



YOUTH STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

2019-2023

*To connect, develop, and support
our young people to live safe,
happy, and healthy lives.*



*Mansfield Shire Council
recognises that indigenous
people have been custodians of
this area for generations. We
acknowledge the living culture
and unique role of Taungurung
people in our region.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mansfield Shire Council's Youth Strategic Plan 2019-2023 is a whole-of-Council and whole-of-community approach based on feedback from young people and stakeholders and research on current best practice. This forms an integrated approach which will guide Council in:

- creating safe, accessible, and relevant spaces and opportunities for young people to connect with each other and other members of the local community
- promoting happiness by furthering the skills of our young people, professionally and personally, to equip them with strong foundations for future work and life
- empowering our young people to live healthy lives by providing access to professional services, such as counselling, career guidance, education and training



GUIDED BY

COUNCIL

Mansfield Shire Council Plan 2017-2021

Strategic Objective 3.3 states Mansfield Shire is a welcoming, supportive and inclusive place to be.

In alignment, we aim to develop a youth strategy and action plan to guide Council's role within the youth sector, focusing on developing partnerships and collaborative approaches to deliver responsive and coordinated services.

Council's Municipal Health and Well being Plan focuses on Community Resilience and Connectivity, aiming to work collectively with our partners to:

- improving mental health of adults and young people
- increasing sense of purpose of adults and young people
- reducing isolation for adults and young people

STATE GOVERNMENT

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

“Engage, Involve, Create” is the Victorian State Government's Youth Statement, which was released in April 2012. The vision of this policy is that all “young Victorians experience, healthy, active and fulfilling lives and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, participate in the workforce and be involved in their community”.

The three key priorities for the Victorian Government Youth Statement are:

1. Getting young people involved
2. Services that meet the needs of young people
3. Create new ideas and partnerships

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CHARTER 2016

Victoria has adopted a Youth Engagement Charter across the state government, which includes a commitment to:

‘Respect the rights of all young people to participate in decisions that affect their lives.’

‘Recognise that young people must be at the centre of decision making about issues that are important to them.’

‘Value young people as genuine partners in decision-making processes.’

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

National Strategy for Young Australians 2010 focuses on eight priorities for supporting young people to succeed and build lives of their own choosing. These eight areas have been prioritised for action because research, expert opinion and young people convey that each can influence their ability to lead safe, healthy, happy and resilient lives.

health and wellbeing
education
families
communities
online
work
early intervention
safety

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989 sets out the basic human rights for children everywhere. This charter aims to establish children's' rights as enduring ethical principles that influence international standards of behaviour towards children. These principles are consistent with the direction and policy frameworks accepted by governments in Australia.

COUNCIL'S ROLE IN YOUTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Mansfield Shire Council provides various programs and services that support youth development. These include both externally funded programs, as well as those embedded into Councils ordinary services.

As part of Councils commitment to youth development we employ a number of youth service specific staff members. Currently they are;

- Youth Services and Partnerships Coordinator
- Two part time Youth Engagement Officers
 - A FReeZA Program Officer
 - An Engage! Project Officer
 - An L2P Learner Driver Program Officer

Council operates the Mansfield Youth Centre, a supervised recreational space for young people ages 12 – 17 that is open between 3 – 6pm Tuesday to Friday. The Youth Centre incorporates a gaming hub, pool table, air hockey table, meeting room, quiet space, kitchen, Music Shed, and outdoor area including a half basketball court. Other activities and programs are also on offer at the Youth Centre, dependant on need and availability.

Externally funded programs currently include;

- Engage! - youth connection and development activities, including Mansfield L.E.A.D. - youth leadership program, funded until 2020
- FReeZA - youth led arts, cultural and leadership activities, funded until 2021
- L2P - learner driver program

Council also coordinates the Mansfield Youth Service Provider Network (MYSPN), and advocates for and considers the needs young people in all operations.

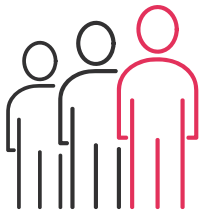
Council is committed to seeking future funding options to ensure the delivery of appropriate, relevant and timely youth development programs in an ongoing capacity. Key achievements to date include:

- Guiding the development of the Mansfield Shire Youth Strategy 2019-2023
- Guiding research into youth mental health in Mansfield, including partnering with Mansfield District Hospital and Mansfield Secondary College to distribute the Resilience Survey (By Resilient Youth Australia - an instrument that measures the strengths, mental health, and hopefulness of young people), the delivery of Youth Mental Health First Aid Training to the public, and the development of the Youth Mental Health Project Report 2018
- Youth consultation and development of the Mansfield Youth Centre
- Advocacy for developing infrastructure responsive to the youth voice, e.g. redevelopment of the Mansfield Skate Park
- Securing funding to run targeted youth programs, e.g. youth disability consultation, LGBTIA+ program, art, film and culture projects, L2P program
- Building and chairing key youth service network MYSPN
- Delivery of youth activities and events, e.g. free skate workshops by SBA, FReeZA program Rock Out and Pool Party, National Youth Week Photography Workshops, The King of Street. plus many more.



**MANSFIELD
YOUTH
CENTRE**

COMMUNITY PROFILE



8584

people, with a non-resident rate base of 50%

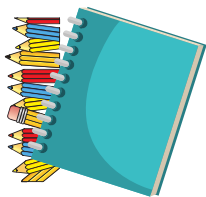
Mansfield Shire has proportionally the second largest adolescent population per capita of all 79 Local Government Areas.



1209

young people aged 12-25 (approx 14% of population)

Mansfield currently offers limited tertiary education opportunities, so many young people move to larger towns and cities in their late teens for further education. As a result there are fewer young adults in the town than adolescents. Those that remain often seek local employment and/or apprenticeships.



702

Attend secondary, technical, tertiary, or other education

2016 census.

The school-based apprenticeship scheme is firmly founded in Mansfield, with the secondary college linking students to vocational courses in local businesses. These students gain a recognised qualification before they have left school.





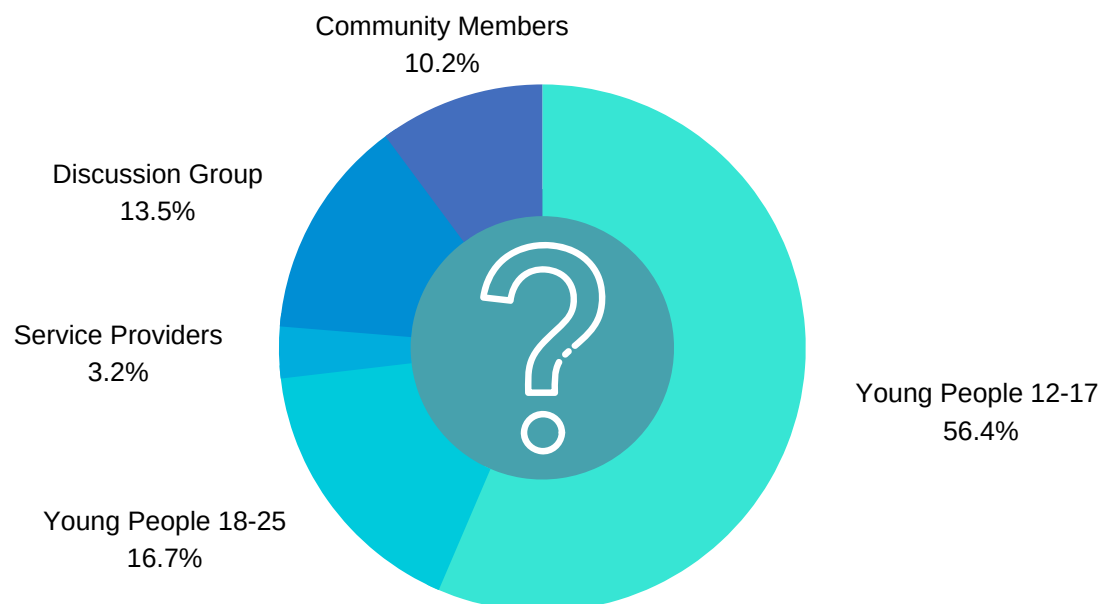
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Engaging the community, service providers, and young people was central to the development of the Strategy in order to understand the wants, needs and desires of young people in the Mansfield community. The surveys and focus questions were designed to be both relevant and youth-friendly.

Community involvement was facilitated through:

- focus groups and chatrooms
- intercept interviews
- online youth surveys through social media platforms
- an online survey for all Mansfield Shire permanent and part-time residents
- school-wide consultation including Mansfield Secondary College and Mansfield Rudolf Steiner School
- engagement with Mansfield Youth Service Providers Network (MYSPN); Rec Reserves Advisory Committee; Active Mansfield Network; High Country Library
- a range of Council Officers' contributions.

Overall, a total of 340 community members provided input into the development of the Mansfield Shire Youth Strategy, results of which follow.



YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

Only 10% of young people felt that they always have an opportunity to have a say on things that impact young people in their community. 36% of young people stated that they don't feel their voices are heard anywhere



Mental Health: 38% of young people ranked bullying as the top issue facing young people in Mansfield. It was still ranked as a significant issue for 28% of those over 18.



Family and friends: Parents are the first option for help and information for 85% of all young people, although 32% of young people ranked family issues as the top issue. Other friends were the next place young people turned to, and all groups ranked a trusted adult family friend as one of their top three sources for support.



Hopefulness: almost 70% of young people felt that their chances of being able to achieve their future goals were good; 30% felt that their chances were average (26%) or not good (4%) and cited confidence and cost as factors.



Drugs and Alcohol: Other drugs were rated as the most pressing issue facing young people in Mansfield by 46% of those under 18. This spikes sharply once young people leave school; 70% of those over 18 rated drugs as the top issue. Almost 10% of young people over 18 rated drinking as a primary recreational activity.

Jobs: 40% of young people at school were also working part-time. Others observed that it was difficult to find work, and living out of town with no transport was an added barrier to working.



Study and Work: Further study at university was a future aspiration of many young people over 18 who were resident in the Shire. 50% of these were working fulltime, 12% doing an apprenticeship, 5% were starting a business, 28% were studying and working part-time or in a gap year, and 5% were unemployed. Comments indicated that young people who remain in Mansfield are often unable to afford to go away to study and are waiting until they are older to progress these aims.



Service accessibility: young people wanted to have greater awareness on what is currently available in Mansfield

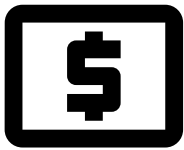


"...I'd like more of a say of what we do in Mansfield." (15 yo)

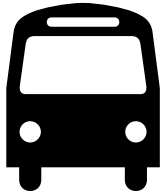
"...Let youth speak out." (24 yo)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

The top three things that young people enjoyed doing in their free time were unstructured outdoor activities, organised sport, and hanging out with friends.



Barriers: 10% of young people wanted to be involved in an outside activity but cited cost, time, and confidence as barriers to participation.



Geographic Isolation: Mansfield has no options for travel to nearby regional towns. Young people can travel to Melbourne by a coach that leaves twice a day.

There are no transport links between outlying communities and the main township, other than the weekly Woods Point bus.

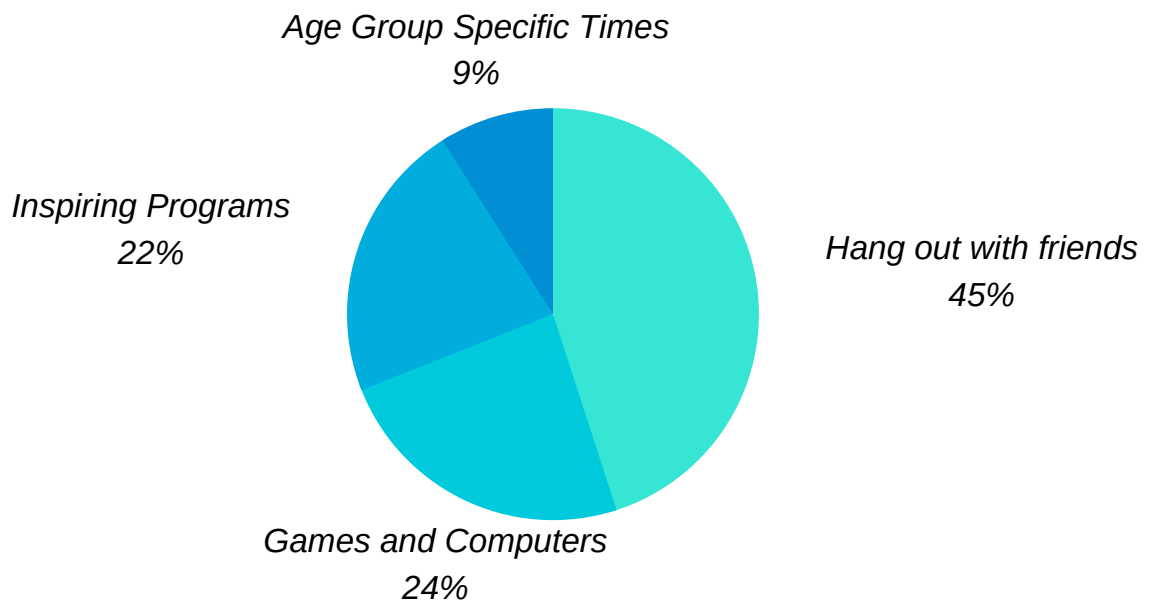


Boredom and having no transport to interesting activities was ranked as the top thing that young people didn't like about where they lived.

23% of young people felt that having more activities would make Mansfield a better place for young people.

50% of young people rated music, art, film and photography activities as something they would find interesting to do.

Reasons given for visiting the Youth Centre:



MISSION, VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To connect, develop, and support our young people to live safe, happy, and healthy lives"

We have found that when a young person experiences community activities as positive and encouraging, their willingness to be involved with that community is enhanced. Mansfield Shire Council operates using principles of youth empowerment and community engagement. We are committed to projects and programs that are authentically initiated by young people and where decision-making is shared amongst young people and adults. These projects empower young people and allow them to benefit from adult expertise and life experiences.

OUR VALUES

We value what young people bring to their communities:

- diversity and unique ways of being
- fresh perspectives and new ideas
- enthusiasm and willingness to work towards solutions
- ambitions and concerns for the world they will inherit
- interest and passion for change
- adaptability and creative thought
- ability to work respectfully with all levels of community
- understanding of new technology

OUR PRINCIPLES

That our young people:

- are physically and emotionally safe
- are included in every aspect of community life
- are able to access quality education, training, recreation and social experiences
- are empowered to play an active part in our solutions, and have their approaches, interests, opinions and skills valued
- are celebrated for their achievements and contributions
- are responsibly committed to a community that brings out the best in each other



PRIORITY ACTIONS AND FOCUS AREAS

To connect, develop, and support our young people to live safe, happy, and healthy lives"

Based on, and guided by, our Mission Statement, we have identified three key focus areas, and related priority actions.

CONNECT

Creating SAFE, accessible, and relevant spaces and opportunities for young people to connect with each other and other members of the local community.

DEVELOP

Promoting HAPPINESS by furthering the skills of our young people, professionally and personally, to equip them with strong foundations for future work and life.

SUPPORT

Empowering our young people to live HEALTHY lives by providing access to professional services, such as counselling, career guidance, education and training.





CONNECT

CONNECT

PURPOSE

We want to provide SAFE opportunities for our young people to be themselves, and connect to others.
We aim to do this through the provision of space and focused events to engage and inspire.

ACTIONS

2019**2020****2021****2022**

Promote and develop the Mansfield Youth Centre as a safe, inclusive space for young people to connect with others, and for the delivery of innovative short programs and youth-driven projects.



Research and develop resources that support inclusive practices and diversity of young people across the Shire, including rejuvenating the LGBTQI+ support network, and partnering with disability services to better support young people with a disability at events



Plan together with key organisations and young people to offer arts and cultural activities and events, including Taungurung culture and annual NAIDOC week



Work towards increasing sustainable transport opportunities and support for young people to get to youth events.



Work towards creating outreach youth programs to connect isolated communities.



Expand our volunteer base for community members to contribute in kind to our youth programs


























DEVELOP



DEVELOP

PURPOSE

We want to promote happiness by activating and developing the skills of our young people, professionally and personally, to equip them with strong foundations for future work and life. This involves igniting passion and leadership within our young people, increasing participation in skills training, and providing opportunities to engage with new activities.

ACTIONS	2019	2020	2021	2022
Once a term, organise and facilitate programs and activities through Engage! that develop specific professional and personal skills				
Build upon the development of youth leadership through our Engage! Program to become a yearly community supported program				
Further develop and continue inter generational programs that promote connection and community engagement between youth and older residents				
Using data from the Resilience Survey, partner with local schools to develop a youth mentoring program that addresses low areas of resilience such as belonging and educational engagement				
Continue to develop and build on arts, music, and cultural activities for young people through the FReeZA program.				
Continue to promote and support existing mentoring programs such as L2P program, and where appropriate, new mentoring opportunities across the Shire.				



SUPPORT

SUPPORT

PURPOSE

We want to increase health and well-being in our young people, by providing access to professional services and supporting an attitude of opportunity.

ACTIONS

2019**2020****2021****2022**

Investigate, promote and develop programs that educate young people, parents, teachers, and workers about resilience, and that foster protective factors in mental health for vulnerable young people.



Partner with the Mansfield District Hospital in actioning recommendations made in the Youth Mental Health Project Report 2018



Advocate for young people and their families regarding service access limitations and work to address these limitations by promoting various options and offering space for services



Be responsive to the significant trends impacting the mental well being of young people by keeping staff and volunteers educated and equipped to respond to mental health matters.



Transform our information sharing processes for service providers and young people in Mansfield Shire, including the creative use of social media.



Develop the Mansfield Youth Service Providers Network (MYSPN) from face-to-face meetings into an online network to advance networking opportunities, communication and streamlining of services locally.



MEASURES

We will have reached our goal if, by 2023:

- youth participation and Child Safe principles have been embedded into all policies and programs within Council's services
- actions have been implemented to increase young people's access to and participation in youth connection, skills development, and support activities
- there has been an increase in participation in Council's Youth programs and activities
- the Mansfield Youth Centre has continued to be utilised effectively by young people and the community, with increased participants, better voice in the community, and more awareness of what is offered
- there has been an increase in skills for young people and their wider support networks developed through Council's programs, measured through confidence factors and engagement in broader activities
- evaluation of programs focused on leadership training, social enterprise, inter generational relationships, mental health and resilience in young people indicate positive outcomes
- we have made measurable steps towards actioning the recommendations from Youth Mental Health Project 2018
- a collaborative approach has been developed between schools network and Youth Services in response to building resilience, bullying response and LGBTQI+ inclusion
- networks between youth-focused organisations have been supported to enable service development, engaging with young people, and information sharing
- there has been an increase in partnership opportunities for the delivery of services to young people, parents and schools in Mansfield
- Council has maintained up to date information on innovative and evidence-based practice, contemporary youth sector/program information and skills
- Council has undertaken consultation activities with young people, parents, workers, agencies, and schools in Mansfield to better strengthen community assets in response to current needs and service gaps for young people

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The ongoing monitoring and review of the Mansfield Shire Council Youth Strategic Plan will be undertaken by the Youth Services and Partnerships Coordinator, in correlation with broader Youth Services staff and members of the Mansfield Youth Services Providers Network.

An annual report will be provided to Council on the progress of the Mansfield Shire Youth Strategic Plan 2019-2023 by December each year, commencing from December 2019. It will outline the significant activities undertaken by Council in the previous calendar year in relation to the delivery of the Youth Strategic Plan 2019-2023, flag activities for the following year and identify opportunities to consider any emerging issues over the life of the plan.

If external resources for Youth targeted programs changes (increasing or decreasing) over the life of the Strategic Plan, adjustments will be made to the plan through the annual review and reporting process outlined above.

Due to the operational nature of this strategy, and its beginnings over the course of multiple changes in staff and restructuring, our intention is to use this strategy and action plan to build a solid foundation in our Youth Services department. Towards the end of this operational plan, the youth services team will conduct youth led investigation into what the community needs. Our future strategy will be built upon this solid foundation, and will enable us to further empower our young people to form their own futures. First we must engage, if we want to empower.



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