

# Youth Citizens' Juries



An exciting new tool is available to enhance youth participation in community decision-making. *A Guide to Setting up and Running a Youth Citizens' Jury* has been developed to support schools and councils to run your own Youth Citizens' Juries.

## What is a Youth Citizens' Jury?

A Youth Citizens' Jury is a tool to enhance youth participation through experiencing informed decision-making. Participants gain confidence in their ability to understand political issues and make a collective decision. A group of young people are tasked with considering relevant information and evidence on a specific topic and producing a recommended response.

## Why run a Youth Citizens' Jury?

Young people are an important group to involve when making community decisions because of the perspectives they can offer and their significance to the community and its future. While recent changes to legislation have encouraged more consultation with the community, young people often feel disengaged and excluded from decision-making processes.

A variety of different community consultation methods have emerged to help combat these concerns. One of these, a Youth Citizens' Jury, offers a unique alternative to more traditional community consultation methods such as public meetings or polling. It does this by providing opportunities for in-depth discussion, insights into the views of the community, and real experiences with decision-making processes. The experience of being involved can also help foster confidence in the process and increase young people's understanding of relevant issues. This may encourage them to take part both now and in the future and show them they can have their say and make a difference.

## Who can be involved in Youth Citizens' Juries?

**Schools** – Youth Citizens' Juries support learning in the senior social studies curriculum by providing a model for social inquiry grounded in local issues. Youth Citizens' Juries support the overarching values of 'belonging and participating' in society. The resources have been developed to support Years 12-13 and can be used for a topic within any curriculum stream. For example, a geography class could hold a Youth Citizens' Jury on water management, or an economics class could use the process to consider whether there should be GST on food.

**Councils** – Youth Citizens' Juries represent a great opportunity to involve young people in decision-making on issues of local importance.

## What resources are available?

*A Guide to Setting up and Running a Youth Citizens' Jury* is available to give step-by-step information on how to create and run your own Youth Citizens' Juries. This package includes a resource booklet, with a number of case studies in a number of contexts and a DVD resource. Resources are available at [www.lgnz.co.nz/projects/SocialandCommunityIssues/](http://www.lgnz.co.nz/projects/SocialandCommunityIssues/) and click on Growing Active Citizens. This website will also hold future updates and a place to send your case studies.

## Where have Youth Citizens' Juries been used in New Zealand?

Two Youth Citizens' Juries were undertaken in the preparation of the Guide in order to test the concept with young people in New Zealand. The two case studies are outlined briefly overleaf.

Growing Active Citizens is coordinated by *Local Government New Zealand*, in association with local and central government agencies, and educational institutions.

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**Local Government New Zealand**  
te pūtakehi matakokiri

## Local water issues – Christchurch, New Zealand, December 2007

### Issue

The issue for discussion for this Youth Citizens' Jury was the Central Plains Water scheme. This related to a large-scale irrigation scheme for the Canterbury region. It would draw water from two major rivers in the area and reallocate this water using a network of dams, tunnels, open-canals and pipes in order to irrigate 60,000 hectares of land. Many organisations, groups and individuals held an interest in the success or failure of this scheme. Students from the University of Canterbury took part in this first trial.

### Objectives

The aim of the Youth Citizens' Jury was to analyse the issue of the Central Plains Water scheme and provide the local decision-making authority and wider community with the perspectives of a group of young people from Christchurch. After hearing from expert presenters who represented a variety of viewpoints on the issue, and deliberation sessions, the jurors' provided a report outlining their opinions.

### Relationship with the decision-making body

The final report of the Youth Citizens' Jury was given to local government authorities, however, there was no direct relationship with any decision-making bodies in this case (as it was a pilot programme).

### Results

The jury did not reach a consensus or unanimous decision, and so their report concluded by explaining the two main opinions within the group. Jurors reported a significant change in their own opinions and priorities as a result of taking part in the process.

## The Bus Priority Project – Mairehau High School, Christchurch, New Zealand, August 2008

### Issue

The issue for discussion for this Youth Citizens' Jury – within a high school setting – was the 'Bus Priority Project', a recent initiative of the Christchurch City Council. The purpose of the 'Bus Priority Project' is to help make buses a more attractive travel option for the public and has involved trialling different bus priority ideas across three specifically chosen bus routes. One of the three bus routes chosen was very close to Mairehau High School, so the issue was especially relevant to the students in the class.

### Objectives

There were two main objectives for this Youth Citizens' Jury. The first was to trial a Youth Citizens' Jury in a high school setting. The second was to help encourage participation amongst young people on an issue that involved their community. This Youth Citizens' Jury was held during five one-hour periods across two weeks.

### Relationship with the decision-making body

There was no formal relationship with the decision-making body, in this case the local City Council, however the speakers were provided by the council and the council was given a copy of the final report from the class.

### Results

The 'charge' of this Youth Citizens' Jury was *Is the 'Bus Priority Project' a good idea for Christchurch?* The class collectively produced a PMI (plus, minus, interesting) chart and the final decisions and suggestions of the group were presented. For example, the class recommended that bus lanes are a good idea for the 'Bus Priority Project', because they will create a better service for passengers, peak traffic times will be improved, and traffic will flow more smoothly.

