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A YOUTH VISION FOR PORIRUA CITY

Researchers from the University of Otago, Wellington, have developed and used an app as part of a study to find out the vision for Porirua from the youth viewpoint.

The BLITZ study, run by the Porirua Social Sector Trial used the app to survey approximately 100 children and youth, and 100 whānau, and service providers, and found that although youth in the Porirua region are very proud of their city, they need better facilities and affordable activities.

Porirua has a strong community and pride in their city. Lead researcher on the BLITZ study Dr Ramona Tiatia says that youth groups, churches, and schools often take the lead on coordinating services and activities, but they do not have enough funding or resources.

"This study shows there needs to be better coordination, collaboration and increased stable funding for youth amenities in Porirua," says Dr Ramona Tiatia, from the University of Otago, Wellington's He Kainga Oranga/Healthy Housing Research Programme.

The Porirua Social Sector Trial is a partnership with Ngati Toa, Porirua City Council, Te Puni Kokiri, NZ Police and Ministries of Health, Justice, Education, Housing and MSD. It was established three years ago to trial new approaches to social sector change through inter-agency collaboration, co-ordination and communication to targeted communities.

"We wanted to find out from youth whether they saw themselves living, working and building careers in Porirua in the next decade and whether they and their whānau were being supported well enough by public and community services in Porirua" says Ranei Wineera-Parai.

"We developed the app for the study to encourage Porirua youth to have a say in how they see the future of their city," says Dr Tiatia.

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Porirua has a higher youth population than other New Zealand cities (26.2% of Porirua's population is under 15, compared to 21.5% for all of New Zealand, and the median age is 32.6 years compared to 35.9 years for all of New Zealand), according to Statistics NZ.

"The Porirua City Council has made catering for youth a priority, spending over 30% of its rates on community and leisure, according to the NZ Sustainable Cities Drivers of Urban Change report. (NZ Sustainable Cities). However, as the BLITZ study shows, more can be done to understand what youth need and want, and more needs to be provided.

"Participants overwhelmingly wanted more amenities for youth, including creative arts and performance spaces, free and affordable entry fees for youth programmes. The children and youth made creative drawings of fun activities they wanted all around the city such as bike and boat rides, water fountains, horse treks and flying foxes," says Dr Tiatia.

Other issues raised were the high cost of public transport especially for youth who travel into Wellington City for school, training, employment, and entertainment; the lack of coordinated services such as health, social, and career; and pollution of Porirua Harbour.

"With the council elections upon us, we encourage residents to ask candidates about what they will do for youth in Porirua, and whether they support increasing amenities such as building dedicated youth hubs and youth spaces," she says.

The full report will be released at the end of October.



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