



NSW Police Force

# YOUTH STRATEGY

2013-2017



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# NSW Police Force Youth Strategy 2013-2017

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# Message from

the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

NSW Police Force has long recognised the unique and important status of youth within the community.

The majority of youth in NSW make positive contributions to their families, schools and communities. Some youth engage in offending behaviour, and unfortunately some youth become victims of crime at a young age. Some youth such as newly arrived refugees have higher levels of vulnerability in integrating within their new environment. Aboriginal youth face particular risks in these areas.

The NSW Government is working towards a safer community for all, particularly the most vulnerable members of the community, children and young people. This Youth Strategy will build on current strategies to increase safety for children and young people and prevent violence.

NSW Police Force is usually the first point of contact with the criminal justice system for young people who are offending or engaging in anti-social behaviour. The Youth Strategy supports early intervention initiatives to divert young people before their offending escalates.

Police cannot solve all the problems that young people face. The success of this Youth Strategy depends on the support of service providers, families, the community and young people themselves.



**Michael Gallacher MLC**

**Minister for Police and Emergency Services**

# Message from

the Commissioner of Police

I am pleased to present the *NSW Police Force Youth Strategy 2013-2017*. Since the development of the last Youth Policy, NSW Police Force has made significant steps to improve its relationship with youth in the community.

NSW Police Force recognises that children and young people can be victims of crime as well as offenders, and that safety of children and young people is a priority. Police are committed to interacting professionally and appropriately with all youth, and working collaboratively with partner agencies and community stakeholders to ensure their safety.

I am encouraged by the success that the NSW Police Force has made in recent years to responding to the needs of youth. Further challenges remain, particularly in relation to the policing of public space and compliance with legislative responsibilities.

Youth in NSW come from diverse backgrounds, and their needs will vary according to their Aboriginality, cultural background, gender, sexuality, disability, mental health and a range of other factors. Police officers need to be equipped to work effectively with all young people.

This Youth Strategy has been developed to align with the NSW 2021 goals of returning quality services, strengthening our local environment and communities, and restoring accountability to government.

I support the new NSW Police Force Youth Strategy, and consider this to be a step forward in further strengthening our relationship with youth and the community, as we work together to achieve a safe and secure NSW.



**Andrew P Scipione APM**

**Commissioner of Police**





# Message from

## the Corporate Sponsor for Youth

The NSW Police Force is committed to working with youth to reduce and prevent crime, to enhance relationships and to promote a safer community.

The Youth Strategy 2013-2017 will provide NSW Police Force with direction to reduce and prevent youth crime. Youth crime is a highly contemporary and topical issue across all NSW communities. Anecdotally it is known that many youths who are involved in crime at a young age face significant social and economical marginalisation throughout their adult lives. Change needs to occur to break this cycle. As the NSW Police Force Corporate Sponsor for Youth, I am committed to the objectives and directions of the Youth Strategy to break this cycle and enhance the future of our youth.

The strategy not only focuses on youth crime but protection of young lives. Trends suggest that child abuse and neglect are precursors to youth crime. With this in mind it is important that the NSW Police Force approach issues relative to youth in a holistic manner, which includes ensuring an expedient response to reports of child mistreatment by appropriate agencies. Community and Government partnership is the key. Education is a powerful tool to assist young people identify the consequences, both short and long term, of their choices. The Youth Strategy 2013- 2017 supports the development of 'new' and the continuation of targeted programs which engage the youth of NSW in developing local solutions for local problems.



**Assistant Commissioner Jeff Loy APM**

**Corporate Sponsor for Youth**



# BACK GROUND



# Context

The NSW Police Force Youth Strategy 2013-2017 is the result of a significant review of the previous *NSW Police Force Youth Policy 2006-2012*. It aims to provide a framework for interactions between police officers and youth.

The NSW Police Force understands youth issues must be addressed collaboratively, from a whole-of-government approach in order to achieve positive outcomes for youth and the community. While police officers have an important role to play in early intervention and responding to crime, there needs to be a collaborative approach to ensure that children and young people are safe and that young offenders are dealt with appropriately.

The following key principles underpin the Youth Strategy:

- Building collaborative relationships
- Early intervention and prevention
- Promoting trust and respect
- Providing the right person and the right response
- Strategic timing and programming
- Transparency and accountability
- Understanding diversity and responding effectively.

The Youth Strategy uses the term 'youth' to refer to all people under the age of 18 years. When the term 'youth' is used in this document, it includes all children and young people.

# Scope

The Youth Strategy applies to all interactions between NSW Police Force employees and youth as members of the broader NSW community. The Youth Strategy applies to all youth including victims, witnesses, offenders and other situations where police come in contact with youth in the course of their official duties.

This Strategy applies to all NSW Police Force employees, Volunteers in Policing and persons engaged to undertake responsibilities in accordance with the *Police Act 1990*.





# YOUTH STRATEGY STATEMENT



# Youth Strategy Statement

NSW Police Force is committed to developing positive relationships with youth in NSW in all policing contexts. This includes recognising youth can be witnesses, offenders, and are particularly vulnerable to victimisation.

The NSW Police Force will strive to develop better communication strategies for dealing with youth, recognise the diverse needs of youth, address the specific needs of Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse youth and be flexible in adapting policing to an increasingly online world.

Police officers will aim to prevent youth from becoming victims of crime, prevent youth from offending, work in partnership to reduce antisocial behaviour and support collaborative approaches in all aspects of youth policing.

The NSW Police Force Youth Strategy Statement seeks to:

- Provide a framework of objectives and strategic directions for the policing of youth in NSW
- Enhance NSW Police Force's work in partnership with other government/non-government agencies, communities and youth
- Demonstrate transparency and accountability, making clear NSW Police Force's priorities and principles for policing youth.

The objectives of the NSW Police Force Youth Strategy 2013-2017 are:

1. Improve police strategies addressing youth antisocial behaviour, crime and violence
2. Enhance positive relationships between police and youth
3. Develop policing approaches that increase youth safety
4. Engage in early intervention and prevention initiatives to divert youth from the criminal justice system
5. Continue to focus on the specific needs of Aboriginal youth
6. Work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) youth.

The objectives and priorities identified in this Youth Strategy will be supported by actions and performance measures in command business plans.

# YOUTH STRATEGY OBJECTIVES



# Objective 1:

## Improve police strategies addressing youth antisocial behaviour, crime and violence

NSW Police Force is committed to the development and improvement of prevention, intervention and diversion strategies which seek to reduce the proportion of youth participating in antisocial behaviour, crime and violence.

In line with the objectives of NSW 2021, a key focus for NSW Police Force is the reduction of youth reoffending and the prevention of youth escalating the seriousness of offending.

It is recognised that risk factors associated with offending by youth are often beyond the direct influence of the NSW Police Force. In order to improve strategies which address youth antisocial behaviour, crime and violence, NSW Police Force will continue to collaborate with relevant government and non-government agencies and organisations.

As part of this, NSW Police Force will look at strategies for reducing and preventing youth crime, enhancing road safety and working in a collaborative manner with relevant organisations and bodies. A particular focus will be on the use of public space, and balancing the rights of youth to use public space with the safety of the wider community.

## Directions:

- Address youth antisocial behaviour and crime in public space whilst encouraging positive use of public space by young people
- Identify best practice in crime prevention among youth offenders and broadly disseminate these methodologies within the NSW Police Force
- Work towards greater youth awareness of the importance of road safety by increased emphasis on education of young persons
- Maintain a collaborative and interagency approach to dealing with youth crime
- Develop and maintain prevention and intervention programs focused on all forms of youth violence.



## Objective 2:

### Enhance positive relationships between police and youth

The NSW Police Force will continue to foster positive relationships with children and young people within the community.

NSW Police Force is committed to encouraging positive community participation and responsible conduct by youth. Respect, impartiality, accountability and professionalism are fundamental to all interactions between NSW Police Force staff and youth victims, witnesses, offenders and community members.

NSW Police Force recognises that the way staff members interact with youth is extremely important. Being taken seriously and treated with the same attention as an adult witness, victim or offender is important. Whilst interactions with youth offenders pose a significant challenge, respectful treatment and the maintenance of the rights of a youth demonstrates the need to respect the rights of others and promote a greater appreciation for the law.

Each successive experience a youth has with police can influence relations. All children and young people should be treated fairly, and afforded respect, understanding and support regardless of how they come into contact with police.

All police will be equipped with the skills to be able to communicate and interact respectfully and effectively with youth. The NSW Police Force will aim to develop these skills in all police officers, as well as participating in community engagement activities and events where police and youth can interact in a positive manner.

NSW Police Force will look at the best mechanisms for sharing information around youth-related issues, both internally and externally. Additionally, New South Wales Police Force will continue to implement mechanisms for consulting with youth and the youth sector on issues around youth policing.

## Directions:

- Enhance police skills in communicating with youth by targeted training
- Participate in youth-focussed community engagement activities
- Improve information collection and dissemination practices within the NSW Police Force to ensure effective exchange of information concerning NSW Police Force youth-related issues
- Enhance NSW Police Force mechanisms for community consultation and involvement on youth issues

## Objective 3:

### Develop policing approaches that increase youth safety

Youth are one of the groups that are most vulnerable to crime and victimisation in NSW. The NSW Police Force has a strong record in addressing issues of youth safety, including child protection and family violence issues. The establishment of the Child Wellbeing Unit, the ongoing work of Youth Liaison Officers, School Liaison Police and the “Keeping me Safe” education program, specialist child abuse investigations by the Child Abuse Squad (CAS), and the Child Exploitation Internet Unit (CEIU) Sex Crimes Squad, State Crime Command are but some of the resources committed by the NSW Police Force to proactively decrease the victimisation of young persons.

The NSW Police Force will continue to build on existing youth safety practices and initiatives as well as develop responses to emerging issues of concern including the use of on-line communities and other emerging technologies that impact upon the safety and wellbeing of youth.

### Directions:

- Maintain and improve existing child protection strategies
- Develop targeted strategies for youth affected by domestic and family violence
- Address youth bullying, including bullying by the use of electronic media, with particular emphasis in the use of collaborative relationships with schools and other relevant agencies
- Promote safe internet and social media use by youth in NSW
- Promote safe partying practices to youth by continuing to support the MyNite Program and development of specific strategies to address emergent issues such as the online advertising of parties and gatherings
- Improve police officer awareness of suicide and mental health issues amongst youth

## Objective 4:

### Engage in early intervention and prevention initiatives to divert youth from the criminal justice system

The NSW Police Force continues to support initiatives intended to prevent youth at risk from coming into adverse contact with the criminal justice system. Assistance, advice and leadership provided to youth can help tackling the underlying causes of offending behaviour.

Where a young person has come into adverse contact with the criminal justice system, the *Young Offenders Act 1997* enunciates the principle that the least restrictive form of sanction is to be applied against a young person who is alleged to have committed an offence, having regard to matters required to be considered under the Act.

The NSW Police Force is committed to early intervention strategies outlined in the *Young Offenders Act 1997*, and continues to support diversionary measures wherever appropriate. In its diversion initiatives, NSW Police Force will continue to consider the needs of diverse communities and in particular develop innovative strategies for addressing drug and alcohol use among youth.

The NSW Police Force recognises that it cannot respond alone to the diversity of factors which underpin the involvement of youth in crime. Collaboration and cooperation is essential given that the most effective early intervention and crime prevention initiatives involve comprehensive interagency and community partnerships.

## Directions:

- Identify and engage with youth at risk
- Address the diverse needs of youth through a range of early intervention and prevention strategies
- Develop awareness amongst NSW Police Force staff of youth with complex needs
- Continue to support the objectives of the *Young Offenders Act 1997* in the diversion of young offenders
- Continue support for youth drug and alcohol diversion programs
- Support and engage in comprehensive youth focused interagency and community partnerships

## Objective 5:

### Continue to focus on the specific needs of Aboriginal youth

The NSW Police Force is firmly committed to recognising and addressing the particular needs of Aboriginal youth in NSW.

Aboriginal youth comprise of a disproportionately high number of youth coming into adverse contact with the criminal justice system as both victims and offenders. This disproportionate level of contact between police and Aboriginal youth is underpinned by social, economic and structural disadvantage. These factors directly link to social disruption, youth offending and youth victimisation.

The NSW Police Force recognises the richness, diversity and unique nature of Aboriginal culture and will continue to implement targeted programs and procedures to appropriately and sensitively address the needs of Aboriginal youth.

It is recognised that this is not a task that can be undertaken in isolation. Close collaboration with local communities as well as other relevant agencies is seen as the key to delivering a positive outcome in this area.

### Directions:

- Enhance culturally appropriate policing practice for Aboriginal youth by continued development of targeted Aboriginal cultural awareness training for police with particular emphasis on youth issues
- Support an interagency and community approach to addressing issues affecting Aboriginal youth
- Promote diversion of Aboriginal youth from the criminal justice system through initiatives such as the Cautioning Aboriginal Young People (CAYP) protocol
- Enhance safety of Aboriginal youth by development of culturally appropriate approaches to youth policing



## Objective 6:

### Work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) youth

NSW Police Force will continue to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) youth. As such, the NSW Police Force will continue to build trust and establish partnerships with culturally diverse communities in NSW through respect, cooperation, and appropriate and effective consultation and communication.

NSW has been enriched by large scale migration from all parts of the world and the principles of multiculturalism are an intrinsic part of our community. This is a continuing and evolving process, demonstrated by the fact that approximately 20% of the total NSW population speaks a language other than English at home.

Interactions between police and youth from CaLD backgrounds present a number of challenges including limited English language skills, education and knowledge of Australian criminal and legal systems.

A significant proportion of migrants retain cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes that differ from what are considered dominant or mainstream. Youth can find views, beliefs and expectations of their cultural origin in conflict with the views, beliefs and expectations of the broader NSW community.

The process of adapting to a new culture can affect the sense of cultural identity for CaLD youth, particularly those who grow up in bilingual and bicultural communities.

Also, the issue of refugee youth presents an ongoing challenge to the NSW Police Force. Specifically interacting with those youth who have experienced physical, psychological or emotional trauma and who may have difficulty in adjusting into their new communities.

In their interactions with youth from CaLD backgrounds, NSW Police Force staff will consider and adopt culturally appropriate interventions and strategies.

## Directions:

- Ensure appropriate policing practices are identified and adopted for culturally and linguistically diverse youth
- Address communication barriers and issues regarding access to programs and services for youth victims, witnesses and offenders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Consult and build relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the context of youth issues

# Glossary

CaLD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

CAS: Child Abuse Squad

CAYP: Cautioning Aboriginal Young People Protocol

CIEU: Child Internet Exploitation Unit

CWU: Child Wellbeing Unit

DVLO: Domestic Violence Liaison Officer

GLLO: Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer

JIRS: Joint Investigation Response Squad

LAC: Local Area Command

MCLO: Multicultural Community Liaison Officer

MHCO: Mental Health Contact Officer

NSWPF: New South Wales Police Force

PCYC: Police-Citizens Youth Clubs

SLP: School Liaison Police

SSRU: School Safety and Response Unit

SYO: Specialist Youth Officer

YAG: Youth Advisory Group

YCM: Youth Case Manager

YJC: Youth Justice Conferencing

YLO: Youth Liaison Officer

YOA: *Young Offenders Act* 1997