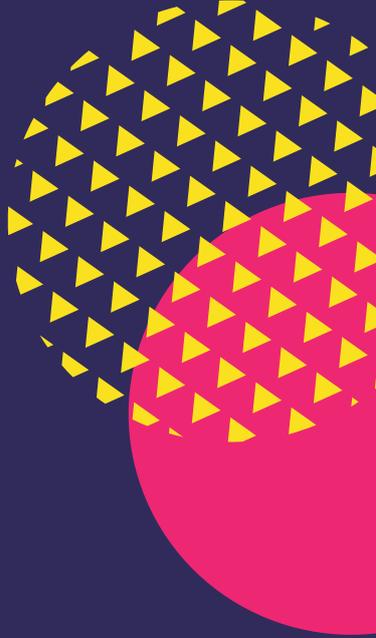


YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT SERVICES



YOUTH **ENGAGEMENT** **STRATEGY**

2024 - 2029



Mildura Rural City Council





Acknowledgements

Mildura Rural City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate and respect their continuing cultures.

Council acknowledges the contribution of the many young people who shared their wisdom, experience and ideas to inform this strategy. Council also extends its appreciation to the many organisations who provided guidance on the needs of young people which informed this strategy.

Mildura Rural City Council is a child safe organisation, working to protect children from harm through upholding the Child Safe Standards in all interactions with children and young people. The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires local government to take positive action towards

promoting gender equality in their policies, programs and services. We have zero tolerance for all forms of violence, and believe raising awareness and supporting respectful relationships is crucial to bring attitudinal and behavioural change.

We are committed to all people enjoying the same opportunities and ensuring that all actions are inclusive and promote equity.

In March 2020, Mildura Rural City Council declared a state of climate emergency requiring action by all levels of government. We are committed to creating and becoming a more sustainable community and region.

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Message from the Youth Council

As the representative body of young people, we are proud to have contributed to the Youth Engagement Strategy 2024-2029. Our diverse group aims to amplify youth voice in our municipality.

We believe that young people are the leaders of today and tomorrow and through this strategy we will strive to ensure that they are equipped and supported in their journeys. As Youth Councillors our unique position also allows us to provide an authentic youth voice.

The Youth Council has meaningfully engaged with the community to ensure youth voice is seen, heard, and valued, in this youth led strategy. The strategy has been informed by the youth survey, our diverse experiences and perspectives and will forge a pathway for future Youth Councils to continue our work.

As the first Youth Council we are proud to start this legacy for the region.



Message from the CEO

It is my pleasure to introduce our 2024-2029 Youth Strategy.

This is an important document that has been inspired by our local youth aged 12 to 25, while clearly outlining key goals, outcomes, initiatives and needs as detailed by our community.

It complements our 20-year Council Vision and four-year Council Plan, while setting the scene to deliver the programs, outcomes and activities our youth have told us they value.

More than 300 young people aged 12 to 25 contributed to the strategy's development via an online survey, which was shared with their schools, networks, on social media, and through press and radio advertising.

Young people told us that they feel educational, recreational and employment opportunities are important to ensuring they reach their full potential. They also told us about the key issues they are concerned about - smoking and vaping, alcohol and drugs, mental health and safety, were all challenges young people identified.

The strategy aims to give our youth a voice, ensure they are connected, are healthy and well, have access to safe places and spaces and can access the opportunities that matter to them.

Thank you to our Youth Council, Youth Engagement Services team and the young people who contributed.

Martin Hawson



Introduction

The Youth Engagement Strategy 2024-2029 outlines how Council will support and respond to the needs of young people aged 12-25 years, who live, work, study or play in the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) municipality.

The MRCC Youth Council have played a lead role in the engagement of young people in our community to gain diverse perspectives on matters impacting their lives.

The Youth Council have been supported to co-design Council's first youth-led Youth Engagement Strategy.

The MRCC's Youth Engagement Strategy 2024-2029 outlines an integrated approach to ensure we value and include young people in decision-making. The strategy aims to ensure there are meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute and that young people are empowered to shape our community.

The development of the focus areas and objectives for Council's strategic plan has been informed by:

- Community consultation with more than 300 young people who completed the online survey
- Consultation with key community stakeholders
- An internal evaluation of the previous Youth Engagement Strategy 2020-2023, including recommendations for the new Youth Engagement Strategy
- Research considering factors that support positive youth development

Vision

Councils Vision 2021-2040

Making this the most liveable, people-friendly community in Australia.

Youth Council Vision

A better world where young people are empowered to reach their full potential.



Development of the Youth Strategy

In June 2023, Mildura Rural City Council endorsed the commencement of a Youth Council pilot. The Mildura Rural City Youth Council was established in August 2023 as an advisory and advocacy committee.

Following the internal review of the previous Youth Engagement Strategy 2020-2023, the Youth Council began working on the new strategy and took a lead role in supporting the Youth Engagement Services (YES) team to develop the engagement plan, promote the survey and collate more than 300 responses from young people.

The YES team also undertook further stakeholder consultation through workshops with key partners and youth organisations within the community, before working alongside the Youth Council to analyse survey responses and determine key focus areas and priorities for the Youth Strategy 2024-2029.

The draft strategy was opened for public exhibition and the community were invited to provide feedback before endorsement by Youth Council and Mildura Rural City Council on 22 August 2024.

The Youth Council has been integral to the development of the next strategy, including the look, feel, focus and priorities. Youth Council will continue to play a key role in supporting implementation of the strategy, by undertaking targeted actions that align with key focus areas and priorities identified during their Youth Council term.

Youth Council

August 2023

Mildura Rural City Council's first Youth Council established

Commenced Youth Strategy

January 2024

Youth Council co-design survey and promotion

Survey and Consultation

February 2024

Youth survey and stakeholder consultation sessions

Setting Priorities

June 2024

Youth Council establish priorities for new strategy, draft strategy presented to Council

Public Exhibition

July 2024

Young people, parents/carers, partners and community invited to provide feedback

Strategy Endorsement

August 2024

By Youth Council and Mildura Rural City Council

Strategy Launch

August/September 2024

Our Young People

Almost 8700 young people aged 12-24 years live in the Mildura LGA, representing 15 per cent of the overall population.

Data collected from the 2021 ABS census helps to identify the demographics of the youth population for Mildura LGA, and some of the factors that indicate how well they are fairing regarding their safety, health and wellbeing, education, training and employment, and participating in community through volunteering and unpaid care.

The data revealed that 19 per cent of young people aged 15-19 in Mildura were not fully engaged in education or employment, which is 1.6 times higher than the state average.

It also revealed that only 2541 young people in the LGA completed Year 12 or equivalent, which is just over half of the population in that age bracket.

Youth of Mildura LGA 2021 ABS census data



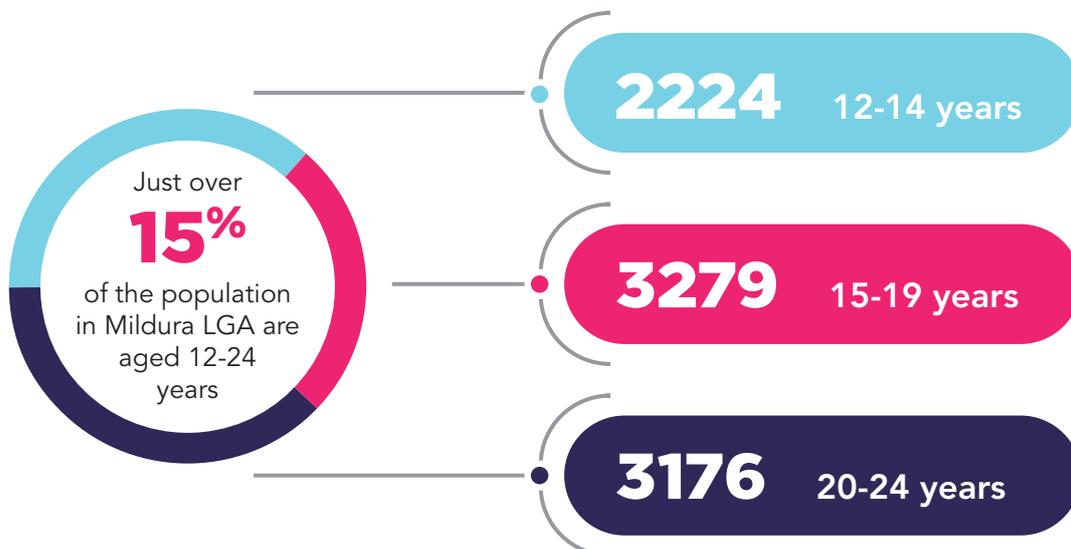
669
or 7.7% are Aboriginal
or Torres Strait
Islander origin
(10-24 years)



Total of
8679
people aged 12-24



267
or 4% of 15-24
years olds are living
with a disability
requiring assistance



Education and employment in the 2021 census



57%
of young people are in
paid employment



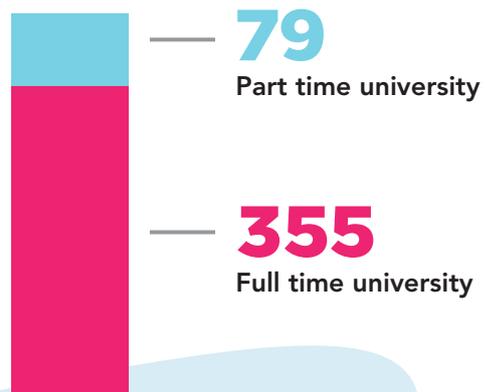
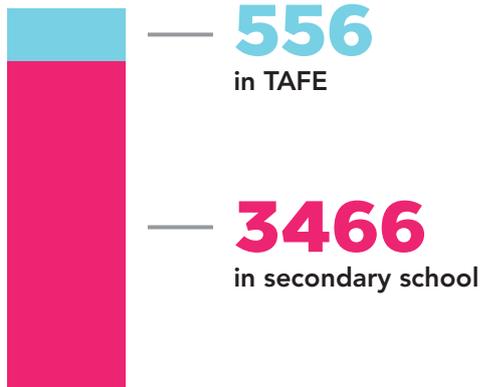
11%
of young people volunteer
in their spare time



2541
young people in Mildura
LGA had completed Year
12 or equivalent



1300
or 15% of young people
provide unpaid childcare and/
or aged/disability assistance



What Young People Told Us

The development of the Youth Strategy was informed by extensive consultation with young people in our community.

An online survey was shared with young people via schools, networks, social media, press advertising, radio advertising and the Mildura Rural City Council website.

To ensure Council reached a broad cross-section of the community, pop-up sessions were also held at a variety of schools, the local university, holiday programs, after school activities and key community groups representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other cultural backgrounds.

317 young people aged 12-25 years participated in the survey

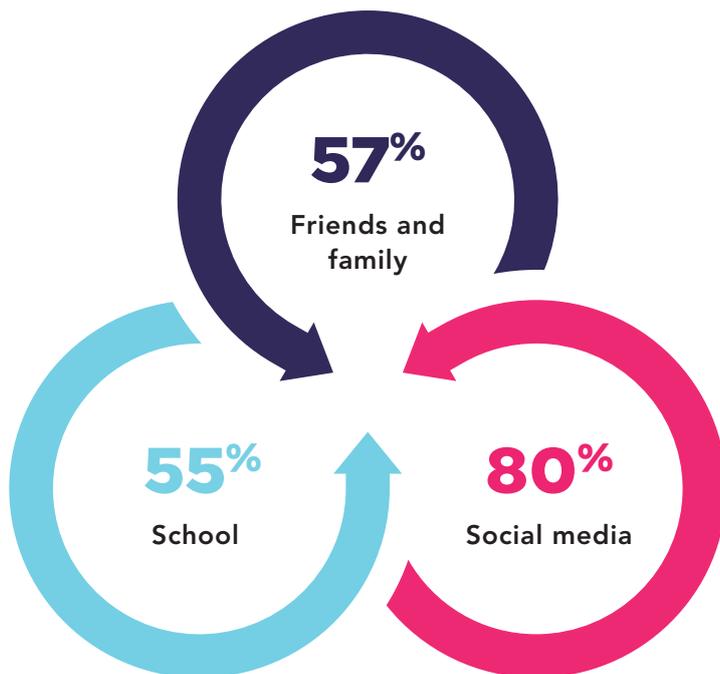


11%
non-English speaking households



15%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin

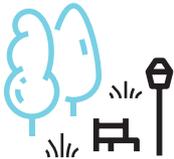
Predominantly, information about events and support services is received via:



Council facilities most utilised by young people are:



61%
Swimming pools



58%
Parks/
Reserves



55%
Sporting fields/courts

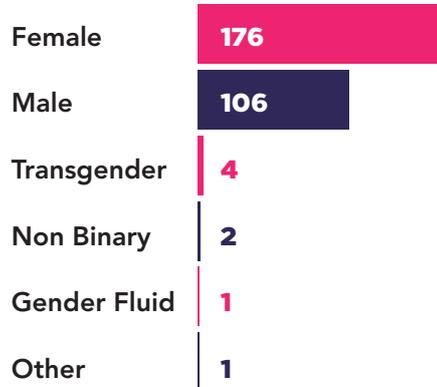


29%
Libraries

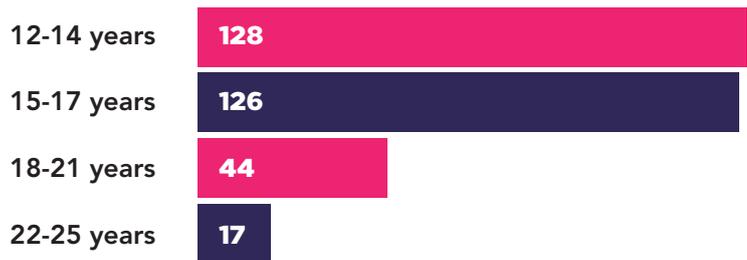


6%
Skate parks

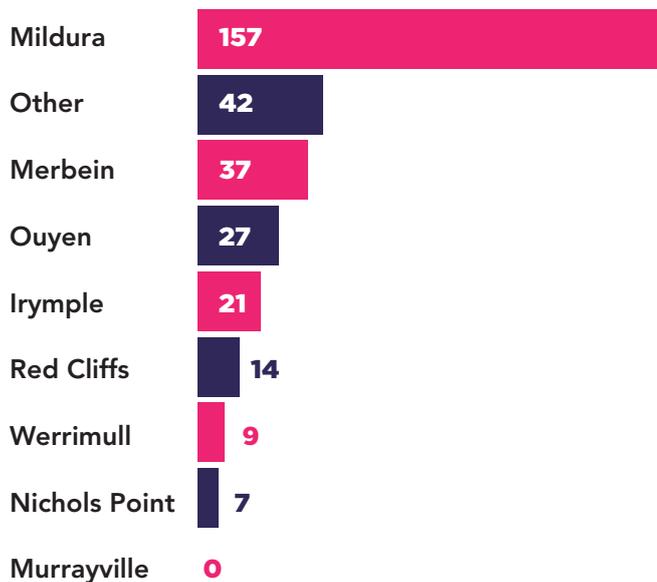
What is your gender?



How old are you?



Where do you live?



What are your interests and hobbies?

12-17's told us

- Sport - **72%**
- Homebased activities - **40%**
- Self-directed activities - **33%**
- Performing Arts - **24%**
- Gaming - **18%**

18-25's told us

- Homebased activities - **58%**
- Self-directed activities - **44%**
- Creative Activities - **32%**
- Sports - **27%**
- Performing Arts - **24%**



Homebased activities: (Gardening, listening to music, craft, lego, cooking, reading)

Self-directed activities: (Pools, parks, gym, running, motorbikes, mountain biking, walking, skatepark)

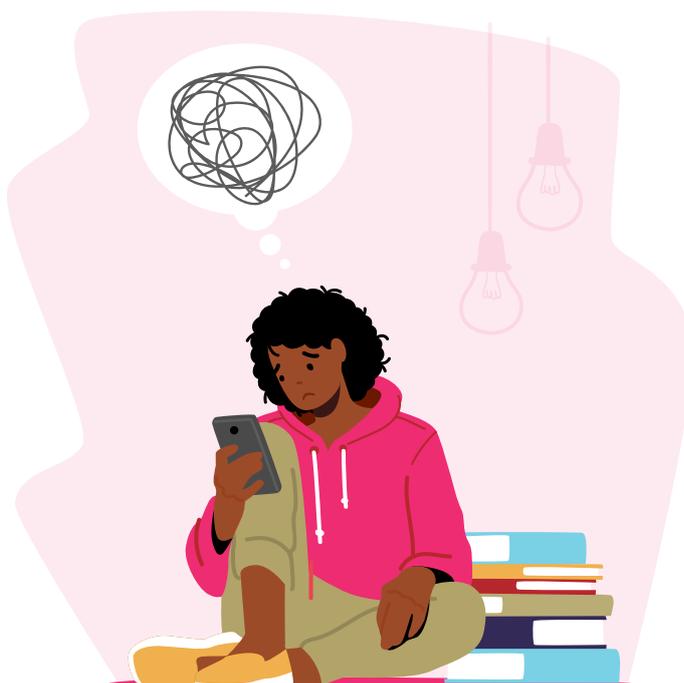
What are the most important issues facing young people?

12-17's told us

- Smoking and vaping - **75%**
- Alcohol and drugs - **67%**
- Mental health - **66%**
- Crime - **54%**
- Safety - **37%**
- Health - **37%**

18-25's told us

- Mental health - **68%**
- Alcohol and drugs - **63%**
- Smoking/vaping - **54%**
- Financial matters - **51%**
- Completing education - **46%**
- Homelessness/housing - **36%**



Where do you hang out with friends?

12-17's told us

- Shops - **41%**
- Active rec spaces - **32%**
- At friends houses - **25%**
- In education spaces - **24%**
- The natural environment - **24%**

18-25's told us

- Eateries - **39%**
- Shops - **37%**
- Natural environment - **34%**
- Friends - **31%**
- At home - **24%**



What programs and services would make our community better?

12-17's told us

- Things to do after school - **59%**
- Sport recreation and fitness activities - **53%**
- Things to do on the weekend - **53%**
- School holiday activities - **48%**
- Support to find a job - **46%**
- Money skills - **42%**

18-25's told us

- Things to do on the weekends - **68%**
- Money skills - **63%**
- Mental health support - **59%**
- Support to find a job - **49%**
- Things to do after school - **41%**
- Cultural/art/creative activities - **39%**



Is there anything else?

Community safety and respect

Asking young people what they would like for activities

Not enough services for young people

More support to find jobs to make money

Basketball courts near skate parks or parks

Mental health support is difficult to access for young people

Travel for isolated communities to activities and events – no activities in their area, nothing aimed at teens

Safe and inclusive spaces

Transport is an issue for young people as they need to rely on adults to transport them

More things for young people to do to reduce youth crime

More for young teens

Improve bicycle infrastructure

Fun safe places and fun activities outside of school and on weekends

Drinking culture terrible – more for 18+ as they are bored, opportunities to meet new people that don't involve alcohol

Youth crime, working with young people and families

Housing is difficult – can't afford to move out, need to find alternative places to hang out so not at parents so go to rowers, parks etc



FReeZA crew - Red Cliffs Cinema Night 2023



Our Focus

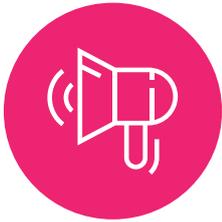
Young people have a **VOICE**

Young people have access to **OPPORTUNITIES**

Young People are **CONNECTED**

Young people have access to **SAFE PLACES & SPACES**

Young people are **HEALTHY & WELL**



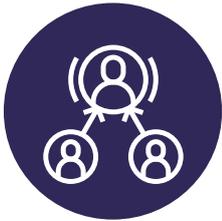
Voice

Young people's opinions and perspectives are valued, they are empowered to lead and advocate for positive change.



Opportunities

Young people are equipped and supported to engage, participate and learn. They are empowered to realise their full potential.



Connected

Young people have access to programs that enhance social inclusion, connection and encourage a sense of belonging to community.



Safe Places & Spaces

Young people have access to safe, inclusive places and spaces. They feel respected and welcome.



Healthy & Well

Young people enjoy good physical health and wellbeing. They have access to opportunities and support for their diverse wellbeing, social and recreational needs.



1 Focus Area: Voice

Objective: Young people's opinions and perspectives are valued, they are empowered to lead and to advocate for positive change.

- Encourage and support the participation of young people in Youth Council
- Actively consult, engage and consider young people in Council's decision-making
- Support opportunities for young people to engage, co-design, plan and lead community activities, programs and events
- Provide opportunities for young people to advocate for positive change through existing groups and programs and explore opportunities for new initiatives.

Opportunities

Mildura Rural City Youth Council, youth consultation and co-design on MRCC plans, strategies and projects, youth-led events, Youth Parliament, community partnerships to develop and deliver youth-led community events, activities and programs.

2 Focus Area: Opportunities

Objective: Young people are equipped and supported to engage, participate and learn. They are empowered to reach their full potential.

- Facilitate opportunities for young people to gain skills and experience to enhance personal development and improve work-readiness
- Facilitate volunteering opportunities for young people to increase participation and develop new skills as a potential pathway to employment
- Continue to support schools and vulnerable young people to engage in education through the School Focused Youth Service program
- Partner and collaborate with local youth organisations to support an integrated approach to provision of youth activities, events and programs.

Opportunities

Provision of free training opportunities for young people, facilitate programs supporting personal development and life-skills, provide volunteering opportunities for young people, promote volunteering opportunities in our community, deliver programs to support building confidence, capacity and work readiness, supporting school retention and transition pathways/programs, school holiday programs and after school activities.



3 Focus Area: Connected

Objective: Young people have access to programs that enhance social inclusion, connection and encourage a sense of belonging to community.

- Celebrate and promote young people's achievements
- Explore opportunities for differentiated and targeted programs, including age specific programs
- Provide a regular program of youth activities that encourage young people to try new things and connect
- Encourage networking and collaboration among stakeholders.

Opportunities

Youth Awards, Youth Arts Prize, pilot targeted activities and events aimed at middle years and young adults, strengthening social networks for young people, diversity of programs that are culturally and socially inclusive, school holiday programs, after school programs, evening and weekend activities, partnering with internal and external partners to pilot new initiatives.





4 Focus Area: Safe Places & Spaces

Objective: Young people have access to safe, inclusive places and spaces. They feel respected and welcome.

- Activate and promote existing safe and accessible public spaces and facilities for young people
- Explore opportunities to improve and/or increase safe places and spaces for young people in our community
- Support initiatives and partnerships that aim to improve safety, inclusion and respect in the community
- Facilitate opportunities for young people to participate in community planning through consultation and co-design opportunities.

Opportunities

Partnering internally and externally to activate public spaces, for example libraries, sporting venues, performing arts venues, outdoor pools, skate parks, parks, riverfront, etc. Engaging young people in community planning through the Youth Council, identifying barriers to participation and access, working with young people to co-design activities/programs that activate public open spaces and facilities.

5 Focus Area: Healthy & Well

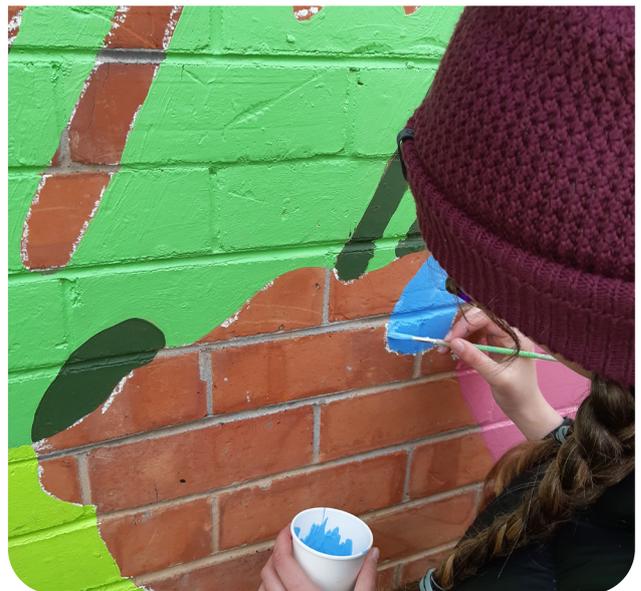
Objective: Young people enjoy good physical health and wellbeing. They have access to opportunities and support for their diverse wellbeing, social and recreational needs.

- Advocate for young people to have access to local, affordable and inclusive mental health services, including connecting young people to information
- Support initiatives to increase participation in recreational, social and sporting activities for young people
- Collaborate with community to improve young people's health and wellbeing
- Support community settings to be safe, welcoming and inclusive of young people.

Opportunities

Work with community partners to support health initiatives, for example initiatives aimed at reducing vaping/smoking and alcohol/drug use. Advocate for delivery of Mental Health First Aid and Teen Mental Health First Aid in community settings, audit existing support services and identify gaps, explore and pilot programs to increase participation in recreational and sporting activities for young people.





Summary

MRCC plays a vital role in the community, to advocate for young people to be heard in decision-making processes that impact their lives. MRCC have the responsibility to provide safe places and spaces that maximise engagement and connection and to provide opportunities for young people, to support their wellbeing, social and recreational needs.



Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

To support the implementation of the Youth Engagement Strategy 2024-2029:

- Action plans will be developed on an annual basis in consultation with the Youth Council and key stakeholders. Action Plans will detail priority areas, responsible parties, timeframes for completion, measures and evaluation for each year of the strategy.
- Youth Council will have actions aligning to their one-year term and report on their progress each quarter.
- Actions that are the responsibility of MRCC Youth Engagement Services will be incorporated into the relevant Council branch plans and will be aligned to the Council Plan. Progress will be regularly monitored via branch plan reporting each quarter including reference to relevant available data.
- An Annual Report will be produced by the Youth Engagement Services Coordinator.
- Key stakeholders will be engaged regularly through networks facilitated by the Youth Engagement Services team – including the Youth Providers Network and Schools Wellbeing Network, and through collaborations and partnerships as they present.

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Framework (MEL)

Results Based Measurements

- 1. How much did we do, how many did we reach, what diversity of reach?**
Number of programs, activities, events conducted
- 2. How well did we do it?**
Planning & delivery, staff morale, unit cost, service standards, customer satisfaction, timely, percentage of youth completing programs, activities
- 3. Were Youth better off?**
Knowledge & skills, attitudes & opinions, behaviours, improved circumstances

Collection Tools

Counts, surveys, post activity reflections, reference to relevant available data, most significant change stories, case studies, journey mapping most significant learning.

Evaluation Questions

- To what extent is MRCC working with the Youth Council? Is youth voice being considered across MRCC projects, programs and events?
- How well have we disseminated a youth-friendly summary of the strategy throughout our community?
- How well have we engaged with the collective voices of young people in our community?
- What engagement methods were used to reach the collective voices of youth?
- To what extent have youth directed or informed activities and investment decisions?
- To what extent is the community aware of Youth Engagement Services?
- To what extent have we promoted the achievements of the strategy to young people?
- Has the Youth Engagement Strategy influenced policies and practices for youth?
- How well have we responded to the key priorities identified by young people in our community?
- Is life better for youth?

Most Significant Learnings Through Time





Supporting Plans and Strategies

Local:

Community Vision 2021-2040
Council Plan 2021-25
Municipal Early Years Plan 2020-2025
Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
Hands Up Mallee – Collective Impact Initiative
Recreation Strategy 2021-2031
Gender Equality Action Plan
Public Open Space Strategy
Library Service Strategy 2020-2025

State:

VicHealth – Future Healthy Countdown 2030
Victorian Child Safe Standards
Our Future, Your Future: Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022-2027

National:

The Nest – National Plan for Child and Youth Wellbeing
Engage! Youth Engagement Strategy

