SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL
YOUTH STRATEGIC PLAN
2015-2019
Councils have a unique and critical role to play. Young people, more than many other population groups, are grounded in place, or the "local". A range of council activities have a primary impact on young people, including urban planning, economic development, public space, parks and gardens, human services, libraries, by-laws, and infrastructure. Councils have a unique capacity to work from a “place-based” perspective, holistically monitoring issues, identifying gaps and responding from a broad professional base.

~Nabben 2004~
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology &amp; Research Methods</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why focus on Young People?</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Strategic Linkages</td>
<td>9-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Support Program Review</td>
<td>15-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Support Program Review Recommendations</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of 2009-2013 Youth Strategy Data &amp; Activities</td>
<td>27-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Community Consultation Findings</td>
<td>30-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Strategy Areas, Objectives and Outcomes</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 1: Leadership, Participation and Civic Engagement</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 2: Preventative Health &amp; Well Being</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3: Youth Friendly Activities, Events &amp; Programs</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 4: Volunteering, Education, Employment &amp; Training</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 5: Planning, Partnerships &amp; Advocacy</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices- Consultation Results</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Survey Results</td>
<td>39-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider Results</td>
<td>58-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Survey Results</td>
<td>71-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Discussion Group Results</td>
<td>79-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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July 2015
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Executive Summary

Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Strategic Plan 2015-2019 is an integrated approach to ensuring that the whole of Council continues to value and include young people in the work that they do.

This Council specific plan was informed by extensive community consultation and sets out the strategic priorities for both Council and its Youth Support Program over the next five years through achievable and effective strategies that utilise available resources to support young people across the municipality.

Swan Hill Rural City Council recognises the value of its young people as active and contributing community members. According to the 2011 ABS Census the Swan Hill municipality is home to 3,810 young people aged 12-25 years. For the purpose of this plan young people are referred to as those that are aged 12-25, who live, work or study in the Swan Hill municipality.

The Youth Strategic Plan was shaped around four key guiding objectives:

- Building a demographic profile of young people across the municipality
- Reviewing the previous Youth Strategy 2009-2013
- Reviewing the work of the Youth Support Program; and
- Identifying current youth needs to inform the future work of Councils Youth Support Program.

Input from young people, parents, service providers and community members informed the key objectives and strategies within the plan. A total of 1202 people shared their thoughts and ideas:

- 840 young people filled in a survey
- 112 service providers completed a survey
- 161 parents/community members filled in a survey; and
- 89 young people/service providers/parents/community members attended small discussion groups

There are 2057 young people aged 12-18 years of age in the Swan Hill LGA (2011 ABS Census) this equates to a notable 41% survey response rate overall and a 28% survey response rate from Robinvale youth in this 12-18 year old age group.

Consultation with young people proved invaluable in understanding their needs and aspirations. In 2015 the things young people liked best about where they lived were: the people (18%) open spaces (14%) and quiet/peaceful communities (13%). Similarly in 2009 the things young people liked best were: friends and family (18%), friendly people (14%) and living in a small town (13%)

In 2015 young people across the municipality shared their top three overall concerns as being: boredom/nothing to do (52%), not keeping up with school work (47%) and body image (38%). These results differed from the 2009 youth survey results where young people named their top three concerns as: alcohol (21%), drugs (19%) and boredom/nothing to do (9%).
Overwhelming community sentiment favored Council continuing to offer a Youth Support Program. When young people, parents, service providers and community members were asked *how important is it that Council offers a Youth Support Program?* They responded affirmatively:

- **71% of young people** surveyed said that it was important to extremely important
- **92% of service providers** who completed a survey said that they felt it was extremely important or very important; and
- **87% of community members** who filled in a survey felt that it was either extremely important or very important.

The youth support program review noted a number of achievements as well as challenges and opportunities for the future. Full recommendations and results are available in the succeeding section of this report.

Informed by extensive community consultation with young people, service providers and parents and community members the strategic priorities that have been articulated in this plan include:

- **Strategy 1: Leadership, Participation and Civic Engagement**
- **Strategy 2: Preventative Health & Well Being**
- **Strategy 3: Youth Friendly Activities, Events & Programs**
- **Strategy 4: Volunteering, Education, Employment & Training**
- **Strategy 5: Planning, Partnerships & Advocacy**

The strategic areas and key objectives included in the Youth Strategic Plan 2015-2019 will enable council to achieve better opportunities for young people aged 12-25 who live, work or study in the Swan Hill municipality.

A *Youth Support Program Operational Action Plan* will be developed each year to ensure that the Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Strategic Plan 2015-2019 actively responds to the changing needs of young people, the community, key service providers and the broader youth policy environment.

It is envisaged that the *comprehensive consultation results* included in this report and the *Youth Profile Demographic Data* companion document will be used broadly as resources for informing youth development, planning and advocacy both within Council and in the wider community.
Methodology & Research Methods

The methodology used in researching and writing the Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Strategy (2015-2019) is outlined below.

Formation of the Project Advisory Group
A project advisory group was formed to guide the development of the Youth Strategic Plan as well as the Youth Support Program review process. The advisory group consisted of members from: Swan Hill College, St. Mary MacKillop College, Swan Hill Rural City Council, Swan Hill District Health, School Focussed Youth Service, the Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network and Loddon Murray Mallee Medicare Local.

To ensure that consultation processes were youth friendly Novo Youth Council was also invited to take part. Youth Council members assisted with: research design, interviewing; and data collection and analysis.

Literature Review
A range of documentation identified in the project brief in conjunction with additional documentation gathered at the inception meeting was reviewed to inform the development of the Youth Strategic Plan.

Demographic Profile
The profiling of the municipality’s youth is a powerful tool in enabling understanding of the community, higher needs areas, cohorts experiencing particular vulnerabilities and areas of community strength. A range of data sources were used to develop this comprehensive profile which has been captured as a companion document to the Youth Strategic Plan.

Review of the Youth Strategy 2009-2013 and the work of the Youth Support Program
To ensure a balanced review research questions were developed to invite feedback from youth, service provider, parents and community members. Adding to this was a review of the Youth Strategy 2009-2013 evaluation template and internal data such as Freeza funding reports for the past two years. In addition a focussed conversation was held with program staff and management to review their thinking on the strengths, challenges and opportunities for the program.

Consultation and Engagement
The following key activities were undertaken during the consultation and engagement phase:

Youth Survey
A youth survey was developed with Novo Youth Council to explore young people’s needs and aspirations and to gain their input on the future focus of Council’s Youth Support Program.

Partnerships with schools were crucial in ensuring high completion rates of the youth survey. The following schools were engaged to assist with promoting and rolling out the youth survey:

- St. Mary MacKillop College
- Swan Hill Specialist School
- St. Mary’s Robinvale
- Swan Hill College
- Robinvale P-12 College
- Manangatang P-12 College

A total of 840 young people filled in a survey.
Service Provider Survey  A survey was developed to invite the input of key stakeholders working with or planning for young people. The survey was promoted by advisory group members and via local networks. A total of 112 service providers completed a survey.

Parent/Community Member Survey
Parents of young people and community members who were passionate about youth were invited to provide input into the Youth Strategic Plan. Surveys were promoted through community groups, school newsletters and by radio. A total of 161 surveys were completed.

Small Discussion Groups
Small discussion groups were held with parents, service providers and community members:
Swan Hill Specialist School Senior Students  TAFE Certificate of Work Education Students
Certificate of General Education Students  ESL Students
Manatunga Elders Group (Robinvale)  Polynesian Parents (Robinvale)
Students at risk of disengaging (Robinvale)  Indigenous Languages Group (Robinvale)
Matrix-Cornerstone  Murray District Aboriginal Services Staff

A total of 89 people attended face to face small discussion groups.

Workshops
Internal Key Stakeholder Workshop- Key departments within Council were invited to hear about the demographic data and consultation results and plan together for how young people can be genuinely involved in Council’s decision making processes across all business units. A draft action plan was reviewed to gain feedback from key Council staff and departments.

External Key Stakeholder Workshop- the external key stakeholder workshop provided an opportunity to share the demographic data and consultation results with key stakeholders. The aim of the workshop was to explore and encourage relevant external partnerships as well as to inform the overall work of the Youth Support Program.

Presentation to Councillors- the DRAFT Youth Strategic Plan was presented to Councillors to gain their input and feedback. The session discussed key findings and encouraged Councillors to share their thinking about Council’s role in supporting young people into the future.

Data Analysis
All consultation data was analysed exploring both differences and similarities over time for young people taking part in the youth survey and also those differences and similarities between age and gender groups.

Drafting of the Youth Strategic Plan
The Draft document brought together each element of the research process including the research and literature review, demographic profile and community consultation findings and analysis into a form which articulates Council’s role and responsibility in supporting young people throughout the municipality with clearly defined outcomes.

Evaluation tools to enable measurement of outcomes and successes and a yearly work plan template were also developed to assist with the implementation of the Youth Strategic Plan.

The DRAFT Youth Strategic Plan was circulated to key stakeholders and the broader community to seek feedback prior to it being finalised and presented to Council for adoption.
Why focus on Young People?

The available research confirms that adolescence and early adulthood is a time of substantial change and development. In addition to the general trials of growing up, the current generation of young people face unique challenges related to an uncertain and changing world: globalisation and its impact on local labour and financial markets; climate change and loss of hope; the impacts of social media on relationships; changing family and relationship structures; and delayed transitions to independent living (Eckersley, R. (2004); and Robinson, L. & Lamb, S., The Foundation for Young Australians (2012).

There is a broad range of evidence available that highlights the benefits of young people being actively engaged in their communities.

Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities will be less depressed, have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities and will more likely reach full and healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).

It is by questioning; expressing their views and having their opinions taken seriously that young people develop skills, build competencies, acquire confidence and form aspirations. It is a virtuous circle. The more opportunities a young person has for meaningful participation, the more experienced and competent he or she becomes. This allows more effective participation, which in turn enhances [his/her] development (United Nations, 2004, p. 276).

An Australian report by Access Economics on the benefits of early intervention to prevent youth disengagement found that interventions that reduce youth disengagement could potentially return 23.6 times the initial government investment to society and 7.6 times directly to the government through increased taxation revenues (under a scenario assuming a 50% potential return) (ASIB, 2010).

YACVic’s 2011 discussion paper on the extent and nature of young people’s participation in decision making in local government in rural and regional Victoria reinforces the need for Councils to better engage young people in the work that they do:

‘Local government is an important and appropriate level for young people to participate in their communities. When properly supported, such participation can enable them to develop a sense of active and positive citizenship, and to build and share their skills in leadership, teamwork and community connections’.
The MAV sourced resource by Nadden and Hill (2004) also details the benefits of connecting young people to Council:

- Councils are more effective in their planning and decision making when connections are built between community and young people
- Mutual understanding is enhanced, and stereotypes are challenged
- The energy, leadership and fresh perspectives of 20 per cent of the population become more effectively engaged in social, economic, cultural and environmental renewal
- Young people and communities grow into active citizenship in order to tackle social problems and act on opportunities; and
- Inclusion and fairness is promoted for all sections of the population.

Swan Hill Rural City Council has demonstrated the value it places on supporting and involving young people to be actively engaged in their communities through:

- Inclusive planning processes e.g. community planning, infrastructure planning
- Involving young people in a meaningful way that builds their capacity e.g. Swan Hill Riverfront Project and the Clock Tower Project
- Development of the Youth Engagement and Participation Guide
- Youth advocacy e.g. Youth Partnerships, Mallee Child and Youth Area Partnership, YAC Vic
- Youth specific planning and research- Youth Strategic Planning; and
- Provision of the Youth Support Program.
Key Strategic Linkages

Local Government
Swan Hill Rural City Council’s 2013-2017 Plan is Council’s vision for the community and has a vital role in shaping the future of the municipality. The Plan articulates the following Vision, Mission and Values:

Our Vision
A vibrant, growing and sustainable community with pride and confidence in a prosperous future.

Our Mission
We will lead, advocate and provide a range of services that support our community and plan for the future.

Our Values
Council values our residents and community and will be responsive to their needs. In pursuing our objectives, we believe in, and are committed to the following values:

- **Community Engagement** We will ensure that our communities are engaged and informed.
- **Leadership** We will lead with integrity and encourage innovation.
- **Fairness** We will value and embrace the diversity of our community and ensure that all people are treated equally.
- **Accountability** We will be transparent in our activities and we value feedback

The Council Plan provides a broad direction and details Council’s priorities and longer-term goals with four key strategic objectives:

- Governance and Leadership
- Community Wellbeing
- Economic Growth
- Built and Natural Environment

**Strategic Objective 2 in the Council Plan – Community services that are efficient and responsive to needs** articulates Council’s ongoing responsibility to **maintain council’s level of support and explore opportunities to strengthen the following services:**

- Aged care services.
- Early Childhood education and Maternal and Child Health services.
- Disability access.
- **Youth support services.**
- Performing arts programs.
- Visual arts programs via the Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery.
- **Advocating for other services as they arise.**

Details of what specific activities will be undertaken on a range of services and projects are determined each year by Council.

Youth Policy
In February 2008 the Swan Hill Rural City Council adopted a Youth Policy. The Youth Policy confirmed Council’s commitment to supporting young people living in the municipality.
Within the Youth Policy Council acknowledges:
- The rights of local young people to live in a safe, caring, inclusive, non-discriminatory and just community;
- That the well-being of young people needs to be nurtured, fostered and protected;
- That young people have capacity to participate in decision-making that affects their lives so they are able to play an integral role and make a positive contribution to their community;
- There are differences amongst young people, and these different interests need to be recognised.

Child and Youth Friendly Charter
In 2007 the Child and Youth Friendly Charter was adopted by Council. The Charter was created to guide both Council and the wider community in making the municipality a friendly place to raise children and youth.

The Charter’s Vision:
“To create and sustain an entire municipal community that: cares for, includes, trusts and respects all children, youth and families; provides for health, welfare and education needs; offers safe, meaningful, welcoming and fulfilling entertainment options for the whole family; and ensures a supportive environment in which friends and extended family can be closely involved in the lives of these children and youth”

The Charter has become a Framework for best practice in the Swan Hill Rural City Council Municipality. The Charter not only guides current practice but planned infrastructure and program development.

State Government
Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Strategy - Our Shared Responsibility 2013-2022

The Victoria’s Vulnerable Children – Our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013-2022 is a whole-of-government strategy designed to drive broad, transformational change across government and the community to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

The strategy outlines collaborative governance arrangements and a performance and accountability framework that provides a set of goals, key outcomes and indicators that aim to reduce the incidence of vulnerability.

The strategy draws together all parts of government that have a responsibility for the health, social and economic factors that can make someone vulnerable and potentially lead to child abuse and neglect. It is designed to drive the broad-based change required across government and in the community over the next decade.
Children and Youth Area Partnerships

Children and Youth Area Partnerships are a new approach, bringing together Victorian Government departments including the Departments of Education and Early Childhood; Health; Human Services; Justice; and Victoria Police to work with local government and the community sector to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

This new approach recognises that improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people is a shared responsibility which requires better coordination across a range of partners and a focus on improving services and practice.

The Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership (MCYAP) which includes four local government areas; Mildura, Swan Hill, Buloke and Gannawarra, was established in September 2014; it is co-chaired by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education.

Membership of the MCYAP Partnership Steering Group includes Australian government, state government, local government and community sector representatives and a community member. Membership of the Steering Group is listed at the end of the newsletter.

The Area Partnerships have been asked to identify local priorities to address two key areas:

1. Support the learning and development of all children and young people, particularly those who are at risk of disengaging or who have disengaged; and
2. The creation of safe and supportive communities and environments in which children live free of abuse and neglect.


The Victorian state disability plan 2013–2016 articulates the government’s view for the future and sets a clear direction for the next four years.

At the centre of the plan is the framework, which outlines the vision and principles of the plan, the long-term goals, shorter-term outcomes and four-year strategies that guide the two-yearly implementation plans. The plan describes how progress and the results of our actions will be monitored, allowing for adjustments if needed and enabling greater transparency and accountability.

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013–2018, released in 2012, guides and coordinates the efforts of the Victorian Government in partnership with Victoria’s Aboriginal communities. The framework focuses long term, strategic and progressive effort to improve the health and quality of life of Aboriginal Victorians, and aligns closely with the targets of the Council of Australian Governments.
**Victorian Wannik education strategy**

*Wannik Learning Together — Journey to Our Future* is an education strategy which aims to reduce disparity in educational outcomes between Koorie and non-Koorie students in Victoria. Taken from the Gunai/Kurnai language, *wannik* (pronounced ‘wunn-ick’) means 'learning together - journey to our future'. Wannik represents a new era of collaboration within all Victorian schools. The system will reposition the education of Koorie students through a culture of strong leadership, high expectations and individualised learning.

The strategy proposes to:
- Reform the government school system’s education of Koorie students,
- Support greater student engagement,
- Provide more literacy and numeracy support,
- Provide support and encouragement for high-achieving students,
- Expand and develop the Koorie support workforce,
- Renew our focus on parental engagement, and
- Share responsibility appropriately across government.

**Victoria’s Advantage – Unity, Diversity, Opportunity**

Victoria’s multicultural affairs and citizenship policy, *Victoria’s Advantage – Unity, Diversity, Opportunity*, identifies a whole of government response to the opportunities and challenges of Victoria’s diverse multicultural society. From early childhood services through to education, employment, health, justice and transport, every citizen, regardless of background, should expect the very best from their government. This policy emphasises a commitment to addressing discrimination and ensuring access to government services that are sensitive to cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

**Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children – Everyone has a responsibility to act 2012-2015**

Victoria’s *Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children – Everyone has a responsibility to act 2012-2015* (Action Plan) was launched in 2012. The Action Plan engages a range of Government areas and community sector organisations to enact a range of prevention, early intervention and response measures. Victorian Government initiatives to address violence against women and children fall within three streams:
- Preventing violence against women and children: changing attitudes and behaviours to promote respectful non-violent relationships and gender equity,
- Intervening earlier: by identifying and targeting individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour or of being subjected to violence, and
- Responding through an integrated system: providing consistent, coordinated and timely responses to women and children who experience family violence and to get tougher on perpetrators and prevent reoffending.

**Strong People, Strong Culture, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities**

In Victoria, the integrated family violence system involves the police, justice services, and the community services system. The 10 year Aboriginal family violence strategy: *Strong People, Strong Culture, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities* guides the development of Aboriginal services and policy in this area.
Federal Government

National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020
All Australian governments have endorsed the first National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020 and are committed to implementing the initial actions it contains. It is an ambitious, national approach to help protect all Australian children.

The National Framework represents an unprecedented level of collaboration between Australian, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations to protect children.

Establishment of a National Children’s Commissioner
In February 2013, the Australian Government announced the appointment of Australia’s first National Children’s Commissioner. The role of the Commissioner—which sits within the Australian Human Rights Commission—complements those of existing commissioners and guardians at the state and territory level. The Commissioner advocates rights of children and young people in national-level policies through: direct consultation with children and their representative organisations; promotion of public discussion and awareness; research and education programs; and examination of relevant Commonwealth legislation, policies and programs in a human rights context.

The second 3-year action plan under this long-term framework sets out a range of actions for completion between 2012 and 2015. The plan focuses on enhancing collaborations between the government, non-government sector and the community, thus reflecting the notion that ‘protecting Australia’s children is everyone’s responsibility’.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022
The National Plan, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), brings together the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women. This plan shows Australia’s commitment to upholding the human rights of Australian women and it is the first plan to coordinate action across jurisdictions.

The National Plan focuses on preventing violence by raising awareness and building respectful relationships in the next generation. The aim is to bring attitudinal and behavioural change at the cultural, institutional and individual levels, with a particular focus on young people. The National Plan sets out a framework for action over the next 12 years and will be driven by a series of four three-year action plans. These Plans will support Australian governments to work together to develop, implement and report progress within a coordinated national framework.

Each Action Plan will address agreed national outcomes, while allowing states and territories to act in locally relevant and responsive ways. The First Action Plan (2010-2013) – Building a Strong Foundation, established the groundwork for the National Plan putting into place the strategic projects and actions that will drive results over the longer term while also implementing high-priority actions in the short term. The Second Action Plan (2013-2016) is an opportunity to take stock, reflect on gaps, develop new actions and strengthen implementation. It will be about building and introducing practical national initiatives to reduce violence against women and their children.

Review of Funding for Schooling and Australian Government response
The 2011 Review of Funding for Schooling (the ‘Gonski review’) was carried out with the aim of achieving a ‘fair, financially sustainable and effective’ funding system for Australian schools, focused on achieving the best outcomes for all students. In response to the review, the Australian Government introduced the Australian Education Bill 2012. This Bill proposes a National Plan for
School Improvement and a shift towards needs-based funding for education. The aim of the plan is for Australia to be ranked, by 2025, as one of the top five highest performing countries based on the performance of Australia’s school students in reading, science and mathematics, and on the quality and equity of Australia’s education system.

**Australian Curriculum**
The Shape of the Australian Curriculum version 4 was released in October 2012. This version built upon the first release in late 2010 which, for the first time, made available a set of curriculum materials for use in schools across Australia. The Australian Curriculum currently includes English, mathematics, science and history. Other subject areas are in development and will be progressively added (ACARA).

**National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions (2009–2013)**
The Partnership is a joint initiative of the Australian and State and Territory Governments and aims to increase participation of young people in education and training, increase attainment levels and improve successful transitions from school. It contains a package of elements, including:

- Strengthened participation requirements to encourage young people aged 15-20 to be engaged in education or training as a first priority,
- Lifting qualification levels with the aim of 90 per cent of young people nationally attaining a Year 12 or equivalent qualification by 2015 (Victoria’s target is 92.6 per cent) with an accompanying education or training entitlement for young people aged 15-24, and
- Support for successful transitions through the provision of youth career and transition programs.

**International**
**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) sets out the basic human rights that children everywhere have. The convention protects children’s rights by setting standards in health care, education, legal, civil and social services. The convention strives to establish children’s rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. These principles are consistent with the direction and policy frameworks accepted by governments in Australia.
Youth Support Program Review

A review of Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Support Program was undertaken in order to support continuous program improvement and ensure that the Youth Support Program was meeting the needs of young people.

The review encompassed:
- surveying and holding small discussion groups with parents and community members
- surveying and holding small discussion groups with young people
- surveying youth service providers
- a focussed conversation with headspace executives
- a program review workshop with Youth Support Program staff and management
- a small discussion group with Councillors
- a workshop with internal Council staff; and
- a workshop with external key stakeholders

The Role of Council in ‘Youth Services/Supports’

The review highlighted that all of the services being provided by Council’s Youth Support Program fell into the primary prevention and early intervention categories- services that are broadly offered to all young people or services that are targeted for young people identified as being at risk.

The diagram replicated below (Fig.1) characterises a framework for understanding the service continuum which was adopted by the Interface Councils in their 2007 report *Staying Connected: solutions for addressing service gaps for young people living at the Interface.*

**Figure 1: Framework for understanding services**
Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Support Program’s mode of service delivery is not unlike other Local Government youth programs. The *Right in the mix: Roles of Victorian councils in the delivery of services to vulnerable young people* Report of the MAV/DEECD Partnership project (July 2013) research report found that:

- 95% (43 of 45 Councils) provided what they would describe as ‘Generalist’ Youth Services, offering early intervention and prevention services.
- The majority of councils visited are delivering preventative and resilience building programs in schools with positive outcomes. Of the 45 councils studied, 32 do some work within local schools.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 84% were involved in programs delivered in schools or in partnership with schools.
- Of the 45 councils studied, only 11 were delivering what might be described as ‘tertiary services’.
- 41 of 45 councils (91%) provide funding for youth services over and above that provided by state and federal governments.

The report also highlighted the crucial role of local government in the youth support space:

> “Councils are pivotal to service and community planning; connecting services and developing partnerships within municipalities and regions. Councils understand their communities, turning data into knowledge and action”.

**Generalist Youth Support Explained**

Whilst a precise commonly used definition of Generalist Youth Worker is difficult to find *Right in the Mix: Roles of Victorian councils in the delivery of services to vulnerable young people* defines it as: ‘Services that are available to the general youth population rather than young people with specific needs or pathologies’.

*Right in the Mix* also identifies a number of common themes to role/position descriptions for generalist youth workers in local government and community agencies it reviewed (examples include Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, 2012; Greater Dandenong City Council, 2012; Jesuit Social Services Mt Druitt, 2012; Tribal Youth 2012):

- the use of a youth participation and community development framework
- facilitating and supporting youth leadership
- needs assessment and referral to appropriate services
- individual support to young people
- the planning, development and implementation of programs and activities for groups of young people
- advocating for young people and youth services to ensure appropriate service options for young people
liaison with other service providers—including education and employment, as well as specialist and general youth services—to promote sharing of resources and opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of services to young people

liaison and consultation with Government and non-government agencies in relation to the needs of young people

Who’s Carrying the Can, the 2006 report into youth service gaps in Victoria commissioned by the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), suggests that ‘Generalist youth support services’ are youth specific, universally available and flexible in approach. In this Youth Strategic Plan when reference is made to generalist youth support it is at a primary/early intervention level (see figure 1):

**Primary/early intervention:** Services that provide skill development, holiday programs, life skills, recreation and leisure events and arts programs, programs that support young people’s participation and civic engagement, the development of leadership skills and programs that enhance young people’s ‘protective’ factors.

During the review service providers highlighted the importance of primary prevention/early intervention:

“We need to spend more time working on preventative strategies so that our youth don’t become vulnerable, especially with regards to ‘generational poverty’. Building and strengthening of protective factors for all of our young people is vital as rurality is a risk factor in itself. Educating parents about the early years is an important strategy in this process. The community as a whole needs to help support young people so that their outcomes can be improved. Sporting clubs are now starting to realise their important role in this process. I.e. they are educating and nurturing young people in more than just sport”.

“service provider”
Current Work of the Youth Support Program

Over the past two years the Youth Support Program has engaged a wide range of young people in programs, events and activities and was also involved in broad planning, research and advocacy to support better outcomes for young people.

Youth Inc

Council’s Youth Support Program is based from Youth Inc - a space for young people aged 12 to 25 to hang out, study, meet new people and get involved in the community. There are entertainment options as well at Youth Inc for young people and Youth Support Program staff on hand that can provide referral and advice for support services.

The Youth Inc building hosts weekly Novo Youth Council meetings and housed co-located services from Mallee Family Care, Loddon Mallee Medicare Local and the now defunded Youth Connections Program. Council’s Youth Support Workers are based from the Youth Inc building. Currently there are no co-located services at Youth Inc. The opening hours of the Youth Inc building are from 9am-5pm.

Youth Inc is also a resource for external programs in the community, with current use by the following groups:

- Swan Hill Specialist School Tuesday & Thursday afternoons- senior students after 1pm.
- School workplace tours- as Booked in.
- Flexible Learning Option Program (FLO- Swan Hill College) Tuesday and Thursdays 9am-12pm.
- Swan Hill District Health, Health Promotions, School holiday programs- times vary according to activities.

FReeZA

Swan Hill Rural City Council is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) FReeZA program to provide a range of drug and alcohol free events for young people across the municipality.

FReeZA is an innovative youth development program providing young people with the chance to attend affordable and safe music and cultural events. FReeZA attracts over 140,000 young people each year to events that take place in a fully supervised, drug, alcohol and smoke-free venues across Victoria.

FReeZA committee members help to organise and create events with young people involved in everything from selecting and booking venues, media and promotion, entertainment and more. Young people also have access to leadership training and career development workshops.
Since January 2013 the following Freeza activities and events have engaged 2037 young people:

**EVENTS SHRCC HAS CONDUCTED (on its own):**

**JANUARY 2013 – May 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>ATTENDANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/01/2013</td>
<td>Ice Skating</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/01/2013</td>
<td>Pre-Aussie Day Pool Party (DJ)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/03/2013</td>
<td>Metal Mayhem</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/04/2013</td>
<td>NYW Skate/Scoot/BMX Jam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/06/2013</td>
<td>Red Rave</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/12/2013</td>
<td>Rock the Dock</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/01/2014</td>
<td>Pool Party</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/02/2014</td>
<td>Pool Party 2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/04/2014</td>
<td>NOVO Youth Awards</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/06/2014</td>
<td>Neondezvous</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/10/2014</td>
<td>Youth Arts Festival</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/12/2014</td>
<td>Pool Party</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/04/2015</td>
<td>NYW – SKATE/BMX Comp</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the Youth Support Program, Youth Council and the FReeZA Committee partnered with a range of organisations to offer youth focussed programs, activities and events that engaged 3, 914 young people.

*The combined efforts to young people in ‘FReeZA’ programs, activities and events from January 2013 to May 2015 is 5,914.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF EVENTS SHRCC HAS PARTNERED WITH:</th>
<th>JANUARY 2013 – May 2015</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>ATTENDANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03/05/2013</td>
<td>Loud @ the Library</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/03/2013</td>
<td>Public Speaking Workshop (SFYS)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/07/2013</td>
<td>Freeza Summit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/07/2013</td>
<td>Freeza Summit – Bendigo</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/09/2013 &amp; 05/09/2013</td>
<td>Youth Leading The World – Swan Hill</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/09/2013</td>
<td>YES Fest</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/11/2013</td>
<td>Loud @ the Library 6</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/12/2013</td>
<td>Robinvale New Year’s Pool Party</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/05/2014 &amp; 14/05/2014</td>
<td>Youth Leading The World Facilitator Training.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/08/2014</td>
<td>YMCA Skate League</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/09/2014</td>
<td>YES Fest</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/03/2015 &amp; 11/03/2015</td>
<td>Youth Leading The World – Facilitator Training – Swan Hill</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/03/2015</td>
<td>Loud @ the Library</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/03/2015 – 26/03/2015</td>
<td>Youth Leading The World – Congress – Swan Hill</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/04/2015</td>
<td>NYW – Bright Night (MacKillop College)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coaching Young People for Success (CYPFS)

The Coaching Young People for Success Program is a complete life, career and school performance coaching system that schools and youth agencies can use to transform their approach to career guidance, case management and support.

Coaching young people for success has been delivered to FLO students, Mackillop College students and Sunraysia TAFE students.

2013: work with 115 young people in group settings and 21 individual one to one students.
2014: work with 248 young people in group settings and 29 individual one to one students.
2015-Current: work with 185 young people in group settings and 14 individual one to one students.

Research

Over the past two years Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Support Program has been involved in the following youth research:

**It’s there for life:** local research with young people to learn about cyber safety.

Civic Engagement

**Youth Leading the World** teaches young people to think for themselves, face up to global challenges and become involved in creating new possibilities to resolve these problems. Topics covered at the Swan Hill event included global sustainability, eco-footprint, participatory leadership, strategic questioning and action planning. 111 young people attended this forum.

**Novo Youth Council**

NOVO Youth Council gives young people the chance to have their voices and ideas heard and to contribute to making changes to help local youth. Youth Council meet regularly each Tuesday at Youth Inc during school terms to plan activities, events and programs for young people.

Young people are consistently involved in Novo Youth Council with some of their key achievements being:

- Youth Leading the world 2013,2014,2015
- Minecraft gamers group (young people with a disability/access to gaming consoles)
- PANI farms contributions
- Youthspective photography completion (SHRCC library)
- Colour Fun Run- Suni TAFE
- Youth Arts Festival
- Chaplaincy Dry Deb Ball
- Rock The Dock
- Barry Steggal Park- Basketball Court
- NOVO Youth Awards
- Fair Fax 2014/Yes fest
- School Holiday Program 2014 -Robinvale
NOVO Youth Council Awards- Every two years NOVO Youth Council organises and hosts the Youth Council Awards. These awards are a chance to highlight the positive contributions young people make to the Swan Hill municipality and for local young people to be recognised for their outstanding achievements. Youth can be nominated in the following four categories:

- Young Artist Award
- Young Champion Award
- Young Neighbour Award
- Young Leader Award

Winners receive a cash prize and the chance to take part in training or leadership development.

Other Programs, Activities & Events
Other key projects that the Youth Support Program have conducted or made a financial contribution towards:

- Loud @ the Library
- NOVO Awards
- PANI Farms
- Life Explosion
- Harmony Day
- NYW 2015-2015
- L2P Program
- FLO Breakfast Club
- Youthsuggestive Photography Project
- School Holiday Program
- YES Fest
- Loddon Mallee Skate League
- Swan Hill Gamers Group
- Robinvale Local Indigenous Network
- Youth Arts Festival
- Fire Brigade
- Rock the Dock
- Australia Day- Robinvale

How young people rated Youth Support Program Activities
In the youth survey young people were asked to rate a number of Youth Support Program activities and programs:

- Coaching Young People for Success program of those that participated 85% rated the program as good, very good or excellent and 15% said it was poor and needed lots of improvement.
- National Youth Week Event of those that attended 52% rated the events as very good or excellent, 33% said they were good and 15% rated them as poor.
- Freeza events of those that were involved 87% said that the event was either very good or excellent and 13% said that it was poor.
- Volunteering in their local community (Youth Council, Freeza events, Sports, School, George Lay Park, Lowan Park, and Manangatang) with Councils Youth Support program. Of those young people that got involved 52% rated their experience as very good or excellent, 35% said it was good and 13% rated it as poor.
- “It’s There for Life Project” (Cyber Safety Workshops in your School). Of those that participated 78% said that it was good, very good or excellent and 22% rated it as poor.
- NOVO Youth Council-Of those respondents that had joined or heard about Youth Council 74% rated it as good, very good or excellent and 26% rated it as poor and needing a lot of improvement.
- Youth Inc Facebook page or Website. Of those that had liked or joined 84% rated them as good, very good or excellent, and 16% said they were poor.
How service providers rated key element of SHRCC’s Youth Support Program:

- Engagement of a diverse range of young people (46% good, very good or excellent), (6% Poor), (48% Unsure)
- Offering activities and events for young people (59% good, very good or excellent), (7% Poor), (34% Unsure)
- Supporting young people to lead activities/events (55% good, very good or excellent), (7% Poor), (38% Unsure)
- Partnering with organisations/community groups (51% good, very good or excellent), (4% Poor), (45% Unsure)
- Strategic Planning (33% good, very good or excellent), (10% Poor), (58% Unsure)
- Linking Young People to Services and Supports (37% good, very good or excellent), (13% Poor), (50% Unsure)
- Coaching Young People for Success (40% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (49% Unsure)
- Advocacy for Issues that are important to young people (36% good, very good or excellent), (13% Poor), (51% Unsure)
- Youth Focussed Projects (50% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (43% Unsure)

How parents and community members rated key element of SHRCC’s Youth Support Program:

- Engagement of a diverse range of young people (61% good, very good or excellent), (14% Poor), (26% Unsure)
- Offering activities and events for young people (67% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (22% Unsure)
- Supporting young people to lead activities/events (67% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (22% Unsure)
- Partnering with organisations/community groups (65% good, very good or excellent), (9% Poor), (26% Unsure)
- Strategic Planning (56% good, very good or excellent), (8% Poor), (37% Unsure)
- Linking Young People to Services and Supports (58% good, very good or excellent), (12% Poor), (29% Unsure)
- Coaching Young People for Success (54% good, very good or excellent), (17% Poor), (29% Unsure)
- Advocacy for Issues that are important to young people (54% good, very good or excellent), (17% Poor), (29% Unsure)
- Youth Focussed Projects (65% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (24% Unsure)

The analysis of community member and service provider ratings of key elements of the Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Support Program strongly revealed that there was a lack of knowledge of the overall program amongst the wider community.
Program Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

Young people, parents and community members and service providers were asked via survey:

**How important is it that Council offers a Youth Support Program?**

- 71% of young people surveyed said that it was important to extremely important
- 92% of service providers who completed a survey said that they felt it was extremely important or very important; and
- 87% of community members who filled in a survey felt that it was either extremely important or very important.

"The Council appears like they are really trying to make a difference".

"service provider"

The sentiment across these groups overwhelmingly relayed the importance of Council’s role in youth support:

“*It is vital that Council continue to operate a Youth Support Program which may have an early intervention focus together with youth advocacy and engagement in community projects and leadership development. It is extremely concerning and short sighted that Council may consider not providing a Youth Support Program when we will be relying on these young people to be our community leaders*."

“service provider"

Consultation with young people, parents and community members, key stakeholders and Youth Support Program staff and management revealed the following strengths, challenges and opportunities for the program:

**Key Strengths of the Youth Support Program**

- The combined engagement of 5914 young people in FReeZA programs, activities and events from January 2013 to May 2015.
- Youth Inc provides a youth friendly space to offer programs, activities and events from as well as providing Youth Council a space to meet together on a weekly basis.
- The Youth Support Program is utilising social media to engage and inform young people.
- Youth Inc has its own dedicated interactive website.
- All FReeZA activities are offered on weekends and in the evening.
- Embedding of Coaching Young People for Success into the Mackillop College curriculum (now sustainable).
- The Youth Council program intensively engages approximately 15 young people a year in leadership and civic engagement focused activities.
- The FReeZA committee ensures that activities and events are youth led and supports young people to gain skills and capacity in managing projects and events, meeting procedures and planning and evaluation.
- The Youth Support Program has been proactive with its engagement of young people in research e.g. It’s There for Life.
- Strategic Planning & Advocacy work through YAC Vic, Youth Partnerships, Youth Mental Health Early Intervention Working Group and Mallee Children and Area Partnerships.
• Continuity of program staff.
• The flexibility of the Youth Support Program’s ‘generalist’ approach in supporting primary/early intervention needs of a broad range of young people and responding to changing trends in risk and opportunities.

Key Challenges and Gaps of the Youth Support Program
The key challenges and gaps that were identified were:
• School partnerships- working in a way that engages all schools regularly
• A lack of presence in Robinvale
• Promotion of programs, activities and events to young people
• Promotion of Youth Inc and young people’s active use of the building
• Youth Inc hours of operation being 9-5pm Monday –Friday limits the ability of young people to optimise the use of the building in the evenings and on weekends
• Building community awareness of the work that Council does with young people
• Engaging ‘harder to reach’ and vulnerable young people
• Covering the geographic expanse of the municipality
• Youth Inc is unmanned when staff are in the community as the building does not have a full time administration support person; and
• Limited funding and resources from state and federal government.

Opportunities
• Build on the Generalist Youth Work approach (at a primary prevention/early intervention level) - this approach is flexible and reaches a broad range of young people.
• Headspace- Swan Hill Rural City Council is a named provider in the headspace model and has committed a minimum of .2 FTE (one day a week) to work within this integrated model.
• Youth leadership/volunteering- building on existing leadership opportunities e.g. Youth Council and identifying other opportunities within Council that can support a diverse range of young people to engage in leadership activities and volunteering.
• An increased presence in Robinvale
• Improved promotion of programs, events and activities to young people
• Promotion of the achievements of young people- improving the use of media to build the communities understanding of the value of the contributions of young people.
• Targeted primary prevention/early intervention work- using the data from the Youth Strategic Plan and the Youth Demographic Profile document to develop a planned approach for primary prevention/early intervention work that addresses the needs of young people- in particular: body image, activities and events for young people, respectful relationships, leadership and volunteering
• Joined up work with other Council departments- continue to work closely with other Council departments to support better outcomes for young people and to engage young people in matters that are of importance to them e.g. safety, having things to do and employment and career opportunities for the future.
Young people, service providers and parents and community members were asked to share their thoughts about the future focus of the Youth Support Program. What would you like to see Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Support Program (the work that Kane and Lisa do) focus on over the next five years?

Young people, parents, community members and service providers said they would like the Youth Support program to focus on:

- Offering activities and events for young people
- Prevention/early intervention work with young people
- Work regularly with young people in Robinvale
- Build the leadership capacity of young people
- Improve the promotion of Council’s work with young people
- Strengthen partnerships with schools
- Consult regularly with young people so their voices can be heard
- Engage more vulnerable young people
- Offer leadership opportunities for young people
- Offer arts/cultural activities for young people; and
- Advocate and plan for the needs of young people.

“If Continue to develop partnerships, source grants for activities and work strategically to implement sustainable youth services for the future”.  
“Service provider”

“If Continue to do what they are doing, develop Youth Inc. building, continue to listen to the voice of young people, help councillors to understand the importance of having connected youth within its region, build a relationship with the coming headspace facility and to help the whole of community to own, resource and implement the new youth strategy”.  
“Service provider”

“If Bringing more awareness of the youth venue and throw as many events as possible”.  
“Young person”

“If I think their work in the schools has had a major effect in the way I want to go in life, and has given me a lot of direction”.  
“Young person”

“If Just to continue what they are doing. Their work is great”.  
“Young person”

“If Raising awareness of mental health and ways to support others in the community, in order to remove the need for people to hide their mental illnesses”.  
“Young person”

“If I think they are doing exactly what they need to but they need to focus on younger age groups before they fall into the traps of drugs like people my age today”.  
“Young person”
Youth Support Program Review Recommendations

1. That the opening hours of Youth Inc be expanded to 7pm one night a week so that this youth specific space can better accommodate after school and early evening programs and activities.

2. That the Youth Support Program examines opportunities to maximise the use of the Youth Inc facility.

3. That the Youth Support Program strengthens its relationship and presence in all secondary schools (including Swan Hill Specialist School) across the municipality.

4. Provide ‘Generalist Youth Worker’ primary prevention/early intervention activities in Robinvale for a minimum of one day each week.

5. Provide ‘Generalist Youth Worker’ primary prevention/early intervention activities in Manangatang for a minimum of one day each month.

6. Offer ‘Generalist Youth Worker’ primary prevention/early intervention activities from the headspace integrated centre one day each week (when the centre opens).

7. Create an evaluation tool to support continuous improvement by inviting regular feedback from Novo Youth Council members.

8. That the Youth Support Program works closely with Council Directorates that have common strategic objectives relating to young people.

9. That a detailed work plan is developed each year for the Youth Support Program to guide the work of the Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Strategic Plan.

10. That a yearly marketing plan is developed to guide the improvement of the promotion of activities, events and programs and the general work of the Youth Support Program.

11. Identify opportunities to partner with community service organisations and schools so that program and people resources can be maximised.

12. Offer targeted activities, events and programs for ‘at risk’ and ‘vulnerable’ young people so that their personal capacity, community connections and civic engagement can be strengthened.

13. Continue to advocate for the needs of young people (especially vulnerable young people).
Review of 2009-2013 Youth Strategy Data & Activities

The 2009-2013 Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Strategy was a whole of community strategy with a range of activities attributed to a broad range of service providers.

The intention of this whole of community Youth Strategy was to guide a more planned approach to supporting the needs and aspirations of young people ensuring that:

- young people were listened to and their contributions valued,
- diversity was recognised and celebrated,
- young people were included in decision-making processes, and
- young people had access to information and resources to meet their needs.

Key Achievements: Swan Hill Rural City Council

Many activities were joined up to maximise resources and strengthen partnerships. Successful activities where Council had a key role are captured under each corresponding key strategy area below.

1. Young people want to participate in and influence the future of their communities.
   - Youth Inclusion and Participation Project - Development of Youth Engagement & Participation Guide
   - Rural Youth Access Research (Swan Hill & Manangatang)
   - Inclusion of young people in community planning processes
   - YOUth Leading the World Congress
   - Young people actively involved in Lowan Park, Woorinen Skate Park, George Lay Park, Barry Steggal Park, Swan Hill Riverfront Project, Robinvale Riverfront Project

2. Young People want things to do and places to hang out.
   - Youth Inc
   - Freeza activities e.g. Red Rave, Neondezvous
   - Twilight Cinemas
   - Carols by candlelight
   - Red Rave
   - School holiday programs
   - Loud at the Library
   - Pool parties

3. Young People want a range of education, employment and career opportunities.
   - Youth Partnerships - FLO program
   - Coaching Young People for Success (CYPFS)

4. Young People want supportive relationships with family, their peers and other adults in the community.
   - Harmony Day
   - Naidoc Week
   - FLO program
   - L2P program
5. Young people want to be healthy and safe.
   ✓ L2P Program
   ✓ SHRCC Youth Partnerships Forum
   ✓ It’s there for life

In addition to key activities undertaken by Council there were numerous activities that community service agencies and schools delivered to young people. Council’s Youth Support Program captured a wide range of completed activities through a reporting template. This template highlighted that there were no major gaps in activities within the action plan.

Key challenges of the 2009-2013 Youth Strategy

- **Evaluation**: capturing activities and understanding the quality of the activities was a challenge for this whole of community strategy that lacked shared qualitative evaluation tools and methods.

- **Implementation**: Council had an agreed role to guide the implementation of the Youth Strategy. At the commencement of the Youth Strategy, implementation was guided through the Youth Partnerships Group that was led by Council. Into the second year of the strategy this group’s membership diminished as many members became more actively involved in state wide youth services reform.

When the Youth Partnerships group ceased due to a lack of stakeholder commitment, there was a deficiency of shared planning and commitment for the implementation of activities within the strategy. This lack of coordinated implementation has been a challenge for encouraging and maximising collaborative whole of community planned approaches and joined up work.

Data Difference and Similarities over Time

The 2009-2013 Youth Survey data was compared to the current 2015 data with the following key differences and similarities standing out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Similarities</th>
<th>2009 Youth Survey</th>
<th>2015 Youth Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14% of youth responded that friendly people were what they liked best about their community.</td>
<td>What young people liked most about where they live: the people (18%)- caring friendly people, everyone knows everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13% of youth indicated their town’s small size is what they liked best.</td>
<td>Living in a small country town (12%) is one of the things young people liked best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.7% of young people aged 16-19 years of age were not in work</td>
<td>21% of young people surveyed were looking for part time work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31% of young people wanted more activities and events on offer</td>
<td>Offer more activities and events for young people (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body image was rated as young people’s 4th overall concern</td>
<td>Body image was rated as young people’s third overall concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying/emotional abuse was the 2nd overall concern for young people</td>
<td>Verbal bullying was the 4th overall concern for young people</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Data Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 Youth Survey</th>
<th>2015 Youth Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (21%) and Drugs (19%) were the top two overall concerns for young people.</td>
<td>Boredom/nothing to do (52%) and not keeping up with school work (47%) were the top two overall concerns for young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9% of young people were concerned about boredom</td>
<td>52% of young people were concerned about boredom (#1 overall concern)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/study problems was rated as 8th in their list of concerns</td>
<td>Not keeping up with school work was rated as number 2nd in young people's list of overall concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs were rated as young people's 1st overall concern</td>
<td>Drugs were rated a young people's 8th overall concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol was rated as young people's 3rd overall concern</td>
<td>Alcohol was rated as young people's 20th overall concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Community Consultation Findings

Community consultation with young people, parents, community members and service providers revealed the following strengths, challenges and ideas for improving outcomes for young people across the Swan Hill municipality.

Strengths

- **Community Connections** - 82% of young people who filled in a survey said they have trusted adults in their lives and 84% said they have close friends in their lives that they can rely on.
- Young people really valued the people (18%), the open spaces (14%) and the quiet/peacefulness (13%) of where they live.
- 39% of young people surveyed shared that they were currently working either part time or casually.
- 51% of young people surveyed shared that they hadn’t used alcohol or drugs before.
- 72% of young people surveyed were playing a sport in their spare time.
- Young people shared that they had aspirations for the future with their top three being: University (54%), completing Secondary School (53%) and working (39%).
- 33% of young people shared that they felt either very safe or extremely safe in their community and 41% said they felt safe.
- 82% of young people either strongly agreed or agreed that their family had helped them to explore their hopes, dreams and goals for the future. A lesser 62% agreed or strongly agreed that their school had helped them to explore their hopes, dreams and goals for the future.
- Young people shared that they felt most comfortable going to their parents (74%) and friends (72%) when seeking support and advice on issues that were most concerning to them.

Challenges

- **Community Connections** - Only 60% of young people who filled in a survey knew and got along with their neighbours well, 57% of young people regularly got involved in community activities and 67% of respondents said that they felt connected and welcome at their school.
- **The Youth Service Sector** - Only 15% of service providers rated the overall youth service sector as being very effective or extremely effective.
- Young people’s top three issues of concern were: boredom/nothing to do (52%), not keeping up with school work (47%) and body Image (38%).
- Service providers flagged drugs (33%), mental health (28%) and alcohol (18%) as the top three issues of concern they notice most for young people.
- Parents and community members shared their top three concerns for young people as being: drugs (in particular ICE) (50%), boredom (24%) and alcohol (21%)-especially underage and binge drinking.
- When asked what they didn’t like about where they lived young people’s top three things were: nothing to do (26%), isolation (20%) and poor shopping (8%).
- 21% of young people surveyed shared that they currently weren’t working and were looking for work.
Supporting young people to effectively manage social media use and supporting young people to be safe at parties given that these two activities were in young people’s top three things that they do in their spare time.

Some young people shared that they felt unsafe in their community with 17% saying they felt slightly safe and the remaining 10% saying they felt unsafe to extremely unsafe.

Only 62% of young people surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their school had helped them to explore their hopes, dreams and goals for the future.

71% of service providers who filled in a survey shared that they noticed gaps in service provision for young people and their families most notably: mental health services and supports for young people, access to specialist services, availability of non-sport specific activities and family centred support for young people.

Lack of funding/resources, costs of activities, budget constraints, client engagement, lack of youth programs/workers and student behaviour were most notably mentioned for impacting on organisations ability to support young people.

Partnering, networks to connect youth service providers and the overall quality of relationships amongst providers was rated at 50% or below as being excellent, very good or good with many service providers indicating that they were unsure of what informal and formal partnerships and networks were occurring.

There was an overall lack of youth and community knowledge on the work of Council’s Youth Support Program with many young people, service providers and parents and community members indicating that they were unsure about key elements of the program.

Opportunities

- Offer activities and events for young people especially low cost or no cost, non-sport focussed and arts/cultural events, activities and programs.
- ‘Generalist’ primary prevention/early intervention work with young people centred on their issues of concern e.g. body image, not keeping up with school work, bullying, friendships and fitting in.
- Work regularly with young people in Robinvale and Manangatang.
- Build the leadership capacity of young people through leading projects and activities and through volunteering.
- Improve the promotion of Council’s work with young people to the broader community
- Strengthen partnerships with schools.
- Consult regularly (whole of Council) with young people so their voices can be heard.
- Engage vulnerable young people so that their community connections and personal capacity can be strengthened.
- Broaden the number of employment opportunities for young people.
- Broaden local offerings of education/training.
- Improve youth service supports for young people and their families.
- Advocate and plan for the needs of young people and the broader service sector that supports young people and their families.
- Headspace
Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Strategy

*Key Strategy Areas, Objectives & Outcomes*

- Leadership, Participation & Civic Engagement
- Preventative Health & Wellbeing
- Volunteering, Education, Employment & Training
- Youth Friendly, Activities, Events & Programs
- Planning, Partnerships & Advocacy
### Strategy 1: Leadership, Participation and Civic Engagement

#### Council Plan Synergies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance &amp; Leadership</th>
<th>Health &amp; Wellbeing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Positive community engagement and inclusiveness</td>
<td>- A sense of belonging, ensuring that all people have a place in our community</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Community services that are efficient and responsive to needs</td>
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#### Objectives

1. **Develop and implement youth leadership opportunities that engage and cater for a diverse range of young people across the municipality.**
   - Outcome(s): An increase in the number of young people involved in volunteering and community leadership opportunities in Swan Hill, Robinvale and Manangatang.
   - **Internal Partnerships/Linkages:** Community Planning Youth Council HACC Economic Development Unit Aboriginal Planning
   - **External Partnerships/Linkages:** Schools in Swan Hill, Manangatang and Robinvale. Service clubs Local Indigenous Networks Koori TAFE
   - **Role:** Lead
   - **Timeframe:** 2015-2019

2. **Broadly consult and involve young people on matters that relate to them.**
   - Outcome(s): Increased opportunities for young people to be involved in the decisions that affect them.
   - **Internal Partnerships/Linkages:** All Council Directorates Youth Council Youth Support Program
   - **External Partnerships/Linkages:** Young People Youth Groups Community Organisations Education Providers
   - **Role:** Lead
   - **Timeframe:** 2015-2019

3. **Formally include the SHRCC Youth Participation & Engagement training into Council’s training schedule to continually build the capacity of the whole of Council to engage young people in the work that they do.**
   - Outcome(s): Increased youth engagement knowledge, skills, and practice for Council staff.
   - **Internal Partnerships/Linkages:** All Council Directorates
   - **External Partnerships/Linkages:** N/A
   - **Role:** Lead
   - **Timeframe:** 2016

4. **Celebrate, recognise and broadly promote the achievements of young people.**
   - Outcome(s): An increased recognition by the community of the value of young people’s contributions.
   - **Internal Partnerships/Linkages:** Novo Youth Awards Media Department Youth Inc Website Youth Inc Facebook Page
   - **External Partnerships/Linkages:** Schools in Swan Hill, Manangatang and Robinvale. Swan Hill Guardian Robinvale Sentinel Community Newsletters Social Media The Exchange Website
   - **Role:** Lead
   - **Timeframe:** 2015-2019

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**Note:** The table structure and content have been formatted to improve readability and clarity. The original document likely contains additional context and details not included here.
## Strategy 2: Preventative Health & Well Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Plan Synergies</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Outcome(s)</th>
<th>Internal Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>External Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance &amp; Leadership</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Effective partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders</td>
<td>1. Partner with other service providers and young people to provide a range of preventative initiatives on matters that are important to young people (e.g. bullying, career pathways, respectful relationships, mental health, managing study pressures, body image and alcohol and drug use).</td>
<td>Improved local capacity to educate and support young people on matters that are important to them.</td>
<td>Youth Support Program</td>
<td>Robinville District Health Service</td>
<td>Partner/Assist</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved health and wellbeing for young people.</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health Nurse</td>
<td>Swan Hill District Health</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Support the integrated headspace model by offering a 0.2 FTE generalist youth service approach that is flexible and seamless.</td>
<td>Improved mental health for young people.</td>
<td>Inclusive Disability Services</td>
<td>Murray Mallee LLEN Secondary Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved integration of youth supports for young people across the municipality.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Headspace</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Explore ways to enhance and improve delivery of the L2P program in Robinvale.</td>
<td>Increased number of young people assisted to gain their license.</td>
<td>L2P Program</td>
<td>Swan Hill District Health Robinvale District Health Service</td>
<td>Lead Advocate</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Strategy 3: Youth Friendly Activities, Events & Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Plan Synergies</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Outcome(s)</th>
<th>Internal Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>External Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance &amp; Leadership</strong>&lt;br&gt;− Effective partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders</td>
<td>1. Partner with others to provide a variety of low cost and no cost activities, events and programs for young people across the municipality.</td>
<td>Young people from all economic backgrounds can participate without cost barriers.</td>
<td>Youth Support Program</td>
<td>Freeza Program</td>
<td>Partner/Assist</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health &amp; Wellbeing</strong>&lt;br&gt;− A sense of belonging, ensuring that all people have a place in our community&lt;br&gt;− Community services that are efficient and responsive to needs</td>
<td>2. Involve young people in identifying, designing and leading community activities, events and initiatives such as recreational, music, arts and cultural events.</td>
<td>Increased leadership, skills and capacity for young people.</td>
<td>FREEZA Youth Council Community Planning Art Gallery Swan Hill Library</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Offer a minimum of two arts/cultural activities, events or programs per year for young people.</td>
<td>Increased opportunities for young people to engage in arts and cultural activities.</td>
<td>Art Gallery Swan Hill Library</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Develop activities that focus on engaging young people who are not well connected with their family, peers or communities.</td>
<td>Increased community connections for those that are isolated.</td>
<td>Youth Support Program Community Planning Inclusive Disability Services</td>
<td>St. Luke’s Anglicare Mallee Family Care Mallee District Aboriginal Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Market and promote activities, events and programs for young people across a range of mediums.</td>
<td>Improved promotion of youth activities, events and programs.</td>
<td>Youth Support Program Media Department</td>
<td>Newspapers Radio Community Newsletters</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Strategy 4: Volunteering, Education, Employment & Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Plan Synergies</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Outcome(s)</th>
<th>Internal Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>External Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Growth</td>
<td>1. Identify volunteer opportunities within Council where young people could build skills and strengthen their civic engagement.</td>
<td>Increased youth volunteering. Increased community connections for young people. Increased leadership, skills and capacity for young people.</td>
<td>HACC program Leadership &amp; Executive Team Youth Support Program</td>
<td>Schools Youth Groups</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Identify work experience opportunities within Council and promote these to secondary schools across the municipality.</td>
<td>Exposure to a diverse range of work experience opportunities for young people.</td>
<td>HR Department Leadership &amp; Executive Team</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Offer a range of cadetships, traineeships and scholarships to young people.</td>
<td>Young people are supported to train in their career fields. Increased awareness of career pathways and opportunities within Council.</td>
<td>HR Department Leadership &amp; Executive Team</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Encourage and support local employment opportunities for young people across the municipality.</td>
<td>An increased number of young people in employment.</td>
<td>Economic Development Unit Business Sector Advocate</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economic Growth
- Strong partnerships with the business community, government and regional bodies
- An equipped and productive workforce

### Health & Wellbeing
- A sense of belonging, ensuring that all people have a place in our community
## Strategy 5: Planning, Partnerships & Advocacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Plan Synergies</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Outcome(s)</th>
<th>Internal Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>External Partnerships/Linkages</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance &amp; Leadership</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Effective partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders&lt;br&gt;- Effective and efficient utilisation of resources</td>
<td>1. Advocate for a broader local offering of tertiary education options.</td>
<td>An increase in local educational opportunities for young people across the municipality.</td>
<td>Economic Development Unit Youth Support Program</td>
<td>TAFE Schools Parents</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Continue to advocate for the needs of vulnerable young people through active membership on the Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership and through YAC Vic and the Office for Youth.</td>
<td>Improved supports for vulnerable young people and their families.</td>
<td>Leadership &amp; Executive Team Youth Support Program</td>
<td>YAC Vic Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnerships</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Contribute to the development of a collective Sub-Regional Youth Plan for Buloke, Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shires.</td>
<td>Joined up advocacy for the availability of adequate resources for young people in rural areas.</td>
<td>Councillors HR Department Leadership &amp; Executive Team Youth Support Program</td>
<td>School Focussed Youth Service Southern Mallee Governance Group</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Strengthen partnerships with schools across the municipality to improve the activation of schools as a universal platform for the engagement of young people.</td>
<td>Increased engagement of young people across the municipality. Improved use of youth resources.</td>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>Lead Partner/Assist</td>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health &amp; Wellbeing</strong>&lt;br&gt;- A sense of belonging, ensuring that all people have a place in our community&lt;br&gt;- Community services that are efficient and responsive to needs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Growth</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Strong partnerships with the business community, government and regional bodies</td>
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Implementation

A **Youth Support Program Operational Action Plan** will be developed each year to ensure that the Swan Hill Rural City Council Youth Strategic Plan 2015-2019 actively responds to the changing needs of young people, the community, key service providers and the broader youth policy environment.

Shorter-term actions and detailed information regarding what projects to implement and when will be expanded on as an integral part of the Youth Support Program’s yearly planning cycle.

The Youth Support Program will invite feedback on this yearly plan from potential internal and external partners to ensure that the plan is realistic, well balanced and activates available resources, partners and champions.

**How will progress be measured?**

Progress both in terms of participation rates and evaluation of activities, events and initiatives will be captured on an ongoing basis and reported on annually.

Specific measures will include (but not be limited to):

- Participation rates of young people
- Evaluation feedback from participants
- Number of activities, events and initiatives that occur for young people
- Number of activities and events that are youth led or build youth capacity
- Quality and effectiveness of partnerships

An overarching evaluation framework and corresponding data collection tools will be developed to measure the quality and effectiveness as well as the overall outcomes of the activities and objectives within the yearly action plan.

The overarching framework will articulate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Importantly, the timing for the development of the Youth Support Program’s Yearly Operational Work Plan will align with timelines for Swan Hill Rural City Council’s annual budget process.
Consultation Results

Youth Survey Results

A total of 840 young people across the Swan Hill municipality filled in a youth survey.

**Q1 Your age?**

64% of young people who filled in a survey were aged 12-15 years, 31% were aged 16-18 years and the remaining 5% were aged 19-25 years of age.

**Q2 Your Gender?**

There were slightly more females (55%) than males (45%) who filled in a survey.
The survey was filled in from young people across the municipality with the highest number of youth living in Swan Hill (66%), Robinvale (11%) and Lake Boga (6%).

7% of respondents identified themselves as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, 7% shared that either one or both of their parents was born overseas, 6% of young people who filled in a survey speak a language other than English at home and 5% shared that they were born overseas. In Robinvale 17% of young people were from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, 9% of young people were born overseas, 16% had one or both of their parents born overseas and 18% spoke a language other than English at home.
39% of survey respondents were in either casual or part time work, 3% were working full time, 21% were looking for part time work, 2% were looking for full time work, 37% were not working and not looking for work and 4% were volunteering. In Robinvale 39% of survey respondents were in either casual or part time work, 8% were working full time, 11% were looking for part time work, 44% were not working and not looking for work and 5% of young people who filled in a survey were volunteering.
The majority of young people who filled in a survey were living with both parents in the same house (68%), 17% were living with one parent and 8% of young people were living with two parents in two different houses (shared care arrangements). In Robinvale 72% of survey respondents were living in the same house with both parents, 18% were living with one parent, 3% of young people were living with two parents in two different houses (shared care arrangements) and 6% of young people were living with relatives.
When asked how they spend their free time young people who filled in a survey shared that their top three favoured activities were: sports (72%), social media (56%), and going to parties (30%). In Robinvale respondents shared the top three favoured activities: sports (75%), social media (62%), and going to parties (18%).
Q9. What do you like best about where you live?

- The people (18%) - caring friendly people, everyone knows everyone
- Open Spaces (14%) – spaces to ride motorbikes, have animals, farm and have
- Quiet/peaceful (13%)
- Small country town (12%)
- Easy to get around (8%) - no traffic, easy to walk places
- River/lakes nearby (5%)
- Sports (4%) - netball, footy and wide range of sporting opportunities
- Facilities (4%) - skate park, parks, walking tracks
- Safety/freedom (4%) - feel secure, freedom to do more things
- Good Climate (1%)
- Good shopping (1%)

“Most of us care for each other, and I really like our mayor because he is really nice and does a great job”.

“I like how quiet it is and it doesn’t smell because it smells in the city”.

“I enjoy the advantages of knowing my community well; this includes the people, resources and surroundings”.

“It’s quiet, peaceful, we can have lots of animals and I can play loud music without disturbing the neighbours”.

“It is a good community town, with nice people and good sporting clubs”.

“I like the central Murray Football League and I like camping and fishing on the Murray”.

“The thing I like best about where I live is that there are no people that get annoyed at what I do”.

“The ability to access a variety of services available like the cinemas. I love the look of Swan Hill, how neat and tidy it is especially the nature along the river”.
Q10. What don't you like about where you live?

The key things that young people who filled in a survey said they didn’t like about where they lived was:

- Nothing to do: 26%
- Isolation: 20%
- Poor shopping: 8%
- Too small: 6%
- Drugs: 5%
- Lack of jobs/opportunities: 5%
- Poor internet: 4%
- Neighbours: 3%
- People: 3%

“I don't like the culture where people are expected to party, drink, do drugs and fit in this stereotype”.

“I don’t like how we are far away from a town (supermarkets and shops etc.), it makes it hard to organize things with friends and get supplies”.

“Not much promotion with events for the youth. I know that there are heaps on but most people are unaware of them”.

“Our internet service is very very bad (we only get 15g, whereas in town we could get 200g)”.

“Going to the Movies with your friends all the time gets a bit repetitive after a while, still fun, but we as teenagers and also young adults and also parents with young kids or grandparents with grandchildren need other fun things to do in town that are easy to get to, fun and also at a reasonable price”.

“Not enough resources and programs and organisations for children and teenagers to find work or children to play we need more shops #MALLS”. 
Young people who filled in a survey shared that their plans for the future were:

- University (54%), Robinvale (55%)
- Completing Secondary School (53%), Robinvale (52%)
- Working (39%), Robinvale (42%)
- Travelling (30%), Robinvale (26%)
- Gap Year (27%), Robinvale (15%)
- Not sure (16%), Robinvale (13%)
- Military, Trade, TAFE (9%), Robinvale (10%)
Q12 How well have you been supported to explore your hopes, dreams and goals for the future?

Answered: 708   Skipped: 132

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My family has helped</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school has helped</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

82% of young people either strongly agreed or agreed that their family had helped them to explore their hopes, dreams and goals for the future (Robinvale-84%). A lesser 62% agreed or strongly agreed that their school had helped them to explore their hopes, dreams and goals for the future (Robinvale-64%).
Young people were asked to choose what their issues of concern were. The top ten overall issues survey respondents chose were:

1. Boredom/nothing to do (52%)
2. Not keeping up with school work (47%)
3. Body Image (38%)
4. Verbal Bullying (32%)
5. Fitting in (29%)
6. Mental health of others (28%)
7. Friendship problems (28%)
8. Drugs (27%)
9. Cyber bullying (26%)
10. Career/Employment opportunities for the future (26%)

**Top 5 Issues for Males**
1. Boredom (49%)
2. Not Keeping up with School Work (40%)
3. Drugs (34%)
4. Verbal Bullying (31%)
5. Smoking (26%)

**Top 5 Issues for Females**
1. Boredom (54%)
2. Not Keeping up with School Work (52%)
3. Body Image (48%)
4. Friendship Problems (34%)
5. Fitting In (34%)

**Top 5 Issues for 12-15 year olds**
1. Boredom (50%)
2. Not Keeping up with School Work (45%)
3. Body Image (34%)
4. Verbal Bullying (34%)
5. Fitting In (31%)

**Top 5 Issues for 16-18 year olds**
1. Boredom (55%)
2. Not Keeping up with School Work (55%)
3. Body Image (43%)
4. Mental Health of Others (35%)
5. Physical Health (31%)
In Robinvale the top ten issues of concern survey respondents chose were:

1. Not keeping up with school work (42%)
2. Body Image (42%)
3. Verbal Bullying (42%)
4. Racism (36%)
5. Boredom/Nothing to do (36%)
6. Cyber bullying (35%)
7. Drugs (33%)
8. Smoking (27%)
9. Physical Bullying (27%)
10. Career/Employment opportunities for the future (25%)

Compared to the overall results the key differences in what young people in Robinvale were concerned about:

- Racism was 15% more of a concern in Robinvale
- Smoking was slightly more of a concern when compared with the overall results
- Drugs were slightly more of a concern
- Cyber bullying was slightly more of a concern
- Boredom was less of a concern for young people in Robinvale
- Body Image was slightly more of a concern; and
- Verbal bullying was more of a concern (10% higher in Robinvale)
41% of young people surveyed shared that they had drank alcohol before, 15% had smoked cigarettes, 7% had smoked marijuana, 3% had used ecstasy or prescription drugs not prescribed to them, 2% has used cocaine and 1% had used methamphetamines (Ice). 51% had never used anything on the list nor been offered them and 17% had been offered other things on the list but had not used them.

In Robinvale 29% of young people surveyed shared that they had drank alcohol before, 16% had smoked cigarettes, 6% had smoked marijuana, there weren’t any young people who identified as using ecstasy or cocaine. 2% had used prescription drugs not prescribed and methamphetamines (Ice). 65% had never used anything on the list nor been offered them and 11% had been offered other things on the list but had not used them.
Parents (74%) (Robinvale 83%), friends (72%) (Robinvale 76%), relatives (27%) (Robinvale 41%), teachers (25%) (Robinvale 41%) and the internet (25%) (Robinvale 41%) were rated as the top five people/places that young people would go for help for their most concerning issues.
33% of respondents shared that they felt either very safe or extremely safe in their community, 41% said they felt safe, 17% slightly safe and the remaining 10% felt unsafe to extremely unsafe.

*In Robinvale* 25% of respondents shared that they felt either very safe or extremely safe in their community, 45% said they felt safe, 17% slightly safe, and 5% said they felt unsafe or very unsafe.
60% of survey respondents knew and got along with their neighbours well, 57% of young people regularly get involved in community activities, 67% of respondents said that they feel connected and welcome at their school, 82% said they have trusted adults in their lives and 84% said they have close friends in their lives that they can rely on.

In Robinvale 52% of survey respondents knew and got along with their neighbours well, 62% of young people regularly get involved in community activities, 71% of respondents said that they feel connected and welcome at their school, 83% said they have trusted adults in their lives and 75% said they have close friends in their lives that they can rely on.
**Coaching Young People for Success program** of those that participated 85% rated the program as good, very good or excellent and 15% said it was poor and needed lots of improvement.

**National Youth Week Event** of those that attended 52% rated the events as very good or excellent, 33% said they were good and 15% rated them as poor.

**Freeza events** of those that were involved 87% said that the event was either very good or excellent and 13% said that it was poor.

**Volunteering in their local community** (Youth Council, Freeza events, Sports, School, George Lay Park, Lowan Park, and Manangatang) with Councils Youth Support program. Of those young people that got involved 52% rated their experience as very good or excellent, 35% said it was good and 13% rated it as poor.

**“It’s there for life project”** (Cyber Safety Workshops in your School). Of those that participated 78% said that it was good, very good or excellent and 22% rated it as poor.

**NOVO Youth Council**-Of those respondents that had joined or heard about Youth Council 74% rated it as good, very good or excellent and 26% rated it as poor and needing a lot of improvement.

**Youth Inc Facebook page or Website**. Of those that had liked or joined 84% rated them as good, very good or excellent, and 16% said they were poor.
20% of young people surveyed said that they had been to Youth Inc and the remaining 80% said that they had not gone to the building.

71% of young people surveyed said that it was important to extremely important that Council offers a Youth Support Program, 18% said it was slightly important and 11% felt it was not important at all.
Q21. What would you like to see Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Support Program (the work that Kane and Lisa do) focus on over the next five years?

- **Deliver preventative programs/activities** (33%) - e.g. bullying, mental health, drugs, alcohol, body image, respectful relationships, career pathways, coping with studying etc.

- **Offer activities and events for young people** (32%) - e.g. social events for older young people, activities for those not involved in sport, arts and culture activities and music etc.

- **Build young people’s leadership capacity** (12%) - e.g. connect young people to volunteering, deliver leadership workshops, assist young people’s voice to be heard and involve young people in civic life.

- **General support for young people** (5%) - e.g. information sharing, better jobs

“Maximising drug and alcohol awareness and the impacts it has on the youth and getting people involved in events and support/help at future youth events”.

“Bringing more awareness of the youth venue and throw as many events as possible”.

“I think their work in the schools has had a major effect in the way I want to go in life, and has given me a lot of direction”.

“Just to continue what they are doing. Their work is great”.

“Raising awareness of mental health and ways to support others in the community, in order to remove the need for people to hide their mental illnesses”.

“I think they are doing exactly what they need to but they need to focus on younger age groups before they fall into the traps of drugs like people my age today”.

“To have more things to do with the arts as in: -art shows that young people can enter to show off their art. Have art where people can paint on walls all around Swan Hill. “

“Getting teenage kids more involved in the community”.

“Not everything being Swan Hill based. Not everybody has parents that can travel 45 minutes plus to participate in these events and activities.

“A lot more festivals to engage students in art and music, also discos and raves”.

“Everyone loves motivational speakers, perhaps they could organise free events where a motivational speaker comes to talk. If it was made known enough, I’m sure a lot of people would go-it would also be good to have them in schools”.
Q22. If you could improve things for young people where you live what would you do?

- Offer more activities and events for young people (32%)
- Improve services and supports for young people (13%)
- Improve facilities (e.g. skate-park, parks, and youth friendly spaces) (9%)
- Increase youth leadership (7%)
- Address drug issues (5%)
- Address bullying (4%)
- Offer programs to prevent issues (4%) e.g. health and well-being focused information
- Improve transportation (3%)
- Promote a positive youth image (2%)

“Have more talks at school about mental health issues, help kids or tell them where to find help in job searching”.

“Create more activities for teenagers to engage in which could improve their social health”.

“I’d create more things for people to do and open a cafe or something that runs at night, where people can go and sit, instead of having to sit around at Maccas cause it’s the only place open”.

“Minimise drug use and abuse. I find it terrible, the amount of young people who use alcohol as their only motivator to have a good time”.

“There is nothing to do in the community, no organisations or groups that are young people based, this could be looked at”.
Service Provider Survey Results

A total of 112 service providers working with or planning for young people contributed towards the Youth Strategy by filling in a survey. Respondents from the following organisations filled in a survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill College</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (didn’t specify school)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manangatang P-12 College</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee Family Care</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee District Aboriginal Services</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill District Health</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill Specialist School</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunraysia TAFE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Luke’s Anglicare</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern District Community Health Service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s School Robinvale</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADEC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon Murray Mallee Medicare Local</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manangatang Progress Assoc</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill Healthy Minds Network</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill Medical Group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son Centre Christian College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Mallee LLEN</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Aboriginal Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Police</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee Domestic Violence Service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Organisation (general)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91% of service providers who filled in a survey worked directly with young people and the remaining 9% had an indirect role.
Survey respondents came from a range of professions- most notably education (59%).

Other:
- Aboriginal Health Worker
- Maternal Health
- counsellor
- Volunteer, Part time work, Farmer
- Librarian
- Project Manager
- Maternal and Child Health Nurse
- Education Support Worker
- Spiritual Developer (Ministry)
- Police Officer (youth specific)
- Maternal and Child Health
- Allied Health Assistant (gap year position)
- Library Officer
- Manager
- Disability case manager
- Counsellor
15% of survey respondents rated the effectiveness of the youth service sector as very effective or effective, 58% said it was somewhat effective, 14% said it wasn’t effective at all and the remaining 13% were unsure.

**Q5. What are the top three issues of concern that young people are presenting with (or that you notice in young people you work with)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Conflict</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Tertiary Education</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Fitness</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Isolation</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Aspirations</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Self Esteem</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Support for Vulnerable Young People</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Career/Employment Opportunities</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Self Esteem</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Support for Vulnerable Young People</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Violence</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Nutrition</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenage Pregnancy</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Absenteeism</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Drive/Work Ethic</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Costs of Participation</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The worst students in terms of behavior issues and/or academic level often (not always) come from unfortunate home lives - broken families, poverty, drug abuse by parents. These students only represent a small % of the total students but they have a large impact on those around them”.

“A rigid under resourced education system for vulnerable children and young people and resultant impact upon engagement”.

“Young people see drugs and alcohol as an issue in their community also mental health concerns and breakdown in family relations”.

![Effectiveness of Youth Service Sector](chart.png)
Q6. What do you think is needed in your community and across the Swan Hill municipality to support better outcomes for young people aged 12-25 years and their families?

The top seven things that service providers mentioned would support better outcomes for young people aged 12-25 years and their families were:

- **Improved Services for young people and their families (18%)** e.g. more youth workers, support for young people and their parents together
- **Offering more low cost and no-cost activities and events for young people (14%)** e.g. casual after school sports, music events and activities at Youth Inc
- **Youth specific space/centre (8%)**
- **More employment and training opportunities for young people (8%)**
- **Mentors/role models for young people (8%)**
- **Improved service coordination (8%)**
- **Improved promotion of youth activities, events and programs (8%)**

“More casual after school sport that is free and doesn’t require commitment on weekends or every week - just a place for kids to hang out after school and get together which improves health in a number of ways”.

Other ideas for supporting better outcomes:
- A local University
- More youth clubs
- More youth housing
- More preventative programs/strategies
- Highlight youth achievements
- Improved transport
- Consultation with young people
- Council’s youth program working more with schools
- Parenting programs
- Improved parent engagement
- Leadership workshops for young people
- Transition support into the workforce
- Support with school work
- Youth led projects
- Generalist Youth Workers
- Increased government support in rural areas
- Headspace
- Improved supports for vulnerable young people
- Improved mental health services

“I would like to see a dedicated page in the Guardian for youth, youth activities, positive events, awards, upcoming events etc. Make it a dedicated page and maybe encourage some youth writers from the school, youth photographers etc.”

“We need to spend more time working on preventative strategies so that our youth don’t become vulnerable, especially with regards to ‘generational poverty’. Building and strengthening of
protective factors for all of our young people is vital as rurality is a risk factor in itself. Educating parents about the early years is an important strategy in this process. The community as a whole needs to help support young people so that their outcomes can be improved. Sporting clubs are now starting to realise their important role in this process. I.e. they are educating and nurturing young people in more than just sport”.

“More opportunity for involvement in community events. For example by creating volunteer opportunities when organising concerts, NYE celebrations. Giving youth a purpose and something to be proud of”.

Q7. What do you think makes the Swan Hill municipality a positive place for young people aged 12-25 years?

Service providers highlighted the following top ten things that they felt made the Swan Hill municipality a positive place for young people aged 12-25 years:

1. Sports- a wide range of sporting activities for young people to get involved in
2. Community connectedness- people genuinely caring about young people
3. Small communities- easier to know each other and connect with each other
4. Good Schools
5. Caring workers
6. Council’s Youth Support Program
7. A range of employment opportunities are on offer
8. Volunteer opportunities
9. Committed service providers
10. Leadership opportunities

“A small rural community like Swan Hill offers young people a real chance to participate in civil life. Closer social connection available with smaller community”.

“The council appears like they are really trying to make a difference”.

“The willingness of organisations to put a focus on 12-25yrs, providing some activities for the youth and giving the youth a voice (still believe we could do this better though)”.

“It is a well-connected community where people have a shared identity and shared history and a willingness to work together”.

Municipality Care Smaller Community Live Local Interaction Sporting Facilities Variety Sporting Clubs Rural Community Youth Close Knit Opportunities Role Models Support Football Clubs Services Summer Young People Relaxed Schools Little Friends Willingness Options Robinvale
71% of service providers who filled in a survey shared that they noticed gaps in service provision for young people and their families. The remaining 29% did not notice any gaps.

Service providers shared the gaps they noticed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Services and Supports for young people</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Supports</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalist youth workers - not tied to a specific program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to specialist services</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sporting activities young People</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of business hours support for young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent counselling support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Centred support for young people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth friendly health services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug and alcohol services</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth programs and supports not promoted well</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of community meeting spaces in Robinvale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised Youth Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services for Males</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transport</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing for youth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Training Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many visiting services (Robinvale)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified Workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“As mentioned earlier, having no generic youth workers is a major concern, especially with the Youth Connections program being terminated at the conclusion of 2014”.

“Whilst we have many sporting activities I would like to see more opportunities for alternative activities in the Arts, Music and possibly computer gaming activities”.

“Family support services are not readily accessible or accessed by those that need them most”.

“There needs to be early intervention, families and young people need to be at crisis point mostly to get a service when an earlier intervention could of prevented the situation getting to the extreme end (could also provide better outcomes if earlier service available)”.

“I’m not sure I can put my finger on exactly what it is. People who take an interest in young people personally beyond doing a job of teaching their class, etc. That can be powerful”.

“Mental health support is either low level or acute, Swan Hill centric resources “. 
Q9. What are some of the challenges for your organisation/service to meet the needs of young people and their families?

- Lack of funding/resources
- Costs of Activities
- Budget Constraints
- Client Engagement
- Lack of youth programs/workers
- Student behaviour
- Promotion of services
- Lack of partnerships
- Diverse cultures
- English as a second language
- Short term staff contracts
- Students with complex needs
- Large geographic service areas
- Lack of volunteers
- Shared care arrangements
- Collaborating with other services

"Funding constraints to provide projects and having to work across four other LGAs. Short term contracts also provide uncertainty in the work force".

"Working in a truly cooperative way. Putting the effort to work collaboratively requires me to make a real shift in my thinking".

"Large numbers of high need students who are poorly supported by their families".

Q10 How would you rate partnerships/relationships in the youth sector across the Swan Hill municipality?

Information sharing: excellent, very good or good (51%), fair or poor (38%) and unsure (11%).
Informal partnering: excellent, very good or good (48%), fair or poor (35%) and unsure (18%).
Formal partnering: excellent, very good or good (19%), fair or poor (29%) and unsure (42%).
Joined-up integrated service delivery: excellent, very good or good (39%), fair or poor (34%) and unsure (27%).
Networks to connect youth service providers: excellent, very good or good (40%), fair or poor (42%) and unsure (19%).
Quality of relationships across the youth sector: excellent, very good or good (44%), fair or poor (34%) and unsure (22%).
Service Providers rated key element of SHRCC’s Youth Support Program as:

Engagement of a diverse range of young people (46% good, very good or excellent), (6% Poor), (48% Unsure)

Offering activities and events for young people (59% good, very good or excellent), (7% Poor), (34% Unsure)

Supporting young people to lead activities/events (55% good, very good or excellent), (7% Poor), (38% Unsure)

Partnering with organisations/community groups (51% good, very good or excellent), (4% Poor), (45% Unsure)

Strategic Planning (33% good, very good or excellent), (10% Poor), (58% Unsure)

Linking Young People to Services and Supports (37% good, very good or excellent), (13% Poor), (50% Unsure)

Coaching Young People for Success (40% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (49% Unsure)

Advocacy for Issues that are important to young people (36% good, very good or excellent), (13% Poor), (51% Unsure)

Youth Focussed Projects (50% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (43% Unsure)
Q12. What would you like to see Swan Hill Rural City Council's Youth Support Program (the work that Kane and Lisa and Jan do) focus on over the next five years?

Service providers shared that over the next five years they would like Swan Hill Rural City Council’s Youth Support Program to focus on:

- Offering activities and events for young people so that they have things to do in the community
- Get involved in more prevention/early intervention work with young people
- Work regularly with young people in Robinvale
- Build the leadership capacity of young people through supporting them to lead activities/events/programs
- Improve the promotion of Council’s work with young people as well as promotion of events/activities and programs that the Youth Support Program have on offer
- Strengthen partnerships with schools
- Consult regularly with young people so their voices can be heard
- Engage more vulnerable young people
- Offer leadership opportunities for young people
- Offer arts/cultural activities for young people
- Advocate and plan for the needs of young people

“I really valued the leadership that SHRCC showed with Youth Partnership’s that they facilitated years ago. I think that this level of leadership could help serve the whole sector in being more productive”.

“I would like to see a greater presence in schools. Currently we are partnered with Lisa via the ‘It’s there for life’ project. I would like to see a continuation of this project and other projects”.

“Maybe come to Robinvale, I have never seen them here”.

“Council does excellent work with youth consultation and planning and knows the community’s needs in this sector”.

“Continue to do what they are doing, develop Youth Inc. building, continue to listen to the voice of young people, help Councillors to understand the importance of having connected youth within its region, build a relationship with the coming headspace facility and to help the whole of community to own, resource and implement the new youth strategy”.

“It is vital that Council continue to operate a Youth Support Program which may have an early intervention focus together with youth advocacy and engagement in community projects and leadership development. It is extremely concerning and short sighted that Council may consider not providing a Youth Support Program when we will be relying on these young people to be our community leaders”.

“Continue to develop partnerships, source grants for activities and work strategically to implement sustainable youth services for the future”.
92% of service providers who completed a survey said that they felt it was extremely important or very important that Council offers a Youth Support Program with the remaining 8% rating it as important or slightly important.

**Service providers provided a number of comments:**

“They (young people) need all the support they can muster”.

“I think it is really important for council to offer leadership for the sector and if there are the resources to provide a generalist youth worker service”.

“If these programs are offered in Swan Hill then why aren’t they in Robinvale?”. 

“Youth are our future! If they have positive experiences they will feel connected to their community and contribute to it. Those who leave the district for further study will also want to come back at a later date if they have had a good experience growing up here”. 

“Youth are our future and if council are not involved who else will advocate for them. This is an organisation that can influence youth in the right direction”. 

“Young people today need all the support we can offer they are a big part of our community and our municipalities future” 

“These are the up and coming Swan Hill citizens”.

“Our young people are special and they should not have to do it all on their own”.

“Council is the one constant within the community and should be the main constituent in this area, the driving force for the community, showing that the members, all of them are important and great outcomes for all young people is the council’s priority”. 
Q14. What do you think is needed to better meet the needs of vulnerable young people and their families? (Children and young people are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care protect and provide for their long term development and wellbeing is limited. Source: Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy)

- Improve partnerships between service providers
- Address poverty
- Offer more prevention and early intervention programs
- Deliver drug education programs
- Improve service collaboration and communication
- Improve access to services for vulnerable young people
- Offer more youth support
- Family centered practice
- Improve education supports for vulnerable young people
- Strengthen community connectedness
- Social inclusion
- Have youth spaces where young people are made welcome
- Offer parenting education
- Free adult education programs
- Improve child protection services
- Improved mental health supports
- Better enforcement of school attendance

“More holiday, weekend and after school programs to engage the young people and services that specifically target the needs of the families”.

“A whole of family approach needs to be practiced. I saw a news clip on TV where a numeracy program for parents is being run after hours by a school as many parents were struggling to assist their children with homework. Activities such as this would be one way of engaging parents in their children’s education”.

“Services must work together more effectively, be prepared to change the way they do business to better support vulnerable children and young people, measure outcomes and plan responses in a more integrated way”.

“Earlier intervention, families should have to hit crisis point for a service to become involved.”
Q15. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

“Worried that our youth are dropping out of extra-curricular activities because of rising costs to families and lack of transport options - students are missing out on so much and the divide between the “haves and the “have nots” is growing”.

“Most things that happen in Robinvale happen because of our generous community and people have to own it. That is good but people do burn out and support would be great”.

“It is of upmost importance that we continue to invest in our youth and their families!”.

“I enjoy making contact with Lisa. She is very good to communicate with and her responses to questions are always thorough. Her friendly nature is also evident through her communications with us. It would be a pleasure to continue working with her on projects at Manangatang P-12 College”.

“Don’t forget Robinvale”.

“Anyone supporting our youth is doing a fantastic job. Keep up the good work and keep trying to keep the Youth Officers as part of our community. Rate payers should have a say about how and what services are offered and this is one Service that Council needs to maintain. Our youth need to be supported or we will struggle in the future to keep a viable community if our youth all leave the area or do not flourish in the area. Thanks for the opportunity”.

“Council would be better served by a competent and careful community development strategy which empowers the very full resources in each community. E.g. churches, Robinvale Network House, High School, and Housing (Haven). There are some seriously dysfunctional areas that I don’t feel free to name”.

“The council really remove themselves from schools and they need to start working within them...they don’t see the reality”.

“Realistically money or funding is needed for more support to happen in education, training, health & employment”.

“We offer very little for kids who are not sporty or who don’t have money to join sports. We need free access for at risk kids and the skate park needs to be moved”.

“The services in Swan Hill are amazing and please keep it up!”.

“Jobs, employment, university in Swan Hill would be good”.

“The young people in Robinvale are amazing and very undervalued, caring and friendly most of the time. Wonderful young people”.

“My concern is for the disengaged young people in our community. There are some great programs in place, but my experience has been that the people most in need of participating are least likely to do so. Therefore I would like to see at-risk families encouraged and supported in accessing suitable support/activities from infancy as this may prevent the number of disengaged teenagers we currently see”.


“Swan Hill Rural City Council is the community leader and needs to be a part of the solution to improve outcomes for vulnerable children”.

“Good on you. I like what you’re doing”.

Well done!
Community Survey Results

A total of 161 community members contributed towards the Youth Strategy by filling in a survey. A summary of results follows.

Q1 Where do you live?
Answered: 137  Skipped: 24

- **Swan Hill**: 64%
- **Robinvale**: 21%
- **Manangatang**: 3%
- **Lake Boga**: 4%
- **Piangil**: 1%
- **Ultima**: 1%
- **Woorinen**: 4%
- **Boundary Bend**: 1%
- **Nyah/Nyah West**: 1%

64% of survey respondents lived in Swan Hill, 21% lived in Robinvale, 4% lived in Lake Boga and Woorinen, 3% lived in Manangatang and 1% lived in Nyah/Nyah West, Piangil and Boundary Bend.
The age of respondents were: 41-50 years old (34%), 26-40 years old (25%), 51-60 years old (21%), 61-70 years old (6%), 18-25 years old (6%), under 18 years old (6%) and 70 years + (2%).

61% of community members who filled in a survey indicated that they that they were currently a parent of a 12-25 year old. The remaining 39% were not parenting that 12-25 age group at this time.
Q4. What do you think helps to make the Swan Hill municipality a positive place for young people aged 12-25 years and their families? (E.g. places, events, activities, services, people, opportunities, facilities, location, education, sport etc.)

The top ten things that community members identified as making Swan Hill a positive place for young people aged 12-25 were:

1. The range of sports activities on offer (47%)
2. Activities and events for young people (20%)
3. Good facilities e.g. parks, playgrounds, sporting grounds and Leisure Centre (19%)
4. Quality Education/Schools (12%)
5. Caring community members (8%)
6. The cinema (8%)
7. Small rural lifestyle (6%)
8. The river (5%)
9. The climate (4%)
10. A good range of opportunities (3%)

“There are great sporting communities, plenty of well-maintained parks and regular events. Lots of opportunities to get out of the house”.

“Speaking from a Robinvale point of view the sporting facilities which involve young people and their families. The Pre-Schools, Schools are great and the many facilities offered to families through the local Hospital are also wonderful”.

“We have a great rural lifestyle. We have enough schools including FLO campus which is great. We have a regional hospital in Swan Hill and a hospital in Robinvale. We have free medical services thanks to Tristar. We have lots of sporting options”.

“My children use the services of the Leisure Centre. I have been pleased with the educations they have received at SHC. They have been involved in sports (tennis, football, netball), dance, Eisteddfod (when younger), they have all had the opportunity to gain casual work from employers in Swan Hill/Piangil. Luckily we at least now have a Cinema for entertainment”.

“Robinvale is a "village” like place where people know and care and it is multicultural and intergenerational sport is valuable both physically and socially for those involved in sport”.
Q5. What are the top three issues of concern that you have for young people where you live?

Community members who filled in a survey shared their top ten concerns for young people where they live as being:

1. Drugs (in particular ICE) (50%)
2. Boredom (24%)
3. Alcohol- especially underage and binge drinking (21%)
4. Limited employment opportunities (18%)
5. Lack of entertainment (16%)
6. Mental health (14%)
7. Limited education and training opportunities (9%)
8. Lack of services/supports for young people (8%)
9. Lack of non-sporting activities (8%)
10. High costs of tertiary education (5%)
11. Costs of participating in activities (5%)

“Many young people are not sure about their future and what they might do so are not motivated to do well at school - and maybe they just find school not all that engaging. This impacts on motivation and mental health. All young people have to face decisions around use of alcohol and drugs. Parents are not equipped to support young people and there is not any qualified generalist youth workers employed in early intervention”.

“Seems little to do on a weekend for entertainment. They tend to make their own fun. Drinking/Drugs at parties. Lack of ambition for many young people”.

“Other than sport there is not much for the young people to do. I am concerned that as there is not a lot for them to do, they wander the streets sometime looking for trouble”. 
Q6. What do you think is needed in your community and across the Swan Hill municipality to support better outcomes for young people aged 12-25 years and their families?

Community members that filled in a survey shared a wide range of ideas for things they thought would support better outcomes for young people aged 12-25 years and their families. They were:

- Youth-led activities and events
- More entertainment options
- A greater number of employment opportunities
- Improved youth services and supports
- Broader offerings of education/training
- Youth friendly spaces
- More family activities
- Consultation with young people
- Leadership activities
- Improved services for families
- Mentoring/role models
- Arts/Cultural activities
- More non-sport focussed activities
- Early intervention/prevention programs and services
- Headspace

“More support for youth with mental illness, more accessible treatment/counselling”.

“Teachers that care about their students and motivate and inspire them to greatness”.

“More opportunities for young people to participate in leadership programs”.

Compulsory parenting programs to give young people the skills and incentives to be responsible parents to end the vicious cycle of poverty and hopelessness.

The community needs to work together to be a supportive community - not take the view that this is not my problem- it's someone else's.

The community needs to be well resourced with generalist youth workers and improved integration of services to achieve better outcomes for young people.

“University access locally or more scholarships for local students. Increased support to find apprenticeships. More activities for older teens. Develop Lake Boga for the summer. Add things to riverside park for older kids such as a flying fox or a maze. Open the pioneers settlement area similar to Echuca”.

“More media of positive outcomes and opportunities for youth. Low cost travel options to enable them to attend events outside the area”.
Parents and community members rated key element of SHRCC’s Youth Support Program as:

Engagement of a diverse range of young people (61% good, very good or excellent), (14% Poor), (26% Unsure)  
Offering activities and events for young people (67% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (22% Unsure)  
Supporting young people to lead activities/events (67% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (22% Unsure)  
Partnership with organisations/community groups (65% good, very good or excellent), (9% Poor), (26% Unsure)  
Strategic Planning (56% good, very good or excellent), (8% Poor), (37% Unsure)  
Linking Young People to Services and Supports (58% good, very good or excellent), (12% Poor), (29% Unsure)  
Coaching Young People for Success (54% good, very good or excellent), (17% Poor), (29% Unsure)  
Advocacy for Issues that are important to young people (54% good, very good or excellent), (17% Poor), (29% Unsure)  
Youth Focussed Projects (65% good, very good or excellent), (11% Poor), (24% Unsure)
87% of community members who filled in a survey felt that it was either extremely important or very important that Council offers a Youth Support Program. 12% said it was either important or slightly important and the remaining 1% said it was not important at all.

Q10. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

“It would be a travesty for SHRCC to decide not to have a Youth Program. Council is the community leader and need to show respect and care and advocate for the rights of all citizens including children and young people”.

“Keep up the good work”.

“Community members could be invited to play roles within the activities or events. By involving community members you are creating relationships that hopefully will be lasting and owned by the community”.

“I really want to congratulate the council for being proactive with this survey and trust it will assist in developing and progressive strategic plan that entice our youth to rise and be all they’ve been created to be”.

“It is extremely concerning that some of our elected Councillors are looking to get rid of the Youth Support Program”.

“Robinvale P-12 does a fantastic job with our youth’s education and support. If Kane/Lisa can work together with them and also St Mary’s School to get more kids involved in events not just culturally but in other ways”.

“Thanking the council for what they have done to the youth so far”.

“Some of the Senior People in Robinvale need to live in Robinvale and not in over towns, so they can get to know the kids (like School Teacher & Police officers)”.

“Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to such an important part of Robinvale’s future - our young people”.

“We must keep working with our youth but we need to involve all backgrounds not just a select few who we perceived to be disadvantaged, ALL KIDS”.

“It all takes money doesn’t it$$$$$$$$$$$$$$”.

“Make teenagers proud of Swan Hill and not refer to it as Swan Hole”.

“We need this program enlarged, more staff would be able to reach and do so much more, time put into young people has vast benefits to us in that it creates more responsible adults who can then have input into our region”.

“I used to live and teach in Manangatang and Swan Hill; in case you are wondering what a city slicker is doing completing this survey! I am just interested in the well-being of youth, and feel it is an important endeavour to support the youth of today to succeed in life”.

“Glad that SHRCC decided to keep this service going. My main comment would be around making yourselves more available to the local schools and youth. Keep up the good work”.

“Thank you for this survey; I am a mother of a 17 year old girl and a 15 year old boy. I struggle with frustration of the secondary education at the moment and really worry about where it is going. That is no reflection on our teachers not at all; I believe they have the same frustrations. Our children need to be in control of their pathways, not be told that no that does not fit on our grid you cannot have this class as we do not run it! I love Swan Hill and would love for my children to stay and grow up here with their families”.

“Keep up the good work. Our youth are the future of Swan Hill and surrounds, they are the way forward”.
Small Discussion Group Results

A total of 89 young people/service providers/parents/community members attended small discussion groups in Swan Hill in Robinvale.

Key findings were:

Swan Hill
(Swan Hill Specialist School, Cornerstone, Mallee District Aboriginal Services, TAFE ESL Students, Community Services Students, Certificate of General Education Students and Preparation for Employment Students).

1. What do you think helps to make the Swan Hill Municipality a positive place for young people?
   - Sports
   - The cinema
   - Skate park
   - Youth Inc
   - The library- free wi-fi
   - Guides and Cubs
   - FReeZa activities for young people
   - Good schools
   - Drag strip will be in Swan Hill soon
   - The weather
   - The river and lakes
   - Caring/friendly people
   - Parks
   - Its relatively safe
   - Grainshed
   - Baptist Church

2. What are the issues of concern that you notice for young people aged 12-25 years (in your community and across the municipality)?
   - Lack of employment and career opportunities
   - Cost of TAFE courses
   - Financial pressures
   - Drugs
   - Violence
   - Bullying
     
     “I don’t like being called retarded”.  

   - Boredom/lack of things to do drives bad behaviour
   - There is a lack of resources for young people
   - If you are not involved in footy/netball it can be hard to fit in
   - Not many places to hangout
   - Underage drinking
     
     “There is a real culture of underage drinking”.

   - Smoking
   - Lack of shopping
3. What do you think is needed in your community (and across the Swan Hill municipality) to support better outcomes for young people aged 12-25 and their families?

- Subsidised sporting activities for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- Headspace- more mental health education
- More entertainment
- More dramatic activities
- Free waterslide- fix it up!
- Involve young people in decision making- help young people to have a say
- More festivals
- Free transport for young people
- Subsidised gym memberships
- Engage harder to reach groups
- Increase publicity and use of Youth Inc
- More activities and events for young people

  “Stop thinking of Swan Hill as a retirement town for older people”.

- More leadership opportunities

  “Make it a town that kids want to be in”.

  “There aren’t enough young leaders”.

- More music activities
- A hang out space for young people- like a small park in the CBD
- More access to tertiary education courses

**Robinvale**

(Munatunga Elders, Indigenous Languages Group, Polynesian Community, VCAL Boys, VCAL Girls)

1. What do you think helps to make Robinvale a positive place for young people?

- Footy / Rugby / Sports
- School – most people get along and the new buildings are great
- You can walk everywhere if you live in town
- Everyone knows everyone
- The river
- Caravan park is great
- Chinese New Year event this year was fun, huge
- Can get part time work fairly easily, ie Fishers
- Can walk everywhere in town
- Freedom and space, you can ride your motorbike etc
- Basketball program. Has recently started again. Great for all families, very inclusive and welcoming (not all sports are).
- Rugby league for both girls and boys
- The brass band
- Achievement Night for the Tongan community
• Robininvale youth program in school holidays is critical, always hard to get funding for. Age 10 years +
• School is really important and kids are loving the school, there is a great school community at the P-12 College

“Schools were like institutions when we were growing up, they’re much better now”.

• MDAS is now running programs for MVAC, one will be a Men’s Group which is looking to set up a garden at the Co-op, will involve school and help students get back to country.
• Clontarf Academy has made a huge difference for the young indigenous boys in the Robinvale community.

“There is this young boy, he’s my neighbour and the other day he went to the kindergarten as a story teller and read books to the little kids, he would have never done that before Clontarf”.

2. What are the issues of concern that you notice for young people aged 12-25 years (in your community and across the municipality)?

• Drugs
• Violence
• Racism
• Transportation
• There is a lack of things to do for young people outside of school hours

“We started talking about a youth space 8 years ago but people weren’t prepared to take the risk, but they need this and we can connect them to services then”.

• Limited shopping and food outlets
• A lack of activities to do outside of sport
• No counsellor at the Co-op at the moment, having a big impact on Indigenous families
• Youth Suicide need a lot more support around this
• Cyberbullying is a big issue
• Keeping up with school work
• School attendance
• Young people are not consulted with enough

“We don’t get much of a chance to be heard or to share our ideas – the right way to do that is by coming to the school and hearing from us in groups like this or in the class groups”.

• NO Koorie unit at TAFE in Robinvale
• Racism and transgenerational trauma due to colonisation
• There is not enough help for youth suicide
• Not enough good news stories about Robinvale
• A lack of focus on Indigenous girls

“We need Katherine Hadfield’s Indigenous Girls program to run again with the years 7-9 girls. This ran out of funding”.

• Lack of jobs for young people

“Young people ask where are our future jobs?”
A lack of career options for young people

“They (young people) need better careers than just the take away shop and the blocks, they need to dream and have their dreams supported”.

“What will I do when I finish school, my older sister has finished school and she’s doing nothing”.

Loss of CDEP was a huge thing for the Robinvale community

A lack of good advice about costs, savings, grant and scholarship opportunities for further education.

“My niece she got accepted to Uni but she can’t afford it so she is working 2 jobs this year to save up, but the other girls, if they don’t have dreams what are they doing? They’re working at the take away until they get pregnant; they got nothing to do so they think ‘I might as well have a baby’”.

Loss of ASSPA (Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness) program was significant

“[Aboriginal] Disadvantage is well camouflaged in Victoria, in the NT it is all over the news, you don’t hear about it here”

3. What do you think is needed in your community (and across the Swan Hill municipality) to support better outcomes for young people aged 12-25 and their families?

- Improve our reputation as a town, show the good things and stories
- Tidy up, people come through Robinvale from everywhere, and we look terrible
- More activities and events for young people
- Wi-fi in K Square
- More Polynesian specific supports- especially for those with large families
- More doctors
- Ongoing support for the community garden
- preventative programs that encourage healthy lifestyles
- Need a band rotunda so the Brass Band can perform somewhere for the whole community to enjoy
- Need to make Perrin Street look nicer
- Improvement of the sports precinct and especially the standard of the netball court
- Mental health services for youth
- Family violence services
- Out of home care services
- Big Aboriginal Culture Festival
- Youth Mental Health (visiting to the school weekly)
- Grief and loss counsellors
- Drug and alcohol services (especially for ICE)
- A cultural meeting place
- Increased profile of Indigenous needs and engagement through Swan Hill Rural City Council. Mildura Rural City Council does this much better than Swan Hill Rural City Council. In Mildura there is the Aboriginal Action Committee which sits within Council and meets regularly with Councillors.
- Want to work more closely with Swan Hill Rural City Council to have an Aboriginal Councillor, Council more visible in the Robinvale community
- Youth Forums
- Need emerging leaders programs for young people

  “SHRCC has a youth network but Robinvale are not on the map, that’s why FREEZA funding doesn’t extend to Robinvale”.

- More career and employment opportunities for young people
- There was meant to be a Swan Hill Rural City Council Indigenous Partnership Plan but this never came to fruition
- LIN Community Plan for Robinvale needs to be endorsed by Council
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