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The important role of Youth Voice Groups locally and regionally

Sarah Colcord

**We are.
LGNZ.**

Te Kāhui Kaunihera ō Aotearoa.



New Zealand Community Boards Conference 2019
Community Boards in a Time of Change

**The important role of Youth Voice Groups locally,
regionally and nationwide**

“The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional level is essential if we are to build a more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies. Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society”.

From the Preamble of the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional

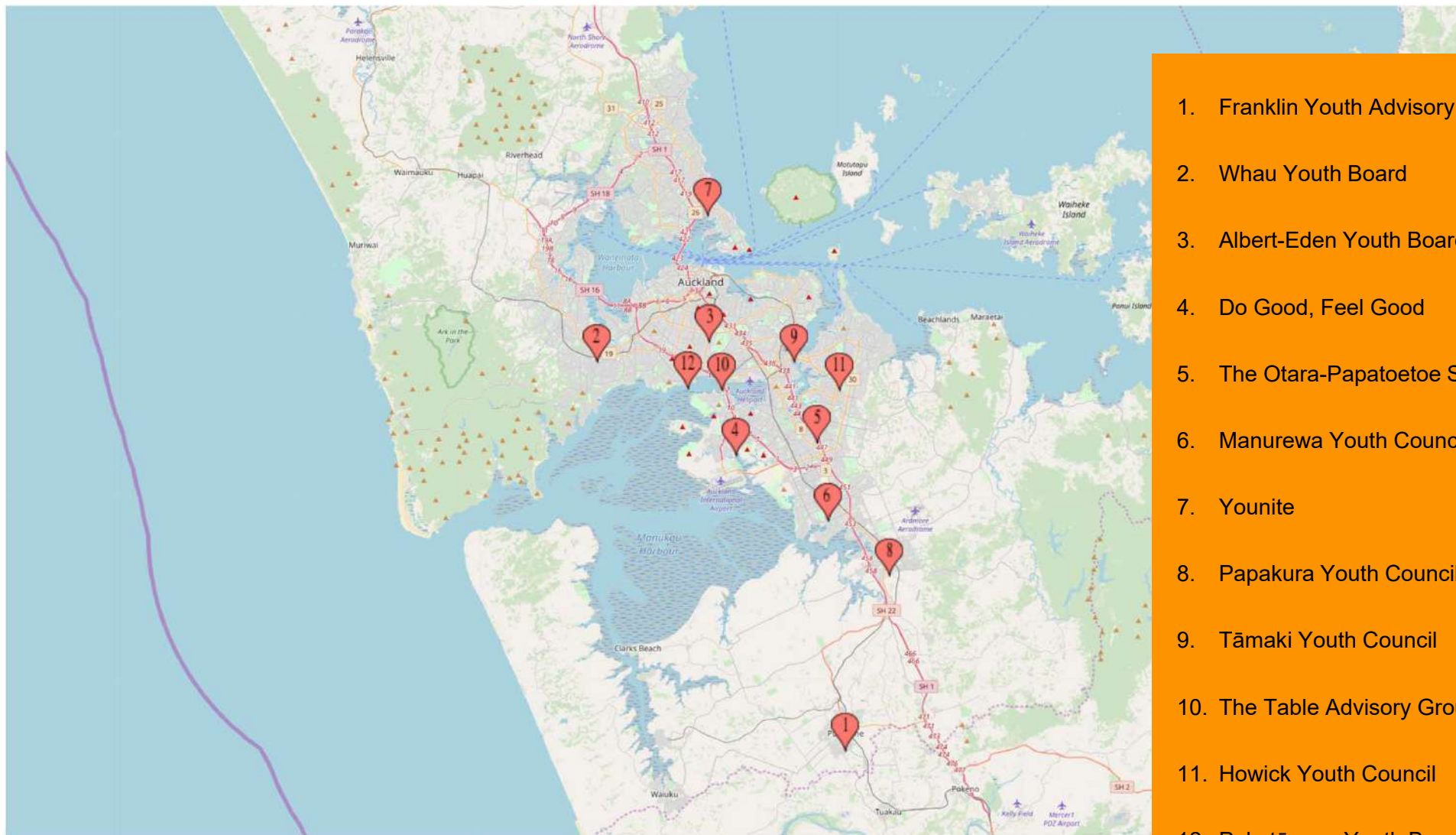
Life, Council of Europe, May 2003

The
Manurewa
YOUTH
COUNCIL



**AUCKLAND
YOUTH VOICE**

The logo for Auckland Youth Voice features the text 'AUCKLAND' and 'YOUTH VOICE' in a bold, teal, sans-serif font. The text is set against a dark blue, 3D-style speech bubble background that has a pointed tail on the left side. The entire graphic is tilted slightly upwards to the right.



1. Franklin Youth Advisory Board
2. Whau Youth Board
3. Albert-Eden Youth Board
4. Do Good, Feel Good
5. The Otara-Papatoetoe Squad
6. Manurewa Youth Council
7. Younite
8. Papakura Youth Council
9. Tāmaki Youth Council
10. The Table Advisory Group
11. Howick Youth Council
12. Puketāpapa Youth Board









The issue

One in five New Zealanders are aged 12 to 24 years old.

“Young people tend to get sidelined in the policy process and I think a lot of our urban space and infrastructure is a great example. Our cities are not built to support young people’s wellbeing.”

Academic Researcher, Ngā Kōrero Hauora o Ngā Taiohi (Youth Wellbeing), report by ActionStation and Ara Taiohi (2018)

What are Youth Voice Groups?

“Young people will be impacted by the decisions of today - Mō tātou, ā, mō

kā uri, ā muri ake nei – for us and our children after us.”

Youth Voice Groups are a group of young people that provides representation or a voice for youth in the community. They exist on local, regional, national, and international levels among governments, NGO's, schools, and other entities.

Youth Councils and Youth Boards:

Developing and presenting submissions to the local council or government on matters of interest or concerns of young people

Participating in training and development to upskill

Organising a variety of events and projects to engage young people and the local community

Participating in community events to connect with young people and the local community

Youth Advisory Groups:

Identify issues that are important to young people

Advise on how to effectively engage with young people

Provide a youth voice in significant plans and documents

Engage with external organisations to gain a better understanding of the work
done in youth spaces

Why Youth Voice Groups?

“A city which is attractive to young people, and which involves, values and acknowledges young people, creates benefits for the whole community.”

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**FLIPPING
EAST**

SINCE 2017



Whau
youth
BOARD



The Findings

When asked how they got involved in a Youth Voice Group, most expressed that they were looking for an opportunity to contribute positively to the development of their community.

- *“I was looking for the opportunity to explore my interests of equity and equality, giving back, and helping others. A friend suggested I apply for my local youth council, that he was a member of, as it encompassed many of my interests and values.”*

“I saw it as an awesome way to have a genuine positive impact for youth in the community.”

“Lobbied local board for one and applied when it was available.”

“Wanted to apply to be part of it after seeing their amazing work.”

“I wanted to join something that gives me an opportunity for a voice. To speak my passion and be heard by people around my area”.

When asked if Youth Voice Groups were important, most, if not all, explained that Youth Voice Groups were crucial for participating in decision-making, they are safe spaces for personal development, and they provide opportunities to influence and contribute positively to their local community.

- *“So important to have youth voice represented in decision making. Also youth voice groups provide so much personal development - I've grown so much as part of my youth voice group.”*

“Without youth voice groups the already minimal contact decision makers have with rangatahi would be even more limited. Youth voice groups enable visibility and allow young people to speak for themselves, rather than being spoken for.”

“Having a group like this allows for opportunities for the youth group to influence the future and let their voices be heard.”

When asked what impact being involved had on their lives, most if not all responded by acknowledging that personal and professional growth was mutually inclusive.

- *“To say that I've picked up a few things would be an understatement. It has provided me with the opportunity to not only serve my community, but become upskilled in the soft skills and grow my understanding in aspects such as project management, delegation, and effective communication; teachings that I believe will prove critical in the workplace of the future. Combine this with my love of service, and to be surrounded by equally passionate rangatahi, my three years on my Youth Council fostered a healthy culture of both personal and professional growth.”*

- *“My time on my Youth Voice Group was a monumental moment in my leadership journey. Many people remember that one opportunity that was the starting point that helped open doors- my Youth Voice Group was mine. This is where I learned how to write a submission, how to engage with young people and where there are gaps in our current plans and political system. It’s provided me with a wider view of the world and equipped me with key skills that I am able to apply in different organisations. It was where I was able to experiment with ideas and openly create initiatives that have provided me with skills that I am able to use in my advocacy for young people on a regional level. I have walked away not only having meet some amazing young people who I am sure will be New Zealand’s future entrepreneurs and Mayor but I have walked away empowered of the talent of our young people. Without this group, I wouldn’t be able to speak on panel’s with academics and politicians. My Youth Voice Group was where my passion for young people was able to flourish.”*

- *“Being a long serving member of a youth council provided me with the opportunity to develop the leadership, collaboration and management skills that has supported the success in my career thus far. More importantly, being part of a youth council whanau helped me to view my identity as a young, polynesian female from South Auckland as an advantage. This realisation balanced with the experience I've gained from my time on a youth council has made me more professionally competitive and more determined to make a change.”*

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**Member of Parliament
Simeon Brown**



**New Zealand Diplomat
Fale Lesa**



puketapapa
YOUTH BOARD



Youth council follows Swarbrick's lead by creating videos to reach and educate youths

12 Sep, 2018 10:13am

🕒 3 minutes to read



Auckland's Youth Advisory Panel chairwoman Veisia Maka says the group has taken a leaf out of Chloe Swarbrick's book to engage young people directly. Photo / Supplied

Howick Youth Council's fresh perspective

By **Therese Henkin** - August 2, 2018

✓ Like 1



The Howick Youth Council with Howick Local Board members. The youth council presented young people's ideas to solve issues around transport, equity, the environment, and well-being to the board on July 24. Photo: Irra Lee.

News Community Politics

Youth Council launches consultation on T2 Lane

By **Staff** - February 8, 2019

👍 Like 40



Howick Youth Council chairperson Jack Collins.

Is Howick a model to boost voting in Auckland?

Todd Niall • 07:43, Aug 27 2018



When asked what the biggest barriers or challenges are for Youth Participation and what support Youth Voice Groups need the most common answer was engagement feeling tokenistic and their voices not being valued.

- *“Lack of being taken seriously. Local, Regional, and National Government all want youth votes but hardly make themselves known to us or regard us as the changemakers we know we can be. ‘Helping rangatahi’ seems like an empty platitude and lip service with little behind it at times.”*

“I feel that we as young people are an afterthought in consultation processes or thinking that throwing a “youth friendly” to an 80 page document is ok. It’s not. The ‘Youth voice’ doesn’t feel valued a lot of the time around decision making tables. Plans don’t look or sound like the communities they are implemented in so we detach.”

When asked what support Youth Voice Groups needed, the most common answer was greater support and funding from their Local Boards/Community Boards, not being micromanaged by the 'support' person and more opportunities for training and development.

- *“Being supported by their local board, having good relationships with facilitators to resolve conflicts etc. strong relationships with other youth voice groups.”*

*“We need positive role models and mentors who can help our voice reach where it needs to go. We need funding to implement our vision and guidance regarding the plausibility of that
We need people to believe in us and talk to us, rather than coming into our spaces and overtaking our narrative with their own political agenda.”*

“Greater funding to be more effective.”

“The council needs to be more open to our ideas and help to allow for us to follow through with our projects rather than preventing.”

When asked what their hopes and dreams are for Youth Participation in Aotearoa, all responses indicated a desire for young people to have their voices valued but also for young people to have the resources and support to contribute to decision-making.

- *“I’m of the opinion that all young people in NZ should be civically engaged, at least at a very basic level. I hope we can instil values in our young people around civic responsibility, kotahitanga, and manaakitanga at every age. Young people need to know how they can contribute to decisions made about them and realise they have the power to change policies that affect them adversely.”*

“That it becomes so seamless it becomes a fabric of everything we do, from designing cities to parks to private enterprise. Young people deserve to be able to participate fully in life.”

“More awareness of groups such as these - many people don’t even know they exist.”

“Being recognised by national government, so it’s easier for youth groups with good causes to apply for funding and operate easier.”

“We often talk about “young people” as though they are some homogeneous group like “the community” when of course, that’s not true. Young people are incredibly diverse.”

- Recognising participation is beneficial to young people

Valuing young people's contribution

Involving young people from the entire process i.e. from the beginning to the end

Creating a space for young people's involvement

Building positive relationships with young people

Providing young people with the resources, training or development to equip young people with the tools to participate in decision-making

He aha te mea nui o te ao

***What is the most important thing in the world? He tāngata, he
tāngata, he tāngata***

It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.