ADVOCATE CELEBRATE ELEVATE



THE ACE

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

HEPBURN SHIRE 2022 - 2030

Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our South East and the Wadawurrung to our South West and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture, and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.



Message from the Mayor

We recognise young people as leaders in our community and as our future. Their visions and dreams will make the communities and world we live in a better place for us all.

The ACE Youth Strategy 2022-2030 is our commitment to elevating and celebrating our young people, their gifts, talents, passions and contributions and our promise to continue working/advocating for and with them to ensure Hepburn Shire is a welcoming and nurturing place for all young people.

Our ACE Youth Strategy outlines a vision where all young people who live in Hepburn Shire get the opportunities and support needed for them to reach their potential and chase down their dreams.

The strategy also demonstrates our commitment to work together as a community to create strong foundations and ensure social and community support networks that celebrate the contribution youth make within our communities.

I would like to thank the large number of local young people who have contributed to the development of the ACE Youth Strategy and acknowledge the leadership and dedication of the Youth Co-Design group who have played a pivotal role in ensuring this strategy was for and by the young people who call Hepburn Shire home.

They have raised challenges about personal, regional and global issues that amplify the need for change in our communities. This strategy is the framework that will push us onto the next steps towards a more connected, sustainable and equitable region for young people and our community as a whole.

Its an exciting time for youth within the Council as we look forward to the future and start to embed youth voices through investigating the possibility of a Youth Council or Youth Advisory Committee.

Cr. Tim Drylie, Mayor
Hepburn Shire Council



AWESOME

OUR CO-DESIGNER TEAM



"By being involved in youth co design I've been able to tangibly influence the experience of young people in Hepburn Shire. This experience provides a fantastic insight into the work councils do for anyone who wants to become involved in policy making into the future."

- Tino (19) Hepburn



"Having a voice in Hepburn Shire, especially as an 18 year old has helped me not only be able to see the changes this strategy is going to provide; but it has also helped me visualise the issues that young people have in the area, such as the lack of youth spaces in the area."

- Shaelyn (18) Trentham



"Being a part of the Youth Strategy Co-Design group has allowed me to voice my concerns and thoughts about my personal experience in growing up in the Shire. My outlooks and beliefs are recognised, listened to and taken into consideration within the discussions. This allows me to feel as though I can personally make a change and elevate future youth experiences in the Shire."

- Lilia (21) Creswick

"Having my voice heard, and my ideas come alive, was such a satisfying and amazing feeling. It made me feel that I was a true part of the community. I hope that this strategy can show young people how many others within the community are willing to help them thrive and succeed, and that having a voice within the community can pay off and can truly make a difference."

- Lucinda (18) Daylesford



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As Hepburn Shire, along with the rest of the country navigates the new COVID normal, business support, community and economic recovery will remain a high priority.

Young People in our region have been severely impacted by the pandemic lock downs, which have all contributed to challenges for businesses, especially those working in the tourism and hospitality sector. Many young people within the Hepburn Council rely on these as their primary income.

COVID 19 has also brought along challenges of isolation and connection for many young people. This has compacted the many complex issues of living in a small rural town. Mental health, social support systems and transport have become a high focus for young people moving to a COVID normal lifestyle.



IMPACT OF COVID-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hepburn Shire is home to some to the most intelligent, talented, caring, unique and real young people in Australia. Hepburn Shire Council's Youth Team have been fortunate enough to engage a handful of such young people (see page 5) in the co-design of this strategy and also the youth consultation and engagement which preceded its development (as per page 6).

The Hepburn Shire Council's ACE Youth Strategy 2022-2030 sets the strategic direction for the Hepburn Shire Council and our local communities, networks and partner agencies, work in:

i) **Advocating** with and for young people on the issues that matter most to them;
ii) **Celebrating** our young people, their passions, skills, contributions, achievements and endeavours; and
iii) **Elevating** young people as leaders and decision making roles in our schools and communities, and in their own lives however they choose to live them.

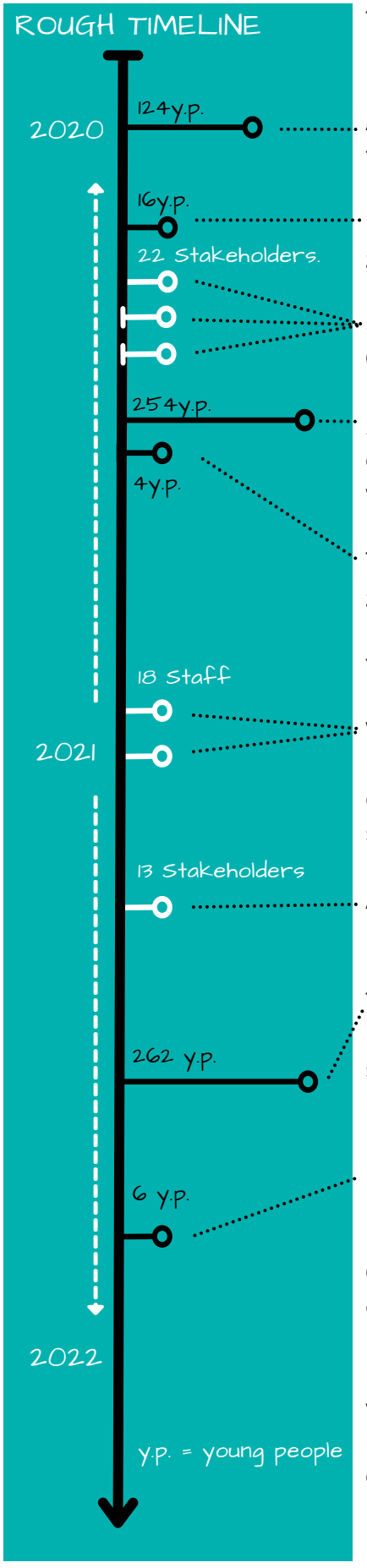
The Hepburn Shire Council's ACE Youth Strategy 2022-30 has been co-designed with and for young people. It's purpose is to guide our work in supporting, empowering and championing young people of Hepburn Shire through three core functions articulated as overarching strategic action areas: Advocate | Celebrate | Elevate

Expanded upon on page 13 & 14, these three strategic action areas provide a focus point or lens through which all of the Hepburn Shire Council's work with and for young people can be articulated, rationalised, operationalised and ultimately measured and reviewed.

Under the scope of our three strategic action areas the Hepburn Shire Council is also committing to working across eight priority areas (listed on pages 15 - 18), which have been identified through extensive consultation with our young people. These priority area have been included within the strategy to help keep the focus of our work on addressing the key issue impacting young people today, so that we can deliver a better future for and with all young people in Hepburn Shire and surrounding areas.

The combination of the ACE Youth Strategy's strategic action areas and youth priority areas provide the basis for the development and implementation of the Annual Action Plans (see page 19), which will operationalise the strategy and provide a framework by which we will monitor and evaluate the strategy (as per page 20).

YOUTH & SECTOR INFORMED



The development and consultation for the ACE Youth Strategy has spanned 18 months, engaged 660 young people and 53 stakeholders.

An online survey was conducted with 124 young people from throughout the Hepburn Shire having a say on key social issues and challenges.

In March 2021, 16 young people at Daylesford College were involved in a group consultation as part of the development of our new Council Plan.

3 community meetings were held, engaging 22 stakeholders as part of the Creswick youth project scoping.

254 young people (aged 10-25) were engaged via in-school workshops, community outreach and a postcard activity to have their say on what would make where they live better for all young people.

The ACE was led by 4 passionate young people made up of the co-designed group, who informed, organised and promoted the consultation process. Prior to the formation of the Co-design group, consultation was undertaken for the Council Plan and the Creswick Youth Project.

We held 2 consultation sessions with Council staff (18 participants) to provide insight and input from across other departments and units to ensure the ACE Youth Strategy was developed as a whole of Council strategy.

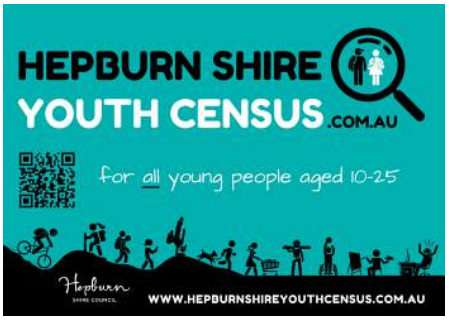
A youth strategy consultation was held with Hepburn Engaging Youth Network (13 participants) .

The Hepburn Shire Youth Census ran from November until the end of December, with 262 young people completing the Survey. This was supported by a member of our co-design team presenting to every Daylesford College's senior school mentor groups.

In December 2021, the Co-design group organised a pizza night session for 18-25 years to discuss their vision for Hepburn Shire (6 participants).

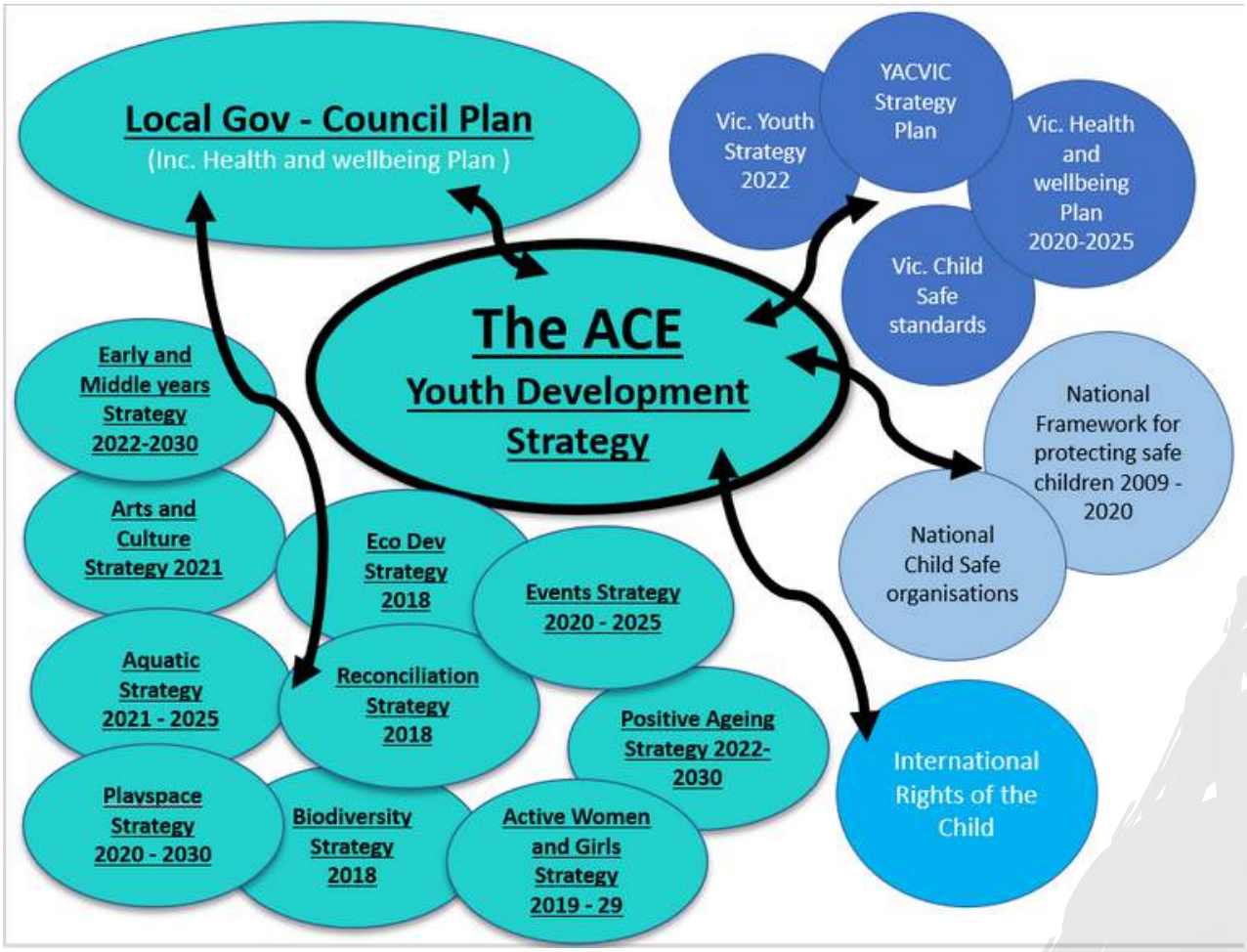
Overall 660 young people were consulted and 53 stakeholders were engaged and consulted.

Literature scanning was also undertaken with federal and state policies, research reports, best practice papers, and other council strategies.



INTEGRATED & CONNECTED

The Hepburn Shire Council ACE Youth Strategy 2022-2030 aligns with and is informed by local, state, national and international priorities and outcomes.



Our Partners

Ballarat Community Health
Ballarat Foundation
Central Goldfields Shire Council
Central Highlands Rural Health
Child & Family Services (CAFS)
ChillOut Festival
City of Ballarat
CoRE
Cresfest
Daylesford College
Federation University
Headspace
Hepburn Engaging Youth Network
Hepburn Local Drug & Alcohol Team
Hepburn Region Blue Light
Highlands Local Learning & Employment Network (LLEN)
L2P

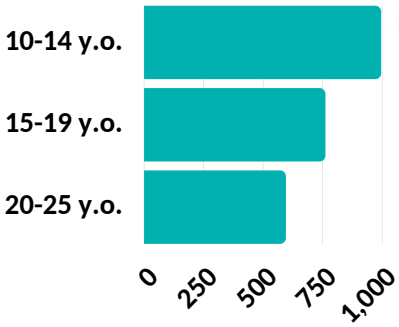


Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Melbourne University
Moorabool Shire Council
Mt. Alexander Shire Council
Neighborhood Houses (Creswick/Clunes/Daylesford/Trentham)
Prevention of Violence Network
Pride Brigayed
Primary Schools within Hepburn Shire
The Push inc.
Uniting Care
Victorian Police
WayOut
Womens Health Grampians
Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)
Youthrive
Youth Participation Practice Network (YPPN)

YOUTH PROFILE



In 2020, Social Health Atlas of Australia - Torrens University, there were 2,351 young people aged 10-24 years old living in Hepburn Shire.



According to the National Census Data from 2016 and Social Health Atlas Data from 2018 **for every 100 young people living in Hepburn Shire at the time:**

1 would be pregnant

2 would identify as Aboriginal

4 would have been living with a disability

8 would have been studying at Tafe

10 would have been unemployed

13 would have been born overseas

17 would have been studying at university

23 would have been involved in volunteering

Of our 2,351 young people aged 10-24 in 2020:

2 in 5 were aged 10-14

1 in 3 were aged 15-19

1 in 3 were aged 15-19



KEY ISSUES 4 YOUNG PEOPLE

Hepburn Shire Council's ACE Youth Strategy is informed by the views and opinions of over 25% of young people living in the Hepburn Shire who were engaged in the lead up and/or design of the strategy. Below is a brief summary of some of the most important issues that young people spoke to us about and that have provided a platform for the creation of the new ACE Youth Strategy.

Mental Health

An overwhelming majority of young people consider mental health to be a significant issue in Hepburn. With 59% of young people telling us that improving mental wellbeing should be Council's top priority for supporting youth. When we asked young people in 2019 about the most significant issues facing young people, the top two responses were 'Anxiety' and 'Depression'.

Gender Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

Almost 50% young people believe that Gender equality and preventing violence should be a priority action for Council. Unhealthy intimate relationships were seen as an issue by 46% of our youth survey responses and 31% believed family violence was also a problem within the community. Mission Australia's Youth Survey also found that 69% of gender diverse young people have been unfairly treated.

Education & Employment

Young people told us that there are significant barriers to living in the Hepburn Shire. In our consultation sessions, participants said that the lack of further education and employment options mean they will need to leave Hepburn Shire. 47% of young people said they don't see themselves living in the Hepburn Shire in 10 years. Only 48 % of students who finished year 12 in 2019, went on to further study (Undergraduate, TAFE, apprenticeship), which is much lower than the State average (75%). The Unemployment rate in Hepburn Shire (12%) is also much higher than neighbouring Council areas (Moorabool 8%, Ballarat 10%).

Social and Community Inclusion

When we asked young people about their community, a majority of young people felt connected to their community (79%). In contrast young people also believed Government (66 %) and Community (45%) don't value the rights and opinions of youth. There was also a growing concern amongst older young people (15-20 years) that they are often unfairly treated by the Community on Social media and in the media (44%). Outside of school young people are well connected to their community. 54% of young people play sports, 27% are engaged in Art/music/cultural activities, and 16% are involved in community volunteering. 76% of young people who participated in our survey felt well supported by their community.

KEY ISSUES 4 YOUNG PEOPLE

Climate Action

Young people in the Hepburn Shire have been passionate and active regarding action on climate change. These include 16% of young people participating in community eco programs and attending Climate strikes in Melbourne. 53% of young people beleive council should make Climate action a priority.

Youth Arts & Cultural Events

In our consultations with young people, there was a strong theme for more art programs and music events (28%). Young people stated that music events were an excellent opportunity for young people to create a safe space, where they can spend time with friends (outside of school) and have fun. Dedicated after-school art programs was also seen as a need. 26% of 10-14 year olds said that having a youth space was important to them, and 29% said that they want more outside of school programs.

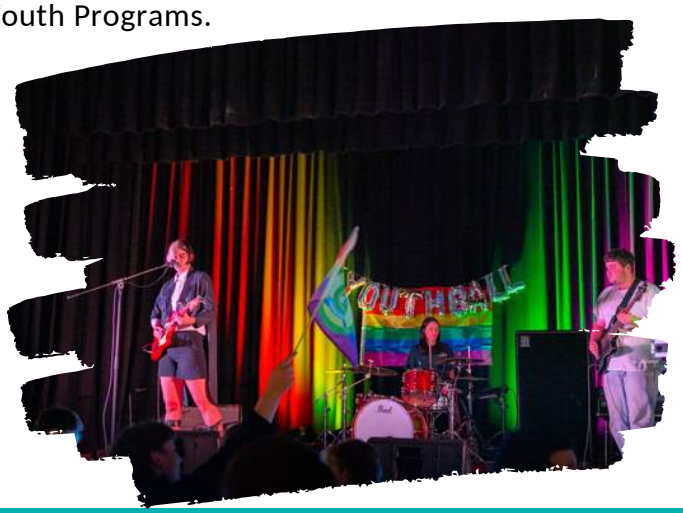
Drugs & Alcohol

Alcohol & drug usage was considered a significant issue for young people aged 15-19 years. Alcohol was the most prevalent drug tried by this cohort with over 90% saying that they have previously drank alcohol. Tobacco and Cannabis were the next highest drugs used with 51% and 50% respectively. Lack of entertainment options, boredom and relieving stress were the main reasons for drug usage.

Transport

Transport continues to be a major barrier for young people. This came across very strongly in our consultation sessions. With many young people unable to attend after-school sports & programs with support of a parent. 17% of young people stated that transportation has been a concern for them. In Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's (YACVic) survey with young people from Rural Victoria, 89% of participants said they were unable to get public transport to work/university/TAFE and 82% said they relying on getting a lift from their parent to attend Youth Programs.





POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Hepburn Shire Council adopts a 'Strengths Based Approach' to its work with young people, engaging a Positive Youth Development Framework as defined by Kathryn Seymour.

The framework provides a practical evidence based guide to delivering youth programs. These programs provide a range positive developmental outcomes, including the opportunity for young people to develop knowledge competencies and practical life skills.

Learning and Development
Effective youth development programs provide learning and development opportunities for Young people. Emphasis is placed on a structured learning approach that builds on the strengths and skills of young people. Youth Participants will lead and be responsible for their own learning outcomes within programs. The Learning experiences should be age appropriate, safe, fun, meaningful and relate to real life.

Leadership and Decision Making
By engaging youth in leadership roles and decision-making processes we recognise young people's expertise and their role as active citizens. Programs support young people's right to be involved, to be informed, to have their own opinion, to express their views and to be heard. Young people recognise that by taking up decision making and leadership opportunities they become confident participants, develop important life skills, make a valuable contribution to the organisation, act as role models for other young people and support organisations to be responsive to their needs and aspirations.

Inclusive Ethos
Youth Programs are best served by involving young people of different backgrounds, opinions, experience, skills, interests, needs and capacity. By being inclusive, programs are more responsive, effective and support the advantages of youth development programs being accessible to all young people.

Community Service
Active young people in the community help to develop their sense of belonging and connectedness within their community. Effective programs provide many learning opportunities, which builds optimism and broadens their long-term outlook. Youth Programs acknowledge, reward and celebrate the efforts that young people make to the community surrounding them.

Partnerships and Social Networks
Partnerships and social connections help to build community capacity, widen available resources, provide access to and strengthen social networks and expand the diversity of available opportunities. We encourage and support young people to develop community partners and build upon their social networks.

Ethical Promotion
Youth programs promote positive images of young people and work to ensure promotional material is an honest and an accurate reflection of the program. The best interests of young people are considered in any decision making.

VISION & PURPOSE

Our vision is:

That Hepburn Shire is an inclusive rural community located in Dja Dja Wurrung country where youth are valued, partnerships are fostered, environment is protected, diversity supported, and innovation embraced.

Our purpose is:

To Advocate, Celebrate and Elevate with and for all young people so they can be healthy, happy, heard and 100% themselves.

ADVOCATE **CELEBRATE** **ELEVATE**



STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

Hepburn Shire Council's ACE Youth Strategy 2022-30 aims to support, empower and champion young people of Hepburn Shire through three core functions articulated in this guiding document as overarching strategic action areas: Advocate | Celebrate | Elevate

Expanded upon below these three strategic action areas provide a focus point or lens through which all of the Hepburn Shire Council's work with and for young people can be articulated, rationalised, operationalised and ultimately measured and reviewed.

Under the scope of these three strategic action areas the Hepburn Shire Council is committing to working across eight priority areas (as listed in the following section of this document), identified through extensive consultation with young people, to help address key issue impacting young people today and deliver a better future for all young people in Hepburn Shire and surrounding areas.

The combination of the ACE Youth Strategy's strategic action areas and youth priority areas provide the basis for the development and implementation of the Annual Action Plans which will operationalise the strategy and provide the tools required to monitor and evaluate the strategy.



ADVOCATE

advocate (v): to publicly support or suggest an idea, development, or way of doing something

Ensuring young people have resources in our community and advocating for further inclusion of young people in Hepburn Shire.

This may take on forms such as;

- Activating spaces within Hepburn Shire through community grants such as 'Youth Space Activation' Grants
- Working with internal teams at Hepburn Shire such as Customer Service and Library Teams
- Hosting external networking and support meetings such as 'HEY Network'
- Ensuring youth voice informs practice ie. 'Youth Census', 'Covid Youth Survey' & Youth Strategy Co-Design among other consultations
- Providing training for staff, organisations, parents and community regarding needs of young people including but not limited to; Mental Health First Aid, Child safe awareness,
- Maintaining play spaces, sporting facilities, walking trails & upgrades to existing facilities and clubs.
- Promoting access and inclusion within Council's youth-based activities and ensuring safe places for all kinds of young people ie. Queer Youth Bookclub, Chill Out Ball, Youth Ball, Reconciliation, Disability, Women and Girls

STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

CELEBRATE

celebrate (v); to praise widely or to present to widespread and favourable public notice

Promoting the amazing work and achievements of young people in Hepburn Shire.

This may take on forms such as;

- Providing positive news for and about young people in Hepburn Shire through our social media streams at Council.
- Youth Ball, CresFest, Australia Day Youth Awards
- Youth centric events
- School Holiday Programs
- Providing opportunities for young people to explore new hobbies by hosting free and accessible arts, cultural and sporting events including Skate Competitions, learn-to-skate sessions and art and craft workshops.
- Supporting access for young people at local events such as ChillOut & CresFest

ELEVATE

elevate (v): to raise or lift to a higher position

Removing barriers for young people in our community and providing extra support to make sure they can thrive in Hepburn Shire.

This may take on forms such as;

- Providing work experience to bridge employment barriers through work experience, 'Junior Lifeguard Program', Skate Staff Training, 'Getting Dirty' program,' Young Growers' program
- Providing opportunity for young people to expand their knowledge, influence and leadership skills through supporting existing and internal leadership programs such as YouThrive & Western Bulldogs Leadership Program
- Bridging gaps for young people attaining their licence with L2P Program and sourcing alternative transport for young people accessing programs and events in Hepburn Shire.
- Providing financial assistance to young people to excel in their academic studies through Youth Training and Education Grants.
- Supporting youth agency over their entertainment and entrepreneurship with 'Quick Response Youth Grants'
- Ensuring young people have tangible skills that align with their interests with support from FReeZA and ensuring they have agency over the influence of youth events in their community

YOUTH PRIORITY AREAS

In the the development of the ACE Youth Strategy 2022-2030 the Hepburn Shire Council's youth team, in conjunction with our Co-design Team, have identified eight priority areas based on data gained from extensive consultation with our young people and local youth sector. These priority area have been included within the strategy to help keep the focus of our work on addressing the key issue impacting young people today, so that we can deliver a better future for and with all young people in Hepburn Shire and surrounding areas. The youth priority areas in combination with the strategic action areas will form the basis of the annual action plans.



School related stress, transition, mindfulness, arts and culture, supports, bullying interventions, raise awareness and understanding on mental health services and resources.

MENTAL HEALTH

Our approach:

- **Build resilience through youth programs and activities to support mental health and increasing referral pathways.**
- Advocate, raise awareness and understanding of mental health services and increase accessibility for young people.
- **Strengthen partnerships, build, support and maintain strong networks for young people to improve healthy mental wellbeing.**



Enable young people as leaders to adapt and mitigate climate change, and take action to support net zero community emissions by 2030.

CLIMATE ACTION

Our approach:

- **Supporting young people to advocate for environmental issues that affect them.**
- Improve sustainable environmental practice within youth programs, events and activities.
- **Implement programs, events and activities that have a focus on sustainability and positive climate impact.**
- Identify ways to engage young people with the environment eg. Education, projects and leadership opportunities.

PRIORITY AREAS



GENDER EQUALITY, INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

Awareness, access, education, prevention of violence, support, intersectionality.

Our approach:

- **Acknowledgement and celebrate inclusion by increasing young people participation in Council advisory committees.**
- Implement and support programs, events and prevention activities that focus on community participation, diversity and inclusion.
- **Strengthen partnerships and increase community awareness through education and networking.**
- Increasing agency in young people to lead events and activities that focus on gender equity, diversity and inclusion.



YOUTH HEALTH & WELLBEING

Sexual and reproductive health, body image, sport and recreation, natural environment , food, alcohol and drug use (vapes), safety/crime.

Our approach:

- **Implement and support programs, events and activities that have a focus on physical activity and health and wellbeing.**
- Build awareness through youth programs and activities to support personal health and wellbeing and increasing referral pathways.
- **Implement youth physical health awareness communication campaign through Councils youth networks Including sextual health awareness**

YOUTH PRIORITY AREAS



SOCIAL & COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Transport, wifi and reception, access and inclusion, youth space (libraries, NH, etc), inclusion, community perception and (re)integration.

Our approach:

- **Work collaboratively with existing community stakeholders to connect youth with programs, events and initiatives.**
- Identify opportunities for youth to be involved in formal community events.
- **Improve community perception of youth through youth celebration events and promotion**
- Improve young people's connection to their peers to support inclusion.
- **Scope, Investigate and seek funding for a 'Youth hub' in Creswick**
- Support young people with transportation barriers to attend Council programs & events



PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Education, volunteering, leadership, mentoring.

Our approach:

- **Investigate, scope and seek funding for a youth mentoring program across the Hepburn Shire**
- Implement and support youth leadership and development programs.
- **Support local youth volunteering within the community.**
- Provide leadership and development opportunities for young people to increase youth advocacy and employment.
- **Increase arts and culture activities throughout the youth program to support and build pathways for emerging young artists.**
- Advocate and support alternative education programs within Hepburn Shire

YOUTH PRIORITY AREAS



YOUTH AGENCY & EMPOWERMENT

Respect, decision making, action, communication, youth advisory committee, information (how and why).

Our approach:

- **Investigate the formation of a youth council or youth advisory Committee.**
- Increasing agency in young people to lead events and activities for issues that are important to them.
- **Increasing youth involvement in community engagement for council projects.**
- Create a database of youth voice through biannual youth census.



SAFETY & SECURITY

Housing, Employment, Personal Safety, Bullying & Cyber-safety.

Our approach:

- **Ensure sustainable, inclusive and accessible infrastructure that promotes healthy recreational, physical activity and social connection.**
- Support, promote and advocate opportunities for employment of young people
- **Increasing youth advocacy avenues to state, federal government and peak bodies on issues Eg. Transport, Employment, housing, Crime and internet safety.**
- Delivery of healthy, safe and secure youth programs, events and activities and increasing referral pathways. Including transport where possible.
- **Implement youth safety and security awareness communication campaign through Councils youth networks.**
- Advocate, investigate and support local solutions for increased transport, youth employment, affordable housing and homelessness within the region.

ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

The Hepburn Shire Council's ACE Youth Strategy 2022-30 has been designed to provide the high level strategic direction for the Council's actions within the local youth sector.

The ACE Youth Strategy supports the development and implementation of annual Youth Action Plans (example template below) that operationalise the strategy and provide detailed direction on the work of Council in all eight priority areas and within the three overarching strategic action areas of Advocate | Celebrate | Elevate.

A robust internal monitoring and evaluation framework has been designed to measure the success/impact of the ACE Youth Strategy and its annual action plans (as detailed on the following page).

This process will sit alongside an annual peer review process conducted by Hepburn Shire Council staff with neighbouring Local Government's youth teams and will operate in parallel to a human centred design process engaging local young people to assist in the review of the current action plan and co-design next years action plan.

Hepburn Shire Council's
ACE Youth Strategy 2022-30 | YOUTH ACTION PLAN Template

PRIORITY AREAS	ADVOCATE	CELEBRATE	ELEVATE	KEY STAFF PARTNERS & YOUTH	KEY DATES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	STATUS & LINKS TO REPORTING
MENTAL HEALTH						
CLIMATE ACTION						
SOCIAL & COMMUNITY CONNECTION						
PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT						
GENDER EQUALITY, INCLUSION & DIVERSITY						
SAFETY & SECURITY						
YOUTH HEALTH & WELLBEING						
YOUTH AGENCY & EMPOWERMENT						

MONITORING & EVALUATION

The Hepburn Shire Council's ACE Youth Strategy 2022-30 and it's Youth Action Plans will be supported by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework

This action plan will be monitored and evaluated with an annual review that will take place in June and will be informed by the bi- annual Youth Census that will be implemented in March of that year. The 2021 Youth Census will be used as base line data and the Bi- annual Youth Census will seek to get feedback from the community on how we are tracking and inform the Council of any arising issues that may need to be considered in the future Action planning. This will ensure that the strategies and actions are inline with the overall vision and reflect the needs and wants of youth today.

