

Monday, 8 April 2024

MEDIA RELEASE

Opening of the Bland Shire Youth Centre

On Thursday 11 April, the Bland Shire Youth Centre opened its doors to the Youth of the Bland Shire for the first time.

Youth and officials gathered at the Centre to enjoy live performances by local talents, including Leah Brohan, Jake Jewell and Breakfast at Noon. The entertainment was paired with a grazing table and pizza dinner, provided by the Council in celebration of the opening.

The night acted as the first opportunity for Youth to explore the Centre and discover the activities, facilities, and the recreational and educational tools that the Centre has on offer.

Bland Shire Council received Australian Government funding for this facility after a group of high school aged students in the Shire approached Council requesting a space that could be utilised by the demographic outside of school hours in 2020.

Following this petition, Bland Shire Council secured \$350,000 under Phase 3 of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program for the Council owned building to be converted into the space that we see today.

Located directly next to Council's main office on Shire Street, the Centre is designed to be a multi-purpose space for youth in the Bland Shire. The Centre offers study spaces with computers, an outdoor area, a kitchen, bathrooms, smart screens, videogames and a variety of physical games and youth activities.

Apologies for the event were received from Senator for New South Wales, Deborah O'Neill who commented that "as a Senator for New South Wales and a former teacher I am proud to support the development of the Bland Shire Youth Centre. The space will provide amenities for both recreation and learning to some of Australia's most important citizens. Providing a safe and accessible space for local High School aged students to call their own is important for their development".

Mayor, Brian Monaghan says "Although schools provide great tools to allow kids to progress in their education, some kids do not have access to the same technologies and support outside of school hours. The Centre provides equipment and resources for kids in an environment that is designed for them, which acts to reduce the impacts of disadvantage and allow them the opportunity to further their education and learning with their peers."

"Beyond the educational benefits of the Centre, youth can socialise, congregate and participate in activities with their peers in a way that is productive for their interpersonal relationships and for the broader community alike."

"These kids will be the future of Bland and this Centre is an investment in our future. It creates a space for youth to grow, socialise and learn in a healthy, safe, and interactive way." says the Mayor.

The Youth Centre will be staffed by recently appointed Bland Shire Council Youth Officer, Macey Cowen who was one of the initial drivers for the establishment of the Youth Centre.

The position of Youth Officer is funded by a NSW Government contribution of \$152,192 and involves monitoring and supervising the Centre on a day-to-day basis.

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Minister for Regional NSW Tara Moriarty said the youth-led initiative will be a great addition to the Bland community.

“It’s fantastic to see the young people of Bland working to create a centre that has the facilities they need and want” Minister Moriarty said.

“They’ll be able to socialise, share skills, help each other with homework, and forge wonderful warm friendships and I look forward to seeing local young people thrive thanks to the support of the dedicated Youth Officer”.

The intention for the Centre moving forward is to provide tools to allow Youth to make use of the space in both a recreational and learning capacity. The Center will be used to host youth activities and events, including afterschool programs and school holiday youth activities.

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