



YOUTH TASKFORCE

Different people, one community.



Hay Shire
COUNCIL

HAY YOUTH STRATEGY

2024-2029



20 May 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Hay community, its volunteers and youth service organisations have a strong connection. Throughout the development of this strategy, we greatly appreciate the genuine willingness shown by every sector within the community to collaborate and work together to uplift and support the aspirations of young people.

Hay Shire Council acknowledges the Wiradjuri, Nari Nari and Yitha Yitha people as the traditional custodians of the land and waterways in which we live and work, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. It is in their footsteps that we travel these lands and waters.



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INTRODUCTION

The Hay Youth Taskforce was first established in 2022 to provide a voice for Hay's young people and to champion inclusion and community connection.

Driven by the Youth Taskforce, Hay Shire Council was successful in obtaining funding under the NSW Government's Regional Youth Investment Program to support the continuation of the Youth Taskforce for a further two years, along with an integrated program of youth-led activities.

The Youth Taskforce has emerged as an integral part of the Hay community and has led the way in delivering a wide range of youth projects and initiatives. Taskforce members also support community events in a voluntary capacity.

As a recognised stakeholder of Hay Shire Council, Youth Taskforce input helps ensure the views of young people are considered in Council plans and activities. A formalised Youth Strategy specifically targeted at meeting the needs of young people will enable Hay Shire Council to address these needs in a planned and holistic way.

For the purposes of this strategy, youth are young people aged 12-24 years. However, we recognise that early intervention and community participation is an important foundation for young people to thrive as teenagers and young adults.



The strategy was informed by a review of relevant literature, surveys and both formal and informal stakeholder consultations and discussions. Documents summarising these activities are available as separate appendices.

In developing this youth strategy, it was essential to actively include the perspectives of both young people and community members that engage with youth, creating a sense of ownership, connection and shared responsibility.

While Hay Shire Council has taken a lead role in driving youth development initiatives in the community, responsibility for some identified priority areas will primarily and more appropriately sit with other health, education and community service organisations. Community coordination, regular communication, delivery partnerships and shared resourcing will be vital if we are to use limited available community resources to most effectively support our youth.

By incorporating young people's unique insights and fresh ideas, it is hoped this strategy becomes more than a set of policies—it becomes a shared vision co-created with the youth. Through active participation, young people feel a greater sense of ownership, empowering them to drive the implementation and success of the strategy. This strengthens the strategy's relevance and impact, and establishes a lasting connection between the youth and the policies that shape their lives and influence their future.

The youth strategy sets out the high-level priorities for youth development over the next five years. Its implementation will be supported by an annual action plan with specific activities and targets, enabling the strategy to remain relevant and responsive to changing circumstances.

WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- identify the challenges, needs and aspirations of Hay's young people
- inform, prioritise and connect future Hay Shire Council activities and resourcing to support and advance Hay's youth
- foster a sense of joint community ownership and shared responsibility for supporting, developing and empowering Hay's young people.



OUR VISION

Our young people are resilient, healthy, and safe, living together with a strong sense of community in a vibrant and prosperous economy.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Vision for NSW Regional Youth

For all regional youth to have opportunities for meaningful work, accessible health care and education; and to feel part of vibrant and inclusive communities.

Vision for Hay Shire Council

Where our people are resilient, healthy and safe, living together with a strong sense of community in a vibrant and prosperous economy.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Hay's young people:

- have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to reach their potential
- are happy, healthy and supported
- have fun and interesting things to do
- have quality spaces to meet and learn
- feel safe and included in the community
- are actively involved in and connected to our local, regional, and wider communities
- have a voice in decision making
- are valued, recognised and invested in.



OUR COMMUNITY

There are currently around 450 young people aged 10 – 24 years living in Hay, comprising 16% of the town's population. These young people are a diverse group, with many different interests, backgrounds, aspirations and needs.

To understand our young people, we must also appreciate the family, community and world context in which they are living in and expected to navigate in the future.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Our community is situated in the middle of the Hay Plains in south-western NSW, world-renowned as the flattest place in the Southern Hemisphere and in the top three flattest places on earth. Located over 100 kilometres from the nearest town, we have a rich history, unique environment, resilient community and positive outlook for the future.

Compared with the NSW average, Hay has:

- a significantly lower socio-economic index
- lower median weekly family incomes and lower median rents
- a higher proportion of people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- a higher proportion of people whose country of birth was Australia.

Hay is generally considered a safe community for young people and a good community for families.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Our people are our greatest asset. Working together, many community organisations and volunteers provide important services and social connections in our town.

Compared with the NSW average, Hay has a higher proportion of:

- people doing voluntary work through an organisation or group
- dwellings without internet access
- single person households.

EDUCATION AND CAREERS

Compared with the NSW average, Hay has:

- a higher proportion of people whose highest educational attainment was Year 10 and Year 9
- a lower proportion of people attending university or other higher education
- a lower proportion of people who have achieved Bachelor Degree level and above
- a higher proportion of people working 45 hours or more per week
- a higher proportion of people working as labourers and a lower proportion of people with professional occupations.

Our local schools play an important role in the community and the lives of our young people. Hay has two primary schools - Hay Public School and St Mary's Parish School. Hay War Memorial High School (HWMHS) is Hay's only secondary school. 62% of HWMHS students are in the lowest quartile for socio-educational advantage.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Compared with the NSW average, Hay has:

- a higher rate of premature death among females and males aged 0-74 years. Causes of premature death include deaths from circulatory system diseases, cancer and external causes.
- a higher number of potential years of lives lost from road traffic accidents
- a higher proportion of 0-14 year olds who reported they had a mental health condition, such as depression or anxiety
- a higher proportion of adults who report that they have fair or poor self-assessed health
- a higher rate of smoking during pregnancy.

Prevalent risk factors in Hay LGA include a higher percentage of:

- boys and girls aged 2-17 years who are overweight
- male and female adults who are obese
- the number of adults reporting low, very low, or no exercise
- male and females who currently smoke
- males and females who report risky alcohol consumption.



YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

The majority of young people aged 12-24 years are from Generation Z. Their identity has been shaped by the digital age, climate anxiety, a shifting financial landscape, and a global pandemic. They were the first generation to grow up with the internet as part of their daily lives.

Globally, Gen Z experiences relatively higher levels of mental illness and has less of a positive outlook compared with other generations, fueled by global unrest, wars, financial crises and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gen Z is expected to have around 18 jobs across 6 career areas in their lifetime, and they seek purpose and meaning in their work.

Gen Z values belonging to an inclusive and supportive community, and are active social and political advocates. They care about the environment, equity and discrimination, and mental health.

According to young people in Australia today, their biggest challenges are school, mental health and relationship challenges.



WHAT YOU TOLD US

Community engagement with young people, parents and carers, community members, youth service providers, Councilors and Council staff formed a key part of the development of this Youth Strategy. In addition, background research included:

- understanding the community profile of Hay
- reviewing national, state and regional reports related to young people
- analysis of findings from youth, parent/guardian and community surveys
- reviewing Hay Shire Council policies as they relate to young people
- ongoing informal discussions with the Hay Youth Taskforce.

A summary of key findings from the Youth Strategy surveys are provided on the following two pages.

Further details of the community engagement process, survey results and key findings are outlined in Appendices 1-3 of this strategy.

YOUNG PEOPLE

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The best things about Hay

Sports
River/nature
Community facilities

Community spirit
Community facilities
River/nature

Community spirit
Community facilities
Easy to get around

The main concerns for young people

Body image
School or study problems
Coping with stress
Mental health
Social media

Mental health
Access to services/support
Bullying
Boredom
School or study problems

Mental health
Access to services/support
Alcohol misuse
Boredom
School or study problems

Young people's experience at school would be better with

More life skills training
More choice of subjects
More leadership opportunities

More life skills training
More choice of subjects
Less bullying

The people we have turned to for support

Friends
Family
Parents
School staff

Family
Friends
Doctor
School staff

The main barriers to young people participating more in youth activities, community groups, clubs or events

I don't have enough time
Nothing
I don't know what is on

Nothing
Too shy/lack confidence
They are not interested

Too shy/lack confidence
Uncool
They are not interested

YOUNG PEOPLE

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Programs or initiatives you'd like for young people

Water sports/activities
Life skills
Trips out of town
Cooking/healthy eating

Life skills
Cooking/healthy eating
Movie nights
Trips out of town

Life skills
Mentoring programs
Job readiness programs
Cooking/healthy eating

I find out what services and events are happening in Hay from

Friends
Family
School announcements

Facebook
Flyers/posters
Newspaper

Facebook
Flyers/posters
Newspaper

Suggestions for one thing that could improve life for young people in the community focused on:

- better health services and support
- educational opportunities
- a youth centre or safe places to hang out
- activities and events to suit the diverse interests of young people.

Only one quarter of parents/guardians and community members and half of the young people felt there are enough services and facilities available to support young people in Hay. The services and facilities identified as most needed included:

- affordable, face-to-face and permanent mental health and counselling services
- specialist medical and allied health services
- youth workers and a youth centre
- sporting coaches, ambassadors and facilities (e.g. heated pool).

SHARED STRENGTHS AND CONCERNS

Community consultation highlighted areas of strength in our young people and community to build upon in addressing the shared challenges facing young people.

Shared strengths included:

- resilience and adaptability of rural young people
- community care to foster an environment where young people can thrive
- community awareness and connection, creating a sense of collective responsibility and support
- confident, open and transparent communication within the community
- friendship and support.

Shared concerns included limited awareness of and access to essential educational, healthcare, and recreational services, potentially hindering young people's personal and professional growth.

Community advocacy for improved educational and recreational options, increased access to mental health services, and the creation of diverse job opportunities will be key to addressing these shared concerns.

Engaging in advocacy not only empowers the community to address existing gaps but also instils a sense of agency among young individuals, encouraging active participation in shaping the future of their community.



INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK



Sustainable and coordinated investment in supporting young people, in partnership with the community, is the essential foundation underpinning all youth initiatives.

Four pillars of Life Ready, Wellbeing, Community and Connectivity provide the framework for youth investment, broadly aligned to the NSW Regional Youth Investment pillars, and contributing to the Regional Australia Institute's Regionalisation Ambition 2032 pillars of Liveability and Jobs and Skills.

Investment, coordination and effort in addressing eleven priority themes associated with these pillars will help to support the pinnacle achievement of our collective vision for Hay's young people.

PRIORITY THEMES

Our young people want to be happy and healthy, equipped for life, involved in and connected to their communities, and supported to develop and achieve.

Encouragingly, the majority of young people surveyed attended a community event in the past year, and over half would like to become more involved in community groups, clubs or events.

While Council acknowledges the strengths, skills, contribution and participation of many young people in our community, other young people face challenges that affect their ability to participate in opportunities and reach their full potential. It is these socio-economic, geographic, educational, family and personal barriers that we hope to address through action in the below priority areas identified through background research and community engagement.

1. Life ready (Equipped)
 - 1.1 Life skills
 - 1.2 Career and employment pathways
 - 1.3 Connected schools
2. Wellbeing (Healthy & Happy)
 - 2.1 Mental health support
 - 2.2 Healthcare and social support services
3. Community (Involved)
 - 3.1 Youth voice
 - 3.2 Community participation
 - 3.3 Recreational and social activities
4. Connectivity (Connected)
 - 4.1 Community connection
 - 4.2 Regional and wider connection
 - 4.3 Inclusivity
5. Sustainable resourcing (Supported)
 - 5.1 Sustainable investment
 - 5.2 Community partnerships

WHAT WE WILL DO

1. LIFE READY (EQUIPPED)

Hay's youth have the necessary knowledge, life skills and support to complete school and confidently transition to adulthood, further education and training or meaningful employment aligned to their career aspirations.

1.1 Life skills

- Coordinate and support the delivery of a range of upskilling initiatives and experiences aimed at preparing young people with the knowledge and practical skills needed to succeed in employment and adulthood (e.g. financial literacy, first aid, driving instruction, healthy lifestyles, leadership, communication, teamwork, cyber safety, parenting skills)

1.2 Career and employment pathways

- Work with local schools, universities, TAFE, businesses and community organisations to identify and support the introduction of a wider selection of study options, subject choices and employment options available to local youth
- Foster opportunities to increase students' awareness of available career and employment options

1.3 Connected schools

- Collaborate and connect with local schools to promote and deliver social, wellbeing, leadership and resilience initiatives



2. WELLBEING (HEALTHY & HAPPY)

Hay's youth can easily and confidently access the services and support they need to live happy and healthy lives.

2.1 Mental health support

- Advocate to improve the availability and awareness of mental health services for young people
- Provide opportunities for young people to participate in activities that build resilience and support improved mental health

2.2 Healthcare and social support services

- Advocate for better access to youth support workers, and a wider range of health services for young people



3. COMMUNITY (INVOLVED)

Hay's youth have the skills, confidence and mechanisms available to advocate for their needs, and are actively involved in the community.

3.1. Youth voice

- Support the continued operation of an active youth representative body
- Identify and offer opportunities for young people to influence decision-making in the community

3.2. Community participation

- Facilitate youth involvement in, and leadership of, community events, forums, organisations, representative roles, training programs and workshops

3.3. Recreational and social activities

- Create safe and youth-friendly spaces where young people can connect
- Encourage and support a diverse range of youth-led activities, events and projects



4. CONNECTIVITY (CONNECTED)

Hay's youth have diverse networks, strong community connections and a sense of belonging, and are confident to explore broader issues and new opportunities.

4.1 Community connection

- Support opportunities for young people to connect and engage with other members of the community

4.2 Regional and wider connection

- Promote and support opportunities for young people to participate in regional, state, national and international events and forums

4.3 Inclusivity

- Empower and support young people to champion community inclusion and kindness



5. SUSTAINABLE RESOURCING (SUPPORTED)

Hay's youth are recognised as a valuable community asset, and are effectively developed and supported through coordinated community partnerships.

5.1 Sustainable investment

- Investigate a sustainable and feasible financial and human resourcing model to provide consistent and reliable youth services

5.2 Community partnerships

- Foster community partnerships to effectively address the needs of young people and the challenges of limited resourcing and service access



IMPLEMENTATION

An annual action plan will be developed to guide the specific implementation activities to be undertaken during the relevant year with available resourcing. The action plan will include clearly identified actions and deliverables aligned to the priority areas.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

An annual review of the youth strategy will be undertaken to monitor progress in achievement of the strategy's objectives. This will include the production of a short progress report on actions undertaken, outcomes achieved, challenges faced and any recommendations for the following year's implementation. The report will be informed by an annual youth survey, data collected and other available feedback mechanisms.

Development of subsequent annual action plans will consider the strategy objectives, achievements and lessons from the previous annual review, and any changes to the operating environment.

A comprehensive review and update of the 5-year youth strategy will be undertaken in 2029.



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