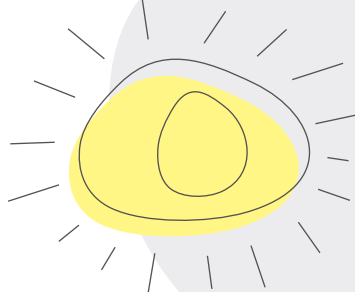




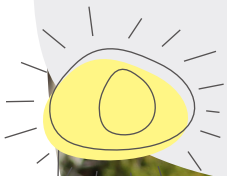
MIDCOAST
council



2019 - 2023

YOUTH STRATEGIC PLAN

Our future together



Acknowledgement of Country
MidCoast Council acknowledges the
Gathang-speaking people, the custodians
of the land to which this plan applies.
We pay our respect to all Aboriginal people of
the land and to Elders past, present and future.

FOREWORD FROM OUR MAYOR

It is with great pleasure that I present MidCoast Council's inaugural Youth Strategic Plan, a document that will provide direction in the way that Council, youth service providers and the broader community will work with, include and empower our young people.

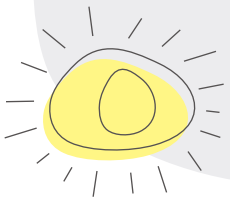
Young people are often referred to as our future, and as such they will be the demographic who experience the full impact of the planning and decisions we make now and implement over the next 10 years. But more than our future, young people have a role to play today as active participants within our communities. Through the strategies outlined in this plan we aim to see this perspective become a visible reality.

There are many challenges that impact on the capacity of our young people to achieve their aspirations. From rising mental health concerns to limited local employment and tertiary education opportunities, it is vital for us to work together to address these challenges and ensure our young people thrive in their current and future lives.

The development of this strategy in consultation with key stakeholders, including young people, youth service providers, schools and the broader community, is the first step in the development of an all-of-community approach to supporting young people in the MidCoast Council area. As a plan that is owned and will be implemented by the key stakeholders identified, the success of the strategies outlined will be defined by innovative partnerships focused on achieving common goals.

Everyone has a part to play in creating a community where young people are valued as active contributors to our community and we look forward to seeing our young people, and by extension our whole community, benefit from the implementation of this plan.

Cr David West, Mayor



FOREWORD FROM A YOUNG PERSON

As a member of the Manning Youth Action Team I have been privileged to help enrich the lives of young people across the MidCoast Council region through helping to facilitate many amazing events that are run for young people, by young people. These events empower young people as well as keep them safe by giving them something to do in a safe place that allows them to be young people without the fear of judgement from the wider community.

This youth plan is incredibly important to young people like myself because it is essentially a guide for the community that is informed by us. It shows where we need and want support and helps stop important things falling between the gaps. By allowing us to have an input it gives an accurate view of what young people need, and where we as a community can improve and change to support the growth and wellbeing of young people. Through helping to grow opportunities, supporting connections to the wider community, and lifting young people's voices to make sure they are truly heard, we can enrich the lives of young people in the region and show them that they do matter and they are valued as members of our community.

Natalie Price

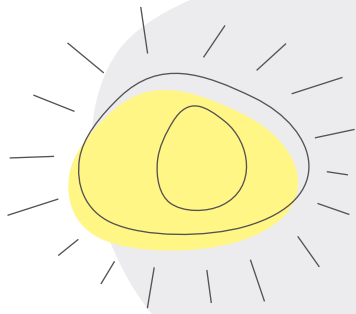


**“ANY AGE YOU ARE,
YOU’LL ALWAYS
HAVE AN OPINION
AND YOU’LL ALWAYS
HAVE SOMETHING
TO CONTRIBUTE TO
THE COMMUNITY.”**



Words from a Focus Group participant.

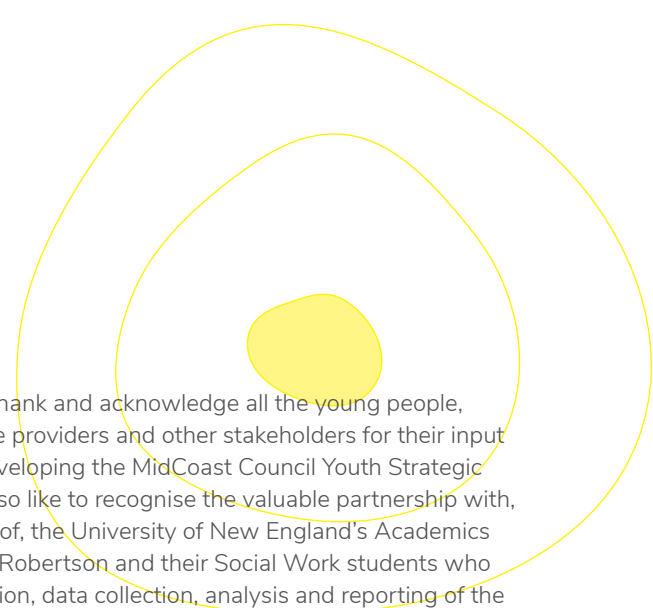
The quotes in this document are from our local youth who participated in Focus Group workshops.



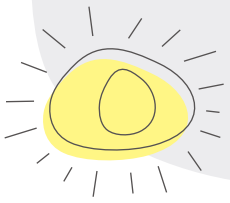
2019 - 2023
**YOUTH
 STRATEGIC PLAN**
Our future together

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Council would like to thank and acknowledge all the young people, parents, carers, service providers and other stakeholders for their input and involvement in developing the MidCoast Council Youth Strategic Plan. Council would also like to recognise the valuable partnership with, and subsequent work of, the University of New England's Academics Erica Russ and Stuart Robertson and their Social Work students who worked on the promotion, data collection, analysis and reporting of the consultation phases.



Our vision:

To be a connected community where young people are valued, supported and empowered to lead fulfilling lives

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Youth Strategic Plan provides a clear strategic direction to guide and focus the manner in which Council, service providers and the broader community support and empower our young people. The Youth Strategic Plan seeks to:

- Guide and focus the community's collective work with and for young people
- Ensure that best-practice support and services are delivered for young people
- Utilise a strong evidence base to help the community better meet the needs and aspirations of our young people
- Ensure that young people are actively engaged and that the community is responsive to their needs
- Outline how young people will be empowered to participate in community life

SCOPE

The 2019 - 2023 Youth Strategic Plan:

- Focuses on young people aged 12-24 years old who live, work, study or play in the MidCoast Council Local Government Area
- Represents a whole-of-community plan, serving as a guiding document for Council, service providers and the broader community
- Maintains strong links to strategies and outcomes in existing planning documents across all three levels of government
- Will be supported by the development of annual action plans and will be monitored in partnership with key stakeholder networks

BACKGROUND

This inaugural Youth Strategic Plan for the MidCoast Council local government area (LGA) was born from an environment of opportunity and reform at both a local and state level.

In May 2016, MidCoast Council was formed through the merger of Gloucester Shire, Great Lakes and Greater Taree councils. The merger presented the opportunity for a fresh approach to council's business, including the delivery of community-strengthening activities for young people. Transformation was also underway at a state level, with NSW Family and Community Services (FaCS) releasing their Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) Program Reform Directions paper in August 2016. The paper outlined FaCS' vision and guiding principles for development of a flexible, evidence-based and client-focused service system to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

To capitalise and deliver on these opportunities and realise meaningful, achievable and sustainable outcomes for young people, a strategic approach was required.

From mid-2017, Council, FaCS and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) began collaborating to progress this new approach. From an initial forum of state- and federal-funded service providers in August 2017 emerged the establishment of a Youth Strategic Group, dedicated to discussing and addressing the needs of young people. This group readily identified the need for a foundational strategic plan to provide direction for the way in which young people are included, empowered and supported across the MidCoast.

In its facilitative capacity as a community-strengthening provider, Council has taken the lead on development of the Youth Strategic Plan. Stakeholder engagement and funding body collaboration have been critical aspects of the project to ensure development of a valid plan which is owned by all parties with an interest in its implementation and fulfilment.



**"JUST TO FEEL
INCLUDED, I THINK...
TO FEEL HEARD."**

CONSULTATION

As a whole-of-community plan, the Youth Strategic Plan has been developed through an extensive consultation process, undertaken from August 2018 to April 2019.

Key stakeholders including young people and their families, service providers and the broader community have been involved in the project to support development of a valid plan that is owned by parties with an interest and/or role in its implementation and fulfilment.

The University of New England (UNE) was engaged by Council as a project partner providing independent and specialist support with consultation, data analysis and strategy development.

Consultation was conducted in three phases:

	AIM	KEY ACTIVITIES
PHASE 1 Aug-Sep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather broad stakeholder input on youth issues, opportunities and priorities • Analyse feedback to identify key emerging themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey open to young people (aged 14 – 24), youth service providers and community members across the LGA • 407 survey responses were received
PHASE 2 Oct-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore information obtained during stage 1 consultation • Clarify and confirm emerging themes • Identify objectives to achieve the aims of each theme • Analyse and report on focus group findings to inform the development of strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of a series of 7 focus groups in the three main regional centres of Taree, Forster-Tuncurry and Gloucester in November of 2018 • 50 participants including young people and service providers in the three main regional centres of Taree, Forster-Tuncurry and Gloucester • Focus groups were recorded, transcribed and data analysed throughout December 2018 and January 2019 by UNE academics, with a report provided to Council in February 2019 to inform the development of the plan's strategies
PHASE 3 Feb-Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and test plan strategies • Confirm draft plan content is reflective of stakeholder input and provides a clear and achievable direction • 'Close the loop' with young people and key stakeholders on the consultation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop with local service providers • Three workshops held with young people across the LGA during Youth Week 2019 • Participation by 80 young people and 16 service providers

Stakeholder consultation will remain a feature of the plan's implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review. This ongoing consultation will support the flexible delivery of meaningful, achievable and sustainable outcomes throughout the plan's four-year duration

POLICY CONTEXT

While this Youth Strategic Plan has been developed specifically for the MidCoast LGA, the plan maintains solid alignments with local, state and federal priorities and outcomes.

The table on the following page outlines the documents that have informed the Youth Strategic Plan development and aligns the relevant themes addressed.

LOCAL

MidCoast Council Delivery
Program & Operational Plan

STATE

NSW Human Services
Outcome Framework

NSW Strategic Plan
for Children & Young People

NATIONAL

Australian Youth
Development Index

National Strategy
for Young Australians

The Nest - National Plan
for Child & Youth Wellbeing

OPPORTUNITIES

LOCAL

STATE

NATIONAL

<p>Strategy 10.3: Increase opportunities for quality education and training</p>	<p>Education & Skills All people in NSW are able to learn, contribute and achieve</p>	<p>Education Work</p>
	<p>Economic All people in NSW are able to contribute to and benefit from our economy</p>	<p>Employment & Opportunity Education</p>
	<p>Opportunity Children and young people have relevant skills for life, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Learning</p> 

CONNECTION

LOCAL

STATE

NATIONAL

<p>Strategy 1.1: Provide equitable access to services, programs, spaces and facilities</p> <p>Strategy 1.3: Strengthen the capacity of our young people to participate and thrive in community life</p> <p>Strategy 1.5: Support the strengthening of social connectedness through programs and partnerships</p> <p>Strategy 1.7: Welcome people of all abilities and backgrounds</p>	<p>Social & Community All people in NSW are able to participate and feel socially and culturally connected</p>	<p>Communities</p>
	<p>Connect Children and young people have a sense of belonging and connectedness with people and place on and offline</p>	<p>Participating</p> 

WELLBEING

LOCAL

STATE

NATIONAL

<p>Strategy 6.1: Work together to promote and enhance community safety</p> <p>Strategy 6.4: Encourage physical health and fitness through provision of appropriate recreational facilities</p>	<p>Safety All people in NSW are able to be safe</p> <p>Home All people in NSW are able to have a safe and affordable place to live</p> <p>Health All people in NSW are able to live a healthy life</p>	<p>Early Intervention Safety Health & Wellbeing</p>
	<p>Safety Children and young people are free from abuse, neglect, violence and serious injury</p> <p>Wellbeing Children and young people are healthy and well through the provision of affordable, accessible and timely services</p>	<p>Health & Wellbeing</p> <p>Being Loved & Safe Being healthy</p> 

VOICE

LOCAL

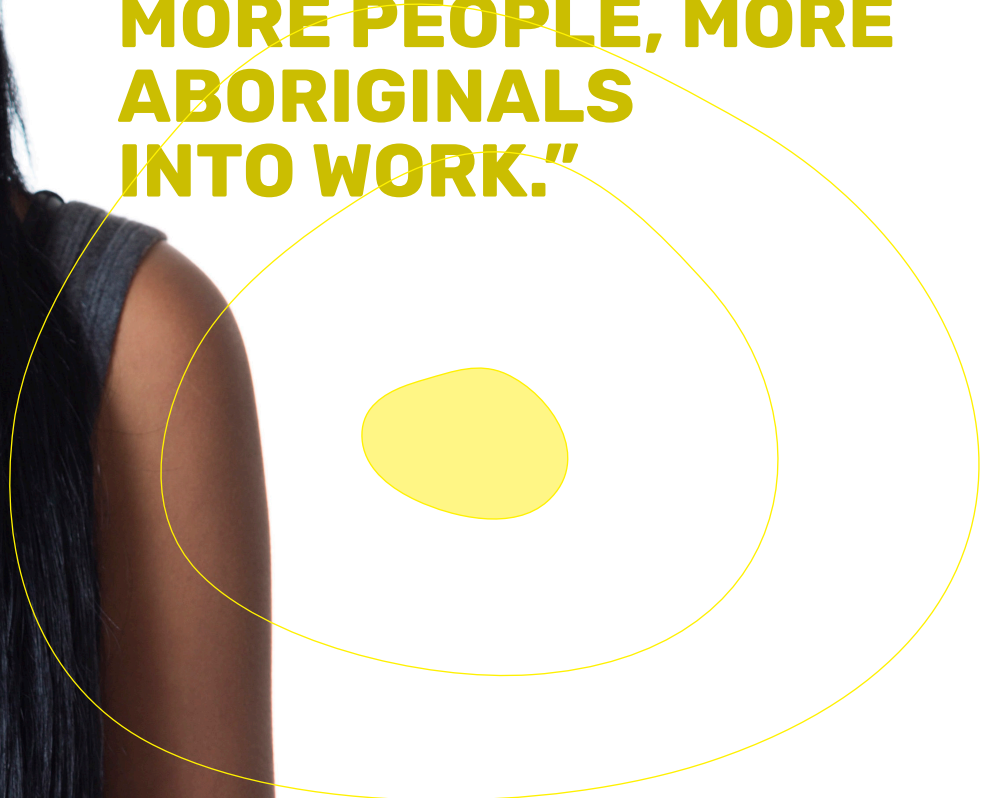
STATE

NATIONAL

<p>Strategy 15.3: Empower community members to participate in decision-making by providing a broad range of engagement opportunities</p>	<p>Empowerment All people and communities in NSW are able to contribute to decision making that affects them and live fulfilling lives</p>	<p>Political Participation Civic Participation</p>
	<p>Voice Children and young people are empowered to be involved in the decisions that affect them</p>	<p>Participating</p> 



“AS AN ABORIGINAL MYSELF, NOT MANY ABORIGINAL KIDS HAVE JOBS AROUND HERE. IF I DID HAVE A JOB, I WOULD BE TRYING TO GET MORE PEOPLE, MORE ABORIGINALS INTO WORK.”



YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MIDCOAST

The MidCoast Council LGA has 93,288 residents spread over an area of 10,000 km². Young people (aged 12-24) represent 12.4% of the population and number 11,200.

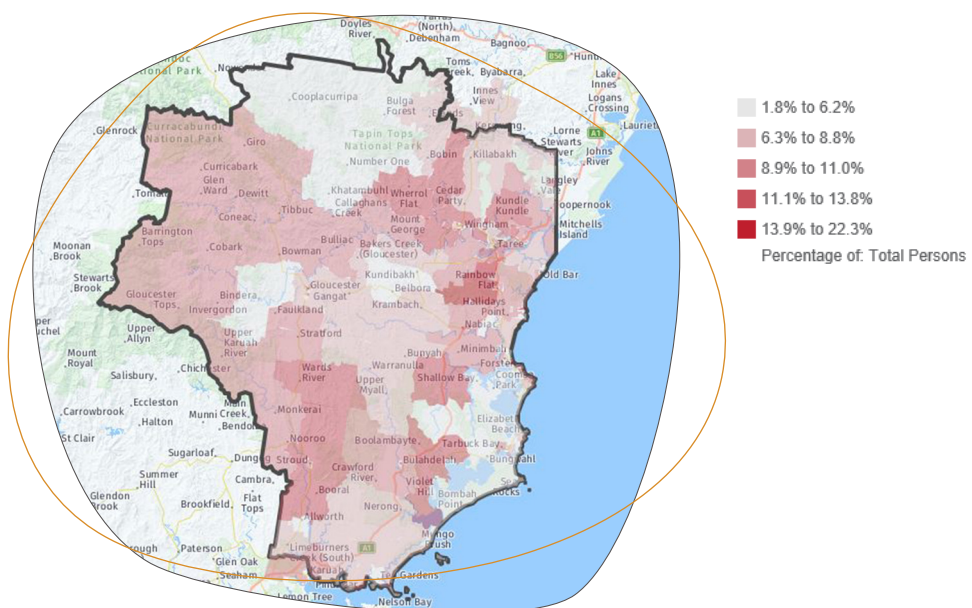
	MidCoast LGA	Regional NSW	State	National
12-24 year olds in the MidCoast Local Government Area	12%	15.2%	16.1%	16.3%
Proportion of 12-24 year olds who are Indigenous	12.3%	n/a	4.6%	4.3%
Proportion of 12-24 year olds from low-income households*	12.2%	9.5%	9.2%	9.6%
Youth unemployment (12-25 yrs)	17.1%	13.7%	12.9%	14.1%
Youth engagement: Disengaged	16.7%	11.8%	9.0%	9.6%
Partially engaged	16.5%	13.8%	10.8%	11.7%

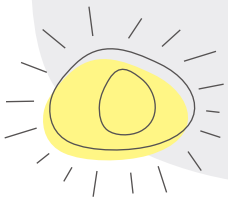
* low income households are those where income is less than \$650/week

Unemployment rates within this demographic are high at 17.1% compared with the rest of the state (12.9%) and Australia (14.1%), corresponding with high rates of disengagement (16.7%) and partial engagement (16.5%).

The MidCoast local government area has a low proportion of 12-24 year olds compared with the rest of Australia. Our young people are spread widely across our LGA:

People aged 15 to 24 years, 2016, usual residence:





Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a product developed by the ABS that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The indexes are based on information from the five-yearly Census.

Socio-Economic Index

The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage based on a range of Census characteristics, including low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relative unskilled occupations. The lower the SEIFA score, the higher the level of disadvantage.

The MidCoast Council area is the 24th most disadvantaged LGA in NSW (131 LGAs), with an overall SEIFA index of 928. Within the MidCoast Council LGA, there are varying levels of disadvantage across localities, with key indexes including:

- Hallidays Point (1034.6)
- Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest (969.4)
- Taree (960.6)
- Forster/Tuncurry (920.5)
- Gloucester (911.9)
- Cabarita area, Forster (513)
- Bushland area, Taree (444)

The proportion of 12-25 year olds in the MidCoast Council LGA who live in low-income households (where income is less than \$650/week) is significantly higher than the rest of the state and Australia at 12.2%.

"OUR COMMUNITY IS REALLY LOVELY. WE GET LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES THAT YOU WOULDN'T GET LIVING SOMEWHERE ELSE."



OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



12%
of the MidCoast
Council population
are young people¹

compared to
15.2%
for Regional NSW



31%
are involved
in sport²



12.3%
of them are Aboriginal
or Torres Strait Islander¹

compared to
4.6%
across all of NSW



3.5%
live with
a disability¹



17.5%
youth unemployment¹

compared to
12.9%
in Regional NSW



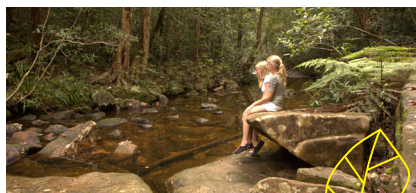
16.7%
youth disengagement rate
(young people not employed
or in education)¹

compared to
9%
for Regional NSW



WHAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT LIVING IN OUR REGION

25%
country area²



28%
natural environment²

25%
beaches²



20%
community²



FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

25%
would like more youth events and activities²



26%
education is their highest priority²



24%
employment is their biggest issue²



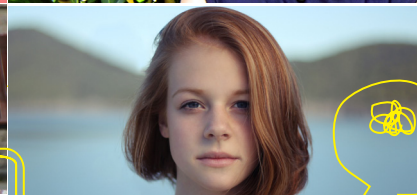
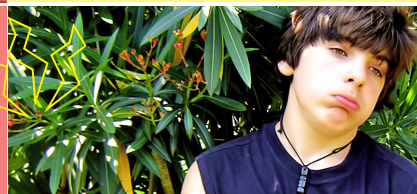
35%
believe attitudes contribute to creating a youth friendly community²



34%
are concerned about coping with stress³

35%
feel there are barriers impacting upon them finding work³

34%
are concerned about body image³



60%
feel positive about their future³

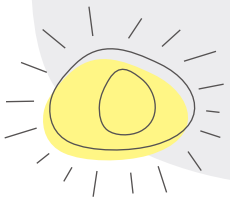
23%
use the internet to source information on specific issues³

24%
are concerned about mental health³

Sources ¹ Population statistics (profile id.) ² Survey Statistics (UNE report) ³ Survey Statistics (Mission Australia Annual Youth Survey – MidCoast Council report 2018)

“IF YOU HAVE THAT INDEPENDENCE, THAT MONEY, YOU’RE MORE RELIANT ON YOURSELF. THAT ALSO CAN EQUAL CONFIDENCE AND IT’S SOMETHING THAT’S REALLY IMPORTANT WHEN YOU’RE GROWING UP AND SHIFTING FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULT.”





THE PLAN

To achieve our vision, we will focus our efforts on achieving outcomes across four key areas over the next four years:

OPPORTUNITIES

Young people have access to meaningful and local employment opportunities

CONNECTION

Young people have a sense of connection and belonging to space, their peers and the wider community

WELLBEING

Young people have access to information and supports available for mental and physical wellbeing

VOICE

Young people's opinions and perspectives are sought and valued



OPPORTUNITIES

Young people have access to meaningful and local employment and training opportunities

WHAT we want to do

1.1 Connect young people with existing and future employment opportunities

HOW we will do it

- 1.1.1 Facilitate connection and collaboration between services, businesses and schools and other relevant stakeholders
- 1.1.2 Increase awareness of school-based apprenticeships and training
- 1.1.3 Investigate avenues for centralised information on local employment and training opportunities

WHAT we want to do

1.2 Strengthen existing, and identify new training pathways for young people

HOW we will do it

- 1.2.1 Support young people's access to further education pathways in the region
- 1.2.2 Identify existing and create new training networks to ensure distribution of relevant information
- 2.2.3 Promote and enable young people's access to necessary technology for further training

WHO can be involved

Young people, MidCoast Council, high schools, chambers of commerce and business community, further education institutions, youth service providers, job service providers, local Aboriginal groups and organisations, disability service providers, Department of Industry, Regional Development Australia, and Great Lakes Education Fund



CONNECTION

Young people have a sense of connection and belonging to space, their peers and the wider community

WHAT we want to do

2.1 Support a positive image of young people within the broader community

HOW we will do it

- 2.1.1 Support and promote existing youth-led initiatives
- 2.1.2 Seek new initiatives that promote inclusion and respect for young people in the wider community
- 2.1.3 Encourage participation in local volunteer opportunities
- 2.1.4 Develop and support a coordinated approach to the promotion of youth issues, opportunities and contributions
- 2.1.5 Create partnerships with local media to promote the positive contributions young people make

WHAT we want to do

2.2 Identify, promote and/or activate spaces where young people are welcomed and have the opportunity to connect with peers (on and offline)

HOW we will do it

- 2.2.1 Identify and promote existing youth-friendly spaces
- 2.2.2 Activate spaces (on and offline) where young people can connect, develop their identity and feel safe

WHAT we want to do

2.3 Deliver ongoing activities, events and workshops for young people that celebrate a diversity of interests, backgrounds and cultures

HOW we will do it

- 2.3.1 Support the delivery of existing initiatives
- 2.3.2 Explore opportunities to increase engagement with the creative arts
- 2.3.3 Encourage program networking and collaboration among stakeholders

WHAT we want to do

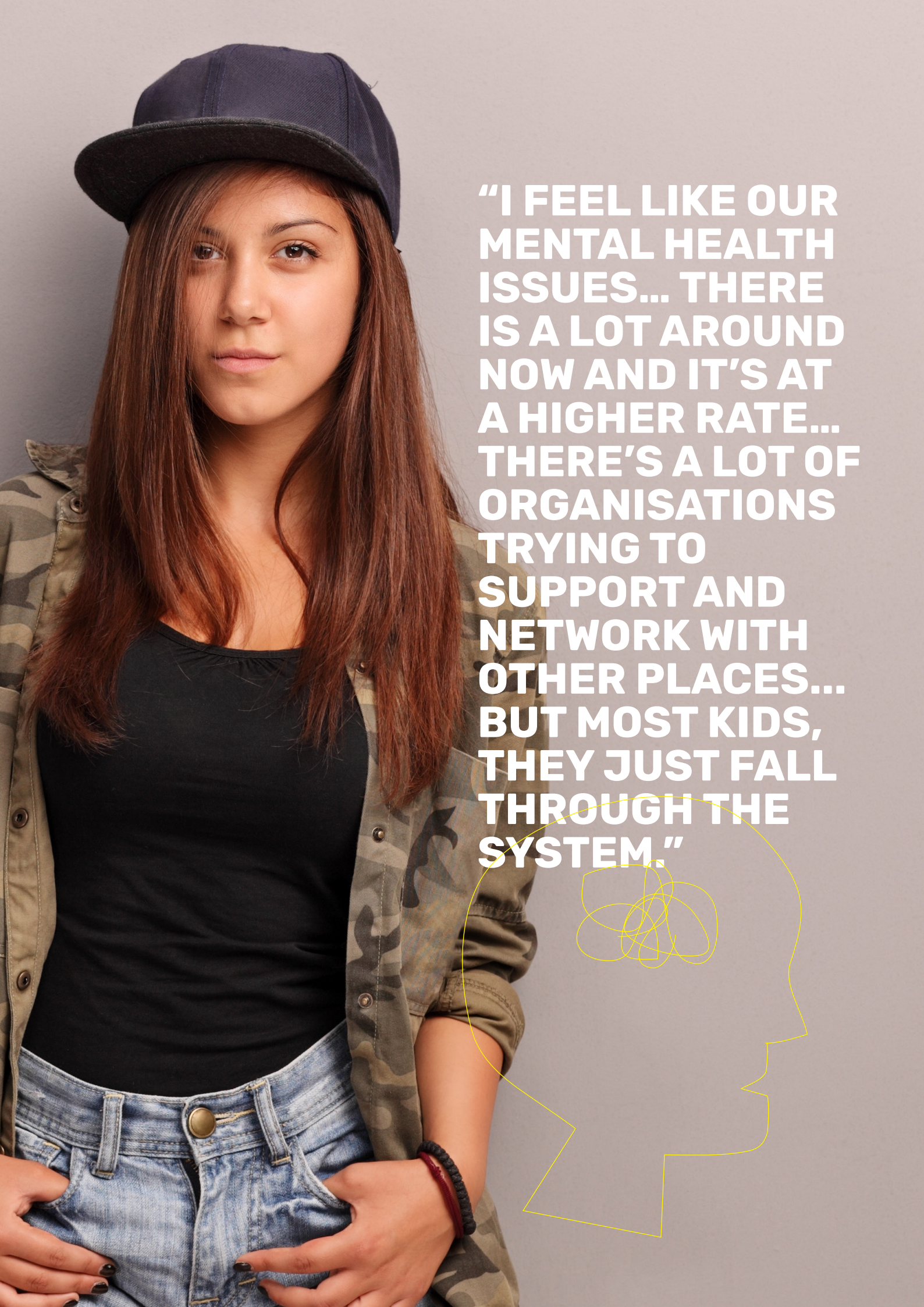
2.4 Establish effective communication strategies to ensure young people have access to information

HOW we will do it

- 2.4.1 Utilise existing avenues and relevant forms of media to promote events and services to young people
- 2.4.2 Create young person-led promotional opportunities

WHO can be involved

Young people, MidCoast Council, youth service providers, high schools, volunteer organisations, local Aboriginal groups and organisations, disability service providers, creative arts sector and representative groups, service clubs, sporting clubs, and surf life saving clubs



"I FEEL LIKE OUR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES... THERE IS A LOT AROUND NOW AND IT'S AT A HIGHER RATE... THERE'S A LOT OF ORGANISATIONS TRYING TO SUPPORT AND NETWORK WITH OTHER PLACES... BUT MOST KIDS, THEY JUST FALL THROUGH THE SYSTEM."





WELLBEING

Young people have access to information and supports available for mental and physical wellbeing

WHAT we want to do

3.1 Promote local services and supports that are available to young people

HOW we will do it

3.1.1 Create partnerships with local media to aid in the promotion of local services

3.1.2 Maintain existing stakeholder networks to support connection and ensure information is shared in a timely manner

3.1.3 Support initiatives that assist in connecting young people to the information and support they need

WHAT we want to do

3.2 Implement and promote affordable activities for young people to maintain their physical wellbeing

HOW we will do it

3.2.1 Promote existing activities and initiatives that support affordable participation in physical activity

3.2.2 Promote collaboration between community groups and organisations to encourage inclusion of young people

3.2.3 Promote and support funding opportunities that enable young people to access physical activities

WHAT we want to do

3.3 Promote positive mental and physical wellbeing initiatives to support and inform young people and normalise participation

HOW we will do it

3.3.1 Actively participate in the delivery of initiatives that promote positive wellbeing for young people

3.3.2 Identify and seek avenues of implementation for wellbeing initiatives that address gaps in current delivery

3.3.3 Actively promote campaigns and initiatives that seek to normalise support-seeking behaviour

WHAT we want to do

3.4 Identify gaps in existing supports

HOW we will do it

3.4.1 Advocate for improved and/or increased wellbeing services for young people

WHO can be involved

Young people, MidCoast Council, NSW and Federal Government, Hunter New England Health services, mental health organisations, youth service providers, high schools, local media outlets, local Aboriginal groups and organisations, disability service providers, sporting clubs and recreation facilities



VOICE

Young people's opinions and perspectives are sought and valued

WHAT we want to do

4.1 Increase young people's understanding of, and engagement in civic activities and processes

HOW we will do it

- 4.1.1 Promote participation in existing advocacy groups for young people
- 4.1.2 Implement initiatives that connect young people to each other and decision makers in the community

WHAT we want to do

4.2 Provide opportunities for young people to be actively involved in planning and development of policy, services, events and activities

HOW we will do it

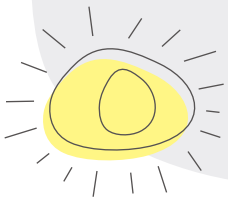
- 4.2.1 Seek input from young people on community issues
- 4.2.2 Ensure young people are regularly consulted on issues and decisions that particularly affect them

WHO can be involved

Young people, MidCoast Council, NSW and Federal Government, youth service providers, high schools, school representative councils, service clubs, local Aboriginal groups and organisations, disability service providers



**"WE HAVE SO MUCH
TALENT IN THIS
AREA AND I JUST
WISH WE COULD
SHOWCASE THAT
IN A FUN WAY."**



IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, EVALUATION

To support implementation of this strategic plan, action plans will be developed on an annual basis in consultation with key stakeholders. These action plans will detail priority areas for action, responsible parties, timeframes for completion and performance indicators for each financial year of the plan. To support flexibility and the delivery of meaningful and achievable outcomes, these annual action plans will be developed for each new financial year in the preceding quarter.

Actions that are the responsibility of Council will be incorporated into Council's Operational Plans and linked to the Delivery Program. The Operational Plan is Council's annual plan, including the individual projects and activities to be undertaken in that year to achieve the Delivery Program. The Delivery Program outlines Council's commitments and focus areas over a four-year period in order to deliver on the objectives and strategies the community has outlined in the Community Strategic Plan.

It is important that progress against the plan is regularly monitored, evaluated and reported to key stakeholders. Given the shared responsibility for plan implementation, Council will oversee plan monitoring, with information gathered from plan partners primarily through key identified stakeholder networks. Monitoring updates will be reported on a bi-monthly basis through those same networks. Updates will also be incorporated into Council's six-monthly Operational Plan reporting and annual reporting processes.

DEFINITIONS

Advocate

The action of supporting and standing up for a particular cause or issue.

Collaboration

The process of working with an individual or group towards a collective outcome.

Engagement

A measure of the level of involvement by individuals in the workforce or study. A full-time employed or full-time student would be 'fully engaged', while part-time students may be fully engaged if they are also employed, or 'partly engaged' if they are not working. A person who is not employed or studying is considered to be 'disengaged' (.id).

Inclusion

The process of involving someone within a process, group or structure.

Stakeholder

An individual, organisation or group that has an interest or concern in something. For this document, the common interest is young people.

Young Person

For the purposes of this plan, a young person is someone that is 12-24 years old.

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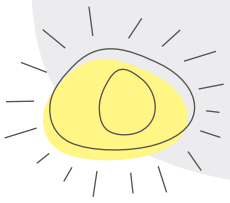
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**YOUTH
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