



MIRROR SERVICES

9 Year Plan 2025 to 2034,
Dunedin City Council,
PO Box 5045,
Dunedin 9054

Tēnā koutou

Ko Deb Fraser Komene toku ingoa. Kaitiaki Whakaata Tohu Tohu te mahi.

My name is Deb Fraser Komene. I am the Director of Mirror Services, a child and youth mental health, addictions and social services provider, based in Ōtepoti. I currently sit as the co-chair for the Mental Health & Addictions Network, chair of the Ōtepoti Youth Intervention Team and the current Chair of the Dunedin Youth Hub working group.

The purpose of this submission to the Dunedin City Council's nine-year plan is to ensure that the needs of children, youth, and families are considered and that dedicated funding, resources, and support are set aside by the City Council to invest in and manage services for these critical sectors of our community.

More specifically, we are advocating for significant investment and support to establish a Youth Hub for Dunedin. This initiative is vital to ensuring that all rangatahi in Ōtepoti have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and valued lives, enabling them to fulfil their potential and contribute positively to their communities.

Key areas of note:

1. The current draft plan does not allocate specific funding or resources toward engaging and supporting youth.
2. Dunedin has a uniquely high population of 18–25-year-olds, particularly due to tertiary institutions—this should be reflected in city planning.
3. A Youth Hub would be a proactive and proven solution to address increasing social issues such as youth homelessness, disconnection, and violence.
4. There is strong evidence and community backing for the development of a Youth Hub.
5. Strategic investment now would mitigate long-term costs associated with youth disengagement and poor health, social, education and wellbeing outcomes.

Addressing the needs of youth:

Despite the clear demographic makeup of our city and ongoing challenges impacting youth, such as the long-term effects of COVID-19, financial hardship on whānau, rising youth homelessness, and violence such as the 2024 bus hub death, there appears to be no new funding or staff allocation in the 9-year plan specifically targeted at youth development.

This omission is deeply concerning. Young people are the future of our city, and yet they are underrepresented and under-supported in this plan.

It is crucial that we act now to allocate:

- **Dedicated FTE roles** to engage and coordinate youth development work.
- **Operational and capital funding** to establish and run a Youth Hub.
- **Land or facilities** suitable for youth-led initiatives and services.
- **Long-term support** for community projects that promote safety, connection, and skill development for rangatahi.

Dunedin's Unique Youth Demographic

Dunedin is in a unique position, hosting a large and vibrant population of 12 –25-year-olds. While many are here for tertiary study, this group is also at a stage of transition, often away from family support and navigating complex social, economic, and health challenges. Currently, there is no central, dedicated space where young people can access services, connect with peers in a safe environment, or contribute to community-led solutions. A Youth Hub would fill this gap, acting as a base for collaboration across health, education, employment, social services, and cultural development.

Evidence and Community Support

Having lived and worked in the social sector in Dunedin since 1992, I have had the privilege of working closely with children, young people, whānau, and the organisations that support them. I have also contributed to research and collaborative initiatives with government and non-government agencies that consistently highlight the need for a dedicated Youth Hub.

Relevant studies and reports include:

- **The Impact for Otago Youth Study** (Otago Community Trust)
- **Te Hurihanga – Time for Change**
- **The Youth2000 Survey** (National Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey)

I was also heavily involved in organising and delivering the successful **Youth Expos** for six years, which demonstrated both the demand for and impact of coordinated youth engagement.

I am requesting that the Dunedin City Council:

1. **Allocate specific funding and resources** in the Long-Term Plan to support the development of a Youth Hub in central Dunedin. (\$30,000 per year for 9 years).
2. **Commit to include the locating of Council-owned land or a suitable Council-owned property to develop a dedicated Youth Hub space in central Dunedin.** Ensuring it is accessible, welcoming, and fit-for-purpose for a wide range of youth services and activities.
3. **Include youth-specific FTE roles** within council staffing to ensure sustained, strategic engagement with rangatahi.
4. **Partner with local youth services, iwi, tertiary institutions, and rangatahi themselves** in the design and governance of a Youth Hub.
5. **Publicly commit to youth wellbeing** as a strategic priority in future planning decisions.
6. **Ensure that any Council-owned property or land allocated for the Youth Hub is made available on a long-term lease at no cost or a nominal fee.** This will enable community

agencies to develop and maintain a financially viable and sustainable operation, guaranteeing the hub can serve young people over the long term without being burdened by prohibitive overhead costs.

In addition to the establishment of a dedicated Youth Hub, I propose the following actions to strengthen youth-focused initiatives across Dunedin:

1. Support for a Central City Youth Café Initiative

Provide grant funding and practical support for the development of a youth-run café in central Dunedin. This initiative would serve as both a training opportunity and an employment pathway for young people, particularly those not currently engaged in education or work. As part of the Council's contribution:

- **Waive consent and licensing fees**
- **Assist with start-up costs through targeted grants**
- **Ensure the project aligns with economic development and youth employment strategies**

2. Reinstatement and Support of the Dunedin Youth Expo

Commit to the re-establishment of the highly successful Dunedin Youth Expo, an event that provides opportunities for young people to explore education, employment, and wellbeing services. Council support through funding, venue access, and staff participation would ensure this initiative continues to be a key annual event for youth engagement.

3. Access to Ongoing Support and Collaboration with DCC

For the Youth Hub and associated initiatives to be successful, we need:

- **Access to DCC grants and long-term financial assistance**
- **Council staff and elected members actively engaged**—not just as funders, but as collaborators who attend planning meetings, advocate within council structures, and elevate youth issues to national platforms
- **A commitment to co-governance with youth and community organisations**, ensuring shared decision-making and long-term impact

This is a pivotal moment for Dunedin. By investing in a Youth Hub now, the Council can demonstrate leadership, vision, and commitment to a future where all young people feel seen, supported, and valued.

I urge you to act with foresight and compassion, placing rangatahi at the heart of the city's long-term vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. I would be happy to speak further or present in support of these recommendations.

Nāku noa, nā



Deb Fraser Komene

Kaitiaki/ Director

Whakaata Tohu Tohu | Mirror Services