact: 1300 55 59 54

Informal networks:

Young people have their own networks, friends, and friends of friends. Young people are the best qualified to tell you how to tap into these informal networks. Be respectful of privacy and the capacities of young people to take time out to assist you to connect with their informal networks. Remember young people have busy lives too and are subject to competing demands for their time and money. You may need to budget in the costs that are incurred by young people who are assisting you to connect with their networks. Such costs include phone or transport costs, hourly peer research fees.

Youth spaces:

Go to where young people are and talk to young people in their own space. For example try the local skate park, shopping centre, park or a hang out spot.

Youth councils:

Connect with formal groups such as youth councils and student councils. Most local councils have established youth councils. For more information on youth council locations and protocols contact the Local Government Association of Queensland. Likewise, educational institutions have student representatives in the form of student councils, guilds and unions. The usual method of making contact is by approaching the chair of the youth council or president/secretary of the student guild or union. They will also be able to inform you of any protocols and suggestions for connecting with their memberships representatives or individual student guilds, councils or unions.

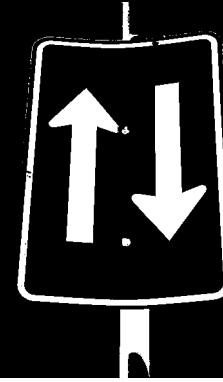
The Queensland State Youth Advisory Council advises the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth on issues affecting young people in Queensland. The council can be approached to consider and advise government departments on appropriate consultation strategies.

More information on engaging with young people through youth councils:

Youth Policy Officer, Local Government Association of Queensland
Contact: 07 3000 2222

State Youth Advisory Council (through the Office of Youth Affairs)
Contact: 1300 55 59 54

For councils associated with educational institutions, see the yellow pages.



ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

The world wide web:

The GENERATE website is a whole-of-government youth website that facilitates communication between young people aged 15 – 25 and the Queensland Government. This site provides you with the ability to access young people across the State. A questionnaire or a topic for discussion can be posted and responses monitored.

More information on engaging with young people through the GENERATE youth website:

Office of Youth Affairs
Contact: 1300 55 59 54
Email: manager@generate.qld.gov.au

Regional Youth Affairs Officers:

Regional Youth Affairs Officers, Department of Employment and Training, can provide regional information about connecting with young people and can link you with other Department and their resources and community networks.

More information on engaging with young people through the Regional Youth Affairs Officers:

Office of Youth Affairs
Contact: 1300 55 59 54

5.2 Preparing young people to participate

- *A well-designed consultation gives the appropriate support and information to assist the meaningful participation of young people and consultation partners.*

You will need to provide information to assist young people to participate in the consultation. This includes information about:

- the consultation topic
- the processes being used
- what outcomes and products are anticipated
- how young people will be involved in progressing the consultation

- how young people will get feedback
- boundaries, guidelines or legal issues (which need to be outlined in the first consultation session, and at other times when necessary)
- timelines expected
- on-going opportunities or benefits for participants.

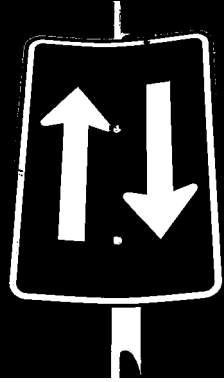
You may not have to do this yourself if you are working with consultation partners. If your consultation partners take on the role of informing young people about the consultation you will need provide this information to your consultation partners to pass on to participants.

5.3 Providing for practical considerations

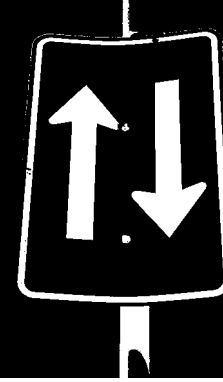
- *A well-designed consultation minimises practical barriers to participation.*

The following practical issues need to be considered to ensure that young people are effectively equipped to participate in the consultation process:

- the particular times that young people would be available
- how young people would access the venue/s that you will be using
- how young people would be compensated for their time, travel, labour and other costs incurred
- what resources could be required such as access to child care
- what special needs young people may have, for example interpreters, or venue access for young people with a disability.



ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE



EVALUATION AND REVIEW

5.4 Ensuring a positive experience

- *A well-designed consultation is mutually beneficial for young people and government.*

In order to engage young people in the consultation it is important to consider the benefits young people will receive. What will the young people gain through their involvement? Consider how young people's contributions will be used in government decision-making and how you will communicate this to them.

There are competing demands on young people. Identify ways to motivate young people to forgo their usual pastimes and obligations to take part in your consultation. Some suggestions include providing food, hosting a competition, providing free transport or including the consultation in an existing event that attracts young people.

For many young people, their previous experiences of government (at local, state and national levels) will impact on their willingness to participate and their reactions to you as a state government employee. Be aware of possible pre-conceived notions you may encounter when you enter into the consultation and the image you present to the participants.

As a government representative you need to know what the parameters of your consultation are and clearly communicate these to the young people. Do not give rise to expectations of an immediate outcome when you know the time frame of the project will mean that a decision might take some time. If there is a time-lapse do practical things such as sending update emails or setting up a communication strategy.

Example of a young person's negative experience of consultation with government:

"Well I am 17 years old and pretty cynical now about government wanting my opinion. These government guys came out here last year and asked us our opinion about the new mine development in the area. Myself and a few friends from school got excited about it all. Did our own research into the environmental impacts and the impacts on the town, employment etc. Did up a big report and presented our findings to the community and to the government consultants. We got patted on the back from our community for our efforts, even won an environmental research award for the information we collected. But the government people just took our report and we heard nothing for 18 months until we read in the local paper that the development was going ahead – I doubt if they even read our proposal."

Example of a government representative's negative experience of consultation with young people:

"I was a bit taken aback by the formality of the event. I just assumed that I was going to talking to a group of kids and it would be pretty casual and they wouldn't really have much to say. I didn't even prepare. Where as the young people had gone to great lengths to get their ideas and questions organised. They were determined to be taken seriously. They asked the hard questions and wanted answers."

A well-designed consultation will avoid situations such as those outlined in the examples above and benefit government by fostering a sense of co-operation and partnership with young people and the community. Government will also benefit from a better reputation in the community, richer information and a fuller understanding of the consultation topic to draw from in order to develop beneficial policies, programs and services.

More information on perceptions of consultation experiences:

Council Staff and Councillors' Views About Youth Consultation, How Young People Would Like To Be Consulted, Youth Consultation Checklist developed by the New South Wales Department of Local Government
Web: <http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au>

South West Region Youth Participation Resource Manual developed by the South West Youth Workers Network
Contact: 07 4687 2872 - South West Regional Youth Affairs Officer, Department of Employment and Training

6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

- *A well-designed consultation includes a review process that offers young people further opportunity for participation and shares findings with stakeholders.*

To ensure that your consultation with young people is effective, it is important to review the processes that you have used. Reviewing consultations should be seen as a positive process and an opportunity for young people and government to reflect on what worked, what was beneficial for participants and who else could use the information you have gleaned.

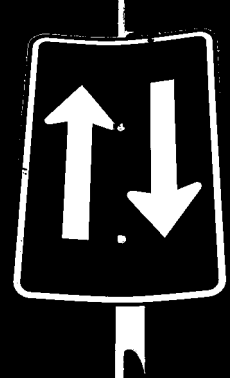
You can use the review process to identify stakeholders who would be interested in the findings of your consultation. Share your information with other government departments or community organisations that can also benefit from knowing the results of your consultation.

Young people will be able to give you valuable feedback about how the consultation process worked. Seeking this feedback demonstrates your commitment to ongoing youth participation and encourages ongoing involvement of young people in government decision-making.

Well-designed consultations with young people provide an opportunity for them to initiate ongoing work related to the project. Consultation is not an end but rather an opportunity for young people to engage in the content areas and develop their own ways to explore these areas further. Identifying opportunities for ongoing involvement demonstrates the government's commitment to implementing policies and programs as a result of the information supplied by young people.

A review process should provide:

- opportunities for stakeholders such as other government departments or community organisations to learn from the results of your consultation
- opportunities for young people and government to identify what worked, what didn't, and what changes could be made to overcome obstacles
- a variety of ways for young people to provide feedback, for example, you using an email questionnaire, a group discussion, visual imaging, or role plays
- opportunities for government to demonstrate their appreciation of the contributions of young people to the community and across government
- information about the results of the consultation process, and how young people's information is included in ongoing government work
- support for young people to initiate activities in their local communities
- invitations to young people to seek their involvement in implementing the results of the consultation, including plans for follow-up activities and information.



FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE

7. FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE

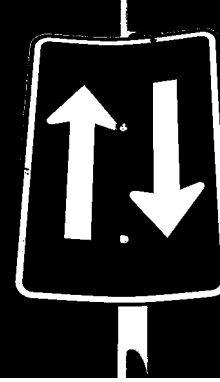
The Office of Youth Affairs anticipates that this handbook will provide useful information for government to realise its commitment to effectively engage with young people.

Ongoing support is available through the Office of Youth Affairs to assist government to:

- access relevant resource material specific to youth participation and consultation models and information
- review and evaluate the outcomes of young people's participation in consultation processes
- support young people's participation in consultation processes
- identify relevant organisations and networks that can assist in planning, and implementing consultation with young people
- recognise the diversity of young people through selection of appropriate consultation processes.

The Office of Youth Affairs is interested in hearing about any consultation or youth-related initiatives your department is undertaking or contemplating. This will allow us to disseminate resources and information relevant to young people across government. So keep us informed.

For more information, advice or assistance or to tell us about your consultation contact the Office of Youth Affairs in the Department of Employment and Training on 1300 55 59 54 or (07) 3224 8451.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

8. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Active participation - is a relationship based on working with government, in which young people engage in the policy-making process. It acknowledges a role for young people in proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue.

Appreciative inquiry - takes a future-oriented approach to consultation processes based on the belief that young people are active social entrepreneurs who construct and create through social interaction.

Best practice - in consultation with young people is two-way exchanges between government and young people; sharing information in an effective manner allows for all involved to benefit and gain from participation.

Consultation partners - can be young people, community organisations, representatives from other government departments, representatives from other divisions within your department, or individuals that can help you interact and can consult with participants.

Constructed communities - Young people belong to various communities geographically, culturally and around common interests, issues and lifestyles. Identify how the consultation topic and issues may impact on different communities.

Diversity - ensure that the methods used to consult with young people are chosen in recognition of the diversity of young people. Such issues to take into account are age, gender, cultural background, economic status, and access. To address these issues employ a variety of ways of collecting and providing information and acquire a sound knowledge of the diversity of young people's culture.

Generate website - provides information and connections between young people and government. The website address is www.GENERATE.qld.gov.au

Image - Be aware of your arrival, your status and the image you present to the participants.

Invitation - Consultation partners may be able to make invitations to the young people more easily as they might already be known to the young people and have an established relationship with their community. This can encourage credibility with the group.

Issues - Young people can be interested in all issues, not just those deemed as 'youth issues'.

Patterns and themes - Using different ways of consulting with young people will produce information in a diverse range of formats. It is important to identify a valid way to analyse the information collected. Consult with your consultation partners to look for themes and patterns within the information that you have collected.

Permission - You will need to consider whether you need permission to conduct this consultation. Identify the decision-makers amongst the communities. Your consultation partners will help you identify specific protocols that may need to be observed. It is important to consider specific issues when consulting with young people. This includes legal and ethical considerations. Be aware of the impact discussing these issues might have on the participants and/or community.

Report Consultant - may be an independent evaluator who has experience in consultation with young people and can evaluate your consultation process.

Safe space - The location of consultation and the ability to create the feeling of a 'safe space' physically, socially and emotionally for young people to express their stories and feelings is important.

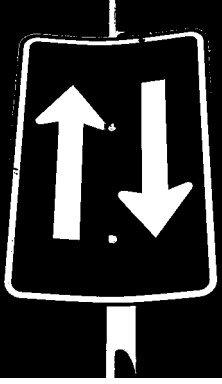
Six Ways Project - The Office of Youth Affairs used multiple ways of consulting with young people about the topics of "Wellness" and "Critical Rights". The ways included a visual art project, a series of 2-day seminars, meeting style consultations, activity based workshops, and an online discussion board.

Stakeholders - are young people, consultation partners in the form of organisations or individuals, and government departments that retain interest and involvement in the consultation.

Suggestions - Ensure strategies are in place as to how suggestions and concerns raised by young people will be incorporated into final products, reports, and program changes. Also ensure the consultation will support the furthering of a young person's concerns, issues, and suggestions.

Support - Ensure access to decision-making processes is provided through appropriate and varied levels of support to young people.





READING AND RESOURCES

9. READINGS AND RESOURCES

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Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development. 1999, Protocols for Consultation and Negotiation with Aboriginal People <http://www.indigenous.qld.gov.au/publications>

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Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Participation's Worth It: Overview and recommendations about young people's participation in the Queensland Government Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy

Department of Local Government. 1999, Council Staff and Councillor's Views About Youth Consultation www.dlg.nsw.gov.au

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Maroochy Shire Council; eKoHost Pty Ltd. 2001, CCATS: Community Consultation Action Tool Set, www.ccats.net

Local Government Association of Queensland, 1996. Bikes, Bands and Strategic Plans: Including Young People in the Business of Local Government.

Local Government Association of Queensland. Consultation Guide.

Young people and place information and links www.yspace.net