

Connect, Create, Activate

Draft Toowoomba Region Youth Strategy 2025–2030



YOUTH
CONNECT



ADVISORY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware this publication contains names of deceased persons.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* is our five-year plan for engaging the many young people aged 12–24 who live, learn, work and play across our communities.

Young people are at the heart of the Toowoomba Region’s future. This strategy provides a framework for how Council will support young people to actively shape the development of our communities, achieve their aspirations and enrich the civic, economic, cultural and social life of the Region.

Since the release of our last strategy, our communities have been faced with continuing stresses, disruption and transitions. To identify priority areas for a new strategy, we conducted a program of long-term consultation with young people, families and our regional youth sector. Built upon our evidence base, relationships and role as a local government, the *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* is structured around four interlinked goals.

Each goal represents an area of our practice, grounded in principles of community development, early intervention and community self-determination. Alongside our action plan, this framework for youth engagement will guide our work for the next five years.

The *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* is a living document. As we continue this shared journey, we welcome contributions from our communities to support, deliver and sustain the strategy’s outcomes.



CORPORATE PLAN 2024–2029



People

Community and wellbeing



Place

Infrastructure and environment



Prosperity

Economic, social advancement and advocacy



Performance

Council workforce

CONNECT, CREATE, ACTIVATE

TOOWOOMBA REGION YOUTH STRATEGY 2025–2030

OUR VISION

A connected, creative Toowoomba Region where young people actively shape the future of our communities.

OUR ROLE



Engage



Deliver



Facilitate



Advocate

OUR GOALS



1. Inclusion and participation



2. Connections and wellbeing



3. Experiences and diversity



4. Services and support systems

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

<p>1.1</p> <p>Build creative, inclusive environments within which young people can actively shape the development of the Toowoomba Region.</p>	<p>2.1</p> <p>Create, sustain and enhance visibility of opportunities for young people to connect and belong in their local communities.</p>	<p>3.1</p> <p>Support the participation of young people from diverse backgrounds and promote understanding, inclusion and humanisation of young people in marginalised groups.</p>	<p>4.1</p> <p>Facilitate, sustain and support platforms for youth sector practitioners to advocate, collaborate and coordinate in the interests of young people.</p>
<p>1.2</p> <p>Consult young people in decisions affecting their lives and consider their needs, values and wellbeing when planning for regional communities.</p>	<p>2.2</p> <p>Partner with the community, business and government sectors to support young people's health, development and socio-economic wellbeing.</p>	<p>3.2</p> <p>Identify and promote opportunities to improve representation of young people in the wider community.</p>	<p>4.2</p> <p>Work together with the regional youth sector to deliver coordinated approaches to youth services and longterm outcomes for young people, families and communities.</p>

OUR PRINCIPLES



Community self-determination



Early intervention



Developmental practice



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



FIRST PEOPLES

Toowoomba Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Toowoomba Region whose song lines traverse these lands and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the knowledge, rich traditions and bold ambitions of Australia's First Peoples.

DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Toowoomba Regional Council is proud of our unique and diverse communities. We are committed to upholding human rights based in principles of dignity, equality, mutual respect and the inherent value of each person.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to the many young people and families who contributed over these past years to this strategy, especially our Youth Leaders. It has been our privilege to walk alongside you and hearing your heartfelt visions for a just and compassionate world.

To our valued colleagues within the regional youth sector, your wisdom, integrity and fortitude continue to spur and inspire us. Thank you for your friendship and contributions to this shared body of work.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF JARED SCHNEIDER AND SAMUEL HOLBORN

To those Youth Leaders we loved and lost...

Jared, you brought lightness and laughter to our worlds. Your kindness soothed us, your levity refreshed us and your brilliant achievements were a source of pride for all of us.

Sam, your passion, gentleness and courage will never be forgotten. There are no words powerful enough to express the effect of your voice and soul on us, or any who knew you.

Find peace, beautiful humans.



We should be building a stronger community within the region between youth for a better understanding

— REGIONAL YOUTH LEADER

CONTENTS

MAYOR'S INTRODUCTION	6
MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL YOUTH LEADERS	7
OUR YOUNG PEOPLE	8
OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT	10
OUR RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION	12
WHAT OUR YOUTH SECTOR TOLD US	14
WHAT OUR YOUTH LEADERS TOLD US	16
OUR ROLE	19
GOALS OF THE <i>YOUTH STRATEGY 2025–2030</i>	20
OUR PRINCIPLES	23
OUR MONITORING AND DELIVERY	24
FURTHER RESOURCES	25
GLOSSARY	26
REFERENCES	27

Status: Draft strategy for community consultation

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MAYOR'S INTRODUCTION



Toowoomba Regional Council is proud to build on our foundations with *Connect, Create, Activate* – a renewed five-year strategy to support young people as active participants in the development of our growing Region.

There are almost 30,000 young people living across our communities.

They are our students, apprentices and young workers. Others are carers or volunteers. Many are running households and supporting families. While most find their home in Toowoomba, more than one in three young people lives in our regional townships.

These young women and men are an integral part of our lives. They bring energy, enthusiasm and bold ambitions for our collective future.

People of all ages are at the heart of Council's goal of creating a safe, healthy and engaged Region. This goal, however, is especially important for nurturing our next generation of young citizens.

The *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* sets our vision for supporting, not only young people but our wider youth sector. With a focus on working alongside families, service providers and communities, Council is keen to build on our valued partnerships that were established over the life of the previous strategy.

I thank everyone who was involved in this document's development, including our Regional Youth Advisory Committee and Regional Youth Leaders.

Our Youth Leaders, especially, remain a source of great pride and a unique forum through which young people continue to develop their confidence, skills and connections.

It has been inspiring to watch them learn, grow and create a variety of projects to address the needs of their peers.

I have no doubt that investing in our young people will continue to pay long-term dividends across our communities.

By working alongside young people, and the sector that supports them, I'm confident we can all play an important role in shaping a positive future for the Toowoomba Region.

Cr Geoff McDonald
Mayor, Toowoomba Region



MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL YOUTH LEADERS

Council's Youth Leaders Program has empowered young people from across the Region to create an inclusive environment for young residents.

The Toowoomba Region will always be a place where youth have the opportunity build strong connections in over fifty educational institutions and many more community hubs.

Youth Leaders have run games, sports and arts workshops from Millmerran to Yarraman. Our strength is our rural backdrop, which brings us together to enjoy the company of community. Distance can be a challenge in bringing services to our most rural locations. However, the Youth Leaders have consistently ensured that activities have run all across the Toowoomba Region for young people to enjoy.

With support from Council, we have been able to hold music concerts, AUSLAN classes, Wear It Purple Day and many other projects. In early 2023, we produced videos with the University of Southern Queensland showcasing the lived experiences of youth across the Region.

Our diversity is what makes us powerful, speaking with many voices united with a fierce spirit for collaboration and community building.

The challenges our peers face are openly discussed in our monthly meetings. Working with Council and other partners, we actively address concerns to ensure all youth can thrive. The Youth Leaders Program should be embraced by all Australian Councils, as young people will always be the future.

Being part of the Youth Leaders not only allows us to become involved in community-building projects, but also allows us to voice our opinions and concerns. We all want the Toowoomba Region to be the place where we can grow up in, feel respected in and build a future in.

**The Regional Youth Leaders
Toowoomba Region**

Sienna B. Makidong ~~Melissa~~ Schultz
Abe Aaron ~~John~~ ~~Shane~~ A
Benji. W ~~Shane~~ J. Barker ~~Shane~~
M. Grehan, Timothy B B. V. ~~Shane~~

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

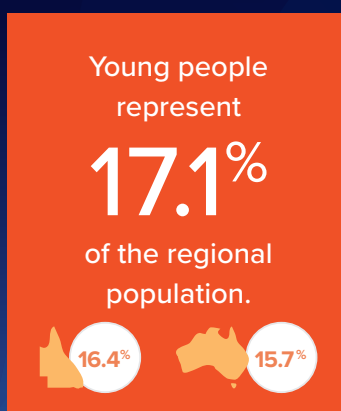
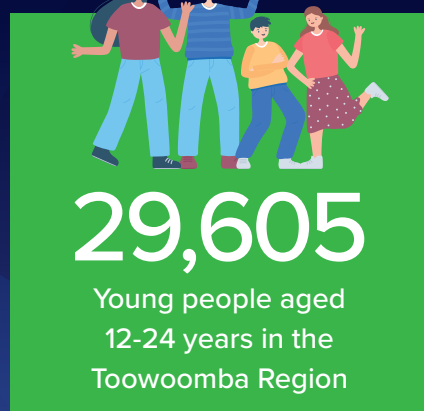
Young people are at the heart of the Toowoomba Region's future: a generation living, growing and participating in a world of rapidly evolving challenges and opportunities.

We define the young person as any individual aged between 12–24.^{1,3} Youth marks the life stage from adolescence to young adulthood, representing a critical time for a young person's health, social-emotional development, relationships, education and transitions to employment and independent living.

Across the Region, young people represent about one in five community members, each an individual bringing unique human experience, connections, perspectives and forms of cultural expression.

Because young people are such a vastly diverse group, their many forms of identity and activity cannot be easily simplified. At the same time, all young people share in the joys, burdens and formative experiences of adolescence and young adulthood.

Without question, young people are integral to the social fabric of our communities and, as such, consideration for their wellbeing, aspirations and engagement is crucial to local decision-making.



11.4%

of young people are **unemployed** and looking for work.^{4,5}



14.9%

of young people aged 15-24 **spend time volunteering.**



13.5%

of young people aged 15-24 live with one or more diagnosed, **long-term mental health conditions.**



Young women bear a higher mental health burden.



202

young people are estimated to be homeless each night.*

Rates of homelessness in the Toowoomba Region increased 78.1% between 2016–2021.⁶



5.4% of young people aged 15-24 spend time **providing unpaid care to a person with disability.**



3.9% of young people aged 15-24 **need help with daily activities due to disability.**



Sources: Unless otherwise noted, all data is sourced from the Toowoomba Region's 2021 Census Community Profiles⁷ provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

* Derived by applying rates of homelessness within the national youth population to rates of homelessness within the local government area. The ABS notes that estimates of young people experiencing homelessness are likely to be underestimated.

OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT

WHY WE DEVELOPED A YOUTH STRATEGY

The Toowoomba Region is home to a growing youth population, and we recognise the importance of Council's long-term decision-making to supporting young people's wellbeing.

As a major network connector and provider of local facilities, infrastructure, services and regulation, we view youth engagement as a key element to ensuring our planning and consultation frameworks are inclusive, effective and relevant to community needs.

Working strategically benefits young people, Council and the wider community in many ways.

Young people benefit from our commitment to supporting their inclusion, development and recognition as active citizens. Our youth programs—such as the Youth Leaders Program—afford young people unique platforms to realise their own agency and develop as caring, capable and self-determining community members.

Council benefits through evidence-based policymaking, a well-defined framework for monitoring outcomes, increased quality of service and effective use of our resources.

The wider community benefits from our strategic approach with young people, families and our industry, government and community sector partners.

While young people bring hope, creativity and innovation to our Region, the issues they face converge across many domains, sectors and systems. By working across all levels of the community, we aim to plan, provide, facilitate, and advocate for initiatives supporting young people from all walks of life.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

As a policy commitment to youth engagement, the *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* interlinks with strategic frameworks at local, state, national and international levels.

At the local level, this strategy is designed to strengthen a range of outcomes integral to Council's *Corporate Plan 2024–2029*.⁸ It is principally aligned with our goal of supporting a vibrant, safe, healthy and engaged Region and creating opportunities for community connection. At the same time, the *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* works to complement our other long-term strategies and promote an integrated approach to regional governance, planning, development and performance.

Corporate Plan 2024–2029



1 People Community and wellbeing

- 1.1 Encourage initiatives that address community health and wellbeing.
- 1.2 Identify, promote and grow opportunities for arts, cultural expression and the development of the creative industry.
- 1.3 Investigate ways to further encourage and support volunteerism.
- 1.4 Improve community safety through effective design, information and programs.
- 1.5 Enhance disaster management preparedness, capability and resilience through response and recovery in collaboration with the community and agencies.
- 1.6 Deliver effective community information and education programs to encourage participation in Council business and to enhance the Region's liveability.
- 1.7 Encourage connection, resilience, equality and inclusion in the community.

STATE AND NATIONAL ALIGNMENTS

At the state level, the *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* aligns with two key frameworks. The *Queensland Youth Strategy*⁹ charts the Queensland Government’s vision for young people’s participation in the economic, civic and cultural life of the state. Released in 2017, the strategy identifies health, housing, education and employment pathways, and support for vulnerable groups as central to young people’s wellbeing.

Similarly, the *Communities 2032 Strategy*¹⁰ sets out the Queensland Government’s long-term plan to support the security and social fabrics of communities statewide. The plan places particular emphasis on measures to address social cohesion, disadvantage, isolation and loneliness.

At the federal level, this strategy aligns with *Engage!*¹¹, a renewed Australian Government framework for youth engagement at the highest levels policymaking. This strategy commits the Australian Government to youth engagement across three priority areas: recognising and listening to young people, empowering young people to advocate and engage with government, and supporting government to work with young people.

GLOBAL ALIGNMENTS

From a global perspective, the *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* aligns with Australia’s commitments to international human rights law and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).^{12–14} The SDGs represent a shared blueprint agreed upon by all member states of the United Nations which seeks to address social, economic and environmental outcomes at local and global levels. This strategy aligns with the following SDGs:



The strategy also reflects our commitment to upholding and promoting the universal human rights afforded to young people under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.^{15,16} This legally-binding human rights treaty is underpinned by four core principles: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the rights to life, health and development, and consideration for children’s views in matters affecting their lives.



There should be regular weekly activities and groups, free and for youth
— REGIONAL YOUTH LEADER



We should teach civic education for all youth aged 13+ in high schools to ensure they understand the local government and its role in the community
— REGIONAL YOUTH LEADER



OUR RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

This strategy is the result of a program of long-term consultation with young people, families and our regional youth sector.

The original ambition for developing a strategy for youth engagement can be accredited to our Regional Youth Advisory Committee and a major study we conducted in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland.

During this project, we interviewed hundreds of local young people, parents, carers, community leaders and representatives from youth service providers, emergency services and educational institutions.

The study found that:

- Recognising young people's views, aspirations and capacity to participate in community formation is vital to supporting effective governance and a representative public sphere
- Awareness of young people's diversity is fundamental to effective youth engagement and program delivery
- Within a strained regional youth sector, it is essential that collaboration and a coordinated approach to youth service delivery be maintained.

The study also explored young people's perceptions of regionality, adequacy of service provision, availability of opportunities and their representation in media and community discourse. Its final report, *Engaged & Active*¹⁷, formed the evidence base for the *Youth Strategy 2019–2021*, and remains a core influence on how we operate.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS STRATEGY

Since undertaking the study, local young people, families and the wider community have been faced with ongoing stresses, disruption and transitions.

Intelligence captured by our Regional Youth Advisory Committee demonstrates how challenging the last four years have been for young people and families.^{18,19} Impacts of the pandemic, cost of living pressures, youth suicide, mental health, isolation, housing stress and homelessness are dominant themes, as is support for the Region's growing multicultural communities.

More recently, a localised increase in youth offending has focused community attention upon how best to address the complex needs of young people connected to the child protection and youth justice systems.

To develop a new strategy during this period, we:

- Listened continuously to the voices of local young people and families through our Youth Leaders Program, regional activities and other engagement opportunities.
- Consulted with youth sector practitioners through our Regional Youth Advisory Committee and local networks on emerging trends, issues and opportunities.
- Conferred with colleagues, both internally and from other local government areas, to benchmark our practice and learn from new and existing policy work.
- Participated in external strategy roundtables and facilitated young people's inclusion, including redevelopment of the Queensland Youth Strategy.
- Funded, co-designed and contributed to research projects concerned with young people's interests, including a study on social outcomes for young people involved in the Oakey Youth Project²⁰ and Youth Community Futures²¹, a research program of the University of Southern Queensland.

Developing the strategy against this backdrop of long-term collaboration and human experience has allowed us to strengthen its evidence base and create an action plan that reflects the values of the Toowoomba Region's communities.

“ There needs to be consent education that starts early to make the concept well-known and not only about sex

— REGIONAL YOUTH LEADER

“ Young people feel like there is nowhere to reach out for mental health and family violence

— REGIONAL YOUTH LEADER

WHAT OUR YOUTH SECTOR TOLD US

PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTITIONERS

In light of community concerns regarding youth offending, we surveyed²² our regional youth sector during 2023 to examine issues affecting young people connected to specialist youth services. The initiative was supported by our Regional Youth Advisory Committee, the Toowoomba Youth Interagency and 108 youth sector practitioners, coordinators and managers.

The last three years have been a taxing period for our youth sector. While the work of our practitioners is founded in goodwill and service, the sector is characterised by funding precarity. Many youth services are struggling to meet demand, operating beyond full capacity and working to address the symptoms of structural issues of intergenerational trauma, poverty and mental ill-health.

Significant increases in unmet need and complexity were key themes, as well as short-term funding environments which hamper the ability of community sector agencies to perform their work and maintain their workforces. It is common for both workers and managers to perform large amounts of unpaid work to meet the demands on—and ensure the survival of—their services.



There are lots of people who want to make a real difference. However, with high turnover of staff and a lack of funding, it is difficult to make a difference. We need to think long-term, while being adaptable to the ever-changing environment.

— YOUTH SECTOR SURVEY RESPONDENT

79% of practitioners reported their services operating at full (31%) or above full (48%) capacity

80% reported that levels of need amongst young people over the past two years had increased (37%) or greatly increased (43%)

46% of managers reported their funding arrangements enable them to attract and retain staff.

89% of practitioners feel a sense of fulfilment in their work with young people

97% intend to continue working within the youth sector over the next 12 months

THE PLACE OF EARLY INTERVENTION

Practitioners identified several key priorities to support young people connected to their services, centred upon:

- Increased focus on early intervention, family support and long-term funding for place-based programs which nurture community connection, outreach, mentorship, trust, healing and hope
- Greater availability of after-hours crisis accommodation, pathways into affordable housing and regional public transport options
- Investment in long-term, trauma-informed case management and alternative learning environments which address the needs of our most complex young people, particularly those connected to the child protection and youth justice systems
- Improved access to timely, affordable youth mental health services, including non-acute, acute and post-intervention support
- Increased sector collaboration, cross-agency links and support for community-based activities
- Changes in community dialogue and involvement from all levels of the community to support the inclusion of young people in marginalised groups.

While the response to the survey highlighted a number of challenges, it also made clear our youth sector's dedication, knowledge and willingness to work together to make a positive difference in young people's lives. The sector's workforce is keenly aware of the forces affecting young people at the margins and how they manifest in experiences of crisis and disengagement.

Early intervention, listening to young people's voices and community connection were recognised as fundamental to restoring hope, with a prevailing message that we must all play a role—across all sectors and all levels of the community—to support our young people's futures.



I think there is a negative and judgemental view of young people – an ‘us and them’ mentality which exacerbates a sense of alienation. There is a punitive perspective to issues, rather than an inclusive, solution-focused approach that seeks to address the systemic need for change.

— YOUTH SECTOR
SURVEY RESPONDENT



WHAT OUR YOUTH LEADERS TOLD US

Initiated in 2015, the Youth Leaders Program remains our primary area of focus for supporting young people's participation in civic life. They are our first point of youth consultation with the Region's young people, providing a voice for their peers and acting as grassroots champions for youth dialogue.

Our young people bring an extraordinary vision and passion for making positive change. What follows is a summary of what we heard from our Youth Leaders over 2023 during meetings, workshops, training camps and project delivery.

Connection and Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our young people would like to see ongoing, accessible youth activities which nurture their community connections, social wellbeing and enjoyment.• Young people are yearning for diverse experiences in culture, music and the arts, and expressed a desire for cultural events and facilities.• They want to see youth-friendly spaces across the Region which support their sense of belonging and community involvement.
Health and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health is of paramount concern for our young people, including the impacts of isolation, stigma, cyberbullying, domestic, family and sexual violence, and capacity shortfalls in local youth mental health services.• Awareness of existing support pathways is often limited amongst young people. Where service capacity does exist, they would like to see improved coordination and promotion using youth-friendly online resources.• Our young people view in-school settings as a critical platform for supporting mental health. They want to see consistent, inclusive school-based sex education—with particular emphasis on consent—to adequately prepare them for sexuality and relationships.• Our young people see many of their peers struggling to develop life skills, establish healthy lifestyles and navigate life transitions. They have witnessed an explosion in vaping amongst their peers.
Opportunity and Liveability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given their lower incomes, our young people expressed significant concerns about costs of living, housing affordability and homelessness.• Young people appealed for living wages, inclusive employment conditions, and responsive human services.• They value local education, training and employment opportunities. However, they want to see development of attached housing choices and public transport options relevant to their needs. Access to transport is especially important for young people in regional townships.• Our young people advocated for action on climate resilience and energy security, and are eager to contribute to local solutions.

Inclusion and Equality

- Our young people passionately value the humanisation and inclusion of peers in marginalised groups, including young women and girls, First Nations young people, multicultural young people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people, and young people with disability.
- Young people are keenly aware of negative stereotypes prevalent in community and media discourse which associate them with criminality and the need for adult intervention. The impacts of these narratives have been amplified by social media.
- Our young people want to be listened to and asked for a greater stake in regional decision-making. They recommended improved civic education, place-based youth engagement and online tools to enable them to have a greater say in decisions affecting them.

“

Better mental health care and more chances to access mental health support

“

More climate action—community-owned batteries, solar farms, wind farms

“

Normalise people's differences and 'flaws'

What I see in an ideal world...

“

Equality and empowerment

“

More opportunities to prepare youth for the workforce and develop their life skills

“

We need better advertising for youth services and community groups

“

Greater access to frequent and convenient public transport

“

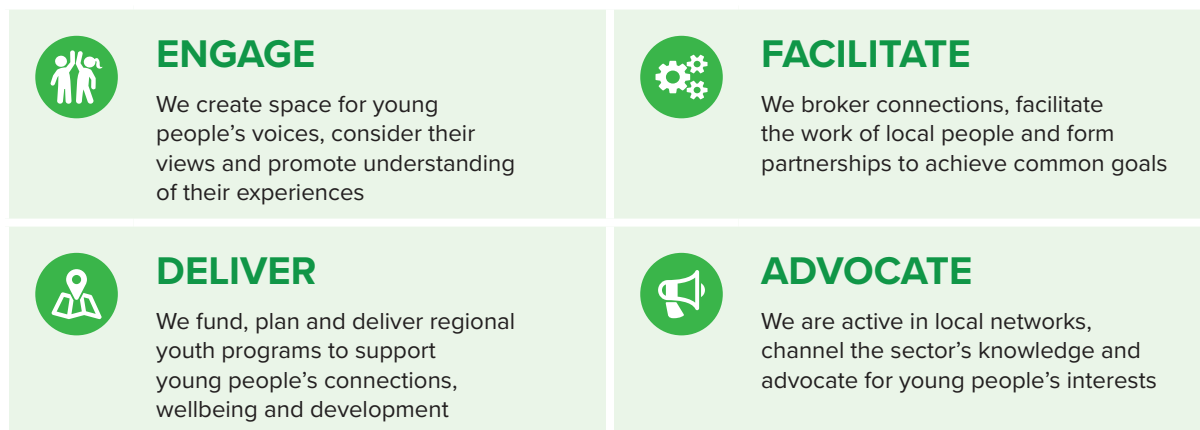
Better diversity of housing, duplexes and units in Toowoomba



OUR ROLE

Supporting young people's futures is an endeavour shared by all levels of the community, and a range of views exist as to local government responsibilities in this context. As the level of government closest to the community, however, Councils commonly play a unique role in youth engagement.

Our approach to youth engagement occurs at the intersection of local government, community development and youth work. We maintain several roles as part of our practice, each of which contribute to the outcomes of this strategy:



OUR PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Our work is underpinned by community development practice^{23,24} and a human-centred commitment to working with and alongside young people, families and communities.

We embrace the relational process of work with young people, including respect for their autonomy, needs, readiness and strengths. Integrity, trust, truth, pragmatism and relationships are at the heart of our work with young people and the wider community. It is through the strength of our relationships that we aim to nurture young people's agency, support community capacity building and collectively achieve long-term outcomes.



GOALS OF THE YOUTH STRATEGY 2025–2030

OUR VISION

A connected, creative Toowoomba Region where young people actively shape the future of our communities.

The *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* is structured around four interlinked goals developed through our work with young people, families and communities. Each goal governs a dimension of our strategic priorities for youth engagement and creating environments within which young people can contribute to the civic, economic, cultural and social life of the Region.

These goals draw together existing practice with new initiatives set out under our action plan. They build upon our evidence base, valued relationships and role as a local government, and are supported by the collective contributions of our young people and regional youth sector.

The goals of the *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* are:



1. INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

Our young people bring energy, ideas and have asked to be included in decisions that affect their lives. We will value and listen to their voices, and plan for liveable, sustainable communities which support their participation. More than that, we will empower young people take a lead role in the development of communities, nurturing their confidence, skills and potential as active citizens.

Strategic Actions

- 1.1** Build creative, inclusive environments within which young people can actively shape the development of the Toowoomba Region.
- 1.2** Consult young people in decisions affecting their lives and consider their needs, values and wellbeing when planning for regional communities.



2. CONNECTIONS AND WELLBEING

Youth marks a critical time for health, development, relationships and transitions to adulthood, but too many of our young people are isolated, disconnected or disengaged. We will partner with a range of stakeholders to deliver youth-friendly programs, support young people's social connections, and improve their education, employment and volunteering opportunities.

Strategic Actions

- 2.1** Create, sustain and enhance visibility of opportunities for young people to connect and belong in their local communities.
- 2.2** Partner with the community, business and government sectors to support young people's health, development and socio-economic wellbeing.



3. EXPERIENCES AND DIVERSITY

Our young people are profoundly diverse, each an individual bringing unique human experience, perspectives and culture. We will endeavour to promote improved representation of young people across a range of settings, and actively work to support the inclusion of our most marginalised young people in community life.

Strategic Actions

- 3.1** Support the participation of young people from diverse backgrounds and promote understanding, inclusion and humanisation of young people in marginalised groups.
- 3.2** Identify and promote opportunities to improve representation of young people in the wider community.



4. SERVICES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

To achieve long-term outcomes for young people and families, our regional youth sector is calling for intergenerational, trauma-informed and place-based models of practice. We will work together with our sector on coordinated approaches to young people's support systems, and facilitate platforms for practitioners to channel local intelligence and advocacy.

Strategic Actions

- 4.1** Facilitate, sustain and support platforms for youth sector practitioners to advocate, collaborate and coordinate in the interests of young people.
- 4.2** Work together with the regional youth sector to deliver coordinated approaches to youth services, support systems and long-term outcomes for young people, families and communities.

Each goal represents a wider sequence of initiatives to be delivered in partnership with our communities over the next five years. For more information on these initiatives, please refer to the **Youth Action Plan 2025–2030**.





OUR PRINCIPLES

The *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* is guided by a set of keystone principles to ensure our decision-making is fair, consistent and effective. These principles serve as a foundation for all areas of our practice and reflect our commitment to acting with intention, accountability and integrity.



COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION

Supporting our young people's futures is an endeavour shared by all levels of the community, and solutions are most successful when they are community-led and co-designed with local young people and families. All communities are unique and we are responsive to their perspectives, strengths, priorities and self-determination.



EARLY INTERVENTION

The lives of young people and families are shaped by social determinants. To achieve social impacts which are systematic and sustainable, we bring an early intervention focus to our practice. It is through supporting young people's protective factors from the earliest stages that we seek to strengthen wellbeing, security and social fabrics across our communities.



DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

We work with and alongside our young people and families. Our practice is human-centred and grounded in respect, trust and relationships. At the same time, we understand the importance of our decision-making. Our work is structured, rigorous and evidence-based.

RESOURCING OUR STRATEGY

Importantly, our work is informed by a commitment to financial sustainability. We will resource this strategy within existing budgets, ensuring our initiatives are responsible, targeted and cost-effective.

Partnerships and innovation with local agencies, small businesses and community groups will play an integral role within this funding environment, and we will actively seek external funding to develop new initiatives. By continuing to invest in our next generation, we aim to sustain social cohesion, improve future capability and drive social and economic outcomes over the long term.

OUR MONITORING AND DELIVERY

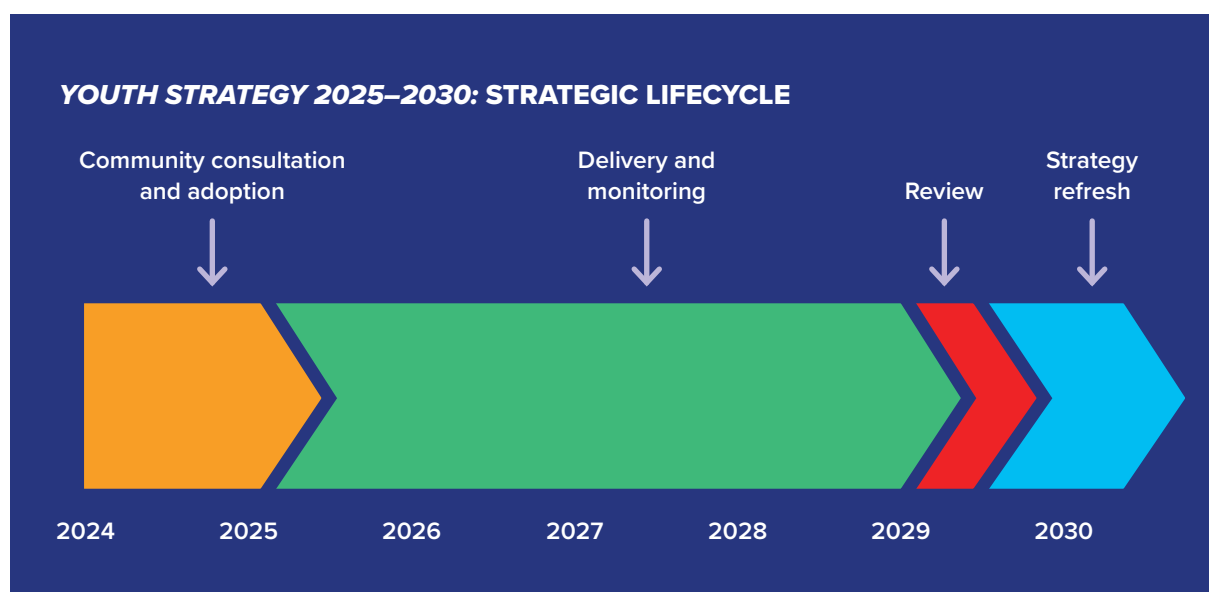
THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The *Youth Strategy 2025–2030* is our next step in supporting young people to actively shape the future of the Toowoomba Region. It strengthens the foundations of our approach to youth engagement, renews our commitment to coordination alongside our regional youth sector, and sets a positive vision for our ongoing work with young people, families and communities.

This strategy is a living document. As we continue this shared journey, our action plan will be adjusted as required in attunement with changing community needs, priorities and expectations. We welcome contributions from our communities to support, deliver and sustain the strategy's outcomes.

Our progress will be measured against the Youth Action Plan's deliverables, timeframes and availability of funding sources. Monitoring will be conducted through regular reporting, operational planning and periodic evaluation meetings with our Regional Youth Advisory Committee. In addition to accountability for our quantitative deliverables, our reporting will place a special emphasis on social outcomes achieved for young people, families and the regional youth sector.

The strategy's lifecycle will close with a review of our learning and practice, followed by a phase of refreshed development and community consultation.



A CREATIVE, CONNECTED FUTURE

In a world of rapidly evolving challenges and opportunities, strategic direction is more important than ever for young people's inclusion, development and wellbeing. Young people are our future, and integral to the social fabric of

our communities. As a collaborative endeavour, founded in our connections, creativity and shared humanity, we look forward to realising the outcomes of this strategy in partnership with our practitioners, communities and young people.

FURTHER RESOURCES



Toowoomba Regional Council
Youth



Toowoomba Regional Council
Corporate Plan 2024–2029



Australian Bureau of Statistics
**Toowoomba Region
2021 Census
Community Profiles**



Australian Bureau of Statistics
**National Study of Mental Health
and Wellbeing 2020–2022**



Australian Bureau of Statistics
**Estimating Homelessness:
Census 2021**



Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare
Australia's Youth



Queensland Government
Queensland Youth Strategy



Australian Government
**Engage! A strategy to include
young people in the decisions
we make**



Queensland Government
Communities 2032 Strategy



Australian Government
2023 Intergenerational Report



Queensland Human
Rights Commission
Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)



Community Development
Queensland
**Guiding Principles of
Community Development**



United Nations Department of
Economic and Social Affairs
Sustainable Development Goals



United Nations Office of the High
Commissioner for Human Rights
**Convention on the Rights of
the Child**

GLOSSARY

Community	A group of people whose members share common characteristics. They may include communities of place, culture, interests, values and other forms of shared identity.
Community development	A field of knowledge, principles and practices which supports members of a community to take action on issues important to them. While community development can be facilitated by paid workers, it is a community-led process to problem-solving where power is shared to achieve more effective, sustainable outcomes.
Council	Toowoomba Regional Council, being the local government for the Toowoomba Region and including all its employees and affiliates.
Early intervention	Initiatives or strategies focused on preventing or reducing the development of long-term health and social issues, particularly for vulnerable people or population groups.
Human rights	The universal rights of all human beings to respect, dignity, equality, freedom, justice and adequate standards of living. Enshrined in international human rights law, many of these civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are protected under Australian domestic laws.
Inclusion	Practices which foster environments where all people are valued and respected, regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances.
Participation	The active involvement of members of a community in its decision-making processes.
Self-determination	The fundamental right of people, groups and communities to shape their own lives and futures.
Wellbeing	A person's overall quality of life, encompassing their physical, mental, emotional and social health. Wellbeing is closely linked with social, economic and environmental conditions, as well as the ability to meaningfully participate in community life.
Young person	Any person between the ages of 12–24. Youth marks the life stage from adolescence to young adulthood, representing a critical time for a young person's health, social-emotional development, relationships, education and transitions to employment and independent living.
Youth engagement	Initiatives or strategies designed to improve young people's inclusion, participation and wellbeing.
Youth sector	Practitioners and organisations primarily dedicated to working with young people in the Toowoomba Region. The regional youth sector includes civil society, community and faith groups, as well as government and non-government organisations in education, employment, health, disability, family support, child protection, youth justice and community services.

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**CONNECT, CREATE, ACTIVATE
TOOWOOMBA REGION
YOUTH STRATEGY 2025–2030**

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