



Yarra Ranges Council

# Connecting Young People

Strategic Action Plan 2016-19  
Executive Summary

## YARRA RANGES

Is a diverse Interface Council with a service system that includes a blend of local agencies and regional services that cater to the outer east of Melbourne. Yarra Ranges has an estimated resident population of 150,000 people with approximately 26,000 residents aged 12-25 years. It covers over 2470 Kms2 and includes three distinct regions: The Hills, Urban and the Valley. This is a vast area in which requires a range of services to address the varying needs of communities, regions and townships.

### BACKGROUND: THE PLAN

This strategy creates a three year vision to deliver on the key outcomes and goals specifically for young people. A Background Paper was produced outlining the evidence, process and the development of *the Plan* highlighting eight main issues impacting young people and their families across the Yarra Ranges. From this, the most prevalent issues have been grouped into three themes: health, relationships and employment.

- 1. Health:** the spectrum of health from wellness to illness and includes mental health, health services, sexual health, general health, recreation and physical activity.
- 2. Relationships:** with families, friends, parents, children, teachers, employers and community groups.
- 3. Employment:** education, employment readiness, training and support for accessing and maintaining work.



*The Plan outlines goals, outcomes and actions in response to each of the themes to guide Council's work with young people. Underpinning this strategy are key principles identified as central to providing a responsive, professional and ethical practice.*

Front cover photo credit: John Weeks

### Young People; Who are they?

For the purposes of *the Plan*, young people living in the Yarra Ranges will be categorised into three distinct age groups:

- **Middle Years:** 8 to 12 years (focus on the later years of Primary School)
- **Young People:** 12 to 18 years (focus on Secondary School age)
- **Young Adults:** 18 to 25 years

Council has traditionally provided services for young people aged 12-25 years and this document will focus on this age group. There is a gap in support and services for 8 to 12 year olds. This has been highlighted not only in Yarra Ranges, but also more broadly across the youth sector. In this *Plan*, Council has made a commitment to determine its role in supporting young people aged 8 to 12 years.

Council has since responded to this need with the allocation of a position focusing on Early and Middle Years strategic planning.

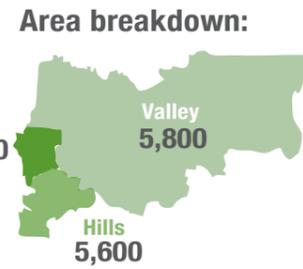
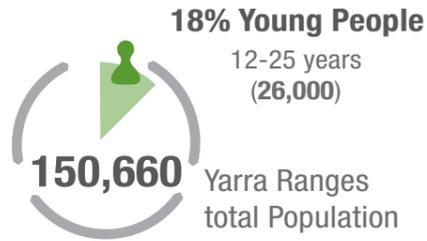
### PRINCIPLES: CORE TO OUR WORK

Council's work supporting young people is evidence based, considers the rights of young people, takes a continuous improvement process and supports innovation. Councils work with young people will:

- Place young people at the core of services, programs and planning.
- Embed a youth engagement model to inform and guide every aspect of our service practice.
- Apply the Youth Work Principles and Code of Ethical Practice to our work e.g. privacy, confidentiality, rights of the young person.
- Lead research with support from external agencies to understand local need and existing gaps.
- Implement practical place based planning and a framework based on evidence considering health and social indicators.
- Ensure the Victorian Charter of Rights and Responsibilities is applied when designing policy, strategy, programs and services.
- Work with key partners using a partnership framework that supports our strategic direction.
- Embed the principles of equity, accessibility and inclusion into all aspects of our work.
- Build capacity and leadership internally through training and development opportunities.
- Incorporate an evaluation framework to measure practice outcomes and improvement.

# YARRA RANGES YOUTH

## Demographic



**A snapshot of young people**

- 880** Are carers
- 580** Have a disability
- 680** From culturally diverse backgrounds
- 300** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

## Where are we:

### Relationships:

- 2nd highest** rate of family violence across Eastern region
- 35%** of children were present during family conflict
- 70%** family conflict as reason for homelessness
- young people attitudes to violence and respectful relationships a concern**

**Secondary School Student Bullying**

- 25%** online
- 39%** at school
- 28%** text

### Employment:

- 5%** of school students leave early due to family issues
- 15 - 25 years 5.4% unemployed**
- high uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships**
- 16%** volunteers aged 15 - 25
- Lack of transport in Yarra Ranges significant barrier to accessing education and employment**

### Health:

- high rates of anxiety and depressed mood**
- hospitalisation for psychological distress higher than State average (3%)**
- low rates of physical activity**
- high rates of sexually transmitted infections**
- above average levels of alcohol consumption**
- young people like living here for natural environment and clean air (31%)**

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT: HOW THIS ALL RELATES

Connecting Young People fits within the broader context of Council's future planning and business framework to ensure Yarra Ranges is a place where community thrives. This Plan particularly focuses on young people between ages 12-25 years and elaborates on the outcomes identified in the Child & Youth Strategy. Other relevant strategic documents that align and influence *Connecting Young People* include the Council Plan and Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

### Child & Youth Strategy (2014-2024)

The vision of the Child & Youth strategy states that Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making.

*'...development of children and young people is significantly shaped by the physical and social environments (their immediate families, communities, schools) in which they live, as well as the effectiveness and responsiveness of the services available to them'.*

In order to achieve this vision, four outcomes and associated goals were identified:

- Outcome 1:** Young people, children and their families can access the right services in a timely way
- Outcome 2:** Adequate infrastructure exists to meet the needs of children, young people and their families
- Outcome 3:** All children, young people and their families will have access to universal services and supports that enhance wellbeing and promote resilience
- Outcome 4:** Outcomes will be improved for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability

### Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2017)

Council's approach to promoting good health is described in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Strategy looks at what makes for good health and wellbeing.

This Strategy outlines Councils work with partners, services, agencies and the community, to improve health and wellbeing. Consultation confirmed the most important health priorities for Yarra Ranges as:

- Healthy places, healthy people;
- Positive mental health and wellbeing;
- Service access for a healthier Yarra Ranges;
- Positive ageing; and
- A healthy start to life and early childhood as the foundations for lifelong wellbeing.

### Yarra Ranges Council Plan

The Council Plan has five strategic objectives which describe how residents want Yarra Ranges to be in the future. Connecting Young People aligns with the 'Active and Engaged Communities' objective; envisioning a resilient, healthy and active community. This strategy supports, informs, and contributes toward the broader work taking place across Council.

## The Plan:

To ensure the Plan informs all service direction and delivery, an annual Implementation Plan will be developed to outline core activities to address identified goals and strategies. The Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis capturing key outcomes and progress and will be informed by an evaluation framework.

### PRIORITY ONE: Health

| Health Goal 1: Young people in Yarra Ranges have improved mental health   |   |
|---|---|
| OBJECTIVE   | STRATEGIC ACTION  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access to youth mental health services</li> <li>• Improve connections to community</li> <li>• Promote protective behaviours</li> </ul>                            | 1.1 Build understanding of the issues of access, connection and protective behaviours to improve mental health                |
|   | 1.2 Facilitate targeted activities, programs and events   |
| Health Goal 2: Young people can access services and information in ways that are non-judgmental and youth friendly  |   |
| OBJECTIVE   | STRATEGIC ACTION  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable a coordinated, responsive service system</li> <li>• Strengthen health literacy</li> <li>• Improve access to cultural, social and recreational activities</li> </ul> | 2.1 Deliver a coordinated, responsive service system focusing on No Wrong Door  |
|   | 2.2 Deliver a health literacy focus on areas relevant to young people   |
|   | 2.3 Advocate for, and influence consideration of, young people in the creation of spaces and services that are youth friendly |
| Health Goal 3: Young people participate in and are valued by their community and have a voice in decision-making  |   |
| OBJECTIVE   | STRATEGIC ACTION  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed positive engagement practices with young people.</li> </ul>  | 3.1 Implement Youth Participation Framework (YPF)   |
|   | 3.2 Facilitate and resource activities driven by young people   |
|   | 3.3 Strengthen internal Council mechanisms to consider/involve the voice of young people                                      |

### PRIORITY TWO: Relationships

| Relationship Goal 4: Young people in Yarra Ranges have strong respectful relationships and connections with family, friends and their community   |   |
|---|---|
| OBJECTIVE   | STRATEGIC ACTION  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower young people to sustain engagement and relationships in their lives and within their community</li> <li>• Strengthen Council's partnership capability across the youth sector</li> </ul> | 4.1 Promote gender equity and respectful relationships  |
|   | 4.2 Promote and facilitate young people's engagement and connection in their community              |
|   | 4.3 Deliver prevention and early intervention initiatives for young people in the context of family |
|   | 4.4 Develop Council's partnership framework   |

### PRIORITY THREE: Employment

| Employment Goal 5: Young people in Yarra Ranges have access to a range of employment and educational opportunities  |  |
|---|--|
| OBJECTIVE   | STRATEGIC ACTION   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access, skills, education and employment options for young people through partnerships</li> <li>• Increase employment and educational attainment of young people</li> </ul> | 5.1 Collect and share evidence on employment trends, emerging occupations and opportunities        |
|   | 5.2 Provide recognition of soft skill development across existing programs offered through Council |
|   | 5.3 Develop opportunities for mentoring / business development for young people                    |



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