

PORT

STEPHENS

YOUTH

STRATEGY

2020 TO 2025



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# Acknowledgement of Country

Port Stephens Council acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land of the Worimi. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Port Stephens Council is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

We acknowledge the past and we are working toward a better tomorrow.





A MESSAGE

FROM OUR

YOUNG PEOPLE

As a young person in Port Stephens with a passion for advocacy and leadership, having a Youth Strategy is incredibly important. Young people are the future of our community, so they should have a voice in how the future unfolds.

Giving young people the chance to voice their ideas and opinions on what affects them gives them the connection to their community many young people believe they don't have.

For me, the opportunity to be involved in decision-making at a local level, and with the YMCA Youth Parliament (NSW), has given me a stronger sense of belonging and belief in the capacity of my peers to contribute to positive change for all.

— Mahaylia Soars, Port West Youth Advisory Panel



Mayor Ryan Palmer and Cr Glen Dunkley at Youth Week 2019

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR MAYOR

I'm delighted to present the Port Stephens Youth Strategy 2020 to 2025.

This strategy sets the direction for the delivery of youth-friendly services, advocacy goals, infrastructure and programs in Port Stephens.

I'm proud to say our Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) have been instrumental in developing this strategy through their planning and consulting with many young people and youth service providers.

Our Council understands how important it is to listen to what our young people say and develop programs and activities based on their responses.

There's no doubt our young people are facing many challenges in 2020 and beyond, with impacts of COVID-19. This only reinforces our commitment to creating an environment for them to feel supported and flourish.

I want to thank everyone who helped shaped this strategy and I look forward to working with you into the future for the benefit of our young people.



## ABOUT THE STRATEGY

This strategy focuses on young people aged 12 years to 24 years who live, work, learn and play in Port Stephens. It's a commitment from our council to work together with our external partners to deliver on the priorities defined by our young people. These priorities align with priorities at a national, state and regional level.

## OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



10,801 young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years of age call Port Stephens home.

- 10 to 19 years — 12.02% of the total population
- 20 to 29 years — 9.83%

The areas with the highest population of 10 to 19 years old are:

- Tomaree Peninsula 2770 (33%)
- Raymond Terrace 1689 (20%)
- Medowie 945 (11.2%)

## PRIORITY ISSUES

**Nationally**, Mission Australia's survey of 25,000 young people aged 15 to 19 years found their top priorities were:



36%  
MENTAL HEALTH



34%  
THE ENVIRONMENT



25%  
EQUITY AND  
DISCRIMINATION

(Mission Australia 2019 survey)

**In NSW**, the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People's survey of 4000 young people found their top priorities were:



67%  
EDUCATION



23%  
EMPLOYMENT



23%  
TRANSPORT



18%  
HEALTH CARE



17%  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT  
AND AWARENESS

(Conducted for the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2016 to 2019)



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The Regional Youth Framework 2020 prioritises young people in regional NSW and makes sure they are involved in decision-making to shape their future. The vision is for all regional young people to have opportunities for meaningful work, accessible health care and education — and to feel part of vibrant and inclusive communities.

It's hoped this approach will mean fewer young people feeling they have to move away to access opportunities and instead stay in communities they love. To change this, we need local solutions informed by local communities.

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**Locally**, our survey of young people mostly aged 14 to 18 found the key issues were:



(Port Stephens Council Youth Strategy 2019 survey)

One of our Council's key roles is to make important links with the community sector, educational institutions, other levels of government and business to create the best possible outcomes for young people in Port Stephens.

We do this by:

- supporting **participation** in Council planning processes, especially in our Youth Advisory Panel and engagement processes
- building the capacity of local community-based organisations through **sharing professional knowledge** and expertise, and **providing funds** through community grant programs
- **advocating** on issues important to young people such as access to employment and training opportunities
- planning and **delivering programs** and events in partnership with young people and local service providers, including Youth Week and events related to significant issues for young people
- **investing in infrastructure** to meet young people's social, recreational and sporting needs.



## PRINCIPLES

We have developed principles that help us achieve our priorities and guide our approach to working with young people.

### Belong

To have a sense of **belonging** and connection to community.

Young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and lived experiences are given the opportunity to connect with each other and to support if needed through place-based initiatives and technology that helps build capacity for belonging.

### Participate

To actively **participate** in decision-making and events that are socially and culturally appropriate.

Young people have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making on issues that impact the community. This includes having access to the resources to participate in shaping their community today and into the future in ways that suit them.

### Aspire

To have access to **innovation** in learning, the workplace and initiatives that create a more liveable Port Stephens.

Young people need avenues to voice their aspirations and hopes for the present and the future. Resources and inspiring opportunities will allow them to grow and influence future generations with confidence, creativity and innovation.

### Partnership

To work in **partnership** across agencies and organisations to deliver a diverse range of support services and maximise capacity of existing resources.

Strategic partnerships involving young people are developed and maintained with and between community-based service providers and organisations. This will maximise outcomes and ensure there is no duplication in service delivery.





## HOW WE ENGAGED WITH LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE

Throughout 2019, over 450 people were involved in the consultation process in 2019.

Our consultation themes:

- **Including us** — how can we help young people to connect with their community?
- **Happy and healthy** — how do we look after young people’s wellbeing?
- **Feeling safe** — how do we make young people feel safe both emotionally and physically?
- **Living green** — how can young people express their desires and take action on protecting Port Stephens pristine environment?
- **Somewhere to live** — how do we create affordable housing options for young people who are homeless, living rough or at risk of becoming homeless?
- **Skilled and ready** — how do we improve opportunities for young people to access and complete education with a pathway to employment?

Where our responses came from:

- 2 service provider focus groups (48)
- online survey (31 responses)
- internal staff focus group (14)
- 4 school pop-up ‘dotmocracy’ sessions (250)
- 2 events and 5 short poems created (109)

## WHAT WE HEARD



### Community Interagency

#### Top issues

- feeling safe
- happy and healthy
- living green

#### Great ideas

- create opportunity to share people's talents like music, art, literature and more
- normalise difference by celebrating that everything is normal including disabilities, mental health challenges and young carers
- local environment valued and protected for future generations

### Tomaree Interagency

#### Top issues

- mental health
- employment

#### Great ideas

- mentoring links to local business and work-ready training
- improved access to services

### Council staff

#### Key findings

- many Council teams are already working closely with local high schools
- greater need to involve young people to voice their concerns and contribute to Council planning
- appetite for greater involvement by young people in events as performers, organisers and participants



## Pop-up 'dotmocracy' sessions

### Students voted on the themes that mattered most to them:

- Tomaree High School: somewhere to live, happy and healthy, feeling safe
- Alesco Senior College Nelson Bay: happy and healthy, somewhere to live
- Alesco Senior College Raymond Terrace: feeling safe, skilled and ready, somewhere to live
- Hunter River High School: happy and healthy, somewhere to live, skilled and ready
- Wandiyali (Community Service): happy and healthy, including us, feeling safe.

## Online survey

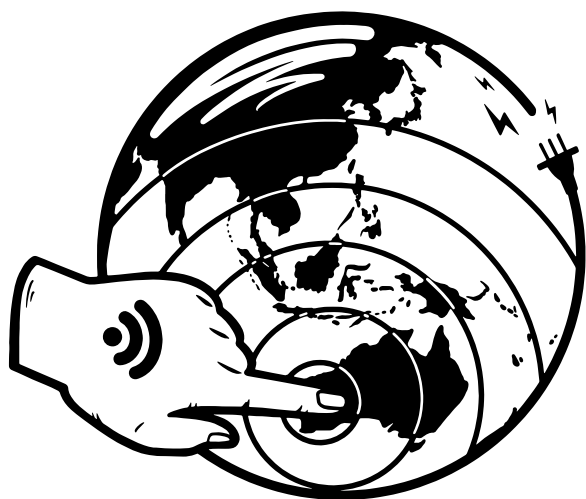
**Most respondents lived in Raymond Terrace (39%) followed by Medowie (13%) and Tanilba Bay (10%).**

Top priorities:

FEELING SAFE

HAPPY AND HEALTHY

SOMEWHERE TO LIVE



"safety in open spaces and having somewhere safe to go"

"more job opportunities and options to get training or experience to make it easier for us to get job"

"easier access to therapy and mental health support"

"more youth venues and leisure activities that are cheap and affordable"

"affordable housing and rent"

"including us on local committees to make decisions about us, the community and the future"

"environmental programs for recycling and single-use plastics"







## ACTION PLAN

When we started analysing what young people told us, we established key priorities to help us reach their goals. These priorities have their foundations in our engagement themes and form the basis of our action plan.

The action plan also identifies:

- our role
- the partners (internal and external) involved in delivery of outputs
- what success will look like and how we'll measure progress
- highlights, key challenges and opportunities.

Our young people will be...

Heard and involved	Connected and feel like they belong	Ready and have pathways to success	Healthy and happy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunity to participate in shaping the future of our community</li> <li>• empowered to raise their voice on issues important to them, including a sustainable future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel safe and welcomed in our public spaces and facilities</li> <li>• have opportunities to showcase their local talent and get involved in planning and running events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved pathways into education, training and employment</li> <li>• supported to adapt and respond to changing job markets and trends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supported and nurtured by a cohesive network of services</li> <li>• access to a range of youth-appropriate initiatives</li> </ul>



## Priority 1: Heard and involved

**Young people are making decisions that impact on their lives and have access to resources to help lead change.**

In making the best decisions for the future, we know we need to involve young people's voices and skills. Young people need to:

- have the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of our community
- feel empowered to raise their voice on issues important to them.

### How do we achieve this?

Keep doing	Start doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deliver targeted youth engagement to support planning of our Council's assets and development of strategic plans</li> <li>• develop and maintain YAP</li> <li>• provide funding programs that support initiatives led by young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a coordinated program of activities delivered by our Council in partnership with local high schools and young people</li> <li>• plan and deliver a sustainable futures event and workshops</li> </ul>

### Who is involved in this work?

Council partnerships	External partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications Section</li> <li>• Assets Section</li> <li>• Capital Works Section</li> <li>• Strategy and Environment Section</li> <li>• Community Services Section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local high schools</li> <li>• diverse range of community groups including environmental organisations</li> <li>• not-for-profit and community support sector</li> </ul>

**What success looks like:** Participation in the Youth Advisory Panel is high and young people are actively working alongside and within community organisations. Our young people feel safe, valued and have the opportunity to express themselves in diverse ways.

**Challenges and opportunities:** Young people want to lead the planning and delivery of youth-focused initiatives. They want to step up to support change and actively participate in the process. We need to focus on strengthening the capacity of both Council and community-based organisations to make this happen.





## Priority 2: Connected and feel like they belong

**Feeling connected to community requires a young person to feel safe and proud of the place in which they live — a place that is inclusive of them.**

We know young people value the lifestyle of growing up in Port Stephens. Young people have said the natural environment plays a big part in creating this sense of belonging. We also need to ensure that young people:

- feel safe and welcomed in our public spaces and facilities
- have opportunities to engage with their strengths and be involved in community life.

### How do we achieve this?

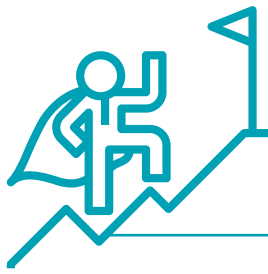
Keep doing	Start doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide safe and accessible sport and recreation facilities</li> <li>• support a diverse range of activities and events with and for young people across Port Stephens including The Lounge and Youth Week events</li> <li>• deliver annual awards like Young Citizen of the Year and International Women’s Day Scholarship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan and deliver the Live on The Lounge online event offering local young artists and musicians the chance to share their talent</li> <li>• deliver digital short stories program to celebrate and promote our public spaces</li> </ul>

### Who is involved in this work?

Council partnerships	External partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications Section</li> <li>• Assets Section</li> <li>• Capital Works Section</li> <li>• Strategy and Environment Section</li> <li>• Community Services Section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• young people</li> <li>• local sporting clubs and sports councils</li> <li>• not-for-profit and community support sector</li> <li>• local parks and reserves groups</li> </ul>

**What success looks like:** Young people are visible in the community enjoying public spaces and accessing opportunities to share their skills and passions. Their contribution to community life is recognised and celebrated.

**Challenges and opportunities:** Port Stephens covers over 85,000 hectares, with our population spread from rural properties to suburban town centres. This creates barriers including limited transport options and opportunities to connect face-to-face. We need to focus on localised responses to address social needs to overcome these barriers.



## Priority 3: Ready and have pathways to success

### Young people in Port Stephens want to have access to the latest in technology and innovation.

We know, like other parts of regional Australia, there's work to do to keep young people learning and working in the region. This requires young people to have:

- clear and accessible pathways to education, training and employment
- support to adapt to changing job markets, trends and cultural priorities.

#### How do we achieve this?

Keep doing	Start doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deliver the annual Mayoral Academic Scholarship Program</li> <li>• offer apprentice, cadet and trainee opportunities</li> <li>• host career information workshops in partnership with business and schools</li> <li>• support workforce development opportunities in partnership with local industry and education providers</li> <li>• support action included in Aboriginal Agreement, Yabang Gumba-Gu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create new work opportunities for young people in Council business</li> <li>• develop a podcast series on future learning and work initiatives with a focus on entrepreneurship and smart technologies</li> <li>• document a series of digital stories on our successful trainees and apprentices</li> </ul>

#### Who is involved in this work?

Council partnerships	External partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications Section</li> <li>• Strategy and Environment Section</li> <li>• Organisation Support Section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creative young people</li> <li>• local business and industry</li> <li>• local high schools</li> <li>• not-for-profit and community support sector</li> </ul>

**What success looks like:** Young people are able to access formal and informal learning opportunities and connect with networks that align to their interests and skills. They have the prospect of future work and job opportunities in the local community.

**Challenges and opportunities:** COVID-19 has led to less certainty around future education, training and employment opportunities. Port Stephens is reliant on the tourism and hospitality sectors for employment and has experienced high rates of Jobkeeper take up due to COVID. We need to encourage innovative approaches to future learning and an entrepreneurial spirit among young people.





## Priority 4: Healthy and happy

**Creating a community where health and general wellbeing can thrive requires a collective effort.**

Young people have repeatedly identified the challenges they face to their mental wellbeing. Issues with access and stigma are all barriers to maintaining physical and mental health. Our plan aims for young people to be:

- supported and nurtured by a cohesive network of services
- able to access professional support and initiatives that promote wellbeing..

### How do we achieve this?

Keep doing	Start doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop and maintain partnerships with agencies that work with vulnerable young people</li> <li>• provide sector coordination and leadership in key projects that support vulnerable young people</li> <li>• provide and promote access to information relevant to young people using appropriate platforms</li> <li>• active participation and leadership within local Youth Interagency network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop program of opportunities for Council staff to use community volunteer leave to support work of community agencies</li> <li>• develop podcast on wellbeing including information about local services and access pathways to support</li> </ul>

### Who is involved in this work?

Council partnerships	External partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications Section</li> <li>• Strategy and Environment Section</li> <li>• Organisation Support Section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local youth interagency members</li> <li>• Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)</li> <li>• DCJ locally funded service providers</li> <li>• not-for-profit and community support sector</li> </ul>

**What success looks like:** Young people have access to the professional support and community infrastructure they need to live a meaningful and healthy life.

**Challenges and opportunities:** One of the biggest impacts of COVID-19 has been the need to look at alternative ways to connect and engage with young people using digital media. A number of local services are already using new technologies to help drive service delivery and promote access.





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