

2018 - 2021

YOUTH STRATEGY





I feel safer living here, having a smaller town and people are friendly. Open spaces and freedom.

- Young Person aged 12 - 14 years



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moorabool Shire Council is committed to providing a place where young people feel safe, well supported and connected to their local communities. The draft youth strategy (draft strategy) provides a future vision and strategic direction for the municipality in relation to young people aged 12-24 years.

Council continues to be committed to providing innovative service provision that meets the needs of young people in Moorabool. There are opportunities for young people to have their say, and young people are encouraged to be involved in the development of programs and services that meet the needs of young people in Moorabool.

Due to their age, stage of development and life experiences young people bring unique perspectives, ideas, aspirations, and needs that require specific approaches to engaging and supporting them. In giving particular focus to addressing the needs of young people and fostering their well-being we build a more sustainable community. Young people represent a significant proportion of Moorabool's total population with 19 percent of all persons living in Moorabool being aged between 12 and 24 Years.

Moorabool has many positive factors, many of our young people are doing well, although our young people face greater challenges than young people living in metropolitan Melbourne, and young people living in the more rural areas of the municipality face further challenges when trying to access sustainable support, education and training and programs.

Population growth places pressure on youth service provision, but equally the significant size of the Shire and overall low population density increase the challenges faced in youth service provision. It is crucial that the plan not only meet the current needs of young people but also ensure that future needs and challenges are well planned.

The draft strategy was developed through a significant amount of community engagement including working closely with young people, parents/carers of young people, schools and with agencies. The draft strategy brings together research and knowledge that is available for improving outcomes for young people and uses the expertise that exists within the Shire, along with the voices of young people and their families to guide a strengthened approach to ensuring that Moorabool is a youth-friendly place to live, play, work, learn and grow.

While Moorabool Shire Council has a role to play in leading the development, implementation and review of the youth strategy, it is also a plan for Council to work in partnership with service providers and the education sector across the municipality.

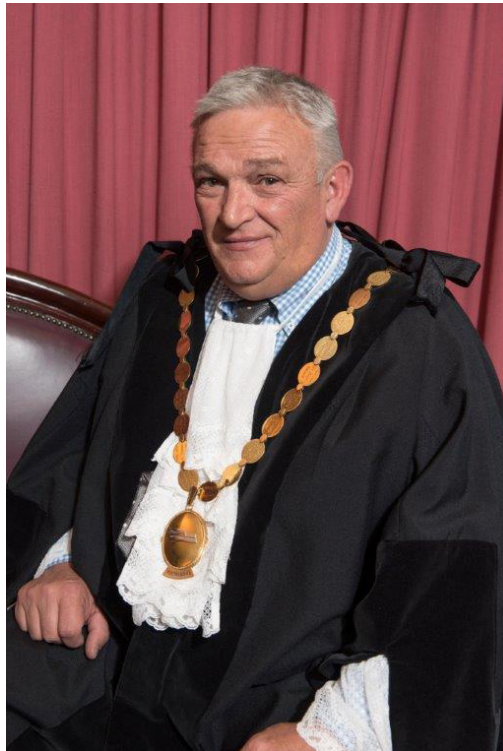
The goals of the draft strategy are categorised under three key strategic directions. These are :

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Education and Employment
3. Connection & Participation

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Moorabool Shire Council has developed its Youth Strategy in partnership with our young people, parents and local education and service providers. This plan is a key strategic document which sets the direction for services for young people aged from 12-25 years in Moorabool.

I would like to thank all the young people, parents, grandparents, carers, our local providers and education providers and our Youth Action Group, for their input into the development of this plan. As the Mayor of Moorabool, I look forward to watching the Youth Strategy come to life and make Moorabool an even better place for young people.



INTRODUCTION

Moorabool Shire Council is committed to providing a place where young people feel safe, well supported and connected to their local communities.

The draft strategy was developed through a significant amount of community engagement including working closely with young people, parents/carers of young people, schools and with agencies. Research and analysis identified the important issues facing young people in Moorabool and provided a framework for the development of the draft strategy.

A youth strategy is a plan initiated and actioned by local government, to provide a future vision and strategic direction for the municipality in relation to young people aged 12-24 years.

Moorabool Shire works with others to build communities that foster the wellbeing of all young people. While Moorabool Shire Council has a role to play in leading the development, implementation and review of the Youth Strategy, it is a plan for Council in partnership with service providers and the education sector across the municipality.

The draft strategy :

- Is informed by current research about young people and topics impacting on the youth sector at a local, state, federal and global level
- Demonstrates Council's commitment to the development, support and engagement of young people
- Provides direction for Council's activities for young people.
- Provides a framework to assist in prioritising responses to the needs and interests of young people
- Assists in the development of annual Council service unit plans designed to achieve specific outcomes for young people and the community
- Articulates investment needed from other levels of Governments and other funding bodies; and the importance of fostering and sustaining partnerships with non-government organisations

Council continues to be committed to providing innovative service provision that meets the needs of young people in Moorabool. There are opportunities for young people to have their say, and young people are encouraged to be involved in the development of programs and services that meet the needs of young people in Moorabool.

Council aims to create an environment that provides increased access to opportunities for young people aged 12 to 24, to improve their engagement with education, employment, health and wellbeing opportunities and to be more actively involved in the communities of Moorabool.

WHY IS A YOUTH STRATEGY IMPORTANT ?

Due to their age, stage of development and life experiences young people bring unique perspectives, ideas, aspirations, and needs that require specific approaches to engaging and supporting them. Young people are our future and by giving particular focus to addressing their needs and fostering their well-being we build more sustainable communities. Young people represent a significant proportion of Moorabool's total population with 19 percent of all persons living in Moorabool being aged between 12 and 24 years.

The wellbeing of young people is involved, many different factors increase the likelihood of a young person's success, and it is vital that when thinking about outcomes and strategies for young people a greater understanding of the complexity of young people and issues are considered.

Moorabool has many positive factors, many of our young people are doing well, although our young people face greater challenges than young people living in metropolitan Melbourne, and young people living in the more rural areas of the municipality face further challenges when trying to access sustainable support, education and training and programs.

Population growth will place pressure on youth service provision, but equally the significant size of the Shire and overall low population density increase the challenges faced in youth service provision. It is crucial that the plan not only meet the current needs of young people but also ensure that future needs and challenges are well planned.

The draft strategy brings together research and knowledge that is available for improving outcomes for young people and uses the expertise that exists within the Shire, along with the voices of young people and their families to guide a strengthened approach to ensuring that Moorabool is a youth-friendly place to live, work, play, learn and grow.

POLICY CONTEXT

The origins of positive youth development can be found in the fields of human ecology, prevention, resilience, and developmental assets. The draft Strategy articulates the needs, desires and priorities of young people and families and the conditions required for children and young people to thrive. Given the significance of young people and family, it is essential that the ideas and suggestions of young people and their families were sought, considered, and acted upon, in the development of the Youth Strategy. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Accordingly, the opinions and perspectives of young people aged between 12-24 years, and their families, were captured through extensive community consultations. 206 young people and 117 family members contributed to the consultation process. Their views and the views of local youth service providers formed the basis of the goals, priority areas, and the corresponding action plan.

Beyond this level of influence are conditions outside of the family, incorporating the local community, including informal networks of friends, neighbours and extended family; and more formal networks including educational institutes, child, youth and family programs, services and facilities. A further influence is the broader political, economic and social context, incorporating all levels of government (Sayers, 2012).

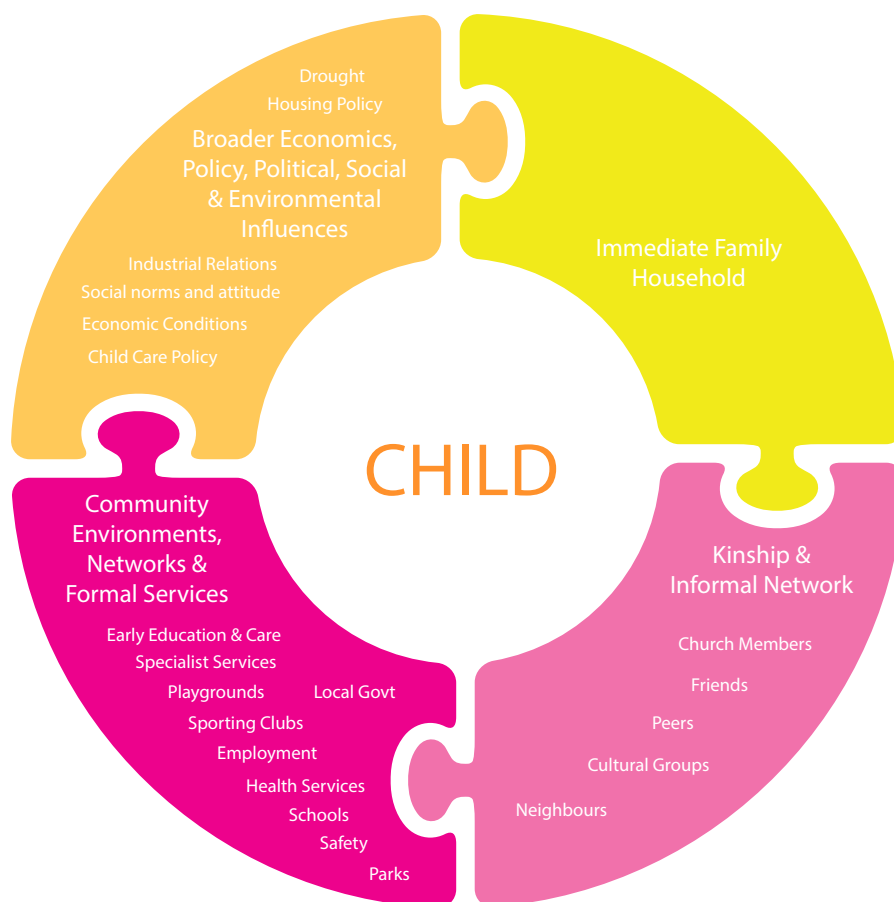


Figure 1 : The ecology of child development.
Adopted from Bronfenbrenner (1979)

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

From a global perspective, the draft Strategy reflects a commitment to uphold the rights of children and young people, as documented in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and evidenced in the UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities Initiative. This is demonstrated through the commitment to ensure the views of young people are sought on issues impacting on their lives, as evident in the consultations with young people, which were a critical component of the methodological approach used to develop the Youth Strategy.

FEDERAL PERSPECTIVES

At a National level, there is no current youth strategy or a minister for youth-specific issues. Instead, the focus is on education, employment and training initiatives for young people. The government direction is on improving opportunities for learning and employment with an additional focus on the needs of Aboriginal young people.

STATE PERSPECTIVES

Victoria's Vulnerable Children : Our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013 - 2022

The strategy identifies a key role for services in enabling the Government to achieve its goals to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families. The three goals of the Strategy are :

- Prevent abuse and neglect;
- Act earlier when children and young people are vulnerable; and
- Improve outcomes for children and young people in statutory care.

Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 - 2026

Marrung is a State Government long-term plan prepared by the Department of Education and Training, designed to achieve an aspirational vision to deliver the ambitious Education State targets and underpin Victoria's strong and steadfast commitment to close the gap in educational outcomes between Koorie and non Koorie Victorians.

Roadmap to Reform : Stronger families, safe children

In April 2016, the Victorian Government officially launched the Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children, as one of its key platforms to respond to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Roadmap sets out once in a generation changes designed to improve the lives of vulnerable Victorian children, young people and families.

Youth Policy - Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria

The Victorian Government's Youth Policy strengthens how government engage with young people and embeds their voice in building an even better Victoria. Young people are often overlooked when developing services, policies and programs on issues that are important to them. This approach is no longer acceptable. The Youth Policy redefines government's relationship with young people and ensures that their views are heard as services, policies and programs are developed. The policy creates opportunities right across government to engage with young people, including those whose voices often go unheard. It allows development of solutions and ideas together and guides future services, policies and programs that impact on young people's lives.

Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) launched the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities in 2013. The Charter is consistent with global initiatives mentioned previously, and embodies a commitment to ensure that children and young people have a voice in local planning and decision-making, through the following principles :

- Freedom for young people to experience environments that consider their needs;
- Respect and dignity for young people to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and their wellbeing; and
- Equitable access to supportive environments and services for young people regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

The draft Strategy acknowledges existing projects and local or regional initiatives, with a similar or complementary focus. It includes the following :

Moorabool Shire Council Plan

The Council plan identifies an action item within the strategic objective of 'Improving Social Outcomes' under 'Health & Wellbeing' to 'Advocate and Support the development of programs and services to increase employment opportunities for young people (2017-2019)'.

The Council plan also includes other key actions relating to education and employment opportunities for young people :

- 'Support a Moorabool "Learning Matters" Initiative – place based collaborative initiative focused on improving engagement and retention in education in the Bacchus Marsh area' (2018-2019)
- 'Prepare a concept plan and costing for Youth Space/s at the Andy Arnold Centre/Rotary Park precinct, Bacchus Marsh (2019-2020)

The Council Plan also includes related community indicators :

- Percentage of Students that complete Year 12 or equivalent
- Increase the number of local jobs as a percentage of total jobs for employed Moorabool residents
- Percentage of Children developmentally vulnerable on one or more developmental domains

Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017 - 2021

Every four years, all Victorian Councils are required to develop their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. The health and wellbeing plan looks at enhancing the health and wellbeing of residents and outlines the health and wellbeing priorities for the community over the next four years. The Plan is also informed by local health and wellbeing data and the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015–2019.

Central Highlands Children and Youth Area Partnership

The Central Highlands Children and Youth Area Partnership bring together State and Local Government, community organisations and local communities to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in the area. The partnership involves a whole of government, non-government and interested community representative wanting to address historically low school retention and completion rates across the region including Moorabool. The partnerships focus on improving outcomes in two areas; Learning and development from cradle to career and Safe and supportive homes and families.

Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network (HLLN)

The HLLN work on developing place-based strategies and local partnerships to pursue learning practice and build community capacity to deliver improved engagement, inclusion and learning outcomes for young people. The Highlands LLEN focus is on Year 12 or equivalent attainment for young people. Specifically, the LLEN will broker sustainable partnerships that support schools and the broader community to :

- Identify young people that have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education prior to completing Year 12 or a vocational equivalent
- Identify and provide the support, education options and pathways to enable those young people to remain in education

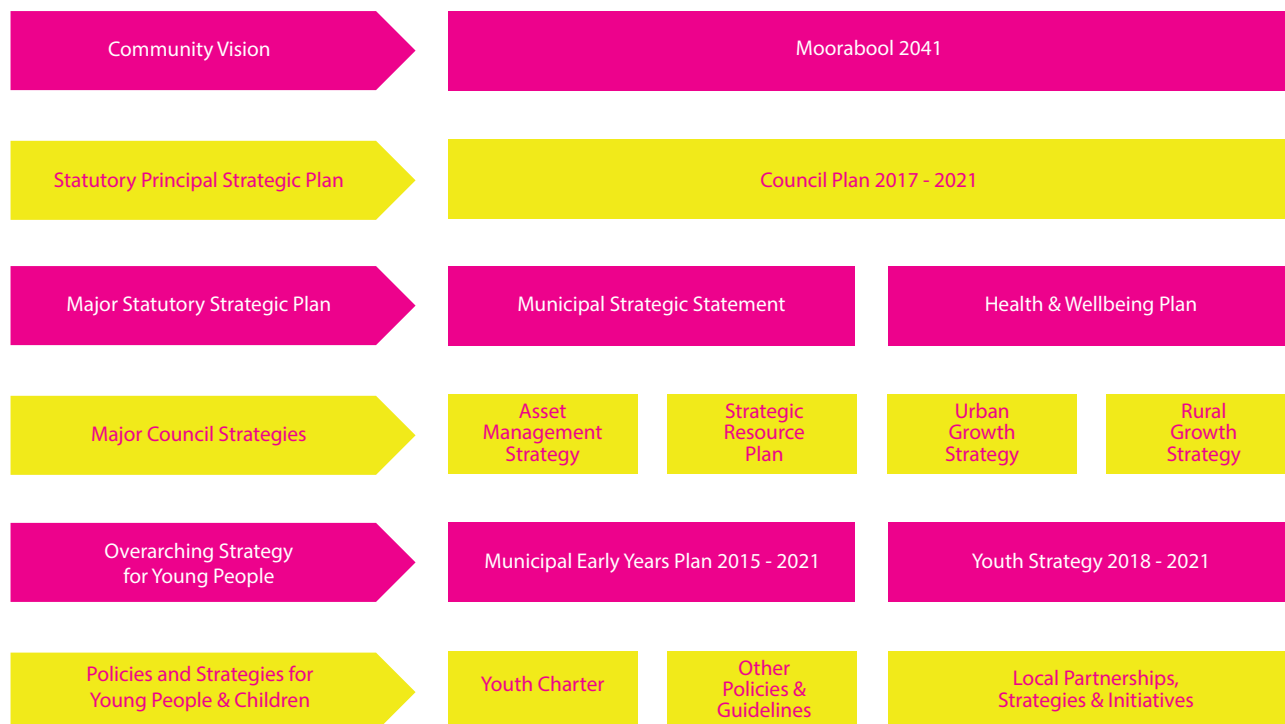
The Highland LLEN Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) program provides opportunities for young people aged 15 to 19 to undertake hands-on learning, meet local employers and gain beneficial SWL opportunities and/or School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) to practice their knowledge and skills.

COUNCIL POLICY & PLANNING

WORKING TOGETHER

The Youth Strategy recognises and builds on existing Council policies, especially those with a specific focus on young people. The Youth Strategy supports the directions of Moorabool 2041 and the Moorabool Council Plan, as well as providing leadership and context for youth related planning, reports and studies.

Figure 2 illustrates where this Strategy fits with other Council plans and policies.



Moorabool 2041

Identified as a growth area in the Plan Melbourne and Central Highlands Regional Growth Strategy, and working in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA), it is vital that Moorabool adopt a whole of-Shire long term approach to planning. Council is planning for the long term direction of our communities and has commenced Moorabool 2041, which sets the vision for the type of community and places Moorabool Shire will be in 2041.

COUNCIL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

The draft Youth Strategy builds on rather than duplicates actions and strategies reflected in other Council strategies and policies. The following strategies and policies currently guide and inform the Youth Strategy :

Council Plan 2017-2021

Health and Wellbeing Plan (2017)

Urban and Rural Growth Policies (2012)

Recreation and Leisure Strategy 2015-2021

Economic Development Strategy (2015)

Age Well Live Well & Access and Inclusion Strategy

Hike and Bike Strategy (2014)

Municipal Early Years Plan (2015)

Community Engagement Policy & Framework

Moorabool 2041 Urban and Rural Policies

Community Infrastructure Plan

The draft Strategy also acknowledges that new and emerging trends and needs may arise during the lifespan that may warrant consideration and attention.

COUNCIL'S ROLE IN YOUTH SERVICES PROVISION

Council has a role to ensure that services provided to young people are planned and respond in a way that meets the needs of the local community and also provides a function of service provision and facilitation of youth services. Council is not a direct provider of all services for young people, it does have a role in planning, and influencing the delivery of services and has a direct role in advocating for high quality local education, services and programs for young people. Council alone does not have the resourcing responsibility or expert knowledge to meet all of the needs of young people in the community. We continue to pursue a collaborative partnership model to support programs and services for young people.

The State Government Youth Policy, Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria, states that :

"Councils play a key role in the delivery of youth services. They often provide the most immediate experience of being part of a democratic process and provide opportunities for young people to participate in their communities through funding for youth workers and support for youth councils. The Ministerial Statement on Local Government outlines opportunities to strengthen local support for social inclusion, including better support for young people. This work is vital for the future health of civil society and is being supported by Local Government Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria".

Council's role in Youth Services Provision is as follows:

- **FACILITATE** the strategic planning, development and management of services for young people aged 12- 24 years to cater for identified current and future community needs. Development of strategies and policies to support and address the gaps including identification of funding support.
- **PROVIDE** direct delivery of Youth Services, including programs and events through direct funding, shared funding, and facilitated funding arrangements.
- **SUPPORT** young people and their families, service providers, and other stakeholders with the development and enhancement of services and educational opportunities for young people.
- **WORK** with the community, service providers, young people, the education sector, and private and government sectors, to ensure that, programs and services for young people, meet the needs of the community.
- **ADVOCATE** - provide leadership to the community when advocating to potential service providers, State and Federal government departments and funding bodies. Council will also play a leading role in recognising the outstanding achievements of young people in the Shire.
- **YOUNG PEOPLES VOICES** - facilitate a coordinated approach in engaging with young people aged 12-25 years to ensure a partnership approach with agencies and Council service units. A significant focus on engagement with young people underpins the key roles of Council's Youth Services unit.
- **NETWORKS** - facilitate networks and partnerships with government and non-government agencies, to deliver programs and services to young people in an integrated and coordinated manner.

This is consistent with Council's role in the delivery of Youth Services within Moorabool.

COUNCIL YOUTH PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Moorabool Shire Council provides many services and programs for young people living in Moorabool.

Youth Services relies on external funding in addition to funds provided by the Council to provide quality programs and maintain existing programs, services and events. External funding is crucial to the existing model of youth services and key outcomes and targets must be met to ensure this funding continues. Opportunities and partnerships continue to be investigated as well as additional income sources to further develop programs and services for young people. Council currently provides the following :

Freeza

Freeza is a State Government funded program, which allows young people to plan, organise and facilitate art, music and cultural activities events for young people in Moorabool. Enabling young people to learn and develop skills in event management, communication, budgeting, time management, team work and many more.

Youth Action Group (YAG)

The YAG is a committee of young people who work with Council and the community to identify the needs of local young people, and deliver projects to address issues that young people face. YAG are a voice for young people, providing information and advice to Council on issues that affect local young people.

Teenage Holiday Program

The Teenage Holiday Program is an inclusive program for young people attending secondary college, it provides young people with a range of engaging activities during school holiday times.

Studio 22

Studio 22 is a supervised Youth Space; it is a safe place for all young people that is staffed by a Youth Worker. Young people can participate in a range of activities and programs or come along for advice or support on a range of issues.

Active8

Active8 is Council's award winning mental health program, targeting young people in year eight. It is run in partnership between Council and local agencies and is provided at Bacchus Marsh Secondary College.

Reclink

Reclink is a program that works with young people who are disengaging or at risk of disengaging from education programs or have other concerns. Young people currently attend weekly sessions with a youth worker that are involved with sport. We are planning to expand this to include arts and culture.

Moorabool Agencies And Schools Together (MAST)

MAST is a group of local agencies and education providers that come together to deliver programs and services for young people in Moorabool, it promotes interagency cooperation and involvement.

School Support

Youth Workers, in partnership with local education providers develop individual targeted programs to support young people that are disengaging or at risk of disengaging from education. The goal is to support young people to maintain their involvement in education until years 12 (or equivalent) or to assist them to find training or employment.

Western Bulldogs Leadership Program

The Western Bulldogs Leadership Program is a dynamic youth leadership program delivered by the Western Bulldogs Football Club Community Foundation in partnership with Council. A modified version is being delivered in Moorabool for the first time in 2018 and is jointly funded by Council and local businesses who sponsor a young person's participation in the program. A key action of this strategy is to expand the program to deliver a full program with maximum participants from 2020.

Youth Awards

The Youth awards program recognises the significant contributions young people make to the Moorabool Shire and is celebrated as part of National Youth Week in April each year. The awards are open to all young people aged 12-25 years who live, work, go to school or have other significant connections to the Moorabool Shire.





We need job preparation skills workshops or providing opportunities for young people to do paid work even if it is a one time gig.

- Young person living in Maddingley



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Moorabool Shire is fast-growing peri-urban municipality nestled between Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. It offers residents picturesque and friendly surrounds, with the vibrancy of an active, growing community.

The Shire comprises of two main towns, Bacchus Marsh with approximately 20,000 people, and Ballan with 3,000 people, and seven townships ranging in size from 200 - 600 people. A further 24 villages ranging in size from 30 – 200 people are distributed throughout the Shire, plus some smaller dispersed settlements.

The Shire's population is currently more than 31,000 people, however, is projected to increase to more than 51,000 people by 2041.

Housing affordability is a significant drawcard for young families and couples relocating to the Shire.

Moorabool is well connected to Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat, with easy access to major highways. The regular train link between Ballarat and Melbourne services Moorabool with stops at Ballan and Bacchus Marsh. Furthermore, Bacchus Marsh is included as part of the metropolitan public transport ticketing system.

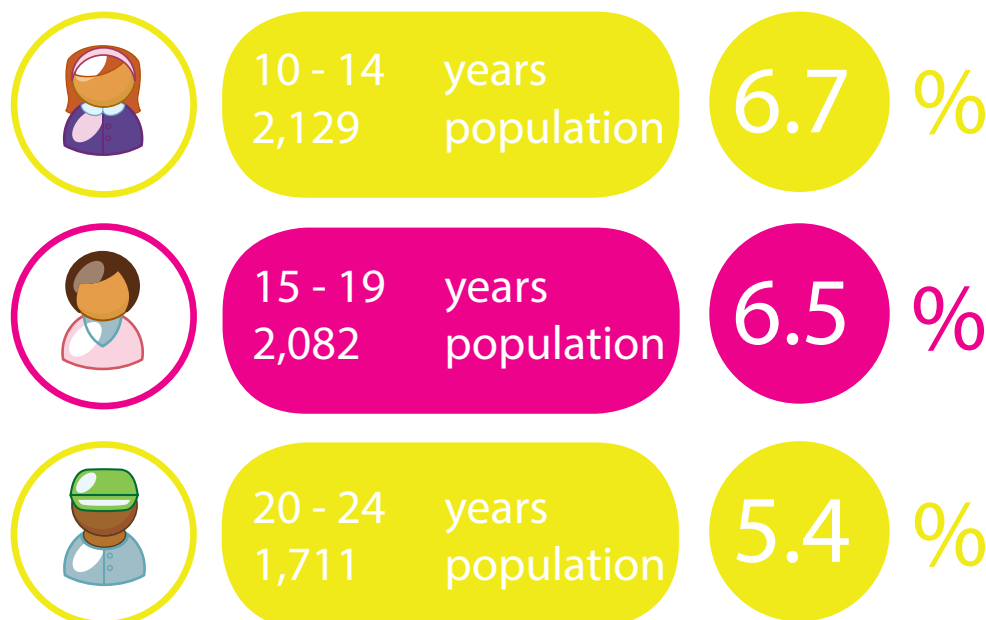
Households in Moorabool Shire bring in an average household income 17% higher than the non-metropolitan Victoria average. Moorabool historically has a low unemployment rate compared to the Victorian average. The latest figures show the unemployment rate in Moorabool Shire is 4.6%, below the State average of 4.8% percent.

A demographic profile for Moorabool Shire is captured on pages 26 - 27. This draws on data from a range of sources, including 2016 Census data and Population Forecasts; Australian; Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS); and Community Indicators Victoria (CIV).

YOUTH PROFILE

POPULATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

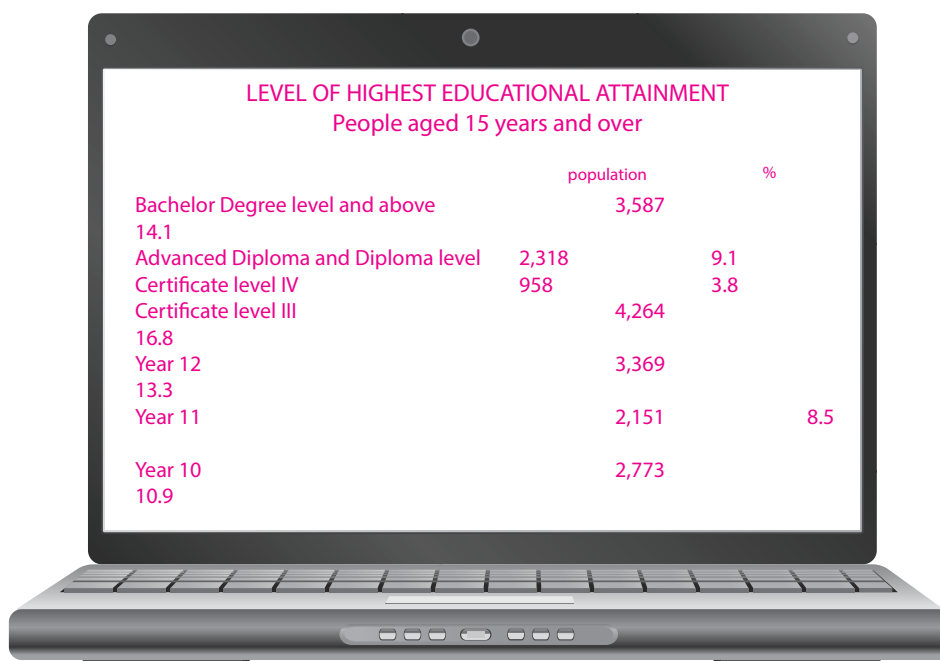
In 2016, there were 3,793 people aged 15-24 years in Moorabool which represents 12.0 per cent of the total population. The population forecast for persons aged 15-24 in Moorabool for 2018 is 5,571 and is forecast to grow to 8,126 by 2041.



EDUCATION

According to the 2016 Census, the highest level of schooling attained by the population in Moorabool Shire compared to Greater Melbourne shows a higher proportion of people who had left school at Year 10 or below and a lower proportion of people who completed Year 12 or equivalent.

When compared to 2011, there has been a 4.2 per cent increase in the number of students completing Year 12 or equivalent in Moorabool and an 11 per cent reduction in the number of students leaving school at Year 10 or below.



YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT According to the 2016 Census, the percentage of young people aged between 15-24 years old not in paid employment or enrolled in education in Moorabool (otherwise known as disengaged) was higher compared to Victoria.

For every 100 young people employed in the industry sectors in Moorabool (assumes that the young people find local jobs) the direct and flow-on economic benefits are estimated at \$40.402 million. Therefore, based on the numbers disengaged youth as reported in the 2016 Census, the estimated annual economic cost (opportunities foregone) for the disengaged youth is estimated at \$150m.



UNEMPLOYMENT

Young people aged 15–24 continue to be at higher risk of unemployment than other age groups. In January 2016, the youth unemployment rate was more than twice the overall unemployment rate (5.8 per cent) and more than 2.5 times the rate among adults aged 25 and older (4.6 per cent). In the 2017 June quarter, the unemployment rate in Moorabool Shire was 6.16%.





METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodological approach was used to inform the development of the draft Strategy. This included :

- Electronic data obtained from surveys of young people, parents and carers and local agencies
- Postcard style surveys in shops, post offices and schools across the Shire. These postcards contained questions, which could be completed quickly
- Focus groups in Bacchus Marsh and Ballan
- Data collected from young people attending events and programs over the past 12 months. Including at FReeZA events, Youth Holiday Programs
- Direct feedback from FReeZA and the Youth Action Group (YAG) members
- Data collected at the end of the Active8 program each year. Active8 is a Health & Wellbeing Program run with year eight students at Bacchus Marsh Secondary College
- Moorabool Shire's demographic profile analysis
- Moorabool Agencies and Schools Together (MAST) Workshop
- Information collected during the evaluation phase of Council programs
- Data from the electronic surveys and focus groups associated with the Youth Space(s) Feasibility Study

113 parent/carers and 13 service providers contributed through face-to-face consultations or survey, with a further 4 completing a postcard.

185 young people contributed through face-to-face meetings or surveys with a further 21 young people completing a postcard.

KEY FINDINGS

WHAT ARE MOORABOOL YOUNG PEOPLE SAYING ?

When Moorabool young people were asked what was important to them about living in Moorabool they told us :

What they like about Moorabool :

- Friends, Family and the Community
- Sporting and Recreation, in particular, the skate parks, the library and outdoor pools
- Events – both youth specific and large Community Events

What they dislike about Moorabool :

- Lack of transport
- Lack of local job opportunities
- Drug Issues
- Nothing to do

A proportion of young people also specifically mentioned the lack of acceptance to those who identify as Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (LGBTIQ+) and a lack of local services for young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

The top three issues facing young people are :

- Drug & Alcohol misuse
- Bullying
- Mental Health Issues

The top three priorities for young people in Moorabool are :

- Good Mental Health
- Access to Education (Learning & Training opportunities)
- Positive home life, dealing with bullies and positive self-image ranked equal third

The top three things that young people would like Moorabool Youth Services to provide are :

- Mental Health Programs, Workshops or Advice
- Programs relating to the Arts (Art, Music, Dance)
- Events



WHAT ARE MOORABOOL PARENTS & CARERS SAYING ?

What they like about Moorabool :

- A sense of community
- The people

What they dislike about Moorabool :

- Lack of choice of education providers and employment options
- Lack of locally based services
- Lack of transport and being isolated

The top three issues facing young people are :

- Lack of access to locally based services
- Drug & Alcohol misuse
- Lack of Employment opportunities
(closely followed by Mental Health Issues & Bullying)

The top three priorities for young people in Moorabool are :

- Good Mental Health
- Positive home life
- Access to Education (Learning & Training opportunities)
closely followed by positive self-image

The top three things that young people would like Moorabool Youth Services to provide are :

- More programs/service/ activities for young people including specific to education and mental health
- Youth Centre
- More/better transport options

WHAT ARE MOORABOOL AGENCIES, SERVICES & THE EDUCATION SAYING ?

The top three issues facing young people are :

- Lack of access to locally based services
- Drug & Alcohol misuse
- Issues at Home & Mental Health Issues, closely followed by Family Violence - Family Violence may also be captured under the banner of issues at home

Agencies were also asked if they thought there were gaps in services within Moorabool and the following was identified :

Some of the themes and issues identified during the consultation process are common to young people across Victoria, while others related more specifically to living in rural communities.

Following an analysis of data obtained through the consultation process, three priority areas were identified. They are :

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Education and Employment
3. Connection and Participation

These strategic priorities have been developed into the action plan, detailing the specific actions to be undertaken to achieve the identified goals and actions.





There is not enough assistance locally for teens with depression and other mental health issues. We need more education on drugs and alcohol for young people and support for parents.

- Parent of a Young Person



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY AREA ONE : HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This priority area focuses on positive health and wellbeing of young people. Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness. It is a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Research has found that wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction.

The Strategy builds upon the work being undertaken as part of the Moorabool Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021 without duplication, with a focus preventative initiatives that focus on positive mental health, the prevention of bullying, the prevention of drug and alcohol misuse, prevention of family violence and positive self-image.

Mental Health


Good mental health is important in the development of young people; it is about young people being able to work and study to their full potential, cope with day-to-day life stresses, be involved in the community, and can cope with change and challenges. Feeling down, tense, angry, anxious or moody are all normal emotions for young people, but when these feelings persist for long periods of time, or if they begin to interfere with their daily life, they may be part of a mental health concern. Mental health can affect young people's feelings, thoughts and actions, and can affect their ability to function in their everyday activities, whether at school, at work, or in relationships.

Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and social behaviour that causes physical and psychological harm. Bullying can happen in person or online. Young people today live in a world that is always connected, in particular via social media; this often makes it difficult for young people to get away from the bullying as it can go on 24 hours a day.

Prevention of drug and alcohol misuse

Young people are at an age where they are finding their place within the community and often come across the temptation to try and experiment with illicit drugs and legal substances such as alcohol. Substance misuse is the harmful use of drugs or alcohol for non-medical purposes.



“The majority of young people in Australia have good health. The causes of poor health for most young people are social rather than physical. For example, the process of separating from parents and family is often associated with high-risk behaviours (e.g. drink driving, experimental drug use, unsafe sexual practices) which have the potential to cause disability, injury or even death ”

What the data tells us :

- Young people identified bullying, drug and alcohol misuse and suicide/self harm in their top three issues facing young people in Moorabool.
- Both parents/carers and agencies identify drug and alcohol misuse also and lack of access to services as the biggest issues facing young people in Moorabool.
- Both young people and parents/carers identified good mental health as their top priority for young people in Moorabool.
- Difficulties at home and family violence affect a young person's mental health and education and learning.
- Agencies and parents/carers are concerned about the lack of locally based services for young people.
- 18.3 percent of young people surveyed identified as having a diagnosed mental health condition with a further 7.3 percent choosing “prefer not to say”.
- 15.2 percent of parents/carers surveyed identified their child as having a diagnosed mental health condition.
- Access to sporting and recreation opportunities and leisure facilities are important to young people.
- Family violence is an issue in Moorabool, with the rate of police callouts for family violence incidents in Moorabool, having increased by 243 percent between 1999 – 2015.
- In Moorabool the proportion of family violence in Moorabool has been at least 9.4% (or higher) than the Victorian average for at least the past five years.
- Self harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts are higher in rural areas.
- Young people want to know how to help their friends who are experiencing mental health issues or being bullied.
- Young people aged 15-24 years are the highest users of social media in Australia with 98 percent of young people using social media once a day.
- In 2014, 48.7 percent of young people in Moorabool reported being bullied, this is slightly higher than the Victorian state average.

Goal : Young people in Moorabool have improved mental health

Actions


- Youth Development Officers to be trained in the delivery of accredited Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Facilitate the delivery of youth specific Mental Health First Aid training
- Investigate opportunities for the implementation of art programs for young people aged 12-18 years with a focus on improved mental health, positive self-image and increase self esteem

Goal : Promote healthy lifestyles with young people

- Review and enhance the delivery of the Active8 Program
- In line with the Moorabool Health & Wellbeing Plan deliver actions outlined in the Health & Wellbeing Plan
- Formalise Moorabool's involvement in the Reclink program to ensure it is adequately staffed and resourced
- Investigate options to partner with other agencies to deliver programs that focus on healthy lifestyle choices for young people

Goal : Young people in Moorabool have access to a range of services

- Advocate for more locally based Mental Health Services for young people
- Work with WRISC Family Violence Services to support young people who have experienced family violence
- Work with Service providers to be locally based within the Studio 22 Youth Space
- Undertake a mapping of Services and information available to young people and the broader communities
- Create a guide to services specific for young people that is readily available in digital and print format
- Advocate for Headspace to provide outreach services with in Moorabool



"There is a lack of mental health support around and some young people have bad family environments and a lack of support group."

- Young person living in Darley.

PRIORITY AREA TWO : EDUCATION, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

Access to high quality education opportunities is vital in the development of a young people. It increases a young person's access to :

- employment
- steady income
- freedom of choice
- ability to transition as employment opportunities and employment patterns change over time

It is increasingly accepted that Year 12 or an equivalent qualification (eg: apprenticeship) is the minimum level of education needed to go onto further education, training and employment – the best foundation from which to launch a secure future.

School alone is not the full education equation for young people, all of the programs, services and community connections that touch a young person contribute to their success.

A key factor for young people looking for employment is the lack of entry-level job opportunities, especially in periods of weak demand and slow employment growth. Poor education outcomes, such as leaving school early and not undertaking further education or training, and the mismatch between employers' demands and the skills and experience young people have acquired also form barriers that young people face in labour markets.

The level of educational attainment links to the labour market performance and the ability of a region (or its population) to respond flexibly to an economic shock. Areas with relatively low levels of educational attainment tend, on average, to be less flexible in the face of economic slowdowns and face greater labour market difficulties. Educational outcomes and employment levels among young people set limits upon social and economic opportunities. In addition, the perceptions of young people, as well as crime levels and birth rates, hold significant implications for social inclusion and prospects of local young people.

While Moorabool Shire Council does not deliver formal education and training; we understand the importance for young people to access skills development opportunities and recognise their achievements.

The Council Plan 2017-2021 identifies an action item within the strategic objective of 'Improving Social Outcomes' under 'Health & Wellbeing' to 'Advocate and Support the development of programs and services to increase employment opportunities for young people (2017-2019)'.

A Youth Employment Advocacy Plan has also been prepared and is available from the Moorabool Website. The objectives of the draft advocacy plan are to :

- Increase investment in educational opportunities to improve the educational attainment levels of young people
- Increase investment in programs and services to support young people experiencing multiple barriers to employment
- Develop the capacity and diversity of the Moorabool workforce by developing the skill set of the young people of Moorabool

What the data tells us :

- Both young people and parents/carers identify education in their top three priorities for young people.
- Young people identified that lack of employment opportunities were an issue for young people.
- Lack of transport was a barrier in both Bacchus Marsh and surrounds and rural areas of Moorabool as young people had to rely on others to get them to and paid employment. In particular, a bus service directly from Melton was identified as a barrier to young people accessing employment opportunities at the Woodgrove shopping complex.
- Young people report that a lack of experience, education and access to transport as significant barrier to employment.
- Young people in the Moorabool Shire experience less favourable educational outcomes, often leaving school early, are less likely to attend university and are less likely to be employed, than those throughout Melbourne. 26.3 percent of young people in Moorabool leave school before completing year ten compared with 21.6 percent across metropolitan Melbourne.
- The percentage of young people aged between 15-19 years old, not in paid employment or enrolled in education in Moorabool (otherwise known as disengaged) was 6.4% compared to 5.2% for Victoria.
- The number of young people aged 20-24 years old not in paid employment or enrolled in education in Moorabool (otherwise known as disengaged) was 15.2% compared to 11.9% for Victoria.
- Limited public transport impacts the ability to socialise, access community services and access to education or employment.
- Pathways into employment is an issue for young people, 24.2 percent of school leavers were looking for work six months later.
- School participation rates of young people with a disability are slightly lower than for young people without a disability, and young people with a disability are less likely to complete Year 12.

“ My sister hasn’t been able to get a job even after applying at 50 places, it’s really disheartening to her, I believe it’s because of her age (21) but it’s quite unfair as she isn’t studying so it can lead to depression when people don’t have these opportunities. ”
- Young person.



" We need programs to help with getting a job. Resume writing, interview help. Print off resumes for free etc. Opportunities for leadership roles. Gives them a sense of purpose and responsibility. "

- Parent/Carer

Goal : Young people in Moorabool have access to a range of education and employment and opportunities

- Facilitate opportunities for young people to develop job readiness and job seeking skills
- Provide education support programs, which assist students to address barriers to education through referrals to support services
- Advocate for better transport options, in particular, a direct bus route from Bacchus Marsh to Melton to assist young people accessing employment

Goal : Increase collaborative partnerships with education providers, local business and community organisations to enhance the education and employment opportunities for young people

- Work with local employers and advocate for employers to take on young people participating in VET Structured Workplace learning programs
- Participate in the Central Highlands Child & Youth Partnership "Learning Matters" place based collaborative initiative focusing on improving engagement and retention in education in the Bacchus Marsh area
- Advocate for more locally based apprenticeships, traineeships and youth employment opportunities for young people
- Provide opportunities for student placement, work experience and volunteering opportunities for young people
- In partnership with local schools, help improve student's transition from primary to secondary school

Goal : Increase opportunities for young people to develop new skills

- Expand the Western Bulldogs Leadership Program so that the full program is being delivered in Moorabool, which targets those aged 14- 16 years
- Provide leadership sessions at secondary schools and alternative education settings
- Provide leadership workshop session to young people aged 18-24 years
- Develop mentoring opportunities and skill development among young people, local businesses or with Community Leaders





PRIORITY AREA THREE : CONNECTION AND PARTICIPATION

A sense of belonging is important to everyone, for young people it is particularly important as they are at a stage in their lives where they are determining where they fit. A defined sense of belonging is 'the extent to which individuals feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported within their social environment'. It is essential for young people to have a strong sense of belonging, many psychologists recognise that this is the most important thing in a young persons development : a need that has to be satisfied before any other needs can be fulfilled. Meeting this need can be challenging, in particular for minority groups such as :

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Young people from non-english speaking background
- Young people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- Young people with a disability
- Young people living in rural or remote areas

An inclusive community that values and encourages the contribution of all of our young people is essential to the healthy development of young people. Council is committed to engaging young people on issues of importance to them, and this is demonstrated by involving young people in Council's decision making processes, celebrating young people's involvement and achievements in the communities of Moorabool and by providing opportunities for all young people to participate.



"The Shire needs a service that can help with SSAGD (same-sex attracted and gender diverse), young people. Although most younger people are more accepting of LGBT issues, there does still seem to be a bit of homophobia."

- Young person

What the data tells us :

- 9.6 percent of young people surveyed identified as LGBTI+ with a further 4.68 percent preferred not to comment.
- 10 percent of parents/carers surveyed identified their child as having a diagnosed disability.
- Young people identified the importance of everyone having access to services and being treated fairly. They had a particular focus on those young people who identify as LGBTI+, from different cultures, those who experienced difficulties at home, those who are bullied or have mental health concerns.
- Young people living in rural areas of Moorabool would like more opportunities to participate in Youth programs and events.
- Gen Z (those born between 1995-2009) are the most technologically saturated generation the world has ever seen. They are digitally transformed, seamlessly integrating technology into their everyday realities.

Goal : Provide opportunities for young people to have their say

Actions

- Review the Youth Charter and increase connections between Councillors, young people and the communities of Moorabool
- Support the Youth Action Group to apply for grants to attract funds to the Municipality to meet actions outlined in the strategy
- Facilitate an annual youth forum

Goal : Promote young people as valuable citizens who make a positive contribution to the communities of Moorabool

Actions

- Facilitate opportunities for young people and older people to learn from each other through friendship, exchange of skills and ideas
- Review Council's Community Engagement Framework to include specific reference to consulting with young people and the Youth Action Group to support active engagement of young people across Council
- Review the Moorabool Youth Awards
- Promote a positive image of young people through social media and print media

Goal : Spaces are inclusive, safe and welcoming for all young people, from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities.

Actions

- Undertake a Masterplan including concept and cost plan for a youth space at Rotary Park, including the Andy Arnold Facility
- Prepare a concept plan and costings for the Youth Space at the Andy Arnold Centre /Rotary Park precinct
- Support and empower young people to self-advocate for resources to ensure that areas they enjoy such as Rotary Park, Ballan Skate Park, the libraries and Studio 22 are appealing and safe, youth friendly community space's.
- Display the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Rainbow Flag at sites and all Youth Council events

Goal : Deliver inclusive, accessible programs and events for young people

Actions

- Provide programs, events, activities and workshops throughout the municipality
- In partnership with the FReeZA team deliver programs and events for young people from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities
- Investigate opportunities to facilitate programs, meetings and workshops for young people utilising digital platforms. (e.g., Skype, Adobe meetings)
- Establish and facilitate a support group for young people who identify as LGBTIQ+

“ I honestly don't know. I don't know how to fix the situations my friends, and people I know are in, I don't know if you can fix it. I suppose you could put services in place to try and make it better, but like, they're gonna suffer forever because of this **** (Homophobia). If I had a dollar for every racist and homophobic person I know, I'd leave as fast as possible. ”
- Young person





There is not enough assistance locally for teens with depression and other mental health issues. We need more education on drugs and alcohol for young people and support for parents.

- Parent of a Young Person



EVALUATION & REPORTING

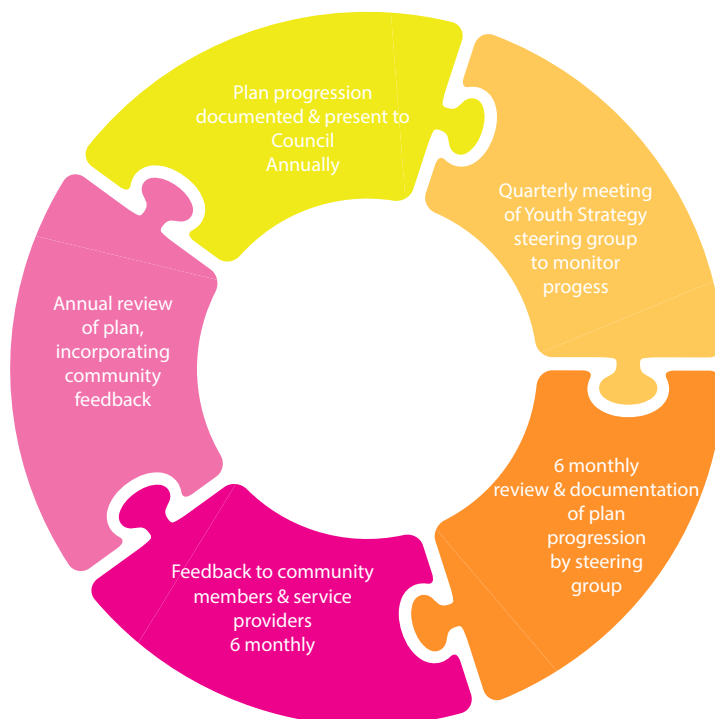
The successful implementation of the draft Strategy requires attention to a number of factors. These include :

- Shared ownership and responsibility
- A commitment to the identified outcomes and objectives
- Implementation of the action steps
- Processes for monitoring progress, evaluation and reporting

Council and non-Council youth service providers need to set aside time to regularly reflect on and review progress towards identified action steps, in line with the indicative measures.

This review process will assist service providers to remain on track in their individual and collaborative efforts, acknowledge and celebrate key achievement and successes, and remain responsive to new and emerging priorities and needs.

The following diagram outlines the process for the annual review and reporting to Council, young people and the Community.



Council will monitor its progress towards achieving the objectives of the Youth Strategy using the following sets of measures:

- Increase percentage of students that complete Year 10 or equivalent
- Increase percentage of students that complete Year 12 or equivalent
- Increase percentage of young people self-reporting health as excellent or very good
- Reduction in the rate of family violence incidents (per 100,000 people)
- Reduction in the unemployment rates of young people aged 15-19 years and 20-24 years
- Increased number of young people accessing Youth Services programs and events

Data to measure performance will be drawn from Council operational data, survey results, State Government data and Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MOORABOOL YOUTH STRATEGY 2018 - 2021

Moorabool Shire Council acknowledges the Indigenous history of Moorabool Shire. The land was traditionally occupied by, and connected to, Aboriginal communities, most notably the :

Wathaurung Tribe in the south and west
Djadja Wurrung Tribe in the northern ranges
Wurundjeri Tribe in the east

Moorabool Shire Council acknowledges and celebrate the diversity of our young people.



We want to acknowledge and thank the young people, parents/carers, schools and local services who participated in the development of this Youth Strategy.

Special thanks to the Youth Action Group (YAG) members who volunteered their time and for their contribution to the development of our Youth Strategy.

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