

CHATSWOOD LIBRARY | CIVIC PAVILION



Willoughby Youth Action Plan
2024 - 2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Willoughby City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we stand, the Gamaragal people. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Who Are Young People?

Willoughby City Council defines young people as those aged 12-24 years of age, who live, work, study or play within Willoughby City.

During the 2021 [Census](#), it was identified that there was 11,159 young people living in Willoughby aged between 12 and 24 years; an increase of 3% in the youth population since the previous Census in 2016.



A Message from Young People

All around the world, young people have been at the heart of promoting diversity, acceptance and love, and we feel that young people in Willoughby are welcoming and inclusive to young people of all ages and backgrounds. With more than 11,000 young people living, working or playing in Willoughby, we embody the very soul of the Australian spirit by facilitating the social, cultural and economic growth of our community.

In order for young people in our community to thrive, it is essential to recognise the weight that our voices hold within our community. That is why it is essential for young people to be included as an integral part of planning for the future of our City.

Willoughby City Council's Youth Action Plan (YAP) is designed by young people, for young people. This plan will guide the work of Council's Youth Services Team and support partnership work across the Lower North Shore.

This YAP acknowledges our human rights, opinions, strengths and the values that we stand for, and allows for the amalgamation of diverse individual voices into one strong voice. We are proud to present the Willoughby YAP.



Message from the Mayor

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to every young individual whose invaluable contributions have played a pivotal role in shaping the Youth Action Plan (YAP).

Your stories, thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and opinions are not just heard but valued. You are the architects of the Youth Action Plan, and your input has directly shaped the blueprint for a brighter future in Willoughby.

I'd also like to acknowledge Council's Willoughby Youth Action Group (WYAG), whose unwavering dedication has been instrumental in the development and design of the YAP from its inception as well as our local youth sector who have continued to support young people in the Willoughby Local Government Area.

The Youth Action Plan is a testament to Willoughby's commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for its young residents and I look forward to continuing to strengthen and nurture Council's partnerships with the local youth sector.

Tanya Taylor
Willoughby Mayor

Contents

<i>Why A YAP?</i>	<u>10</u>
<i>Fast Facts - Young People</i>	<u>12</u>
<i>Who Participated?</i>	<u>12</u>
<i>How We Engaged with Young People</i>	<u>13</u>
<i>We Heard What Young People Said</i>	<u>16</u>
<i>What Are These Themes About?</i>	<u>21</u>
<i>Why 'Including Us' matters</i>	<u>22</u>
<i>Including Us - what we'll do</i>	<u>30</u>
<i>Why 'Supporting Us' matters</i>	<u>42</u>
<i>Supporting Us - What We Will Do</i>	<u>52</u>
<i>Why 'Respectful Relationships' matter</i>	<u>58</u>
<i>Respectful Relationships - What We Will Do</i>	<u>64</u>
<i>Why being 'Skilled & Ready' matters</i>	<u>68</u>
<i>Skilled & Ready - What We Will Do</i>	<u>74</u>



Why Develop a YAP?

There are more than 11,000 young people aged 12-24 years living in the Willoughby City Council LGA, representing around 14.8% of our total population. Young people's thoughts, attitudes, opinions and ideas are vital to the future of our City and the Lower North Shore.

Young people are valuable members of society and the way we include, reflect and recognise their contributions will influence the future direction of Willoughby Council's Youth Team projects and programs.

The complex consequences of COVID-19 called for a considered approach to the future of young people. Much like Willoughby's [Resilient Willoughby Strategy and Action Plan](#), a YAP meets the commitment to young people, by responding to their needs through a new lens.

Willoughby Youth Action Group were invested in contributing to the development of a Youth Action Plan that acknowledges the needs of young people and identifies how to support those needs over the next 3/5 years.



How Does the YAP Fit?

This initiative embodies an overall commitment to the values of inclusion, liveability and accountability in relation to a broader planning framework. Willoughby City Council's Strategic Plan ([Our Future Willoughby 2032](#)), sets the direction for our community priorities over the next 5 years.

There are close links between the six themes in this YAP and our community priorities in the Strategic Plan. Key objectives in the Strategic Plan relating to young people include:

- **2.3 Celebrate and encourage our diversity**
- **5.1 Be honest, transparent and accountable in all that we do**
- **5.2 Demonstrate leadership and advocacy for local priorities**
- **5.4 Anticipate and respond to changing community and customer needs**
- **5.5 Make it easy for citizens to participate in decision-making**

We asked, and listened to young people about what is great about Willoughby and what can make it an even better place. We did this through a survey and interactive workshops. Six hundred and forty four young people contributed over five thousand thoughts.

The feedback received has contributed to the development of this YAP. This YAP provides the strategic direction over the next 3 years for the delivery of contemporary youth services, programs, activities and events that support our diverse population to realise their rights and achieve their priorities and aspirations.

Willoughby City Council's Youth Services Team will work alongside the local youth sector, schools, young people and the community to make Willoughby an even better place for young people.



644 young people participated in the research

73% were aged 12-18

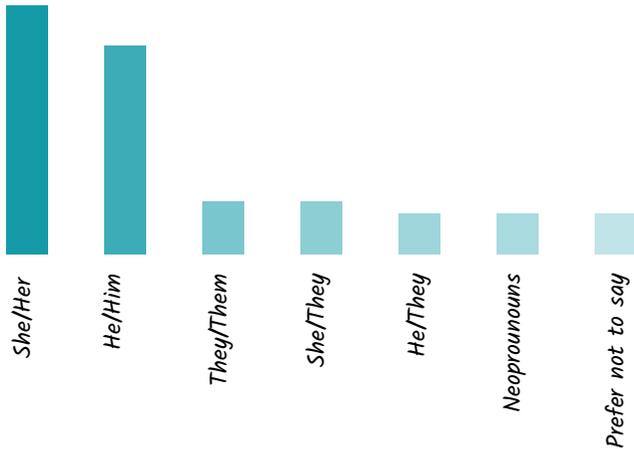
27% were aged 18-24

25% identify as LGBTQIA+

9% live with disability

Identity

351 out of **644** who participated identified as:



Diversity

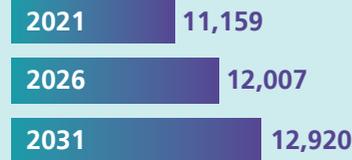
What languages do our young people speak other than English?

Top 3 languages spoken other than English:

1. Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) **32%**
2. Korean **6%**
3. Japanese **5%**

The Future

Projected growth of our youth population forecasts an increase of 7.6% for every five year period between 2021-2031.



How we engaged with Young People

We engaged with young people from July 2022 to February 2023. This is how they participated:

School Workshops

- **4 workshops**
- **120 young people**

Four interactive workshops were conducted during Willoughby Girls High School Excursions to Chatswood Youth Centre, with total of 120 young people participated in these workshops which helped to develop survey questions.

Youth Intercept Surveys

- **351 young people**

Young people were encouraged to fill out the youth survey at popular youth hang out spots, including: Chatswood Westfield, Chatswood skate-park, The Concourse, Chatswood Library and Chatswood Youth Centre.

Willoughby Youth Action Group

- **10 young people**

Willoughby Youth Action Group participated in training in Appreciative Enquiry that was developed and delivered by [Youth Action](#). They contributed to every stage of the YAP process, from survey development to ideas on incentives and promotional material to encourage youth engagement.

Interactive Sessions

- **163 young people**

- **St Leonards TAFE, Macquarie University Orientation Week, and Chatswood Youth Centre**

Young people contributed ideas and solutions after the survey data analysis highlighted four themes which we explore in more depth further on.

Data Analysis

- **644 Young people participated in engagement activities.**

After closing off the survey, our Youth Development Officers reviewed the information gathered from the workshops and survey.

Young people were open and honest about their concerns and potential solutions.

We encourage everyone reading this YAP to listen and include young people in decision-making processes, and take actions available to them to ensure young people can access the opportunities and support that they need to thrive.



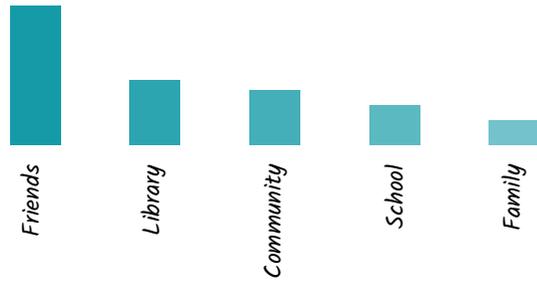
How Did We Tell Young People What Was Happening?

In order to raise awareness of the project and to get young people involved, Council's Youth Services Team started with social media posts and promoted the survey and the workshops through local High Schools, St Leonards TAFE, Macquarie University wellbeing teams; and Chatswood Youth Centre.

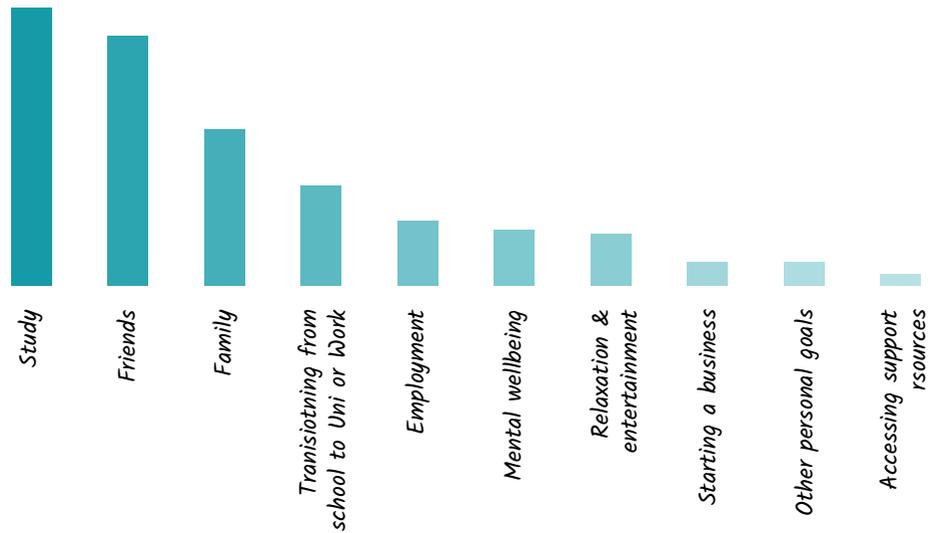
Young people were invited to 'have their voice heard', sharing their thoughts, priorities and needs; to achieve their ideal quality of life in terms of living, studying, working and playing in Willoughby City. Youth Intercept Surveys and Interactive Sessions were the most successful methods because young people responded to incentives and peer engagement.

What Young People Said in the Youth Survey:

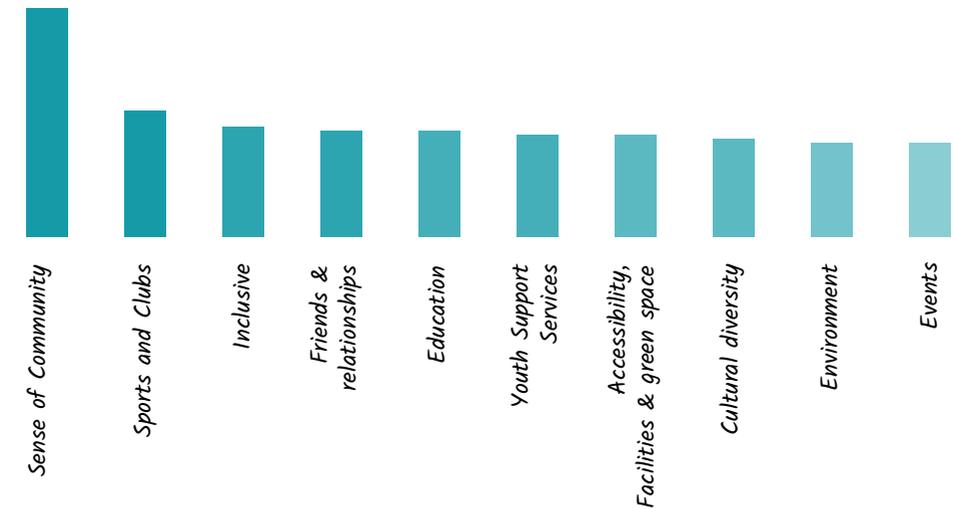
What has helped young people feel included and supported?



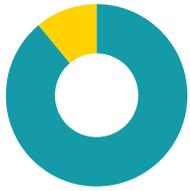
What are young people's priorities?



What are the strengths of our community?

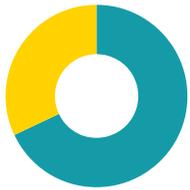


Young people were invited to share a time that they felt included and supported, and whether their priorities were understood and responded to.



89% provided positive examples.
11% stated they were unsure, did not have this experience or could not give examples.

Young people were asked to give examples on other communities that make their people feel included and supported.



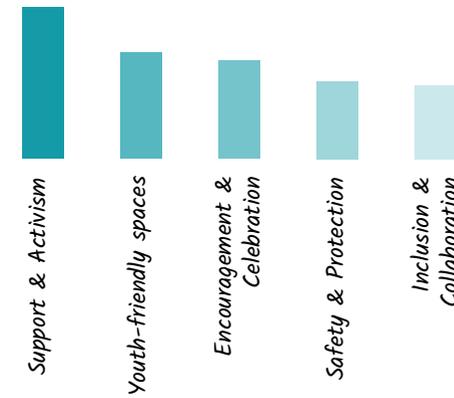
68% provided positive examples.
32% stated they were unsure or could not give an example.

Feedback

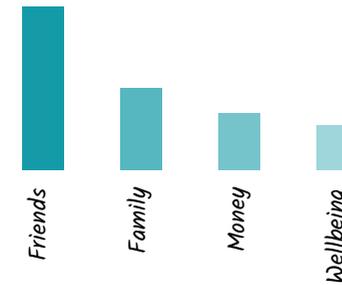
We acknowledge the high percentage of young people unsure or unable to provide positive examples to question 11 and 12 and acknowledge that some young people might not have had positive experiences in these areas. It is important to note that upon further investigation, young people suggested the two questions might have been confusing or challenging to answer.



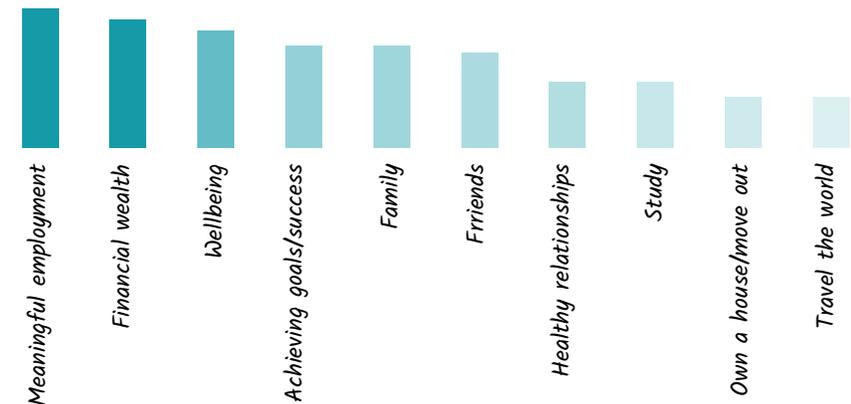
How do young people want to be supported?



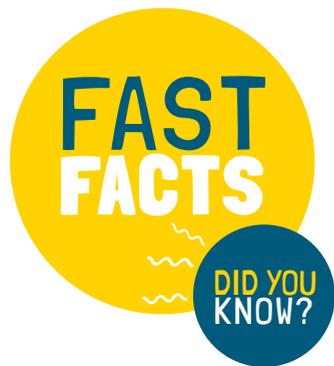
What do young people need for the future and a good life?



What does an ideal future look like?



Young people revealed their top personal challenges in 2022 revolved around:



- **41% School challenges**
Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties and overall school challenges
- **27.7% Mental health**
Anxiety, depression, stress, low self-esteem, self-harm
- **19.7% Relationship Challenges**
Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others. (Mission Australia 2022)

We heard what young people said, so how does this translate into a YAP?

Listening to young people – their opinions, thoughts, experiences, stories and knowledge has been the basis on which this action plan has been developed. Six hundred and forty four young people told us about what it is like living, studying and being a part of Willoughby City. They shared their priorities and what we can do better to support them to achieve and succeed.

We had over 5,000 thoughts, opinions and ideas, we analysed the data, and some common themes began to emerge.

Four key themes were identified: Including Us, Supporting Us, Respectful Relationships and Skilled & Ready.



What are these themes about?



Including Us

Including us is all about making sure young people are included in community life and local decision-making to create a more vibrant Willoughby City – socially, culturally and economically.



Supporting Us

Supporting us is all about ensuring young people are happy, healthy and fulfilled, to provide them with a strong foundation for their wellbeing that will serve them throughout their lifetime.



Respectful Relationships

Respectful relationships are all about empowering young people with the information and skills they need to have safe, secure and healthy relationships.



Skilled & Ready

Skilled and ready is all about improving young people's education and career opportunities in the constantly changing and evolving world of learning, education, skill development, and employment.



Why 'Including Us' Matters

Young people are experts in their own experiences, and their views are essential to solving the challenges for them.

Young people's views should not only be heard, but be influential and taken into account on all matters that impact their lives. This means participating in local decision-making, social opportunities, sporting opportunities, clubs and creative pursuits, and in activities, programs and events that are aligned with their interests.

When young people are encouraged to come up with their own ideas and solutions, they're often inspired to take action themselves.

Young people are of critical importance and enrich the life of our community. Participating in local decision making where young people can express themselves and have their opinions heard and valued supports their skill development. Young people can build their self-confidence, leadership, negotiation and other transferable skills.

Being included as a young person provides young people with opportunities to grow and thrive and is essential to development, learning and wellbeing. Benefits include improved communication and social skills, building resilience and coping mechanisms, gaining early leadership experiences and establishing new social networks.

It is important that young people from all ages, backgrounds, strengths and abilities be provided with the same opportunities to play and learn, take part in the community, build relationships with important people in their lives and feel that they belong.

Sense of Community

Young people talked about the strengths of our region being our 'sense of community', highlighting the important role that sports and special interest clubs and supportive communities have played in catering to young people's needs in providing positive experiences for inclusion and supporting diversity.

Inclusion

Young people are grateful and value the secular communities they belong to, and they identified that they feel included, through participation and/or membership of various groups; these include: LGBTQIA+, various cultural groups, special interest groups, religious groups, gaming clubs, sporting and recreation groups, movie fan clubs and places of work. Young people value their friends and relationships and are thankful for being invited and included in activities and social gatherings.

It is evident from the feedback that young people feel that their schools are proactive at promoting and fostering a culture of inclusion, which makes them feel safe and welcome.

Young people described what it feels like to be included:



Quotes from young people about inclusion

“ I felt included in a netball team, it was also very supportive. If we lost a game, the team wouldn't be annoyed or angry, it would be like we can train harder and get a win. ”

“ When I did GLAM boxing at Chatswood Youth Centre. I felt everyone there was equal and I felt supported by our instructors. It was a fun time and I got a lot out of the body image sessions. When I signed up I wasn't 100% but after doing the course I was really fulfilled. ”

“ When my friends and I are talking about our different cultures and traditions. ”

“ Seeing representation in promotional material. ”

“ I am an immigrant and I felt very included into this western environment, especially when I was offered school captaincy. ”

“ When I first moved to this country, they accepted me. ”

“ When my friends invited me to get my nails done with them. ”

“ Bringing ideas forward to my school principal. He sat, listened and appreciated my passion. ”

COVID-19

Young people talked about how much they appreciated the support of their education providers during life transitions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, young people across the state were not allowed to attend school and had to continue their education online. This impacted young people in various ways, in some cases resulting in technical issues at home, isolation, educational disruption, housing stress and strained family relationships.

[The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) found that COVID-19 significantly affected social connectedness; the easing of restrictions brought structure and connectedness back to young people's lives, however young people still feel the impacts of the pandemic period. There may be longer term effect for young people, including:

- **Adverse effects from the disruption to education**
- **The potential consequences of their long-term employment prospects and finances**
- **Access to secure housing**
- **Mental health**

Accessible and Open Spaces

Young people recognised how our community provides accessible spaces and places. They discussed what it means to have inclusive spaces to hang out, study, play or rest with youth-friendly support staff that make them feel welcome and valued. Youth-friendly spaces in Willoughby include:

- **Chatswood Youth Centre**
- **Chatswood Library**
- **Dougherty Community Centre**

Young people also identified a variety of well-equipped public facilities and open spaces that they access, such as Willoughby Leisure Centre, Gore Hill Oval and Chatswood Oval.





Activities and Events

Young people identified a range of programs, events and activities across Willoughby LGA delivered by community-based and private providers. However, young people said that they are not regular enough, and often are not aware of what is going on. Young people today have a multitude of options when it comes to receiving information about local opportunities. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are popular sources of information, as are community websites and bulletin boards. Many schools and youth organizations also keep their students informed about local opportunities through newsletters, emails, and flyers. In addition, word of mouth remains a powerful tool for spreading information among young people.

Youth Advocacy

Young people identified how much they value youth advocacy opportunities, leadership projects and accessible opportunities to participate in all aspects of life. Young people want to be invited to get involved in diverse and creative ways, to have their opinions heard, lived-experiences valued and to take action.

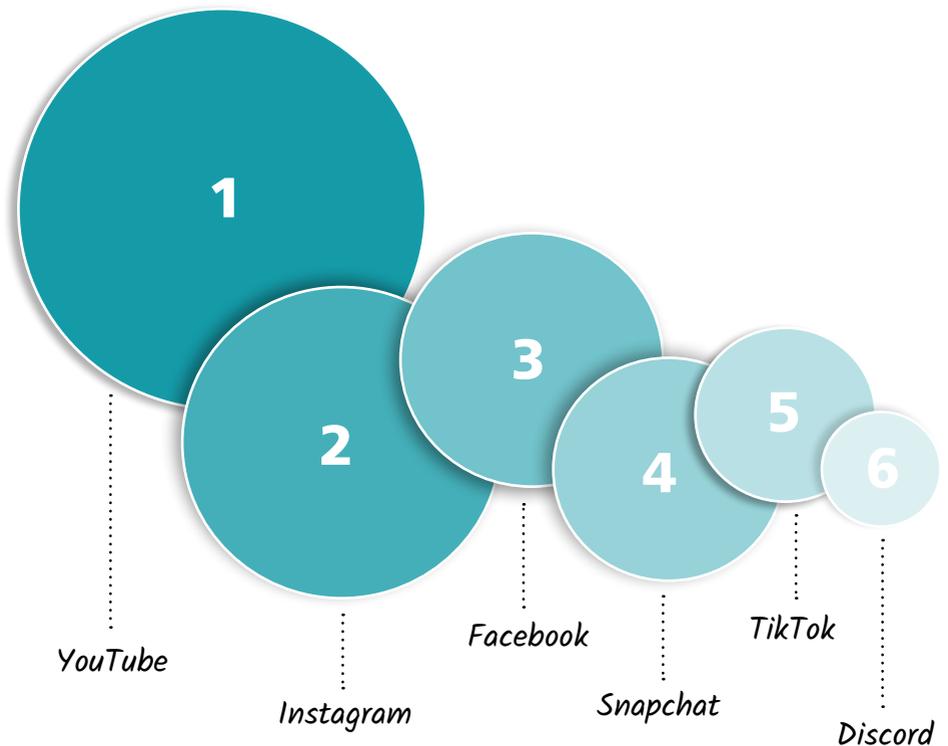
Social Media

Social media platforms are a big part of many young people's lives. They use the platforms to create their online identities, communicate with others and to build their networks. During the COVID-19 restrictions, social media was even more valuable to young people, especially for those facing isolation, exclusion or living with disability or illness.

Social Media enables self-expression, as well as entertainment. Social media content that is humorous or distracting can provide meaningful connections for young people and a wide social network can have benefits such as helping young people deal with mental health issues.

Social media can also have a negative impact – distracting them, disrupting sleep and exposing them to bullying, rumour mongering, peer pressure and negative body esteem.

According to the [eSafety Commissioner](#), teenagers used the following mainstream social media platforms:



Young people feel included when:



- They are invited to get involved
- They are offered leadership opportunities
- They take part in community
- They build meaningful relationships
- Feel a sense of belonging
- Have their voices heard
- They feel valued
- They are celebrated
- They can access youth-friendly spaces and facilities
- Communities foster a culture of inclusion



Young People's solutions for inclusivity include:

“ We could enhance a sense of community by introducing more community events and opportunities to make connections. ”

“ Make everyone feel equal ”

“ To have a sense of belonging and to ensure a safe environment. ”

“ Inclusive events for people with disabilities. ”

“ Ensure there isn't censorship in the community. ”

“ Make people feel more accepted. ”

“ Talk to people about bullying if you see them bullying someone. ”

“ Friendly competitions like card games, gaming, trivia ”

“ Have fun activities like painting a mural and being involved in the design process. ”

“ Being more polite and welcoming to people. ”

“ Collaborating with local creators. ”

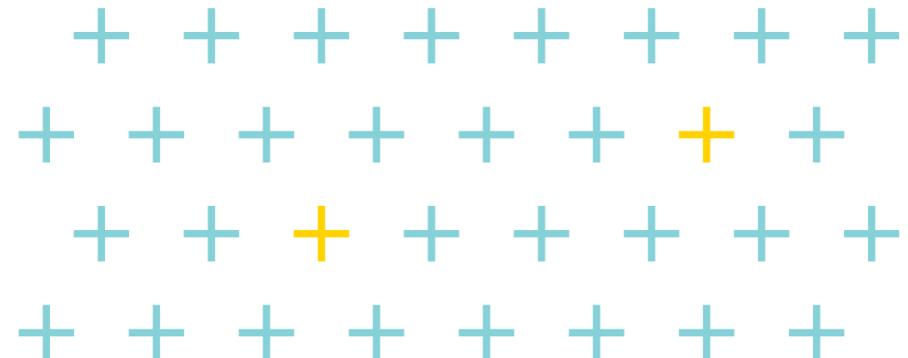
“ Open entry studio sessions for musicians ”



Including Us - What we'll do

Goal	Action	How
Provide opportunities for young people to have their say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run targeted engagement with young people for major Council projects. Consider different avenues of engagement to get young people involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major projects are identified. Youth Services Team is consulted regarding involvement from young people. Engagement options are identified in consultation with Youth Services Team and WYAG.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide young people with feedback regarding the engagement process. Acknowledge their contributions and how that has informed decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcomes of participation are communicated to young people.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a youth focused presence online. Design campaigns to promote and raise awareness of upcoming events, programs, services and opportunities for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is designed specifically for young people with input from WYAG. More young people are connected to Council's youth social media outlets. Young people are informed about youth-related programs, events activities and opportunities.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More young people engaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service partners Internal Business Units (Council) High Schools WYAG members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people are aware of how their input has impacted the decision making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service partners Internal Business Units (Council) WYAG members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More young people attend programs, events, activities and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG members Internal Business Units (Council)



Goal	Action	How
Respect, appreciate and include young people from diverse backgrounds and abilities in community life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with and support key organisations and Council Units to deliver targeted programs, events and activities for young people from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Foster links with Willoughby's Sister Cities (Bingara in Gwydir Shire Council and Sugunami in Japan). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs, events, activities developed and delivered. Increased numbers of young people from diverse backgrounds and abilities participating in programs /activities /events. Utilising feedback from participants to create future programming. Support initiatives such as Youth Week, Disability Programs, World Pride, Harmony Week, Gamaragal Festival and Sister city youth exchange programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create places and spaces that are more welcoming to young people of diverse backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant places and spaces are identified. Display markers of respect and appreciation for diversity (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island, rainbow icons) at places and spaces where programs are run for young people.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of young people participating in opportunities to connect, participate and learn in safe, social and supportive environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service partners Macquarie University High Schools Local clubs Local businesses Non-profit Organisations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service partners WYAG members High Schools



Goal	Action	How
Build and strengthen collaboration, skills and knowledge within and outside of the youth sector to support young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in youth sector networking opportunities to build connections, skills, knowledge and best practice approaches to working with young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership of networking groups such as the Lower North Shore Youth Interagency. New connections and linkages made with external youth organisations and High Schools. Training opportunities for staff, to upskill them to deliver excellent service and programs for young people. Best practice approaches recognised and implemented. Attendance at state-wide networking opportunities, such as the Annual Youth Action Conference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support professional development training opportunities to the youth sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek, support and deliver training opportunities for the youth sector on the Lower North Shore.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upskilled staff. Upskilled young people. New working relationships developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service partners School Wellbeing Teams.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are upskilled on relevant topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbouring Councils (Lane Cove Council, North Sydney Council, Mosman Council, Ryde Council and Ku-Ring-Gai Council) Government and non-Government Organisations External Youth Services partners Employment and Training providers

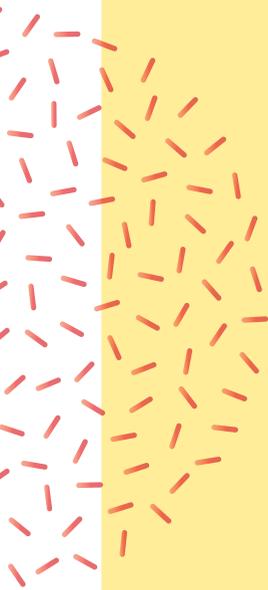
Goal	Action	How
Provide funding for programs, activities, events and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Council's Community Grants Program to support projects, activities and programs that link to the priorities of the YAP and provide opportunities for initiatives led and run by young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants opportunities promoted to young people and the wider youth sector. Innovative and relevant training provided to young people in grant applications. WYAG involved in assessing grant applications.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate annual Youth Week programs, activities, events and resources in alignment with priorities of the YAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate one major Youth Week event in partnership with neighbouring councils and community groups. Support all Youth Week events across the Lower North Shore.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects delivered locally. Increase in participation of young people. Projects funded and implemented and acquitted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Life Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services WYAG members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people involved in the planning and delivery of Youth Week events. Increase in the number of young people attending events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service Partners Neighbouring Councils NSW Department of Communities and Justice WYAG members



Goal	Action	How
Provide free and low cost programs/ activities/ events for young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to enhance an outreach model. Include open/green spaces to allow greater participation from a broader range of young people in activities, programs, events, and skills development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free and affordable programs developed and implemented across the Lower North Shore. Deliver partnership programs across the Lower North Shore. Target different locations for service delivery.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with WYAG to develop youth specific activities at key community events, to increase youth participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify events. Youth specific activities are provided. More young people are attending community events.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide recreation activities, events and programs to young people across the Willoughby LGA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free and affordable programs developed and implemented across locations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of skills development programs for young people, exploring a broad range of topics, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » mental health and physical wellbeing, » creative arts, » graphic design, » martial arts » personal safety » respectful relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free and affordable programs developed and implemented.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase in the number of young people accessing programs. Young people given the opportunity to provide input into future programming/ events and locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Service Partners Neighbouring Councils High Schools Macquarie University St Leonards TAFE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people involved in the planning and delivery of Youth Week events. Increase in the number of young people attending events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG External Youth Services Local Businesses High Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of young people accessing programs. Different locations identified and targeted (outwith Chatswood CBD). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG External Youth Services Internal Business Units (Council) High Schools Local businesses
<p>More young people accessing youth friendly spaces, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chatswood Youth Centre Chatswood Library Willoughby Leisure Centre Increase in identified youth friendly spaces across the LGA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Business Units (Council) Industry Sector Professionals Local businesses Macquarie University Clubs



Goal	Action	How
Provide free and low cost programs/ activities/ events for young people. (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide and promote affordable events and activities for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop partnerships across the lower North Shore and Northern Sydney regions. Develop a youth week calendar of events. Promote all youth inclusive events to young people.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide in-school programs for young people focussing on a range of identified topics, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Anger management » Respectful relationships » Vaping » Social media (safety) » Mental health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key topics identified by communities and stakeholders. Programs developed and implemented
Celebrate young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out information on the contributions that young people make to our community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate the contribution young people make to our community through local media and Council publications e.g. minimum of 6 positive stories per year.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase the creative and artistic works of young people in Council's exhibition, galleries, venues and public spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibition, gallery, community and public spaces identified for exhibition of young people's artistic works.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of young people accessing programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Business Units (Council) External Youth Services WYAG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of young people accessing programs. Upskilling of young people in relation to responding to identified topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Services High Schools Macquarie University TAFE Local businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of positive stories on young people in local media. Third party media outlets highlighting positive stories about young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Media and Marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Services High Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth exhibitions promoted and delivery in the LGA. Young people participating in creative programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Culture and Leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Youth Services High Schools WYAG



Why 'Supporting Us' Matters

When young people are happy, healthy and fulfilled, they have a strong foundation for their wellbeing that will serve them throughout their lifetime. Young people should feel safe in their communities and have a strong sense of resilience, connectedness, sense of control and self-esteem, as well as positive coping strategies for when things get tough.

Many young people live with mental illness. Many mental health issues are associated with social and economic disadvantages, such as impaired academic achievement and school attendance; hindered social development, unemployment and housing instability ([Mission Australia, 2022](#)).

A sobering impact of mental health challenges faced by young people is how suicide is the primary cause of death amongst young people in Australia ([Health Direct, 2021](#)). In 2022, 368 young people 15 -24 died by suicide, this also meant young people have the high rate of suicide across Australia ([AIHW, 2023](#)). Though suicide is a complex and multifaceted challenge, many of the key contributors are mental health connected ([Better Health Victoria, 2023](#)).

Youth Action, the peak body representing young people and the services that support them in NSW, undertook significant primary research in 2017. Their research demonstrated that the current mental health system is outdated, difficult to navigate and alienating for young people. When young people are struggling with their mental health, they are prone to self-isolation and behaviours that risk their health, such as substance misuse. Youth Action found that support services were often adult-centric and lacked a youth-focus, which resulted in young people going without the support they needed. ([Youth Action, 2017](#))

Youth mental health providers such as Headspace, Reach Out and Kids Helpline have successfully introduced e-mental health solutions to support young people. These are extremely effective at providing information, support, and assessment; and can assist with prevention and management of symptoms.



Stigma continues to be a major barrier for young people accessing support as identified in Mission Australia's 2022 report into social exclusion and youth mental health. The study surveyed over 18,800 young people between the ages of 15 and 19 across Australia. The results showed that stigma to mental health issues was the biggest barrier to seeking help. The provision of fit for purpose e-health services helps to support young people to overcome stigma and their reluctance to seek help due to the high degree of anonymity.

When mental health concerns emerge, early intervention can provide support and capacity building to decrease the impact and intensity of those issues later in life. Growing protective factors and access to services is essential.

Early intervention can achieve the best outcomes for young people and can limit negative outcomes, such as the onset of chronic mental illness and suicide; however, there is a lot that can be done to improve outcomes for young people. Intervention can be particularly powerful in adolescence. It is well established that young people experience a key period of rapid psychological and biological growth, second only to early childhood, coupled with an increase in vulnerability to a range of risks. ([Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 2019](#)).

In the report [What Matters Most to Young People in 2023](#), Youth Action recommend that funding be increased to provide non-clinical prevention and early intervention mental health support programs and skill-based initiatives like accidental counsellor training and mental health first aid training for youth peer support roles including provision of funding for additional staff to meet increased demand as well as provision of a diverse range of early intervention programs that can act as soft-entry points for accessing mental health support including outreach, drop-in, peer support, arts and recreation, and youth development models.

What We Heard From Young People

Young people expressed study as being the top priority area for the region, highlighting the biggest personal challenge as school challenges. This reinforces the findings of the [Mission Australia 2022 Youth Survey report](#) which found school challenges were linked to academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties and overall school challenges.

Young people in our community value extracurricular activities like sports and special interest clubs, inter-school activities and performances. They get to experience others cheering them on as they develop their skills and resilience, whilst building self-confidence and their sense of belonging.

On the flip-side, young people acknowledged their need for balance, rest, leisure, relaxation and fun with friends, but felt unsupported in this area. Therefore, missing out on the down time they needed due to overwhelming timetables that included extracurricular commitments, as well as study and for some young people, employment. They highlighted academic pressure and parental expectations as major stressors.

16% of participants stated mental wellbeing was a high priority. Again echoing findings from the Mission Australia Youth Survey report who found 29.4% stated mental health challenges were their biggest personal challenge (Mission Australia, 2022). Mental health challenges were associated with low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem or self-harm.



Young people told us they appreciate the support given during transitional life stages, such as: starting high school, finding employment and transitioning from school to university and/or work and would like more support in these areas. They highlighted the need for skills development support to come from within the school curriculum and from families.

Young people value others standing up with and for them. In many forms including: physically, socially and/or emotionally when they experience injustice against them, such as bullying, racism, rights, rudeness, abuse of power, challenging systems.

Young people continue to turn to their family and friends in a time of need. Naming friends as their second biggest priority, closely followed by family and communities. This calls for more youth and parent training workshops to develop and nurture the interpersonal skills needed to respond appropriately.

The participants highlighted the important role decision makers play as allies, highlighting the importance of schools, teachers, wellbeing teams, libraries and support services staff in providing timely interventions when young people need it; but also advocating for systemic and cultural change. This was mostly related with challenging unhelpful attitudes that prioritise academic success and competition over the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Young people pointed out that building community partnerships to develop better, sustainable and effective support programs and interventions is the way forward.

Young people told us they are carrying a lot of pressure concerning affordable housing and financial security. The majority of young people explained that in order for them to have a future and a good life they needed friends, family, to be rich and have wellbeing.

Quotes from young people about when they've felt supported

“
When I played basketball at Chatswood Youth Centre with people I didn't know but had fun regardless.
”

“
When I was a kid, I got lost in Chatswood, and a group of 17 year old students stuck with me, helping me calm down and then got intercoms to call for my mum.
”

“
When my friends helped me break up with someone manipulating me and I didn't know what to do.”
”

“
I was at school and got a bad mark and all my friends consoled and supported me.
”

“
When my mum bought me a bed.
”

“
When I opened up to my mates.
”

“
When I was crying in public one time, somebody came up to me and gave me a tissue. I didn't know them but I felt supported
”

“
During the HSC, everyone came together and helped each other out.
”

“
When I came out as trans to my school teachers and fellow students
”



Young people feel included when:

- Lived-experiences are shared
- Receive regular check-ins
- They share resources with each other
- Provided with opportunities for skill development
- School challenges and pressures acknowledged
- Mental wellbeing and ambitions prioritised
- Priorities heard and respected
- Allowed time to rest and relax with friends
- Can access youth-friendly support spaces
- Have decision-makers as allies

Young People's solutions for support include:

“
Have more social competitions for young people.
”

“
Youth-led fairs/events
”

“
Inform young people about youth events via Instagram and FB.
”

“
Don't be judgemental.
”

“
Congratulate people when they do something good or hard for them.
”

“
Think before you talk.
”

“
Support Groups.
”

“
More events that promote inclusiveness and participation.
”

“
More activities helping people build relationships.
”

“
Create more spaces where youth can meet up and talk about things which aren't allowed to leave the space, even possible organise events.
”

“
Chronic illness community.
”

“
Speak up about problems
”





Supporting Us – What we'll do

Goal	Action	How
<p>Support the development of Youth-led/ community partnerships to develop and increase peer-led support group initiatives and events targeting specific concerns e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » HSC support » Wellbeing » LGBTIQA+ support » Respectful relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Senior Student Study Support MeetUp. Identify follow-up support options for young people to access for HSC support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase mentor and mentee recruitment and training numbers to 15.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and mentor WYAG members to develop activities for events and programs. Encourage WYAG members to develop new friendships that support wellbeing awareness days e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » R U Ok Day » Mental Health Awareness Month » Wear It Purple Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth led events held at Chatswood Youth Centre and/or locally.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote information about Youth-led council partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with individual schools, Macquarie University and TAFE wellbeing teams annually. Email posters/promote social media links to school representatives to promote internally. Promote externally to Chatswood youth emailing list. School excursions to Chatswood Youth Centre.

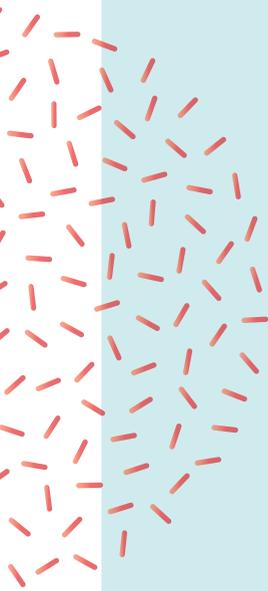
Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people engaged in the mentoring component as mentors. Number of young people engaged in the mentoring program (mentees). Development of skills and knowledge in young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peerlink Enactus (Macquarie University), Communications and Marketing Team Youth Services. High Schools Clubs (e.g. sporting and non-sporting clubs) TAFE Macquarie University Clubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of WYAG events held at Chatswood Youth Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services WYAG members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people attending events. The number of young people 'reached through social media posts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services WYAG members High Schools, Macquarie University TAFE Events Team, Communications and Marketing Team Community Development Team

Goal	Action	How
Raise awareness of all aspects of youth health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG to host an all abilities event for Youth Week 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Youth Team to support the development and delivery of the event. Utilise social media platforms to highlight and raise awareness of health challenges that young people face. Partner with Northern Local Health District Youth Health Promotion & Health related services to provide information to young people.
Increase number of young people accessing Drop-In at Chatswood Youth Centre & Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with WYAG and Marketing Team to build on youth services promotional activities to include video to promote the Youth Centre, Youth Services programs & events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotional material is appropriate and up to date. Number of 'new' young people accessing the Chatswood Youth Centre. Young people participating in the development of promotional material. Feedback from young people and families.
Support and connect young people to improve their health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support young people to improve their mental health and physical wellbeing. Promote services/apps/events/activities that support mental health and physical wellbeing. Promote existing and identify new trails/walks to young people to get out and active in the natural environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all existing trails / walks. Develop youth friendly promotional materials. Advertise trails /walks. Increased use of trails / walks.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people attending the all abilities event. The number of young people 'reached through social media posts. Number of referrals to youth health services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services WYAG members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Events Team External Youth Service partners Youth Health Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More young people aged 12-18 from diverse backgrounds feeling confident and safe accessing the youth centre for recreational purposes; and accessing advice and referral service because promotional material is current, youth-led and appeals to youth audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG members Communications Team Marketing Team Community Engagement Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people accessing health and wellbeing apps. Number of young people becoming more deliberately active. Increased youth engagement with youth services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Open Space Team Sustainability Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Team Young people

Goal	Action	How
Support and connect young people to improve their health and wellbeing. (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the location of existing gyms that include equipment for young people e.g. locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all existing indoor and outdoor gyms. Liaise with Culture and Leisure to develop Youth discount code for young people to access Willoughby Leisure Centre. Increase youth membership numbers. Develop youth friendly promotional materials. Advertise outdoor gyms. Increased use of outdoor gyms. Include free/cost price coaching, work out plans and guidance for young people wanting to use gyms.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain existing youth centre basketball court and skate park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide free access to young people to the basketball court.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold skateboard skills development workshops for young people, with a component specifically targeting young females to address gender imbalance within the sport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops developed and run locally. Young people participating and learning new skills. Increased numbers of young women. Increased utilisation of skate parks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage services such as Headspace to attend Chatswood Youth Centre monthly to build relationships and provide outreach support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More young people accessing support at services such as headspace.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage services such as KYDS to run counselling services weekly from Chatswood Youth Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More young people are accessing KYDS for support.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people accessing Willoughby Leisure Centre. Number of young people accessing health and wellbeing programs. Number of young people becoming more deliberately active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Open Space Team Sustainability Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Team Young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people accessing the basketball courts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Team Open Space Team Sustainability Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Space Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people attending workshops. Number of young women attending workshops. Feedback from young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Space Team High Schools Young people Local businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people seeking referral to services such as headspace and the youth health service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Headspace High Schools Young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people seeking referral to services such as counselling services and the youth health service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KYDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KYDS High Schools Young people





Why 'Respectful Relationships' Matter

Respectful Relationships and consent education are critical topics that young people in our region are keen to discuss. As young people develop, it is essential to teach them about the importance of respecting themselves and others. This education will enable them to form healthy relationships and avoid abusive ones in the future.

It is important to note that domestic violence, sexual harassment, and assault can happen to people of all ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. [The Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) shows that young people aged 16 to 24 are at the highest risk of experiencing domestic violence, sexual harassment, and assault. In Australia, one in three women have experienced physical violence from the age of 15 and one in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. In addition, one in five men have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.

These numbers highlight the need for education around healthy relationships and consent at an early age. By starting these conversations early, we can equip young people with the knowledge and skills to identify and prevent abusive behaviours in relationships.

According to the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), in 2016, 17% of women and 6% of men reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from a partner since the age of 15. This education can help reduce these numbers further and create safer communities for all.

In conclusion, respectful relationships and consent education are essential for young people. By teaching young people about healthy relationships and consent, we can help reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault. When we prioritise this education, we protect our young people from becoming victims and/or unknowingly perpetrators of these crimes, which can have significant negative lifelong impacts.



What we heard from young people

Young people cherish the bonds they share with their friends and family. They want to learn how to have healthier experiences and they want to make more connections. Relationships are vital to their growth and well-being, providing a source of support and encouragement. However, we also know that young people face numerous challenges in their daily lives, which can put a strain on their relationships. That is why it is crucial that we help them develop healthy and respectful connections with those around them. By doing so, we can empower young people to build a solid support system that will serve them well throughout their lives.

It is important that all community youth leaders take responsibility for educating, empowering and protecting young people to have respectful relationships. As young people pointed out, a 'sense of community' is our biggest strength in Willoughby City. This means that young people are looking towards leaders from all community groups, to create collaborative learning experiences to support them to have more relationships that are respectful. They talked about their need for creative ways to better equip and build on their knowledge and experiences, in order to have respectful relationships, encourage and develop their skills in critical thinking; and assist them in being able to problem solve and communicate effectively.

Young people believe that they can make the right choices for themselves and their relationships when given the right information. They highlighted the need to be introduced to local support service providers in an informal environment.

The desire to develop youth-led community campaigns on the issues of relationship violence was evident in the conversations during the consultation process. This is consistent with community feedback from across Australia that included the need to provide a safe non-segregated environment in which young people can talk about relationship abuse and/or violence, sex and relationships.

There appears to be a need to develop and deliver respectful relationship education programs. The programs would cover:

- Communicating mindfully
- Power dynamics in relationships
- Seeking help
- Responding to concerns as bystanders
- Rights and responsibilities in relation to sharing sexualised images
- Respect in relationships
- Gender roles and stereotypes in relationships
- Sexual harassment
- Challenging harassment
- Homophobia and discrimination
- Responding to jealous feelings
- Warning signs of a controlling/abusive relationship
- Supporting friends and breaking up with respect.

Overwhelmingly, young people believe positive social change is possible. They would like the information they need to safely challenge gender stereotypes, attitudes, values and social institutions that perpetuate male violence against women and deconstructing the myths that exist in local communities and society generally on relationship abuse and violence.

Young people described how respectful relationships should look:



Quotes from young people about respectful relationships:

- “ Have more support services and allow people to access anytime to get help and advice. ”
- “ Show them what healthy relationships look like, influence them and encourage them to be comfortable enough to talk to you. ”
- “ Support instead of lecture and scare. ”
- “ Hand out pamphlets on what to say if being pressured in a relationship and when people don't know how to respond. ”
- “ Be kind to others. ”
- “ Don't fake relationships on social media, lose the romanticised image. ”
- “ Make friends or just engage in conversation. ”
- “ Ask them if they are 'OK' if they look down. ”



Young People's solutions for support include:

“
Free social groups
and initiatives for
all groups and
communities.
”

“
Informing about
boundaries and
red flags.
”

“
Support groups for
domestic violence
survivors and
awareness.
”

“
Get constant
feedback.
”

“
Make advice for
tricky situations
more accessible
and normalised.
”

“
Private
consultations.
”

“
Consent
conversations
”

“
Organise
workshops to teach
how to express
love to people.
”

“
Free meetups for
people struggling,
give them a chance
to talk in a safe
environment.
”

“
Workshops to teach
the value of teamwork
and being a support
system to others and
how that will help
in their personal
development.
”

“
Having more
conversations
surrounding what
is healthy and what
is normal in sexual
relationships.
”

“
Implement advice
into classes on how
to overcome
negative
relationships.
”



Respectful Relationships – What we’ll do

Goal	Action	How
Provide training for young people that develops awareness and supports skill development in building respectful relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and promote partnerships with schools and the youth sector to roll out programs such as NAPCAN Love Bites Program across all High School year levels to increase impact and support positive cultural change of respect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools roll out Junior & Senior Love Bites training across year level annually within wellbeing days and/or curriculum.
Increase awareness of local social and support groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify new and existing in-person and online support groups/ programs/apps for young people to seek support for experiences of harmful behaviours such as domestic violence and sexual assault. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all existing youth support groups for wellbeing and harmful behaviours. Develop youth friendly promotional materials. Advertise/promote support groups. Increased utilisation/ access of support groups.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Mates & Dates Podcast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop youth friendly promotional materials. Advertise Podcast.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the schools accessing the delivery of programs such as Love Bites. Number of young people participating in programs. Decrease in reports of unhealthy behaviours, abuse and violence. More young people are experiencing healthy relationships. Feedback from young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Schools External Youth Service partners NSW Police Force – North Shore Police Area Command
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of local support groups for young people. Number of young people accessing the groups. Increased number of local support groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Schools TAFE External Youth Service partners Macquarie University PACE students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased podcast listeners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PACE students Macquarie University Students High Schools TAFE External Youth Service partners

Goal	Action	How
Increase awareness of local social and support groups (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a campaign to support respectful relationships with information on what to do with 'ready to go' language during tricky situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translate resources and promote.
Increase youth events for young people to build more respectful relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support WYAG and youth clubs to create more Youth-led events that support healthy social connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop events that include activities that help young people connect such as friendly competitions like Trivia and gaming and Meet-ups.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relationship, wellbeing, and sexual health resources for young people in English and Mandarin at Chatswood Youth Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people feeling better informed about relationship expectations and confident in keeping safe.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people participating in the development of the promotional material. Feedback on the material. Develop initiative either as an online information resource with video or in-person workshop series. Feedback from young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW Health Catholic Care Relationships Australia PACE students Macquarie University High Schools TAFE External Youth Service partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people participating in events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG members Youth-led clubs High Schools TAFE Macquarie University Communications and Marketing Team Events Team Library Team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Team



Why 'Skilled and Ready' Matters

The Transition into adulthood naturally comes with its own challenges; these are particularly difficult for vulnerable young people, such as those experiencing homelessness or financial hardship. We also know from the research outlined in [Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2022](#), that young people faced a range of challenges and concerns over the past few years. Keeping in mind the diverse backgrounds of our young people and the very real impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic, international conflicts and recent natural disasters have had on our young people's lives and perspectives.

Clear pathways into sustained employment are necessary for young people to attain financial security, independence, wellbeing, a sense of belonging and skill development. All young people should be able to access meaningful, long-term employment, so they can contribute to the Australian economy and community.

In recent years, youth unemployment rates in Australia have remained stagnant, with many young people struggling to find work in an increasingly competitive job market. However, it is not just unemployment that is a concern - underemployment is also becoming an issue, with many young people taking on part-time or casual work that does not provide them with the hours, income or stability they need to support themselves.



According to data from [The Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), the youth unemployment rate in Australia was 8.1% in September 2023. While this is a slight improvement from the peak of 16.4% seen in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate in Australia, which was 3.6% in September 2023.

One of the main challenges facing young people in Australia today is the fast-changing nature of the job market. With new technologies and industries emerging all the time, it can be difficult for young people to know what skills they need to develop in order to be successful in their chosen career. Additionally, many industries are becoming increasingly competitive, with more people vying for fewer jobs.

Despite these challenges, there are a number of initiatives and programs in place to help young people find work and develop their skills. These include government-funded training programs, industry-specific internships and apprenticeships, and job placement services. By taking advantage of these resources and staying up-to-date with the latest developments in their chosen field, young people can increase their chances of finding meaningful employment and building a successful career.

The impact of youth unemployment for the broader community is huge. [The Foundation for Young Australians](#) (FYA) reports that "having so many young people out of the workforce costs our economy 790 million lost hours of work each year, equating to up to \$15.9 billion in lost GDP to the Australian economy annually. The social impact is equally compelling – loss of confidence, hope and self-esteem has led to mental health issues costing Australia \$7.2 billion per annum".



Further research by the FYA shows that 35% of the skills that we consider important in today's workforce will change. The jobs of tomorrow will require a broader range of skills that are transferable across all areas of employment such as creativity, problem-solving, critical and innovative thinking, data literacy, emotional intelligence/ social intelligence, resilience and patience. Technological advancement and global trends are changing the nature of work, the structure of economies, and the type of skills needed by labour forces across the world.

FYA research reveals that the average transition time from education to work is 4-7 years compared to 1 year in 1986. The theme of Skilled and Ready encompasses the four factors identified by FYA that can accelerate the transition from full-time education to full-time work:

- 1. An education that builds enterprise skills**
- 2. Being able to undertake relevant paid work experience**
- 3. Finding employment in a growing sector**
- 4. An optimistic mindset**

It is clear we must invest in redesigning learning pathways from education to work to ensure young people are equipped and empowered with the skills, mindset and confidence to navigate the new world of work. Ensuring young people have the ability to participate in lifelong learning, formal education, skill development, work experience, and meaningful local employment will go a long way in supporting and developing the future economic prosperity of the region.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations committed \$4.1 billion in their 2023/24 budget, for a five year National Skills Agreement to support young people to have safe, secure and well-paid work with the required skills needed for a sustainable future. This funding will enable better access to vocational education and training, with TAFE at the centre.

The program includes redesigning the current Skills for Education and Employment program, to improve access to foundation skills training for all Australians.

There is also grant funding totalling \$15.2 million, to support the establishment of Y Careers Agency – to support tackling the youth unemployment rate. The aim is to support 15,000 young people to pursue meaningful careers and provide employers with access to skilled talent.

What We Heard From Young People

Young people felt that their schools were best resourced to provide transition to employment and/or transition to university and work programs and felt they were letting them down in not doing more. Young people highly value their education, opportunities to develop practical skills and to gain meaningful employment. They acknowledge that education is a critical step to reaching their full potential and unlocking their aspirations for the future. The key places where young people receive learning support in the Willoughby Local Government Area (LGA) include: at school, TAFE, University, in community settings such as libraries and through support at local youth services.

28% of participants stated that to have their ideal future they need meaningful employment in order to have their ideal future. This was closely followed by financial wealth and wellbeing. The majority share the same perspective, that whether or not they were successful in achieving their goals would determine their level of success in life.

Young people suggested reimagining how to deliver transitional support programs in creative ways and information sharing in a youth focused way. Young people told us they feel most supported by their schools, libraries and sports, clubs and communities. This calls upon the whole community to take responsibility to make sure young people and parents/carers are provided with the information, support and opportunities to succeed across all areas of their lives when thinking about best supporting their future.



Young people told us that study, friends and family are their highest priorities, highlighting the need to find ways of informing and supporting families and friends on how they can better support young people transitioning to employment or university.

25% of participants said transitioning from school to university and/or work is a priority for them, which tells us 1 in 4 young people will require support in this area. 14% said finding employment was a priority telling us roughly 1 in 6 young people will be looking for support finding employment.

Young people told us they highly value being supported through activism and sharing their lived-experiences, which is important to consider when redesigning or deciding on transition to employment/university support workshops.

We heard that young people appreciate being supported in ways that celebrate and encourage them, which is something to incorporate into our delivery of transition programs whether it be including Alumni or something else.

Young people want to be included and collaborated with, which tells us we need to be better at co-designing transition programs with young people who would like to access them, to ensure we are delivering what they want, when they want and how they want, where they want and by whom.

Young people feel included when:



- They develop life and creative skills.
- They have access to and participate in local learning and education.
- They pursue lifelong learning opportunities.
- They develop relevant and transferable skills that can be used across new and emerging areas of employment.
- They build knowledge and experience by participating in work experience.
- They find meaningful local employment.

Young People's solutions for being skilled & ready include:

“
Help with the essentials of creating and distributing resumes and interview skills.
”

“ Resilience, readiness, know that you are not alone, mental health, physical wellbeing to support studies by providing things like discount vouchers, mindfulness programs, subscriptions to have us ready for life. ”

“
More Career Expos.
”

“
Professionals in the field providing information on what career paths are available.
”

“
More job workshops.
”

“
More flexibility in Year 11 & 12 subjects.
”

“
More information about how to get into a certain industry
”

“
Organise workshops about create relationships with co-workers.
”

“
Don't heavily enforce overpowering status/power over new or less important employees. Everyone is equal.
”

“
Have more chances to talk about working at school.
”

“
More practical stuff – actually doing things that impact others
”



Skilled and Ready – What we'll do

Goal	Action	How
Provide young people with skills for life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WYAG members to work with stakeholders to develop and deliver a life skills expo which will provide practical information and skills e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » basic car maintenance » first aid » sustainable living » applying for housing » tax and financial advice » basic cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support WYAG to develop and implement expo. • Encourage young people to attend expo. • Young people learning new life skills.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Leadership Program students to develop short online 'how to' videos/tutorials on life skill topics - by young people for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Leadership Program students to develop concepts for videos. • Videos filmed/edited by students. • Communications Team to approve videos. • Videos loaded on to the council website and shared on social media.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out sponsors and partners for youth focused programs, events and activities, which link young people and businesses enabling skill development, mentoring and access to new pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information night(s) held to attract sponsors. • Create linkages between businesses and young people. • Young people are linked with industry professionals for mentoring and pathway opportunities.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of young people attending the expo. • Feedback from young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people • High schools • External Youth Service partners • NSW Health Services • Local business stakeholders • WYAG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students involved in the development of the videos. • The number of young people 'reached through social media posts. • Feedback from young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Services • GLP students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •GLP • Macquarie University • External Youth Service partners • High Schools • Local businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of information events. • Number of businesses engaging in the information events. • Number of business that sign up to be sponsors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Youth Service partners • Local businesses, • Industry professionals • PACE students • Macquarie University

Goal	Action	How
Kickstart young people's business ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver social enterprise programs (e.g. Career kickstarter, Business Launch Pad, local market enterprise, pop up shop fronts, case competitions) for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions provided for young people to workshop and develop enterprise ideas, business and strategic plans. Mentor sessions provided with local young people. Pitch sessions held for young people to pitch their ideas to local businesses.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop partnerships to explore the viability of hosting a Careers Expo that provides information on accessing a variety of industries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local youth employment sector and stakeholders to explore interest and potential partnerships to investigate and lead the viability of hosting and supporting an expo in our LGA.
Upskill young people and provide pathways to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement low cost programs e.g. 'Skilled & Ready' in the school holidays to upskill young people to seek and gain employment in targeted sectors such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Barista course » Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) » First Aid » Hospitality skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses run during the school holidays. Young people receiving appropriate qualification/ accreditation to begin employment in industry.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training sessions delivered. Number of mentor sessions delivered. Number of pitch sessions delivered. Number of young people participating in sessions. Feedback from young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events Local businesses Industry professionals Training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people attending a careers expo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WYAG members Events Team Community Engagement Youth Employment Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of courses run per annum. Number of young people participating in workshops/ courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant local field-related businesses, training providers, education providers.

Goal	Action	How
Upskill young people and provide pathways to employment (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support young people to engage in opportunities for employment within Willoughby City Council. Support Internal business units and external stakeholders to coach and mentor young people in skills development through work experience, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the viability of apprenticeship style programs at Council for young people. Young people are aware of opportunities. Increased numbers of young people are engaged in programs/employed in relevant areas of experience.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver workshops to support interview and job readiness skills (resume writing, interview skills, what to wear etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops provided to young people on employability skills. Young people are more confident in applying for employment. Increased numbers of young people employed.
Embrace learning opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support initiatives within Council libraries that provide young people with academic, social and job readiness opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives continued and implemented. New initiatives explored and developed accordingly. Increased numbers of young people participate in library programs.

Outcomes	Delivery Lead	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young people engaging in programs to gain employment at Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People and Culture Youth Services PACE Macquarie University TAFE Local schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Development Team All other relevant Council Units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of workshops delivered. Number of young people participating in workshops. Number of young people gaining meaningful employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses, Employment providers Training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new initiatives developed. Number of young people participating in initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services Local businesses Training providers Education providers

CONTACT US

youth@willoughby.nsw.gov.au

<https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community-services/Youth>

CHATSWOOD YOUTH CENTRE

64 Albert Avenue
Chatswood NSW 2067

(Cnr Victor Street and Albert Avenue)



© Willoughby City Council

