

Auckland Council Te Ropu Kaitohutohu Take Taiohi, Youth Advisory Panel End of Term Report (2020-2022)

Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa
(Let us keep close together, not wide apart)

This whakatauki speaks to the importance of keeping connected, of maintaining relationships and dialogue so that we can keep moving forward together. By walking together, the journey towards an empowered and thriving Tāmaki Makaurau can happen.

Mandate

The advisory panels are one of the means by which Auckland Council is able to engage with multiple groups who represent a wide cross section of Auckland's diverse communities. The panels provide advice to the governing body and council staff on regional policies, plans and strategies and any matters which are of concern to those communities.

This term, the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) is made up of nine members representing various wards, boards and communities. The panel helps to provide a view of the youth population of Auckland. The priorities are shaped by the goals of I Am Auckland - the Children and Young People's Strategic Action Plan. In 2013, the I Am Auckland plan was developed in partnership between the first Youth Advisory Panel and the council to demonstrate a commitment to help children and young people reach their full potential.

Our Priorities

In the last quarter of 2020, the Youth Advisory Panel agreed to focus on the following key priority areas which were then approved by the PACE Committee as a key part of their work programme:

- **Youth Mental Health**
- **Youth Employability**
- **Cost of Living (Youth Homelessness)**
- **Climate Justice**

There was an overarching COVID-19 recovery lens across all our priorities and Māori, Pasifika and other ethnicities' wellbeing was considered in all our mahi. We also worked closely with the Youth Empowerment team and supported them in their evaluation of I am Auckland.

These priority areas along with a range of other engagement sessions, including written submissions and feedback was provided to numerous Auckland Council parties who had Youth as a key stakeholder.

High Level Summary of Achievements

- 11 Workshops
- 5 Open Meetings
- Cross-Panel hui
- Cross-Panel working groups
- Aspiring Leaders Forum
- Co-Chairs forum every two months
- 3 sessions with governing body - including annual budget and Long Term Plan feedback

All of this was completed throughout multiple lockdowns, a global pandemic and a changing world, alongside panel member's jobs, studies and everyday lives!

Key Public Consultation and Community Engagements

The YAP was encouraged to hold open meetings as a way of engaging with other youth in Auckland and agreed to focus open meetings on the panel's key priority areas - particularly on topics that were not being covered through other activities.

Open meetings were held on:

- Annual Budget
- Youth Mental Health
- Youth Employability
- Climate Justice

In addition, YAP members attended other engagement activities with other panels on the following Cross-Panel Hui:

- Homelessness & Housing
- Three Waters
- Engagement Guidelines
- Thriving Communities
- Regional Land Transport Plan

Cross Panel Working Groups

A number of cross-panel working groups were set up at the beginning of the term that YAP members were invited to participate in. Co-chairs were automatically members of the co-chairs cross panel hui but other panel members decided which working group they were most interested in. In addition, for these other cross panel groups, members were invited to put in an expression of interest to be a co-chair of the working group: two YAP members were successful in being selected.

Elections 2022

Arizona Leger (Co-Chair)

Veisina Maka

Climate Change

Amy Irvine (Co-Chair)

Chris Balzat

Thriving Communities

Murali Krishna Magesan

Hannah Ngo

Faenza-Lee

Co-Chairs Cross Panel Hui

Chris Balzat

Murali Krishna Magesan

From each of the cross panel working groups, youth perspective was provided to help shape holistic feedback, particularly when looking into the future. For example, through the **Climate Change Working Group**, there was the opportunity to advise on a number of key climate related strategies and plans that are guiding Auckland Council's efforts in climate justice. These included:

- Transport Emissions Reduction Plan,
- Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan,
- Climate Action Targeted Rate,
- Te Ara Urutau: Waikino.

One key point from the Working Group and Youth Advisory Panel was the reframing from climate action to climate justice. This enables the emphasis of disproportionate impacts of climate change on communities, both historically and contemporarily, who are made vulnerable by policy. It also reflects the need to ensure any response to climate change is equitable.

Youth Mental Health

The Youth Advisory Panel held an open workshop on 3rd August 2021, at the Te Atatu Peninsula Community Centre. This was one of the key initiatives by YAP to address this key work area. Though this was through the peak of COVID-19 and prior to one of our major lockdowns, there was a huge participation from the community who were interested in meeting face to face on this topic.

From providers and facilitators to representatives of various youth organisations and diverse networks, the representation helped bring together multiple points of view regarding youth mental health. Some key findings from youth included critical gaps in mental health services and waiting times and interaction with police. Accessibility, affordability as well as timeliness of receiving mental health services were identified as key challenges.

A few of the areas that could help bridging the gap between rangatahi and service providers in the short term include funding; mental health training/first aid for front line staff at Auckland Council facilities, ethnically diverse providers as well as co-designing solutions with young people. Some of the proposals put forth to Auckland Council to alleviate some of these challenges long term included, public/council controlled spaces where mental health related support could be institutionalised, supporting networking initiatives where youth and providers could connect in a stigma free environment.

Youth Employability

Issues regarding employment amongst young people was seen to have been the focal point of many discussions during Covid-19. The safety of young people in employment was an issue that many panel members found as a commonality that many young people in our communities related to.

The panel heard from a number of presenters at an open workshop focused on Youth Employability. The purpose of the open workshop was to provide youth and providers a chance to connect on issues relating to youth employability and identify priority areas of action for Auckland Council. It would serve as a platform for both sides to hear what is currently in place, what are the challenges from both sides and ultimately what can be considered moving forward.

The intention was for this workshop to be run in-person, however due to the impact of the Omicron wave, the open workshop was moved online. The panel felt this had an adverse impact on engagement from youth but the workshop still gave useful insights.

There were four providers at the open workshop who gave different insights on youth employability. Auckland Council Community and Social Innovation Team (Reducing barriers to employment), Auckland Unlimited (Youth Employer Pledge Network), Auckland Council's young professional network (Working at the council as a young person) and University of Auckland Career Development Consultant.

It was raised that a lot of people start courses and choose education pathways before knowing what it will lead to. There is a need for more mentoring, strengthening links with alumni and past students/young professionals whom young people can relate to more and give honest reviews. Another important point raised was about ensuring development pathways and further learning when people are working. It was highlighted that getting the job should not be the end point, but as jobs, technology, and opportunities develop, ongoing learning and upskilling should be supported.

Regarding what Auckland Council could help with, keeping Auckland Businesses/Employers and Career support networks and education providers up to date about arising trends in the workforce in Auckland. This may include areas of opportunity, areas of high human resource turnover, attractiveness of employment opportunities to young people.

Facilitate policies that encourage and support both businesses to hire young people, and also ensure young people are supported through the recruiting and early employment process. More Auckland Council visibility/engagement through platforms which young people engage with more frequently e.g. social media, community clubs and recreation centres, schools and education providers. Finally, reaching out to community organisations with outlines and frameworks that they can implement with their rangatahi to help get young people engaged and supported in the employment process.

Climate Justice

This was an area that was raised as a particularly important issue for the Youth Advisory Panel and wider rangatahi. Within Auckland Council, there is a lot of work already happening in this space. This includes cross panel working groups, dedicated sessions in panel workshops and on-going strategies by Auckland Council such as Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan. To ensure the time and effort from the panel was utilised most effectively, the panel decided to have a dedicated workshop and provide feedback on the on-going work by Auckland Council, specifically Auckland Council's Climate Action Targeted Rate (CATR).

From discussions on bus networks, ferry, cycling and walking networks to integration with light rail - the panel provided a comprehensive and detailed insight into what was priority for young people in the context of CATR.

The overall opinion of the panel was support for the ambition of the CATR and members were pleased to see Council was upholding its commitment in addressing the climate emergency. The panel was supportive of the high impact principle of the CATR, as climate action demands ambitious and transformational change, though it was noted that there will need to be work and cooperation with Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, Universities, and other larger bodies to ensure that lower socio-economic communities are not disproportionately impacted by the costs required to invest in this infrastructure. Mātauranga Māori should be embraced in considering our obligations and care for the land and water.

This workshop also included a presentation on the Design Your Future climate change digital campaign that focused on an innovative approach to engaging with young people to submit their ideas to the Council. Such innovation was seen favourably by the Youth Advisory Panel who felt it reflected the diversity and energy of youth.

By partnering with Media Design School it felt like an authentic format that speaks to youth, by youth. The Panel were enthusiastic about future efforts into co-design projects, as this was seen as a step forward for how youth can engage in council decision-making processes.

Cost of Living / Youth Homelessness

Covid-19 further highlighted pre-existing issues that were present in our communities. The panel identified the cost of living and youth homelessness as one key pre-existing issue that many young people in Tāmaki Makaurau had to grapple with. The Panel continued to support the kaupapa of organisations that assist in the support of young people that are or are soon to be homeless from previous relationships developed by past terms.

The panel took part in the cross-panel hui on housing and homelessness in order to gain perspective of the current discussions occurring around cost of living and youth homelessness, as well as the potential opportunities to provide feedback into Auckland Councils' homelessness work programme. As a key priority, panel members continued to challenge the implementation of strategies by ensuring that the issue of cost of living for young people were taken into consideration.

Other Key Feedback and Advice Provided by YAP

The YAP were invited to participate in a wide range of other topics during its term. Of particular note were the following topics which had a specific request for youth feedback:

- Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP)
- Annual Budget and Long Term Plan
- Climate Action Targeted Rate
- Auckland Regional Parks: How to engage with Youth?
- Design Your Future Campaign
- Auckland Transport (Multiple Submissions)
- Auckland Light Rail
- Eke Panuku Town Centre Guidelines

I Am Auckland Refresh

The I Am Auckland Plan was developed in 2013 with the partnership of Auckland Council and the Youth Advisory Panel. The I Am Auckland plan is an overarching strategic plan that focuses on the commitment in helping children and young people reach their full potential in Tāmaki Makarau.

The current plan consists of 7 goals which the current panel has aligned their terms' work programme with the goals of the I Am Auckland plan. The 7 goals are;

1. Voice: Children and young people have a voice, are valued and contribute.
2. Belonging: Children and young people are important, belong, are cared about, and feel safe.
3. Health and well-being: Children and young people are happy, healthy and thriving,
4. Fair go: Children and young people are given equal opportunities to succeed and have a fair go.
5. Connected: Children and young people can get around Auckland and get connected.
6. Opportunity: Children and young people feel that Auckland is their playground.
7. Whakapuawai: Rangatahi tū rangatira (all rangatahi will thrive).

COVID-19 identified the need to refresh the existing I Am Auckland plan with a plan that included potential learnings and gaps that the pandemic identified as issues that hindered children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. Therefore, the panel in partnership with the I Am Auckland refresh team worked together to develop an I Am Auckland plan that is reflective of young people today.

This consisted of workshops that involved korero on how to engage with youth to ensure that the I am Auckland Plan is still fit for purpose and represents the needs of young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. A number of meetings were held determining best engagement methods, what questions should be asked and how to ensure youth from a diversity of backgrounds are engaged.

Our Reflections

One of the main observations was that due to the limited time available for feedback from various parties, the panel or working group had a bit of a challenge reaching out to wider youth networks to help inform some of the feedback. As such the panel were able to only connect with their immediate contacts and limited networks they had contact with. In future, to receive more comprehensive insight there needs to be a greater feedback period with advanced consultation with panels to ensure that the diversity of views of the youth community are heard, helping to inform the strategic decision making process.

This discussion of the very tangible challenges is not to minimise the real impacts of the Youth Advisory Panel and the strides made to progress how rangatahi can be heard throughout the process of developing process and designing our city for decades to come. If anything, the need for a greater feedback period highlights the demand by young people to be able to participate. The language in Auckland Council has evolved and shifted to acknowledge the importance of meaningful engagement with youth. Throughout the term the Panel helped interrogate the extent to which youth perspective was being taken into account and through the many discussions and presentations, the transformative power of the Advisory Panels was felt.

Summary

The Youth Advisory Panel represents a unique demographic who will be most affected by council decisions so its voice as a part of the Auckland Council's mechanism for engagement is very important. The diversity of lived experience, age, employment and education, ethnicity, etc varies significantly and so the panel providing their voice on numerous matters helps in key decision making processes. It has been even more critical, with this term's panel members having to navigate all of this work, through a pandemic and its repercussions on numerous Council responses.

From lack of in-person meetings, to changing how we engage with the community and collating insights to share with Auckland Council, the journey has had its own challenges. In light of this, the youth advisory panel have done a tremendous job of navigating through this environment and still contributing to numerous working groups, workshops as well as delivering to the key work areas proposed by the panel to the PACE Committee.

We hope the momentum of the work that was achieved over the term is continued by the incoming panel and we look forward to seeing the progress that is made in the coming years.