

2013-
2015

YOUTH STRATEGY



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Mayor's message

Strathbogie Shire Council is very proud to present the *Youth Strategy 2013-2015*.

This key policy sets out the future direction for Council as it works to meet the changing needs of the 1125 young people aged 12 to 24 years who are living, being educated and/or working in the Shire. The strategy will reflect a more developmental and strategic approach to working with young people, across Council departments and community partnerships.

The key priorities incorporated within the plan have been developed through comprehensive consultation with community stakeholders, youth sector services and young people. The intent of this strategy is that it will be adopted by the whole community, including community groups and agencies, schools and Council to ensure the best outcomes are delivered for our young people.

The strategy has identified five strategic directions Council will focus on in the next three years. These include:

- Spaces and places for youth
- Neighbourhoods for youth
- Lifestyle choices for youth
- Youth focussed services and supports
- Economies for youth.

Matched to the five strategic directions are a number of key priority areas. These are: Improving transport options, maintaining and improving facilities, promoting active engagement, providing youth focussed programs and activities, providing accurate and timely information, supporting educational opportunities, accessing services and supports, advocating for youth, supporting work pathways and providing opportunities for leadership. Actions in each priority area aim to promote engagement and encourage activities which connect young people to each other and their community.

Council would like to acknowledge the important leadership role of the Youth Strategy Advisory Committee. The development of the strategy required a truly collaborative community approach, and central to this process was the work of this advisory committee.

A youth strategy is not just a document; it is a process and a tool that can assist Council to make a real difference for young people, and create a community where young people can thrive, contribute and be recognised. It provides an opportunity for our community to reaffirm its support for young people, and to take this commitment to a new level.

Cr Debra Swan
Mayor of Strathbogie Shire Council

Mr Steve Crawcour
CEO of Strathbogie Shire Council



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At 30 June 2011, there were 1125 young people aged 12 to 24 residing in Strathbogie, representing 11.8 per cent of the area's total population⁷.

What is a youth strategy?

Young people should have the opportunity to move into adulthood, well-prepared for life ahead. Navigating a successful youth experience often means naming the things that both help and hinder the journey. Our local-level youth strategy can help to achieve this.

The *State of Australia's Young People*¹ report provides a snapshot of young people's lives today.

- Nationally, young people aged 12 to 24 represent nearly 20 per cent of the Australian population and 28 per cent of all households contain a young person.
- They contribute approximately \$50 billion to the gross national income.
- The majority of young people are in some form of education (43 per cent in secondary school, 20 per cent in tertiary education and 6 per cent in vocational education and training).
- Suicide remains the leading cause of death for young people aged 15 to 24 years, but rates in this age group declined by 48 per cent between 1997 and 2007.
- One in four young people aged between 16 and 24 are living with a mental disorder and one in three experiences moderate to high levels of psychological distress.
- Male and female teenagers aged 15 to 19 years had the highest hospitalisation rates for acute intoxication among all the groups. A large number of young people are drinking at levels which place them at risk and almost one in 100 young people report being homeless.
- Young people are more likely to become victims of some violent crimes (including sexual offences and assaults) and are less likely than older victims to report a violent crime.

Youth policies, strategies and plans are common in Victoria as frameworks used to guide councils' commitment and direction regarding young people aged 12 to 24 years in their municipal areas. Developing a youth strategy provides an opportunity for a coordinated approach to local government policy by enhancing organisational understanding of issues impacting on young people and proposing steps to effectively deal with these.

The purpose of the Strathbogie Shire Council Youth Strategy is:

- To clearly outline the role of Strathbogie Shire Council in relation to its commitment to local young people
- To strengthen connections between youth services and assist in establishing a locally based, navigable and integrated service system that meets the needs of local young people
- To identify priority areas and key strategies to drive youth policy and programs for the next three years.

Five strategic directions or factors have been identified as the focus for our youth strategy. These have been informed by recent community consultations with young people, discussions with key stakeholders, research into current youth policy and reference to other Council documents.

Factors	Summary of key priorities
Spaces and places for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving transport options • Maintaining and improving facilities
Neighbourhoods for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting active engagement • Providing youth focussed programs and activities
Lifestyle choices for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing accurate and timely information • Supporting educational opportunities
Youth focussed services and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing services and supports • Advocating for youth
Economies for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting work pathways • Providing opportunities for leadership



What are federal, state and local policy contexts?

Youth policy is a responsibility that sits across the three tiers of government.

The **Australian government** sets out its vision for young people in the *National Strategy for Young Australians 2010*. The aim of the strategy is to help guide future government policy making to ensure that young people's needs and perspectives are taken into account in all government business². It focuses on eight key priorities:

1. Improving the health and wellbeing of all young people
2. Equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through education
3. Supporting young Australians within their families
4. Empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities
5. Equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need to gain, and be successful in, employment
6. Enabling young Australians to participate confidently and safely online
7. Strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on track
8. Establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others².

The **Victorian government** has a strong existing legislative and policy framework. The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, the *Children, Youth and Families Act* and regular, formal inter-departmental discussion (for example, the Children's Services Coordination Board) focus on strategies to continually improve child and youth wellbeing.

At the policy level, Victoria currently considers the needs of its young people through a range of strategies. *Growing Victoria Together* and *A Fairer Victoria* establish the overarching strategic goals to be achieved for all Victorians, including particular focus on young Victorians.

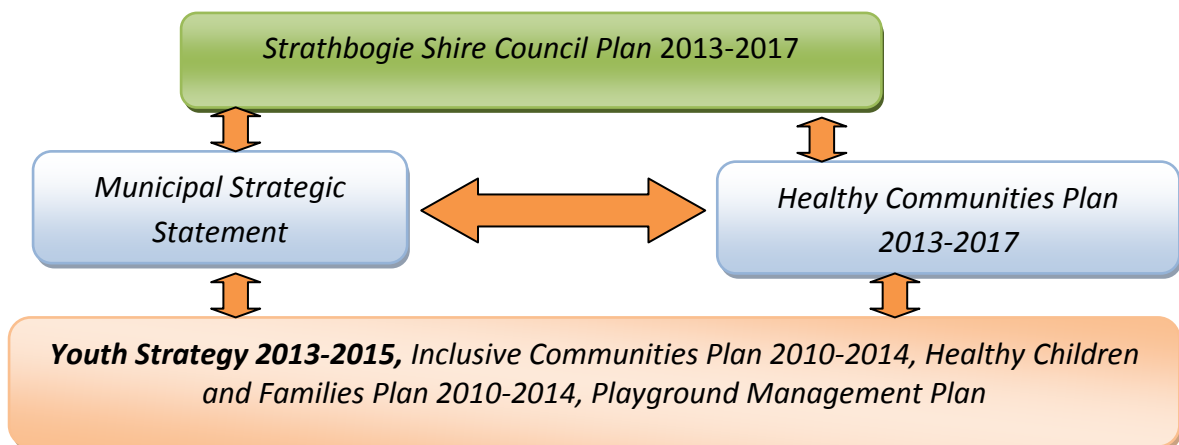
The government has also developed policies that focus primarily on young people. The key overarching policy for young people is *Future Directions: An action agenda for young people* released in 2006. In 2008, the Victorian government reported on how young people aged 12 to 24 years were faring across Victoria in *The State of Victoria's Young People*. More recently, the Victorian government's *Engage, Involve, Create Youth Statement 2012* set out a vision for Victoria's youth. It named three key priorities:

1. Getting young people involved
2. Services that meet the needs of young people
3. Create new ideas and partnerships³.

Local government plays an important leadership and facilitation role when it comes to youth policy. It is best placed to lead planning in social and physical infrastructure, and the service system for young people. Councils impact the lives of young people through a variety of ways such as providing information, advocacy to other agencies, planning and direct delivery of some services. Specific roles of Council in youth policy include:

- Developing a local-level youth strategy in collaboration with youth-focused services and agencies
- Planning and delivering programs for local youth
- Creating links with local agencies, community leaders and target group communities to streamline existing service accessibility
- Developing ‘memorandums of understanding’ regarding information sharing and developing protocols for data sharing to better respond to both individual and group youth issues in the local area.

Our local youth strategy is integral to a suite of Council strategies and plans that together identify what is going on in our community and set key priorities for the future.



Council generally has three roles it can play around youth policy.

1. Provider - we do the work
2. Facilitator - we help or work with others to get things done
3. Advocate - we speak out and support a youth issue.

Our action plan clearly defines the role Strathbogie Shire Council will assume under each key priority area.

What are the issues affecting our young people?

To better understand the issues affecting young people in the Strathbogie Shire, an integrated approach was adopted in the strategy's development. This involved a number of key consultation and research activities.

Youth Strategy Advisory Committee

A Youth Strategy Advisory Committee was formed to guide Council's thinking around youth policy for the Shire. This strategic group included members from Victoria Police, community health, schools, community education, family care, youth services and a local councillor. The purpose of the Youth Strategy Advisory Committee was to:

- Provide leadership in the area of youth policy
- Positively represent local youth experiences
- Provide informed advice to Council to assist in planning a local-level youth strategy
- Initiate and/or drive programs that meet the needs of local youth
- Bring community leaders together to focus on integrated outcomes.

The advisory committee met regularly from March to July in 2013 to oversee the development of this strategy.

Youth Strategy Discussion Paper

A discussion paper was researched, written and shared with the community via the Council's website to provide a platform for thinking about youth issues in the broader sense and what they mean for local communities in the Strathbogie Shire.

The discussion paper was framed by five key questions.

1. What is a youth strategy?
2. What are federal, state and local policy contexts?
3. What are the issues affecting our young people?
4. How are young people represented locally?
5. Where to from here?

Recommendations arising from the paper and follow-on conversations with partners and members from the Youth Strategy Advisory Committee guided this strategy's progress.

Strathbogie Shire Youth Survey

A survey was conducted for young people aged 12 to 24 years over four weeks during May 2013. Different community groups, organisations, clubs and the local secondary school were invited to complete the survey online. Hard copies of the survey were also distributed to Euroa Secondary College. Feedback from the 168 respondents was used to drive actions in the strategy.

Focus group for young people

Nine young people were involved in a focus group held by Council's youth services at the Eclipse Cafe in July 2013. Five students from the local school and four from the Shire's youth committee discussed findings from the survey and key priorities emerging from the data. Feedback from this focus group was used to inform the strategy.

Adolescent Community Profile: Shire of Strathbogrie

Research was also carried out to investigate local level information on the health, wellbeing, learning, safety and development of adolescents. The information sourced from the Adolescent Community Profile provides a snapshot of the identifiable needs of adolescents and their families within our local government area in comparison to regional and state-wide results. Data from the profile has informed decision making within this strategy.



Key findings

Findings from our key consultation and research activities were grouped under the following five strategic directions.

- Factor 1: Spaces and places for youth
- Factor 2: Youth friendly neighbourhoods
- Factor 3: Lifestyle choices for youth
- Factor 4: Youth focussed services and supports
- Factor 5: Youth friendly economies.

Spaces and places for youth

- 79.1 per cent of survey respondents said 'good environment, nice streets, open spaces, no pollution' made their area a good place to live, and 78 per cent said 'easy access to parks, bike tracks and recreational areas' made their area a good place to live.
- 56.9 per cent of survey respondents said 'good facilities and services like shops, schools, libraries' made their area a good place to live, and 20.6 per cent disagreed saying 'good facilities and services like shops, schools, libraries' did not make their area a good place to live.
- 84.2 per cent of survey respondents said 'better shops' would improve life in the area for them, 80.5 per cent said 'better entertainment', and 71.7 per cent said 'better sporting facilities'.
- When asked what stops you from doing the things you want to do, over a quarter of survey respondents said 'lack of transport' and 'access problems - the distance between towns'.
- The major concern of survey respondents (46.6 per cent) to the question 'are you concerned about any of these things' was 'not being able to get to places'.

Small town where I can get around easy without walking too far.

Lack of transportation is the biggest issue. All my friends live in different towns.

Public transport can't take me to Shepparton and the train's not very good to Benalla.

Get a bigger skate park, more sporting places

Plenty of places to experience

I like the open spaces; walking and running.

Youth friendly neighbourhoods

- 80.6 per cent of survey respondents said ‘friendly people, good neighbours, helping others’ made their area a good place to live, and 62.5 per cent said ‘an active community, people do things and get involved’ made their area a good place to live.
- In 2009, 79.5 per cent of adolescents surveyed in Hume region were satisfied with the quality of their life. This was higher than, but not significantly different to that reported across Victoria (77.1 per cent)⁴.
- 67.9 per cent of survey respondents said they liked living in their local area, and 28.4 per cent said ‘sometimes’.
- In 2009, 87.2 per cent of adolescents in Hume region reported feeling safe in their neighbourhood⁴.
- In 2009, 91.4 per cent of adolescents surveyed in Hume region said they had someone to turn to for advice. This was significantly higher than that reported across Victoria (86.1 per cent)⁴.
- When asked what you enjoy doing here, the most popular responses were spending time with my friends (26.1 per cent), playing sport (26.1 per cent) and walking/running (7.8 per cent).
- Young people value friendships and family relationships most (both highly valued by more than 80 per cent), followed by school and study satisfaction (73.8 per cent) and physical and mental health (73 per cent)⁵.
- 42.6 per cent of survey respondents said they would be happy to discuss their ideas with Council in a youth forum.

It is a safe place to grow up. Safe and tight community.

I enjoy hanging out with my friends.

Include youth in future decisions.

It would be good to have more activities like carnivals, sporting events and fun runs.

We need more diverse groups from other countries so we're not all the same.

More live music within the town, so much talent but no gigs.

Lifestyle choices for youth

- 61.3 per cent of survey respondents said that the Shire was a good place for young people to stay after they leave school.
- Based on the 2011 On Track cohort, 22.7 per cent of Year 12 students went to study at university. This was lower than the percentage across Victoria (54.7 per cent). The primary reason for not continuing with study was 'the courses you were interested in were not available locally' (60 per cent)⁶.
- In 2010, the Year 10 to 12 apparent retention rates of full-time equivalent students in the Hume region was 71.5 per cent. This was lower than the apparent retention rate across Victoria (82.4 per cent)⁴.
- In 2008, the rate of babies born to teenage women in the Hume region was 23.0 per 1000 women aged 15 to 19 years. This was more than double that of the rate in Victoria (10.6 per 1000 teenage women)⁴.
- In 2009, 40.9 per cent of adolescents aged 12 to 14 surveyed in Hume region had ever consumed alcohol, while 20.9 per cent had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. Among older adolescents aged 15 to 17 years, the proportions were significantly higher, with 72.1 per cent having ever consumed alcohol and 55.2 per cent having done so in the last 30 days⁴.
- In 2009, 10.5 per cent of adolescents aged 12 to 14 years in Hume region and 32.4 per cent of older adolescents (aged 15 to 17 years), reported that they had smoked cigarettes⁴.
- 88.2 per cent of survey respondents said 'yes' when asked 'can you find enough information about things that concern you'.
- For information, most turn to the internet (78.3 per cent), followed by talking with others (59.4 per cent) and magazines/newspapers (55.1 per cent)⁵.

Getting children my age off the street. Too many are having parties, getting intoxicated and destroying this town.

Not enough education for 18 and over.

Provide more interactive and enjoyable activities, festivals etc that will get underage children involved and away from frequent weekend binge drinking and destruction of the local community.

There are not enough educational opportunities here; we have to go to the city or big towns.

Youth focussed services and supports

- In 2009, 80.6 per cent of adolescents in Hume region felt that they could access physical health services if needed. This was higher than, but not significantly different to the proportion reported across Victoria (79.4 per cent)⁴.
- In 2009, 79.7 per cent of adolescents in Hume region felt that they could access mental health services if needed. This was higher than, but not significantly different to the proportion reported across Victoria (70.4 per cent)⁴.
- 45.3 per cent of survey respondents said they were concerned about 'keeping things private'.
- For advice, most feel most comfortable going to friends (74 per cent), parents (65.9 per cent) and relatives or family friends (60.2 per cent)⁵.
- In 2009, 41.6 per cent of adolescents in Hume region reported being recently bullied. This was lower than, but not significantly different to the proportion reported across Victoria (44.6 per cent)⁴.
- Despite a largely positive view of family relationships, around one in five (22.9 per cent) young people indicated that family relationships are of concern⁵.

Everyone needs to work harder to manage bullying and just general social mishaps/problems.

What stops me from doing something is people telling me I'm not being good enough, people telling me no.

I want to know how to deal with the bullies.

There's not enough publication of problems.



Youth friendly economies

- 78.6 per cent of survey respondents said 'more paid work' would improve life in the area for them.
- 45.1 per cent of survey respondents said they were concerned about 'getting a job'.
- 50.3 per cent of survey respondents were involved in sporting groups, 33.8 per cent were involved in school/student groups, and 19.4 per cent in youth groups and clubs.
- When asked what Council can do to make our Shire better for young people, over one fifth of survey respondents said 'better opportunities and activities for young people'.
- At 30 June 2011, there were 1125 young people aged 12 to 24 residing in Strathbogie, representing 11.8 per cent of the area's total population⁷.
- Based on DPCD projections, the population aged 10 to 17 years in Strathbogie is expected to decrease by 19.8 per cent from 997 in 2006 to 800 by 2026⁴.

There aren't enough full time or part time jobs around for young people.

Lack of skilled employment opportunities.

There aren't many opportunities in the Shire for some careers (especially arts, design, drama, sciences) but it is a nice place for families and for those interested in agriculture or country.

Depends what you are looking for. It can be hard to stay here if you want to go to university or to further education which can be up to an hour+ away. There are also not many job opportunities for younger people around the area so it can make staying here more difficult.

What will we do?

Our youth action plan

After working with our young people, understanding their needs and researching government policy and legislation, Council has established five strategic directions for action in 2013 to 2015. These factors are underpinned by Council's vision of:

A place where all young people can feel safe, valued and access opportunities to reach their potential.

Factor 1: Spaces and places for youth

We know that communities are shaped by the environments in which people live. How we plan our buildings, parks, facilities, roads and pathways impacts on the way young people participate in our community. Where young people live forms the backdrop to their lives, so it is important that, as a Council, we plan ahead for youth friendly spaces and places.

Factor 2: Youth friendly neighbourhoods

Young people have a sense of wellbeing if they are connected to others in their community and feel like they belong. We all need to feel safe, work in a meaningful way, earn enough money to live, feel valued and have time to spend with others. By planning ahead, Council can create opportunities for young people to actively participate in community life.

Factor 3: Lifestyle choices for youth

As a community we need to support healthy choices and a healthy lifestyle for our young people. By participating in physical activity, expressing feelings and exercising the brain, young people can feel better about themselves and strengthen their links within the community. To do this, young people need access to the right information and resources.

Factor 4: Youth focussed services and supports

We know that to support young people, we need ease of access to a range of health and community services. By building partnerships with other organisations and thinking about ways to improve access to our own services, Council can plan for healthier outcomes across the Shire for all young people.

Factor 5: Youth friendly economies

A healthy economy provides opportunities for young people to develop new skills, work or be involved in the community, have enough money to participate in life and have access to goods and services locally. We know that to build a healthy economy Council must encourage economic development through job creation, training, mentoring and providing concessions and rebates for young people.



Factor 1: Spaces and places for youth

Key priorities	Actions	Role	Timeframe
1.1 Improving transport options	1.1.1 Advocate through representation on networks informing <i>The Hume Strategy</i> (Hume Regional Management Forum and Hume Region Local Government Network) for improved public transport catering for the needs of young people within the Shire	Advocate	2013-2015
	1.1.2 Investigate and implement new ways of maximising participation in Council youth programs by promoting travel to and from events	Provider	2013-2015
	1.1.3 Investigate opportunities to promote travel information/awareness for young people eg. Getting their Network	Advocate	2013-2015
1.2 Maintaining and improving facilities	1.2.1 Investigate opportunities for funding for the development of skate parks	Provider	2014
	1.2.2 Manage and maintain Council's dedicated community/youth facility/ies for young people to access programs, services and resources	Provider	2013-2015
	1.2.3 Ensure youth have a voice in the development of the sound shell	Advocate	2014-2015
	1.2.4 Explore options in the Euroa Community Cinema for flexible seating to cater for multi-use events	Provider	2013-2014
	1.2.5 Explore options for a community arts, music and cultural space	Provider	2013-2015

Factor 2: Youth friendly neighbourhoods

Key priorities	Actions	Role	Timeframe
2.1 Promoting active engagement	2.1.1 Ensure young people are included in all Council consultation so young people's views and ideas can be heard and considered	Facilitator	2013-2015
	2.1.2 Encourage and resource greater involvement of young people in community action groups and other local community networks	Facilitator	2013-2015
	2.1.3 Engage youth in the design of youth facilities and public spaces	Advocate	2013-2015
	2.1.4 Engage youth in the annual review of the <i>Youth Strategy</i>	Provider	2014-2015
2.2 Providing youth focussed programs and activities	2.2.1 Provide a range of Council youth services programs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FReeZA • Engage • National Youth Week 	Provider	2013-2015
	2.2.2 Provide a range of Council youth activities/events including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth photography exhibition • Mentoring • Information and referral • Training and leadership • Sport and physical activities • Social engagement • Personal development • Themed movie nights • Music and dance events • Arts and cultural activities 	Provider	2013-2015
	2.2.3 Work closely and partner with local youth networks to support sector development activities, workshops and events	Facilitator	2013-2015
	2.2.4 Work closely with the cinema to explore options for expanded youth activities as a result of the digital upgrade	Provider	2014-2015
	2.2.5 Develop and implement frameworks and measurements to evaluate and monitor all programs and activities	Provider	2014

Factor 3: Lifestyle choices for youth

Key priorities	Actions	Role	Timeline
3.1 Providing accurate and timely information	3.1.1 Improve promotion of activities and programs for young people through a range of media especially through web based media	Provider	2013-2015
	3.1.2 Review and update Council's website to provide youth friendly information on the range of services and opportunities available to young people	Provider	2013-2015
	3.1.3 Explore options for the promotion of a calendar of events for young people	Provider	2013-2015
3.2 Supporting educational opportunities	3.2.1 Develop stronger partnerships with local schools as part of a holistic approach for better outcomes for local youth	Facilitator	2013-2015
	3.2.2 Provide young people with volunteer opportunities to develop their skills and confidence	Provider	2013-2015
	3.2.3 Continue to apply for external funding to support youth educational opportunities	Provider	2013-2015
	3.2.4 Investigate social enterprise models and associated training opportunities	Facilitator	2014

Factor 4: Youth focussed services and supports

Key priorities	Actions	Role	Timeline
4.1 Accessing services and supports	4.1.1 Provide current and relevant information and referrals to young people	Provider	2013-2015
	4.1.2 Investigate the viability of a local youth directory app for Shire services and businesses	Facilitator	2014
	4.1.3 Provide information, support and referral options to young people around bullying	Provider	2013-2015
	4.1.4 Provide information to young people about how privacy is maintained	Provider	2013-2015
4.2 Advocating for youth	4.2.1 Advocate for inclusive facilities and youth driven spaces for young people at a neighbourhood level	Advocate	2013-2015
	4.2.2 Work collaboratively with existing youth networks in the Shire to advocate for the needs of young people at relevant forums	Advocate	2013-2015
	4.2.3 Celebrate the unique contributions young people make to the Shire by promoting positive youth images and stories in the local media	Provider/facilitator	2013-2015

Factor 5: Youth friendly economies

Key priorities	Actions	Role	Timeline
4.1 Supporting work pathways	4.1.1 Work with relevant departments in Council as well as existing networks such as Goulburn Murray LLEN to develop transition options for young people moving into local employment	Facilitator	2013-2015
	4.1.2 Explore internal policies to encourage employment opportunities within Council eg. youth traineeships	Facilitator	2014
	4.1.3 Provide young people with opportunities through Council departments to develop their skills, improve their employability and encourage career pathways eg. obtaining food handling certificates	Provider	2013-2015
	4.1.4 Invite Council staff to share their expertise and career pathways with young people	Facilitator	2013-2015
4.2 Providing opportunities for leadership	4.2.1 Explore opportunities for young people to play active advisory roles within Council eg. Youth Council	Facilitator	2013-2014
	4.2.2 Promote the Australia Day Awards to support nominations for Youth Citizen of the Year	Advocate	2013-2015
	4.2.3 Promote leadership opportunities for young people in project and event management	Advocate	2013-2015
	4.2.4 Investigate opportunities for young people to be involved in state and national leadership conferences	Provider/advocate	2013-2015

How will we keep on track?

Over the next three years Council, with support from community groups, young people and stakeholders, will undertake the actions that are set out in the action plan. It is vital that the community is informed of the progress of these actions to ensure that they remain engaged and included in the plan they helped to develop.

Council will monitor these actions and provide progress updates via the following ways:

- Annual progress report to Council outlining levels of success and opportunities for improvements for the strategy's priorities and actions
- Annual update to the community on key outcomes in Council's website.



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