

Youth Strategy 2026-2031

Public exhibition engagement summary

Central
Coast
Council

Community members were invited to provide feedback between 1 June to 29 June 2026 on the draft Youth Strategy.

The Strategy aims to guide how we will work with young people, youth services, schools and the community to create programs, spaces and activities that matter to young people.

The community could share their feedback by:

- Completing a quick poll
- Emailing a submission
- Writing to Council by post

Who we heard from

Young people were strongly represented in the online submissions, with the **majority (60%) received from people aged 12–24**. The remaining submissions came from youth sector workers (14%) and the wider community (26%).

What we heard

Of the 50 responses to the quick poll, **80% said the draft Youth Strategy's vision summarised or mostly summarised the needs of young people on the Central Coast**. This included 38% who said "yes" and 42% who said "mostly."

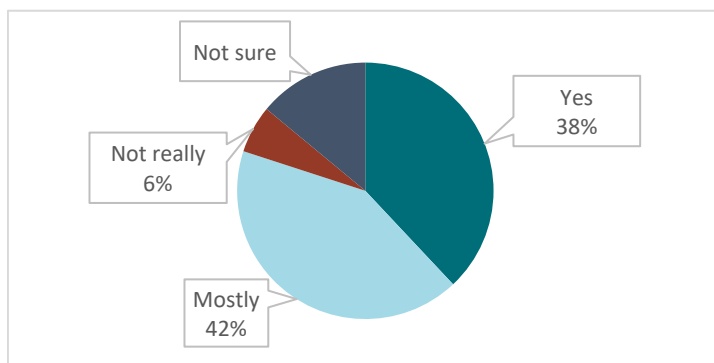


Figure 1: Do you think our vision summarises the needs of young people on the coast?, Online survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 - 29 June 2026, 50 responses.

How you connected



A total of **51** submissions received, **50** online quick poll responses and **1** email



Your Voice Our Coast
3,060 views



The draft Strategy was downloaded **200** times



Facebook – **8,401** people were reached, generating **23** reactions



Instagram – **2,111** people were reached



LinkedIn – **305** people were reached, generating **24** reactions



Meta paid - Reach of **57,000** with a **5%** unique click through rate



Targeted stakeholder email
- Delivered to **2,000**



eNews - Delivered to **6,542**



Coast Connect print -
Delivered to **62,000+** readers



Media Release issued to **121** contacts

Focus areas that matter most

In the quick poll, respondents were asked to rank what focus areas they thought should be prioritised.

Respondents placed the strongest emphasis on “Wellbeing, safety and respect”, which received the highest average ranking score of 2.46. This was closely followed by “Active, connected and affordable living” and “Opportunity, skills and secure futures”, showing that young people’s safety, connection, affordability and future opportunities are key priorities for the community. The remaining focus areas and their average ranking scores can be seen below in *Figure 2*.



Average ranking score by focus area

Lower scores indicate higher priority, with 1 being the highest possible ranking.

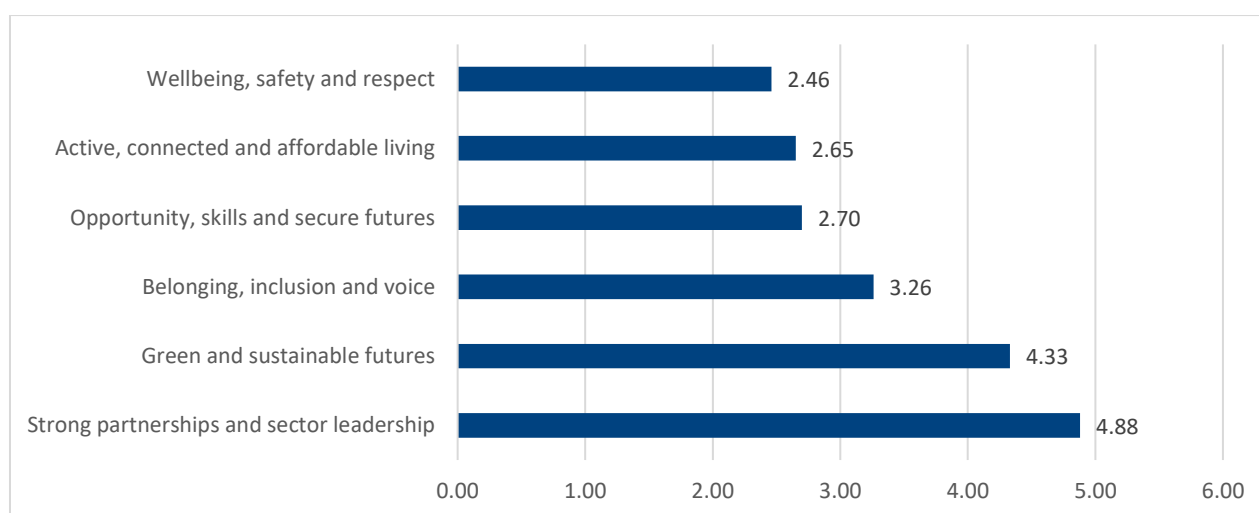


Figure 2: What focus areas matter most to you? (Ranking question), Online survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 – 29 June 2026, 50 responses.

Key themes

The open-ended submissions reflected many of the same priorities identified through the ranking question, with community feedback focusing strongly on safety, wellbeing, access to local services and opportunities for young people to connect, learn and participate. Respondents spoke about the need for safe and youth-friendly spaces, better transport options, stronger education and employment pathways, and more creative, social and recreational activities that are accessible across the Central Coast.

Safe youth spaces



Respondents highlighted the need for dedicated, safe spaces where young people can feel secure and thrive. Respondents highlighted the lack of modern youth hubs, indoor social spaces, and age-appropriate venues, alongside concerns about youth violence, mental health pressures, and a fundamental desire to feel safe. The need for safe environments extends from physical spaces to broader wellbeing concerns including after-hours activities to reduce antisocial behaviour.

Quote examples:

"Teens/youths need safe and free places to 'hang"! Cannot stand toddler/kid play spaces being taken over by teens that are vandalising and inappropriate language and behaviour while I am at the play space with my 3-year-old! It is horrible! Teens like to hang out, they don't want to hang at home - give them a safe space that is not a toddler park or a shopping centre!"

"Want to feel safe"

"We are seeing very high increased levels of violence among youth and sexual assaults. We need more youth activities during school holidays, Afterhours and weekends."

Education, skills and employment pathways



Respondents emphasised the importance of education and skill development for young people, including work experience programs, vocational training, and university education. Suggestions included expanding TAFE courses in trades and technology, and strengthening links between schools and local businesses for career development.

Quote examples:

"Work Experience opportunities for older high school students can broaden their perspective and have a lasting influence on future career paths. Helping high schools and busy teachers establish links to local businesses and workplaces may be something the council could help facilitate."

"The University should offer courses that build and strengthen our young people, such as medical, Teaching, Artificial Intelligence and Electrical Engineering to name a few. Our TAFE needs to focus on building and construction trades, Computer sciences and hospitality."

Accessibility and transport



Multiple respondents raised concerns about limited transport options preventing young people from accessing activities, services, and opportunities. Areas like the Peninsula were identified as youth often must travel long distances for basic services and recreational activities.

Quote examples:

"Often teenagers can't participate in activities through lack of transport. Maybe a council run minibus which could help kids participate in creative or sporting activities."

"Local young people often face additional challenges such as limited transport options, fewer youth-friendly spaces and reduced access to services close to home."

"Limited access to essential services and activities. Teens routinely travel to Gosford, Erina or further for driving tests, indoor recreation, rock climbing and creative activities, reinforcing a sense that the Peninsula is underserved."

Creative, social and recreational opportunities



Respondents valued creative and cultural programs for young people, including music events, arts opportunities, and community programs. Suggestions included youth bands performing in public spaces, open mic nights, and expanded support for creative industries with fair compensation for young artists.

Quote examples:

"Current community programs such as discovered and battle of the bands are a great way to start and continue this vision. Other initiatives such as twilight are also another great way to support creative young people and their communities outside of competition."

"Loss of youth identity and limited youth-friendly events. Community members expressed a desire to rebuild a sense of youth culture through open mic nights, swaps, sustainability events and other youth-centred programming."

Council's response

Due to the large volume and variety of content contained within community feedback, not every issue or theme can be included and responded to in the following table, however all feedback has been read and will be considered by the project team.

This phase of engagement sought feedback on the draft Strategy, to identify where clarification, refinement or improvement may be appropriate prior to finalisation. Feedback has been reviewed by the project team and considered in the development of recommendations to be presented to Council for consideration. The final decision is made by the elected Councillors at a formal Council meeting and may also be influenced by available funding, priorities and delivery programs.

Theme	Theme summary	Council's response
Safe youth spaces	Feedback called for safer, more welcoming places for young people to spend time, connect and take part in positive activities.	Council will create safer and more welcoming spaces for young people by improving access to youth-friendly health and wellbeing services, promoting positive mental health and online safety, and delivering programs that encourage respectful relationships. Council will also provide free and low-cost activities and activate community spaces so young people have safe places to connect, socialise and participate.
Education, skills and employment pathways	Respondents wanted stronger local pathways for young people to build skills, gain experience and access education or employment.	Council will strengthen pathways to education and employment through apprenticeships, traineeships, and partnerships with schools, universities and training providers. The Strategy also supports employment readiness, practical life skills, creative industry opportunities and financial literacy programs to help young people build confidence and independence.
Accessibility and transport	Transport was seen as a barrier to young people accessing activities, services, study, work and social opportunities.	Council will advocate for improved public transport and ensure young people's voices inform transport planning and submissions. The Strategy also supports improved walking and cycling connections, road safety education and better communication about available programs, services and opportunities.
Creative, social and recreational opportunities	Feedback supported more creative, social and recreational activities that help young people connect and feel part of their community.	Council will provide more free and affordable opportunities for young people to connect, be active and participate in community life. This includes delivering programs and events such as Youth Day Out, Youth Week activities, inclusive community events, creative arts programs and youth-led exhibitions that celebrate diversity, creativity and young people's contributions.

What's next?

Feedback received during public exhibition is being reviewed and considered as the Strategy is finalised. The final Youth Strategy will be reported back to Council on 25 August for consideration and adoption.

Find out more and stay up to date at

<https://www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/youth-strategy-2026-2031>

July 2026

Appendix

This appendix contains verbatim comments provided during consultation through the online survey and email submissions. It is included to ensure full transparency of community feedback. All comments have been de-identified and or redacted to protect respondent privacy. Not all submissions include written comments as some provided feedback only through the Quick Poll.

Source	Submission
Online	Opportunities, skills and secure futures Work Experience opportunities for older high school students can broaden their perspective and have a lasting influence on future career paths. Helping high schools and busy teachers establish links to local businesses and workplaces may be something the council could help facilitate. Sustainable and green futures - This area is really broad. One area of focus could be educating young people about recycling. Many years ago when recycling first started on the Central Coast, there were education campaigns. This was long before the youth of today were even born. Unless recycling is modelled at school or at home, kids have no idea. Recycling bins can be found in shopping centres but not in school playgrounds. Maybe a reeducation campaign through Council; maybe involving competitions etc. There's lots of ideas online. https://cleaneuropenetwork.eu/en/blog/20-million-children-are-reshaping-our-world-for-the-better/anc/ https://raceagainstwaste.org/en Active, connected and affordable living - Often teenagers can't participate in activities through lack of transport. Maybe a council run minibus which could help kids participate in creative or sporting activities. Belonging, inclusion and voice Get a youth band to play in the Japanese Gardens in East Gosford. We recently saw this in a town in Europe and it was wonderful. This would be a great way to encourage community engagement, and an appreciation for culture and the arts.
Online	Ourimbah University should be relocated to Gosford CBD The University should offer courses that build and strengthen our young people, such as medical, Teaching, Artificial Intelligence and Electrical Engineering to name a few. Our TAFE needs to focus on building and construction trades, Computer sciences and hospitality. While the above are only a sample of course recommendations, Artificial Intelligence is moving at an exponential rate. Our young people have amazing skills that just need to be tuned and promoted. The relocation of the University would also be an enormous boost for Gosford CBD

	I am sure there is a parcel of land within close proximity to the CBD that could accomodate this.. The above is the WHAT & WHY we just need some strong advocacy to the HOW & WHEN.
Online	Teens/youths need safe and free places to "hang"! Cannot stand toddler/kid play spaces being taken over by teens that are vandalising and inappropriate language and behaviour while I am at the play space with my 3 year old! It is horrible! Teens like to hang out, they don't want to hang at home - give them a safe space that is not a toddler park or a shopping centre!
Online	You guys did a great job putting this together - well done! I especially like the Y4Y program. An Interesting note on the 25% statistic on single-parent households and the high levels of mental health issues in comparison to the state average. Thank you for your work so far- looking forward to seeing the fruits of your labour! :)
Online	Education & basic skills for all provides the critical elements for all young people.
Online	It's almost the same price to live in Sydney city and the Central Coast - with very limited things to do on the Central Coast. Little to no nightlife without travelling 1H + to Newcastle, no activities that are affordable for people with kids, and even if you do try and cheap out and go camping, most of the 4wd tracks / trails are closed. Our main city's are overrun by junkies, council don't care about the roads causing damage to multiple cars from potholes, and refuse to take any accountability. I'm looking forward to seeing a change in council at the next elections, hopefully we can bring back what the coast once was.
Online	Current community programs such as discovered and battle of the bands are a great way to start and continue this vision. Other initiatives such as twilight are also another great way to support creative young people and their communities outside of competition. The strategy should take note of these helpful programs and do more. Age should also be something to consider extending in regards to providing opportunities as many creatives from marginalised backgrounds don't get a start in the industry until they're older due to systemic and SES barriers. Considering CALD and disabled/neurodivergent communities in this is quite important also. Age extention (I.e if someone is older than 24 but younger than 30 they're still a young person). Providing work opportunities guided by industry and fair compensation standards as well as guiding local community business and creative venues on how to pay young people fairly for their creative work should also be within these focus areas (I.e., super). Providing young people with access to professional development, workshop and direct support opportunities to build a professional portfolio/resume. Working with community businesses that value diversity and providing equitable

	opportunity for people to be welcomed to perform for community events, prioritising local talent and ensuring diverse line ups. Providing grant opportunities for marginalised communities to work on their creative projects with other community businesses.
Online	Want to feel safe
Online	We are seeing very high increased levels of violence among youth and sexual assaults. We need more youth activities during school holidays, Afterhours and weekends.
Email	Draft Central Coast Youth Strategy 2026-2031: Submission Introduction The Woy Woy Peninsula Residents Association (PRA) welcomes the Draft Central Coast Youth Strategy 2026–2031 and appreciates the work that has gone into its development. The Strategy demonstrates strong engagement with young people to gain a clear understanding of the issues they identify as important. PRA commends Council on the breadth of consultation undertaken to reach young people — including workshops, school engagement, pop-ups, surveys and social media. Strategy Structure and Key Focus Areas PRA supports the way the Strategy is structured around clear focus areas. The themes of belonging and inclusion, wellbeing and safety, opportunity and skills, active and affordable living, environmental sustainability and strong partnership provide a coherent framework for addressing the diverse needs of young people across the region. They reflect issues raised consistently by young people such as mental health pressures, cost of living impacts, transport barriers and access to education, employment and safe spaces. Peninsula Context PRA supports the Strategy’s direction and encourages Council to ensure it works effectively for all communities, including the Peninsula. Local young people often face additional challenges such as limited transport options, fewer youth-friendly spaces and reduced access to services close to home. Addressing these place-based needs will help ensure the Strategy has meaningful impact where it is most needed across the region. Recent informal community feedback gathered by PRA highlights several specific and urgent gaps on the Peninsula that are not yet fully reflected in the draft Strategy. They include: • A complete lack of a modern, youth-led indoor space. Young people report that existing facilities are outdated, sport-centric or designed for younger children. A co-designed, contemporary youth hub is a priority.

- Limited access to essential services and activities. Teens routinely travel to Gosford, Erina or further for driving tests, indoor recreation, rock climbing and creative activities, reinforcing a sense that the Peninsula is underserved.
- Few non-sport, creative or social options. Young people who do not skate or play sport have no suitable venue to relax, create art, play music or spend time with friends. Indoor social spaces with Wi-Fi, power and flexible use are a major gap.
- Loss of youth identity and limited youth-friendly events. Community members expressed a desire to rebuild a sense of youth culture through open mic nights, swaps, sustainability events and other youth-centred programming.
- Barriers to employment pathways. Schools welcome local businesses offering work experience, but careers advisors are overwhelmed. A stronger coordinating role from Council would help connect businesses and schools.
- Lack of nature-based and adventure activities. Young people expressed interest in local free-camping or adventure-style experiences, similar to Brooklyn Dam, which are currently unavailable on the Peninsula.

These insights highlight the need for stronger place-based actions within the Strategy to ensure Peninsula young people are not further disadvantaged.

Funding

PRA encourages Council to outline clear funding pathways to support delivery, particularly in high-need areas such as the Peninsula where place-based actions will require dedicated resourcing. Without clear investment, the Strategy's goals may not translate into meaningful outcomes for communities experiencing the most significant service gaps.

Strengthening the Strategy

To further strengthen the Strategy, PRA sees value in:

- Clearer recognition of priority areas.
- More specific local actions tailored to community needs.
- Inclusion of measurable outcomes and an implementation pathway.

These additions would help ensure the Strategy responds directly to the Peninsula's identified gaps — particularly the absence of youth spaces, limited access to services, and lack of creative and social opportunities.

Belonging, Inclusion and Voice

PRA supports a Strategy that promotes belonging, inclusion and voice for all young people.

It is essential to ensure that every young person — regardless of where they live — can access safe spaces, opportunities and support. Strengthening place-based actions will help ensure that Peninsula young people feel valued, connected and able to thrive.

	Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy. PRA looks forward to continuing to work with Council to help create a region where young people feel valued, connected and able to thrive.
--	---