

Central Coast Council **Draft Central Coast Youth Strategy**

2026-2031

Central
Coast
Council





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play.

We pay our respects to Darkinjung country, and Elders past and present.

We recognise the continued connection to these lands and waterways and extend this acknowledgement to the homelands and stories of those who also call this place home.

We recognise our future leaders and the shared responsibility to care for and protect our place and people.

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Message from young people

No group of people care more about the future of the Central Coast than the young people that live there.

From the environment to the lifestyle, culture, accessibility, inclusion, employment opportunities, education and endless other aspects, young people are the vessel for the constant improvement of the region. It is imperative their voices are not only heard, but platformed and actioned as they are the lifeblood of the future.

Young people on the Central Coast want to have equal opportunities to their counterparts in metro and city areas, they are key parts of the community and our future leaders, policy and change makers. The young people of the Central Coast dream of a place where all their needs and aspirations are met, their dreams cultivated, a future that is very much possible if their voices continue to be represented in shaping the region's future.

The young people of the Central Coast inspire change, support the community, bring energy to the spaces they exist within and care deeply about the wellbeing of both our region's people and environment.

The young people of the Central Coast are our future, our improvement, our conservationists and our driver as we strive to improve our region.

Mayor's Message

It is with great pride that I present our new Youth Strategy for the Central Coast, a Strategy shaped by the voices, ideas, and aspirations of our region's young people.

Over the past year, we have listened deeply to what matters most to our local youth. Through workshops, surveys, forums, and conversations, young people told us about their hopes for a community where every young person feels they belong, where diversity is celebrated, and where their voices are not just heard, but drive real change.

Young people have shared their concerns about mental health, the rising cost of living, and the need for more affordable housing and secure jobs, and shown a deep commitment to protecting our environment and building a sustainable future for all. They called for safer public spaces, better transport, and more opportunities to connect, create, and thrive.

This Strategy is our commitment to our young community over the next five years. It sets out clear actions across five key themes: Belonging, Inclusion and Voice; Wellbeing, Safety and Respect; Opportunities, Skills and Secure Futures; Connected, Active and Affordable Living; Sustainable and Green Futures and Strong Partnerships and Sector Leadership. Each theme reflects what young people have told us is important, and each goal has been designed with their input. The Strong Partnerships and Sector Leadership theme ensures systems, services and organisations around them are coordinated and working together to deliver on those priorities.



We know that the challenges facing young people are complex and evolving. That's why this Strategy is not just a document, but a living partnership. We will continue to work alongside young people, our youth sector, families, and the broader community to ensure the Central Coast is a place where every young person can feel safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Thank you to every young person, parent, carer, teacher, youth worker, and community member who contributed to this Strategy. Your honesty, creativity, and passion have shaped a vision for a brighter, fairer, and more inclusive Central Coast. Together, let's make it happen.

Lawrie McKinna
Mayor, Central Coast Council

Introduction

Young people are an important part of the Central Coast, contributing to the culture, identity and future of our region. This introduction outlines the purpose of the Youth Strategy, the work that informed it, and the vision that will guide our actions over the coming years.

Young people across the Central Coast are shaping our community in powerful and meaningful ways. They are creators, leaders, carers, thinkers and change-makers. This Youth Strategy has been developed through a youth led development process, ensuring their experiences and aspirations inform the direction we take.

The Central Coast's previous Youth Strategy 2019-2024 set an aspirational agenda for young people on the Central Coast. It helped strengthen youth programs, partnerships and participation opportunities. As young people's needs have evolved, influenced by shifting education and employment pathways, technology, mental health pressures, housing challenges and cost-of-living impacts, the need for an updated approach has become clear.

This Youth Strategy 2026-2031 offers a more grounded, focused and deliverable framework that turns aspirations into clearer priorities and actions, and more directly reflects the realities young people are experiencing today.

Over the past year, Council has listened to hundreds of young people aged 12 to 24 years, community members and youth services organisations. Young people told us what is working well, what needs to change, and what support will make the biggest difference in their lives. These insights have shaped the direction of this Strategy and guided the priorities that follow.



Why this Strategy matters

This Strategy provides a coordinated, future-focused approach to improving outcomes for young people across the Central Coast. It ensures that the needs, priorities and aspirations of young people guide Council's planning and investment.

Young people are navigating a complex and rapidly changing environment, including pressures around mental health, employment, education, safety, housing and rising cost of living.

Through extensive engagement, young people told us they want meaningful involvement in the decisions that shape their lives, opportunities that feel accessible, services that reflect their needs and communities and spaces where they feel safe, welcome and connected.

This Strategy provides a clear direction for Council and our partners to work together with young people. It ensures our efforts are coordinated, targeted and future focused, and it strengthens our commitment to equity, inclusion and wellbeing. It recognises that a strong community must centre the voices and experiences of its young people.

What we are working towards

We are working towards a Central Coast where all young people feel connected, supported and confident in their futures. This includes:

- **Meaningful participation**, where young people have a real voice in shaping their communities
- **Improved wellbeing**, with mental health and support services that are accessible, responsive and culturally safe
- **Safe and inclusive environments** where all young people feel valued and respected
- **Strong education, employment and creative pathways**, providing opportunities to grow, learn and contribute
- **Better access to transport, services and spaces**, enabling young people to participate fully in community life
- **Celebration of culture and identity**, including strengthened cultural connections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- **Support through life transitions**, ensuring young people can navigate change with stability and confidence

This direction creates a shared commitment across Council and our partners to improve outcomes for young people now and into the future.

Our vision for young people on the Central Coast

A Central Coast where every young person feels valued, supported and empowered to thrive.

Young people shared a vision of a region where they experience belonging, wellbeing, opportunity, connection, a strong voice and sense of pride.

- **Belonging** – inclusive, respectful communities where identity and diversity are embraced.
- **Wellbeing** – safe places and accessible supports that strengthen mental, physical and emotional health.
- **Opportunity** – clear pathways to education, training, jobs, creativity and leadership.
- **Connection** – vibrant spaces and experiences that foster friendships and community.
- **Voice** – genuine influence in decisions, programs and spaces that affect their lives.
- **Pride** – a strong sense of identity and confidence in calling the Central Coast home.

Our vision places young people at the centre of community life, recognising their strengths and potential as key to the region's future.



Youth voice at the heart of this Strategy

“To belong and fit in, to do something we love, and to have the support we need.”

This statement, shared by a young person on the Central Coast, captures what matters most in their everyday lives. It reflects a desire for belonging, purpose and support and it sits at the heart of this Strategy.

The priorities, principles and actions that follow are grounded in this message and respond directly to what young people said they need to thrive now and into the future.



Guiding principles

Our work is grounded in a set of guiding principles that reflect what young people told us matters most. These principles shape how we plan, make decisions and work alongside young people across the Central Coast.

- 

Youth Voice at the Centre
Young people’s voices, ideas, lived experiences and leadership are central to our decisions, programs and advocacy for youth-related initiatives.
- 

Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
Every young person regardless of background, identity, ability, gender or circumstance has the right to feel safe, respected, valued and able to participate fully in community life.
- 

Connection, Belonging and Wellbeing
Strong relationships, cultural safety and community connection are essential to building resilience, emotional wellbeing and fosters positive youth development.
- 

Opportunity and Growth
Young people should have equitable access to learning, creativity, employment and pathways that support a positive future.
- 

Partnership and Collaboration
Council, community organisations, the youth services sector, schools, local industry, tertiary education providers and young people work together to create meaningful and lasting change.
- 

Accountability and Transparency
We commit to clear actions, shared responsibility and ongoing improvement, ensuring young people can see the impact of our work.

Young people on the Central Coast

Young people on the Central Coast live in a region that is diverse, growing and constantly changing. Their experiences are shaped by where they live, how they move through the region, the opportunities available to them and the challenges they face. Understanding this diversity provides important context for the priorities and actions in this Strategy.

Young people on the Central Coast are a diverse group aged 12 to 24 years who live, learn, work and volunteer in coastal towns, suburban centres and rural communities. Young people's experiences are shaped by culture, identity, family life, education, employment, transport access and the opportunities available in their local area.

Young people contribute to the region in many ways through study, work, creativity, sport, culture and carer roles, while also navigating challenges related to cost of living, mental health, housing, transport and access to services. This diversity of experiences highlights the importance of ensuring young people are supported, listened to and able to participate fully in community life.



Young people at a glance

There are **51,954** young people aged 12 to 24 years living in our region who account for 15% of our total population¹.

51%

of young people are male¹

49%

of young people are female¹

8.5%

of young people are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background

6.5%

of young people were born overseas and **89%** were born in Australia¹

4.7%

of young people speak a language other than English at home¹

59%

of young people live in coupled parent households¹

25%

of young people live in single parent households¹

63%

of young people live in owner occupied homes¹

2%

of young people live in social housing and **29%** live in private rentals¹

10%

of young people live in medium or high-density housing¹

6%

of those aged 15 to 24 years provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long-term illness or old age¹

6.7%

of those aged 15 to 24 years need assistance with core activities¹

Learning, Skills and Work



42%

of young people attend secondary school¹



7.4%

of young people attend TAFE¹



11%

of young people attend University¹



90%

of young people aged 15 to 24 years are employed (29% full-time and 44% part time)¹



17%

of young people aged 15 to 24 years have a formal qualification¹



Health and Wellbeing

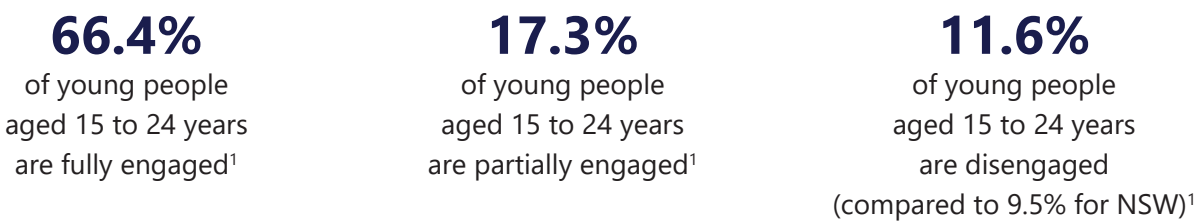
12.4% of young people aged 12 to 24 years living in the Central Coast Region are affected by mental illness¹.

This is representative of **6,453** young people

This is higher than the NSW average of **8.8%**

Youth Engagement

Youth engagement refers to the extent to which young people aged 15 to 24 years are actively participating in the labour market or education and training. Disengagement indicates young people who are not currently participating in these pathways and may need additional support to stay connected.



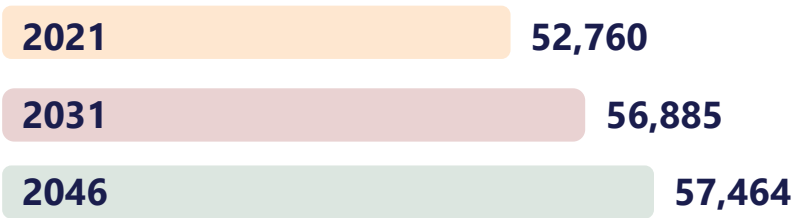
Youth engagement is a powerful driver of wellbeing, confidence and opportunity, creating the conditions for young people to thrive now and into the future.

Looking Ahead

The number of young people aged under 17 years living in the Central Coast is forecast to increase by 1,510 between 2021 and 2031 and will comprise 20.7% of the total population².

The Future

Projected growth of young population (12 to 24 years): increase of **8.9%** between **2021** and **2046**²



The most substantial growth is forecast in the 18 to 24 age group (+14%), projected to increase from 26,664 to **30,394**, aligning with transitions into tertiary education, early career stages and independent living.

Sources: ¹ .id, 2021o, Age groups. Central Coast Council area Community Profile
² .id, 2024, Population and household forecasts. Central Coast Council area Forecast Population

The realities shaping young people’s lives

Young people on the Central Coast experience a mix of supports, opportunities and challenges shaped by their local environment, access to services and the circumstances that shape their daily lives. Understanding these influences provides important context to the demographic snapshot and helps show how broader social and economic trends affect young people’s everyday experiences.

Mental health is a top priority.
Many young people want earlier support, easier access to services and spaces where talking about wellbeing feels comfortable and safe.
“I think for young people, having a safe place that young people can freely use their voice to seek help or information regarding their own health and wellbeing would make it easier for them to use and access.”

Transport shapes what young people can do.
Limited or unreliable transport makes it harder to get to school, training, work, sport, appointments and social activities.
“I think improving and expanding public transport would definitely help a lot across the Central Coast, especially in the evenings and weekends where there are significantly less busses and sometimes trains. This change would help many young people to access jobs, their education and other social events.”

Young people want safe, youth-friendly places.
Many say there are not enough local spaces where they can hang out, relax or connect without cost or judgement.
“I think it’s important to have public spaces that young people feel safe and welcomed to go to and enjoy to their full potential.”

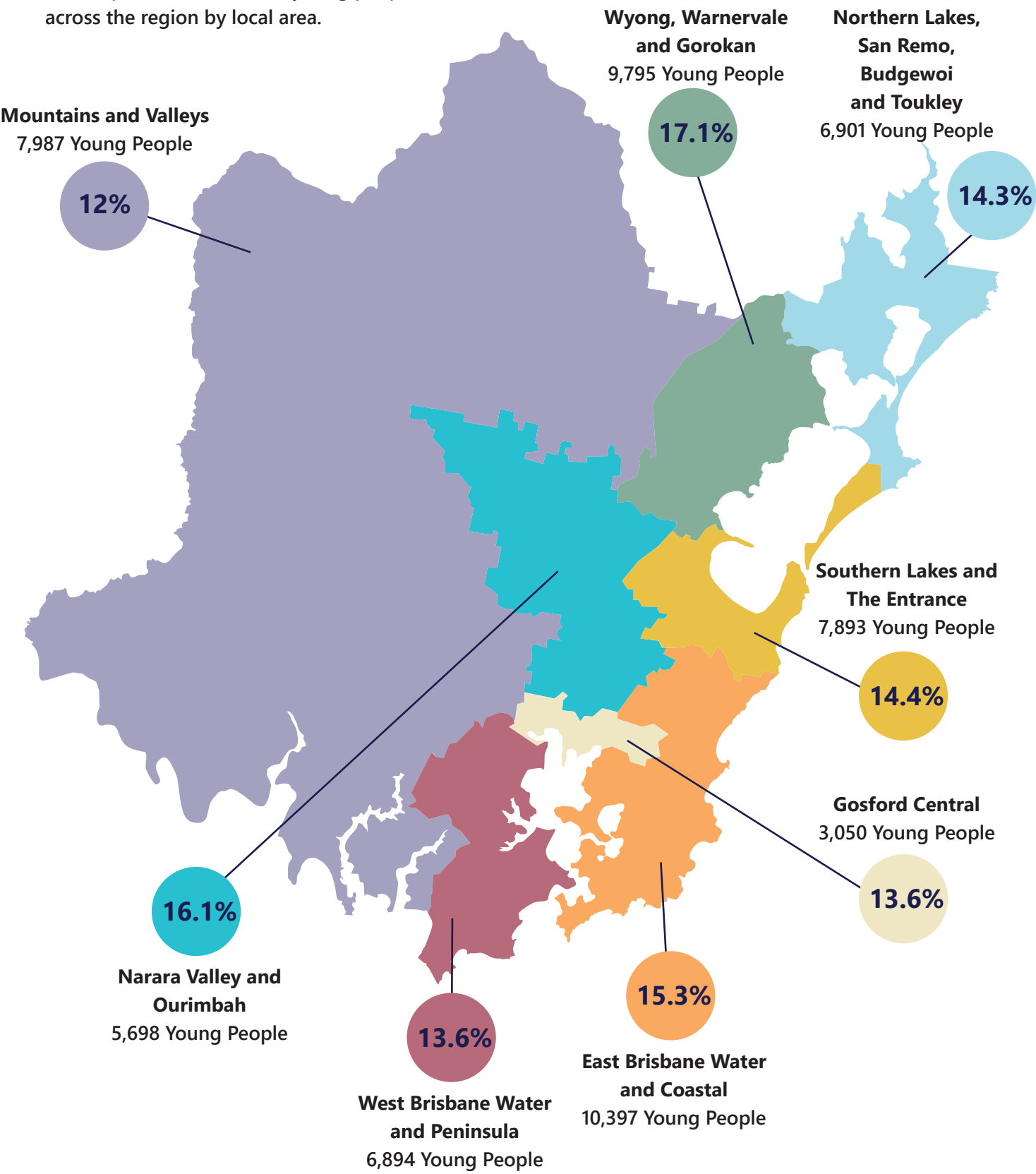
Pathways after school can feel confusing.
Young people want clearer guidance, hands-on learning options, local job pathways and support to explore different opportunities.
“Making it easier for young people to know what career opportunities are actually out there and available for them would also help outstandingly, as many teenagers nowadays are unsure of what they what to go into after school and education.”

Cost of living affects everyday choices.
Young people are balancing study, work, extra-curricular activities and family responsibilities while navigating rising costs that impact independence and opportunities.
“The cost of living is ridiculous already, add on uni fees, study materials, and trying to balance extremely limited time with low wages and mental health is pretty horrific.”

Community, identity and culture matter.
Creative outlets, cultural connection, social groups and inclusive spaces help young people feel grounded and supported.
“More opportunities for meaningful in-person activities e.g. after-hours creative art, free sport and social spaces.”

Where young people on the Coast live

The Central Coast is home to 51,954 young people.
The map below shows how young people are distributed across the region by local area.



Strategic Context

Putting young people at the centre of the Central Coast’s future

The Central Coast is home to a growing and diverse population of young people, and Council recognises the importance of long-term planning and decision-making in supporting young people’s wellbeing, participation and future opportunities.

Through its role in planning, service delivery and community leadership, Council plays a key role in shaping the social, economic and physical environments in which young people live, learn, work and connect. A clear strategic framework supports consistent, inclusive and future-focused decision-making for young people.

The Central Coast Youth Strategy provides this framework. It sits within Council’s integrated planning and reporting framework and supports the delivery of the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Working strategically with young people delivers benefits for young people, Council and the wider community. It supports clear direction, strong coordination and more effective partnerships to achieve shared, long-term outcomes.

Community Strategic Plan alignments

As a policy commitment to supporting young people, the Central Coast Youth Strategy 2026-2031 aligns with Council’s integrated planning and reporting framework and supports strategic priorities at the local, state, national and internal levels.

At the local level, this Strategy supports the delivery of Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035, particularly the Our People focus area. It contributes to Council’s long-term vision for inclusive, connected and thriving communities by ensuring the needs, aspirations and experiences of young people are embedded across planning, policy and decision-making.



Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035

Our People	Goals	Youth Strategy Alignment
 All the elements that make our people feel safe, supported, celebrated, and connected to their life on the Central Coast	PE1: Shared sense of community spirit and pride that celebrates our First Nations voices, diversity, art, creativity, culture and identity PE2: Neighbourhoods and communities where everyone feels safe and supported. PE3: Opportunities for people to connect, engage and participate within their community.	Supports youth participation and leadership, and recognises the diversity, cultures and identities of young people. Promotes young people’s wellbeing and safety, and strengthens access to information, services and support. Supports youth-friendly spaces, events and opportunities for young people to connect and belong.

Global alignments

The Central Coast Youth Strategy aligns with Australia’s commitments to international human rights law and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs provide a global framework for improving social, economic and environmental outcomes for current and future generations. By aligning with the SDGs, this Strategy recognises young people as key contributors to sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities and supports Council’s commitments to long-term, future-focused planning.

The Youth Strategy aligns with the following SDGs:



State and national alignments

The Central Coast Youth Strategy is informed by relevant state and national policy and legislative frameworks that guide how governments support the wellbeing, participation and safety of young people. Aligning with these frameworks ensures Council’s approach reflects best practice and supports coordination across sectors.

National plans and legislation

Strategy alignment:

- **Australian’s Youth Policy Framework 2021** – promoting wellbeing, equity and youth participation.
- **National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030** – improving health and wellbeing outcomes.
- **Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014** – supporting advocacy, participation and safeguarding.

State (NSW) plans and legislation

Strategy alignment:

- **NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024** – supporting safe, healthy and connected young people.
- **NSW Children’s Guardians Child Safe Scheme 2021** – strengthening child-safe environments.

Regional focus areas

The Youth Strategy also reflects the NSW Government focus areas for young people living in regional communities. These focus areas recognise the unique opportunities and challenges experienced by young people in regional areas and provide a shared framework to guide Council action.

Key regional focus areas include:



Work Ready

Supporting young people to build skills, confidence and clear pathways into employment, training or further study.



Wellbeing

Supporting physical and mental health, respectful relationships and access to help when needed.



Connectivity

Supporting young people to stay connected to services, activities, information and each other.



Community

Creating opportunities for young people to take part in community life, culture, sport, creativity and leadership.

Central Coast Council plans and policy

The Youth Strategy sits within Council’s broader planning framework and supports the delivery of the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

By providing a clear, shared framework to guide consideration of young people’s needs, the Strategy ensures their perspectives are embedded across Council planning, policy development, service delivery and advocacy over time.

The Youth Strategy aligns with and supports a range of Council plans and policies including the:

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030
- Central Coast Cultural Plan
- Events Strategy 2026-2030
- Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030.

Together, these plans and frameworks support a coordinated approach to guide Council decision-making, service delivery and advocacy for young people on the Central Coast.



Youth engagement: listening to young voices

Young people shared what life is really like for them on the Central Coast, their challenges, their hopes and what they need to feel supported and included.

How we engaged with young people

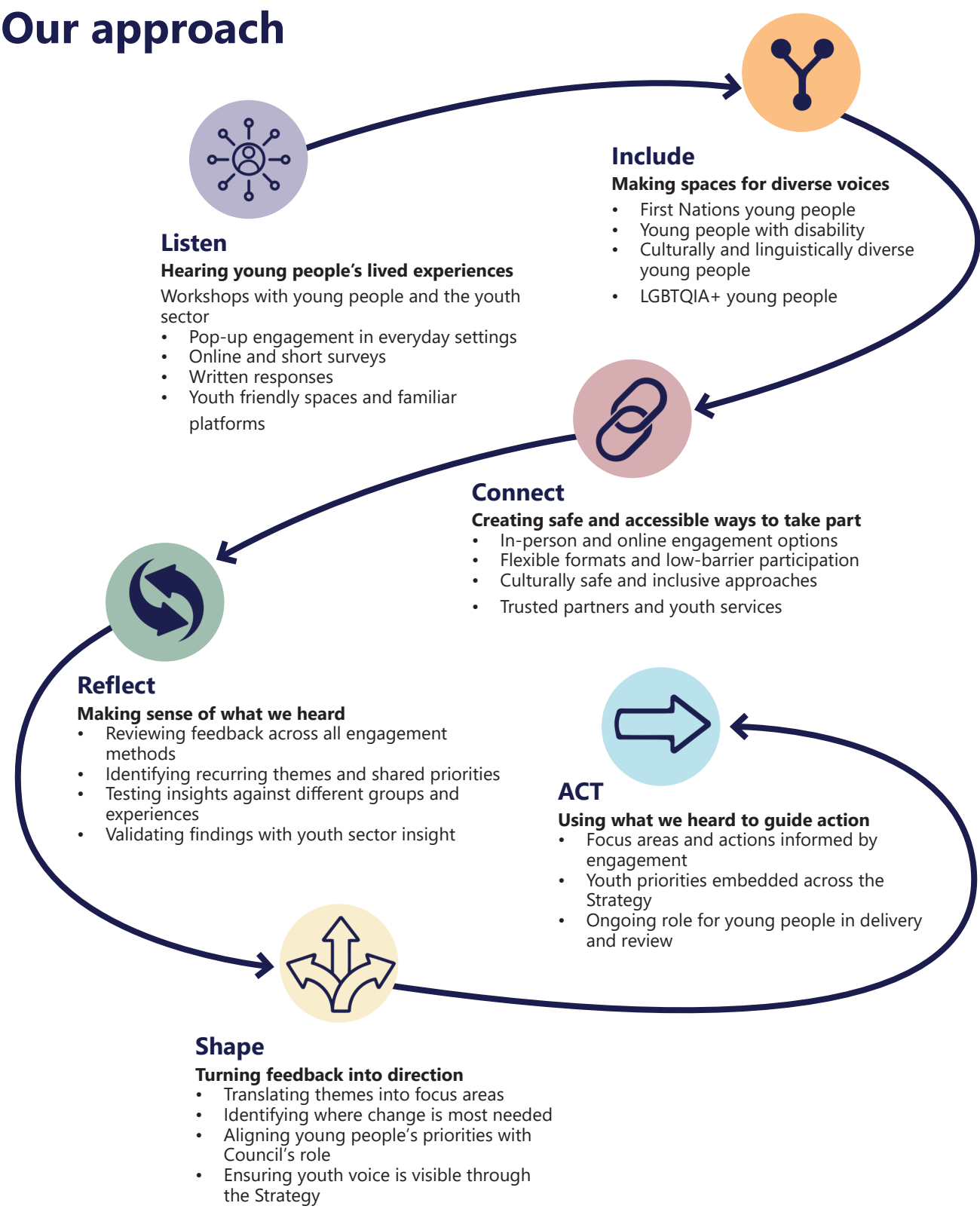
In 2025, Council engaged with over **550 young people** across the Central Coast to understand their lived experience, priorities and ideas for the future.

We heard from young people with diverse background and lived experiences, including First Nations young people, LGBTIQ+ young people, young people living with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse young people, young carers and young people living in different parts of the Central Coast.

Engagement at a glance



Our approach



What young people told us

Young people shared clear and consistent personal insights about what it is like to grow on the Central Coast today and their hopes for the future. Across the engagement activities, young people spoke about the pressures they face in their everyday lives, the pressures that limit their opportunities and the changes they want to see to feel safe, supported and connected to their communities.

What young people told us reflect both immediate challenges such as cost of living, mental health and transport, and longer-term aspirations for inclusion, opportunity and a sustainable future. These insights inform the foundation of this Strategy and directly shaped its focus area and priorities.

Youth voice and participation

Having a say
Young people wanted to be included in government decision-making. They want to understand how their input leads to real change, not just to be asked for feedback.

What matters most

Key priorities for young people

- **Mental health, wellbeing and belonging**
Support for mental health, feeling safe, valued and connected and having a sense of belonging in the community.
- **Activities, services and events**
Access to affordable, local and youth-friendly activities and events that support connection and wellbeing.
- **Public spaces**
Safe, welcoming and well-designed public spaces where young people can gather, relax and spend time.
- **Education and employment**
Education pathways, access to jobs, skills development and support for major transitions such as primary to high school, study to work or alternative post school options and independent living.
- **Environment**
Protecting the natural environment, responding to climate change and caring for local places such as beaches, lakes and bushland.
- **Transport and roads**
Reliable, affordable and safe transport to access education, work, services and opportunities.

Feedback from young people

These themes highlight the importance of both practical supports and social connection in shaping young people's wellbeing and opportunities.



Caring for place and the environment

Young people care about places they live

Environmental protection about climate change were raised as important issues across engagement activities.

Young people spoke about:

- protecting beaches, lakes and bushland
- reducing waste and plastic pollution
- caring for local places they value

They want to be part of the solution

Beyond concern, young people expressed a desire to take action locally.

Young people said they want:

- hand-on opportunities to contribute
- ways to be involved in environmental projects
- support to take action on climate issues.

"Plastic... it's a terrible thing that I want to prevent from ending up in our oceans."



Cost of living and social connection

Cost of living pressures are being felt

Rising living costs were raised consistently by young people and are affecting their ability to participate fully in everyday life.

Young people said cost pressures:

- limit their ability to take part in social, cultural and recreational activities
- make it harder to build independence and plan for the future
- contribute to stress, isolation and reduced wellbeing.

Connection depends on affordability

Young people linked affordability with their ability to connect with others and feel part of their community.

Young people said they want:

- more free or low-cost activities
- accessible spaces to meet and spend time with friends
- opportunities to connect locally without financial barriers

"We need more cheap fun activities for young people to meet new friends and have a good time."



Learning, work and secure futures

Clear pathways are important

Young people spoke about the need for realistic and supported pathways from education into employment.

Young people said they want:

- better connection between school, training and work
- opportunities to gain experience, skills and confidence
- local education and employment options that reflect different interests and strengths.

Stability supports independence

Young people linked housing with their ability to plan for the future and build independence.

Young people raised concerns about:

- housing costs and availability
- difficulty planning to move out while studying or working
- housing affecting where they can live, study or work.

"I am moving to Sydney for my further study, as I not only am unsatisfied with the options for study on the Central Coast, but I wish to expand my experiences and immerse myself in culture."

"Most jobs require experience but as a young person we don't have that so maybe some jobs set aside for younger or less experienced people."



Feeling well and feeling safe

Mental health is a priority

Mental health was raised as one of the strongest and most consistent priorities for young people across all engagement activities.

Young people said they want:

- affordable, youth-friendly mental health support
- services that are accessible outside standard business hours
- early support that is easy to find and free from stigma.

Feeling safe shapes participation

Feeling unsafe in public spaces was raised repeatedly by young people.

Young people raised concerns about:

- Harassment and intimidation
- Poor lighting and unsafe footpaths
- Limited transport options, particularly at night

"It would be easier with more accessible mental health services, designed and open for young people... more school based or low-cost places."

"Contributing to a voice in the new spaces being designed for young people and ways to make them safe... everyone deserves to feel safe while playing outdoors in the awesome place we have and activities on offer around the Coast."

What the youth sector shared

Frontline insights from programs and services

Youth sector organisations shared insights based on their day-to-day work with young people across the Central Coast. Their feedback reinforced what young people shared directly and added practical context from the frontline.



Mental health support through programs and services

Youth services reported growing demand for youth-friendly mental health programs and early intervention support and accessible, and trusted environments were seen as critical to engagement.



Skills, training and positive outcomes

The youth sector highlighted the value of events, training and skills-based programs in building confidence and practical pathways. These opportunities were seen as key to connection, participation and employment readiness.



Housing and stability matter

Housing instability and affordability were raised as increasing concerns for young people. Youth workers noted housing instability can disrupt education, work and program participation.



Access shapes participation

Cost, transport and accessibility continue to limit young people’s ability to stay engaged. These barriers were seen as intersecting and cumulative.

Listening Comes with Responsibility

What young people and the youth sector shared reflect a responsibility to respond with care, intent and action. Their voices call for inclusive systems, coordinated responses and decisions grounded in lived experience, ensuring young people are not only heard, but meaningfully reflected in how priorities are shaped across the Central Coast.



Taken by Allan Acaon
at @precision_sports_media

Our focus areas

Our focus areas define where action will have the greatest impact for young people.

These focus areas highlight what needs to change and where effort should be directed to improve outcomes for young people across the Central Coast over the life of the Strategy.

Together, the focus areas provide a clear framework for Council and its partners in planning, coordinating and delivering action that responds to different needs, experiences and life stages.



Belonging, inclusion and voice

Young people belong, are heard and influence change

Young people feel welcome and included in their community and have genuine opportunities to speak-up, be heard and influence decisions and issues that affect their lives.



Wellbeing, safety and respect

Young people feel safe, respected and valued in everyday life

Young people feel safe and respected at home, online and in the community, and can access spaces, services and information that support positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.



Opportunities, skills and secure futures

Young people are ready for work, life and what comes next

Young people can build skills and access education, training and employment pathways that support independence, financial wellbeing and long-term security.



Active, connected and affordable living

Young people can live well locally and stay connected

Young people can access transport, housing, activities and services that make it easier to connect with others, participate in community life and maintain an active lifestyle.



Sustainable and green futures

Young people lead a sustainable future

Young people are empowered to care for the environment, respond to climate challenges and play an active role in shaping a sustainable future for their community.



Strong partnerships and sector leadership

Young people are supported by a vibrant, connected and well-led youth sector

Young people benefit from coordinated services, collaborative partnerships and shared learning across the Central Coast, with Council playing a leadership role in strengthening connections and sector capacity.



Action plan: Turning ideas into action

A practical roadmap that turns strategic priorities into action

This Action Plan outlines the practical steps Council, supported by its partners, will take to deliver the Strategy's outcomes. It translates the focus areas into clear, deliverable actions that support implementation and accountability. The actions reflect existing initiatives and identify priorities, providing a structured approach to achieving meaningful outcomes for young people on the Central Coast.



Focus area 1: Belonging, inclusion and voice

Belonging, inclusion and voice are central to young people feeling connected to their community. This focus area supports safe and inclusive environments and opportunities for leadership, celebration and co-design, ensuring diverse youth voices shape decisions that affect them.

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 1: Young people feel welcomed, valued and able to participate fully in community life and advocate for issues and concerns important to them.	Action 1.1: Deliver the 'Thinking Out Loud' Youth Forum to create a safe space for young people to raise issues, share ideas and shape local priorities.	- Youth Forum delivered annually, providing a safe space for young people to raise issues and shape priorities. - Increased participation of diverse young people in leadership, community programs and decision-making. - Young people report greater confidence and skills to speak up on issues that matter to them.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council)
	Action 1.2: Deliver the Central Coast Youth Week Awards and Youth Week Calendar to celebrate young people's achievements and contributions.	- Annual Youth Week Awards presentation delivered, and Youth Week Calendar promoted across the Central Coast. - Increased awareness and celebration of young people's achievements and contributions. - Young people report feeling recognised and valued within the community.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council)
	Action 1.3: Deliver a Youth category within Central Coast Community Awards to recognise the positive contribution of young people.	- Youth nominations received annually for the Central Coast Community Awards youth category. - Increased awareness of the positive contributions of young people. - Young people feel recognised and valued for their achievements.	Ongoing	Lead: Events and Placemaking (Council)
	Action 1.4: Deliver Council's Youth Day Out program, connecting young people with local services, support and community opportunities through public activation.	- Youth Day Out activities delivered connecting young people with services, programs and opportunities. - Strong attendance from diverse young people across the Central Coast. - Increased awareness of youth services and young people report feeling more connected to supports and community.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Youth Sector (External)

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 2: Young people from all backgrounds feel respected, included and represented.	Action 2.1: Partner with youth service and community organisations to deliver inclusive programs, events and initiatives that celebrate diversity.	- Inclusive programs, events and initiatives delivered with youth and community organisations. - Diversity and inclusion embedded across youth programming. - Young people from diverse backgrounds report feeling safe, represented and included.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Community Development (Council), Youth Sector (External)
	Action 2.3: Advocate for and influence policies, programs and investment that improve outcomes and expand opportunities for young people on the Central Coast.	- Young people's voices meaningfully inform decision-making and advocacy. - Strong partnerships with the youth sector support coordinated advocacy. - Programs and youth-related initiatives better reflect the needs and priorities of young people.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council)
Goal 3: Young people are involved early and meaningfully in decisions that impact them.	Action 3.1: Deliver the Youth for Youth Leadership Program (Y4Y) and support the Y4Y Team as a youth-led leadership group that informs Council decisions and represents the voices of young people across the Central Coast.	- Youth for Youth Leadership Program delivered annually. 10–20 young people participate each year, developing leadership and advocacy skills. - Youth advice informs Council plans, policies and projects, with young people reporting their input influences outcomes.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council)

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 4: Young people can explore creative expression and develop skills for the future.	Action 4.1: Develop, deliver and promote creative programs in partnerships with local arts organisations and industries.	- Delivery of programs designed to promote career pathways and progressional development. - Opportunities provided for workshops, mentoring, competitions and skills development. - Young people build confidence, skills and pathways into creative industries.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Arts and Culture (Council)
	Action 4.2: Deliver youth-led exhibitions and programs through the Gosford Regional Gallery and community galleries to amplify young people's voice and creative expression.	- Young people develop skills in creative practice, art management and storytelling. - Young people have the opportunity to showcase their work through exhibitions and programs. - Young people's voices are visible and represented in public and cultural spaces.	Ongoing	Lead: Arts and Culture (Council) Support: Youth Services (Council)



Focus Area 2: Wellbeing, safety and respect

Feeling safe, supported and respected is essential for young people to thrive. This focus area strengthens environments, services and partnerships that promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 5: Young people can access affordable, youth-friendly mental and physical health services.	Action 5.1: Partner with local organisations to improve access to youth-friendly mental and physical health services across the Central Coast.	- Increased awareness of available youth services across the Central Coast. - Young people report knowing where to go for help and how to access support. - Accessible initiatives continue to be delivered in partnership with local organisations.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Youth Sector (External)
Goal 6: Positive mental health, resilience and help-seeking behaviours are strengthened.	Action 6.1: Advocate and promote positive mental health practices and early help-seeking behaviours through youth programs, partnerships and targeted messaging.	- Young people report increased confidence in seeking support. - Mental health promotion embedded across youth programs and initiatives. - Increased participation in wellbeing-focused programs and activities.	New – Year 1 (2026)	Lead: Youth Services (Council)
	Action 6.2: Investigate opportunities to deliver youth-specific Mental Health First Aid training.	- Youth Mental Health First Aid training delivered for young people. - Increased community capability to recognise and respond to mental health concerns. - Reduced stigma around mental health and help-seeking.	New – Year 1 (2026)	Lead: Youth Services (Council)
Goal 7: Young people feel physically and emotionally safe in public, online and at home.	Action 7.1: Partner with key stakeholders to deliver evidence-informed programs that promote respectful relationships and online safety.	- Respectful relationships programs delivered in local schools. - Increased awareness of healthy relationships and online safety. - Young people report improved knowledge of online safety and support pathways.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council)
	7.2: Support opportunities for young people to feel connected and safe in public spaces through art initiatives.	- Young people feel more connected and safer in public spaces through creative and community initiatives. - Increased participation of young people in art-based programs that activate public spaces. - Stronger sense of belonging and shared ownership of public spaces among young people.	Ongoing	Lead: Arts and Culture (Council) Support: Youth Services (Council)



Focus Area 3: Opportunity, skills and secure Futures

Access to education, training and employment underpins young people’s future success. This focus area supports pathways that build skills, confidence and long-term security.

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 8: Education, training, and employment pathways are available and accessible for young people.	Action 8.1: Increase apprenticeship, traineeship and cadet/graduate employment opportunities at Council.	- Increased participation in apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience, enable skills development and progression across career pathways. - Apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience opportunities available for young people within Council. - Young people gain exposure to diverse pathways and employment opportunities.	Ongoing	Lead: People and Culture (Council) Support: Youth Services (Council)
	Action 8.2: Support opportunities and deliver programs to support young people in the creative arts industries.	- Young people access paid performance and creative opportunities through Council and community events. - Young people demonstrate increased creative skills, and event readiness. - Programs are delivered and designed to promote career pathways and professional development including music, theatre and the creative arts.	Ongoing	Leads: Youth Services (Council) Arts and Culture (Council)
	Action 8.3: Develop relationships with local schools and universities to promote and partner in education, training and employment pathways.	- Active partnerships with schools, universities and training providers are established and maintained. - Clear pathways from education to training and employment are accessible to young people. - Participation in partner education, training and employment initiatives increases.	Ongoing	Lead: People and Culture (Council) Support: Youth Services

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 9: Young people are equipped with practical life skills and career readiness.	Action 9.1: Deliver annual programs focused on employment readiness and practical life skills.	- Young people have increased access to employment readiness and practical life skills programs. - Young people report increased confidence in job seeking and transitioning to employment. - Young people demonstrate improved understanding of budgeting and financial decision-making.	Ongoing	Leads: Youth Services (Council) Support: People and Culture (Council)
Goal 10: Young people have the skills to achieve financial security and independence.	Action 10.1: Develop, deliver or promote a program that builds financial literacy including budgeting, taxation, superannuation and investment basics.	- Young people access financial literacy education covering budgets, taxation, superannuation and investment basics. - Young people demonstrate improved understanding of budgeting and financial decision-making. - Young people report increased confidence managing finances as they transition to adulthood.	New – Year 2 (2027)	Lead: Youth Services (Council)



Focus Area 4: Active, connected and affordable living

Affordable housing, transport and opportunities for active living enable young people to participate fully in community life. This focus area supports access to the spaces, services and activities that keep young people healthy and connected.

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 11: Young people have access to free and low-cost activities and safe places to socialise.	Action 11.1: Develop, deliver and promote programs and activities that provide young people with safe, welcoming spaces to connect and support healthy and active lifestyles.	- Free and low-cost programs delivered across Council facilities including libraries, community centres, pools and recreation spaces. - Increased participation of young people in programs and activities across these spaces. - Young people report feeling connected and have opportunities to lead active and healthy lifestyles.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Leisure and Pools (Council), Open Spaces and Recreation (Council), Libraries (Council)
	Action 11.2: Develop youth-focused marketing and communication approaches to better promote programs to young people.	- Youth-targeted marketing and communications delivered. - Increase in online interactions by young people across Council digital and marketing platforms. - Young people report feeling informed about local programs and opportunities.	New - Year 2 (2027)	Lead: Communications and Engagement (Council) Marketing and Visitor Economy (Council) Support: Youth Services (Council)

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 12: Public transport and active travel options for young people are available and responsive to their needs.	Action 12.1: Support young people to advocate for public transport options that enable participation in education, employment and community life.	- Young people are engaged in public transport consultations and advocacy initiatives. - Youth perspectives inform submissions and advocacy on transport improvements. - Young people report increased confidence in voicing transport needs.	Ongoing	Lead: Engineering Services (Council) Roads and Drainage Infrastructure (Council)
	Action 12.2: Connect and enhance accessible walking and cycling networks that support safe movements to key destinations.	- Continued development of safe pathways and cycleways across the region. - Improved connectivity between youth hubs, schools and community facilities. - Young people report feeling safer using active travel options.	Ongoing	Lead: Roads and Drainage Infrastructure (Council)
	Action 12.3: Support and promote road safety programs relevant to young people.	- Road safety initiatives delivered for young people across the Central Coast. - Young people are supported with education to encourage increased awareness of safe road behaviours. - Young people access affordable road safety education and programs.	Ongoing	Lead: Engineering Services (Council)
Goal 13: Affordable housing and cost-of-living support is accessible for young people.	Action 13.1: Support young people to advocate for affordable housing and cost-of-living initiatives that enable safe and stable living.	- Youth perspectives inform implementation of the Affordable and Alternative Housing Strategy. - Increased awareness of housing options and cost-of-living support pathways. - Young people report improved understanding of available housing and support services.	Ongoing	Lead: Community Development (Council)



Focus Area 5: Green and sustainable futures

A healthy environment that supports the wellbeing and future prosperity of young people. This focus area encourages sustainable practices, climate awareness and opportunities for young people to contribute to a greener, more resilient Central Coast.

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 14: Young people are empowered to lead and participate in environmental action.	Action 14.1: Inspire, educate and support young people to understand local environmental challenges and collaborate on innovative sustainability initiatives.	- Youth participation in environmental initiatives increases. - Young people contribute ideas and perspectives to sustainability projects. - Young people demonstrate increased awareness of local environmental priorities and solutions.	New – Year 3 (2028)	Lead: Environmental Management (Council) Support: Youth Services (Council)
Goal 15: Young people connect to nature and local green spaces.	Action 15.1: Develop, deliver and promote activities and programs that strengthen young people's connection to the natural environmental and local green spaces.	- Increased youth participation in outdoor and nature-based activities. - Young people report feeling more connected to their local environment. - Increased use of local parks, skateparks, reserves and natural areas by young people.	New – Year 3 (2028)	Lead: Environmental Management (Council) Support: Youth Services (Council) Open Space and Recreation (Council)
Goal 16: Young people are climate resilient and environmentally aware.	Action 16.1: Promote local activities and programs that build climate awareness, resilience and practical sustainability skills.	- Youth-specific climate awareness initiatives promoted across the Central Coast. - Young people demonstrate increased understanding of climate resilience and sustainability. - Increased youth engagement in sustainable behaviours and environmental practices.	New – Year 3 (2028)	Lead: Youth Services (Council)



Focus Area 6: Strong partnerships and sector leadership

A strong, connected and capable youth sector that supports the wellbeing and success of young people. This focus area strengthens collaboration, builds sector capacity and improves coordination across the Central Coast.

What we are working towards	What we will do	What success looks like	Timeframe	Delivery
Goal 17: A vibrant, connected and well-informed youth sector.	Action 17.1: Engage in youth sector networking opportunities to build connections, skills, knowledge and best practice approaches to working with young people.	- Council staff actively participate in youth sector networks and forums. - Collaboration between Council and youth service providers increases. - Council remains informed on emerging youth issues, trends and sector priorities.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Youth Sector (External) People and Culture (Council)
	Action 17.2: Support and participate in the Central Coast Youth Interagency to strengthen coordination and information sharing across the sector.	- Youth sector partners remain connected and informed on current issues, trends and service updates. - Regular information sharing and coordination across the youth sector. - Increased collaboration between youth services across the Central Coast.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Youth Sector (External)
	Action 17.3: Support professional development training opportunities to the youth sector, including delivery of an annual training session on a relevant topic.	- Annual sector training sessions delivered on priority youth sector topics. - Youth sector participants report increased knowledge and capability. - Identified skills gaps across the sector addressed through shared learning opportunities.	New – Year 3 (2028)	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Youth Sector (External) People and Culture (Council)
	Action 17.4: Provide access to Gravity Youth Centre to support youth sector partners to deliver outreach and collaborative programs.	- Youth sector partners utilise Gravity Youth Centre for outreach and collaborative service delivery. - Partnerships between Council and youth organisations increase. - Young people have improved access points to engage with youth services and supports.	Ongoing	Lead: Youth Services (Council) Support: Youth Sector (External)



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April 2026