

Central Coast Youth
Strategy 2026-2030

Community Engagement Report

April 2026



Central
Coast
Council



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What's this report about?

Central Coast Council is working on a new Youth Strategy for 2026-2030. To make sure the Strategy reflects the voices of young people, we asked young people aged 12-24, youth sector professionals and interested community members to share what matters to them, and how Council can make the Coast even better for young people. This report captures how we connected with the community, who we heard from and what you told us.

What is a Youth Strategy?

The Youth Strategy is Council's plan for the next 5 years. It sets out how Council will work with young people, youth services, schools and the community to create programs, spaces and events that matter to young people.

Council's goal is to make sure the Central Coast is a place where young people feel supported, included and heard. This Strategy helps guide decisions, funding and partnerships so that youth voices shape what happens in our region.

It's more than a document, it's a commitment to make the Central Coast a place where young people thrive.



How we connected

Engagement

- **Online survey** - 179 responses from 124 young people, 32 community members and 12 youth sector professionals
- **5 community workshops** – 172 participants
 - 4 targeted workshops with First Nations young people, culturally and linguistically diverse young people, young people living with disability and youth sector professionals.
 - 1 workshop with high school students at the Youth 4 Youth forum
- **Pop-up** – Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, The Entrance Campus – 500 attendees and 123 participants
- **Pre-consultation survey** – 58 responses
- **Online ideas board** – 24 participants

Communication

- **Organic social media** – reach of 26,924 with 225 interactions
- **Meta** – reach of 128,328 with 1,202 interactions
- **Council eNews** – opened by 11,600 subscribers
- **Coast Connect Print** – readership of 62,000
- **Targeted stakeholder emails** – delivered to 2,063



Ideas that stuck

Across 5 workshops, we gathered 651 post-it notes packed with your ideas and feedback. Every single one was captured and carefully analysed – yes, all of them! Now, they're laying the foundation for the Youth Strategy.



You dropped your thoughts, we dropped the Beats!

Shoutout to Sam and Arielle, our headphone competition winners!

Who we heard from

From workshops and pop-ups to surveys and idea boards – we connected with 556 people!

We heard from people with all kinds of experiences and ideas. Each voice adds something unique, and knowing who shared their views helps us see how the mix of perspectives shaped the feedback.

Activity	Participants
First Nations young people workshop	25
Culturally and linguistically diverse young people workshop	12
Young people living with disability workshop	35
Y4Y forum	55
Youth sector workshop	45
Pop-up	123
Online survey	179
Pre-consultation survey	58
Ideas board	24
Total	556

Online survey

Age

From the survey we heard the most from young people aged 12-17 and 18-24. A smaller group of people 25-34, and the remaining respondents were over 35.

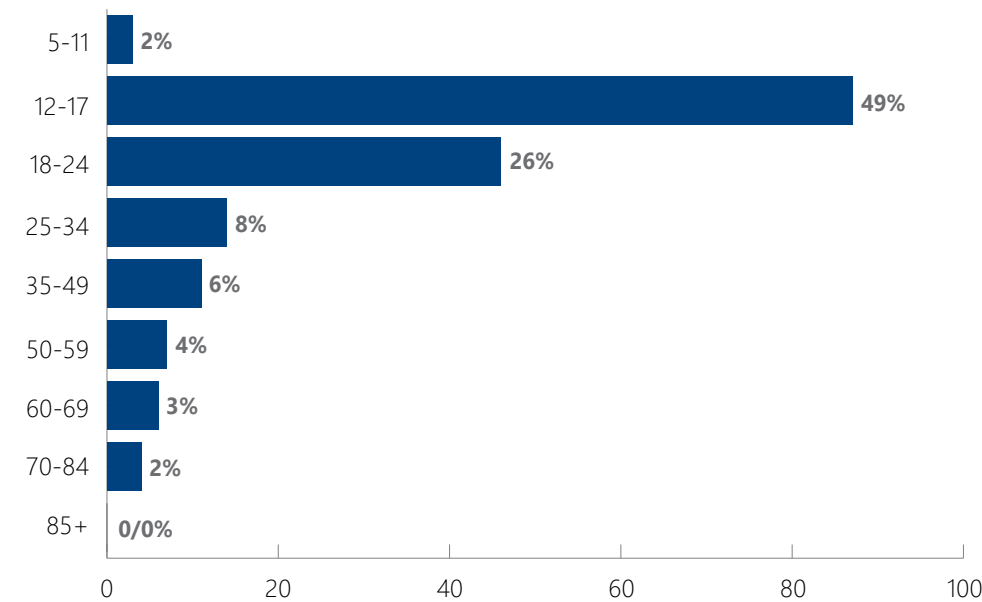


Figure 1: Age of survey respondents Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 178 responses

Gender

Most respondents identified as women, followed by men, and a small percentage selected other or prefer not to say. No respondents identified as non-binary.

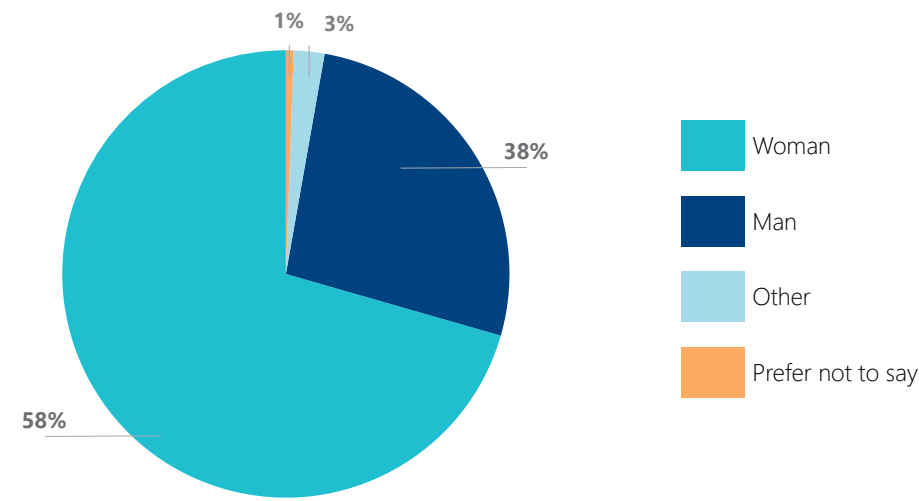


Figure 2: Gender of survey respondents Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 176 responses

Diverse voices

Most respondents did not identify with any of the demographic groups outlined in the survey. However, we did hear from those who identify as LGBTQIA+, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, people living with disability and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as seen in the graph below.

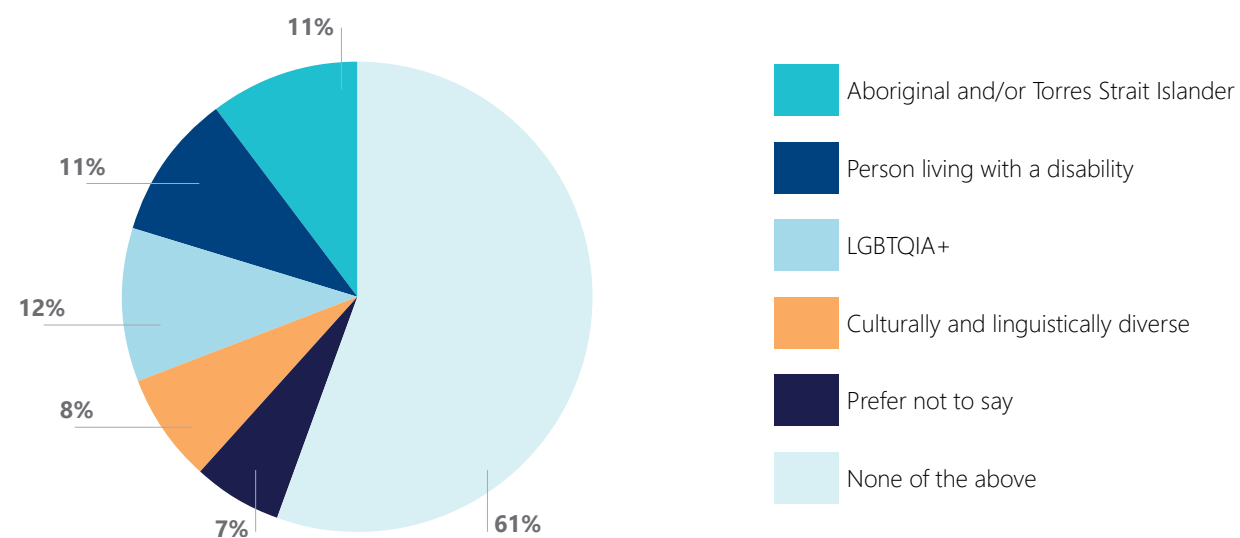
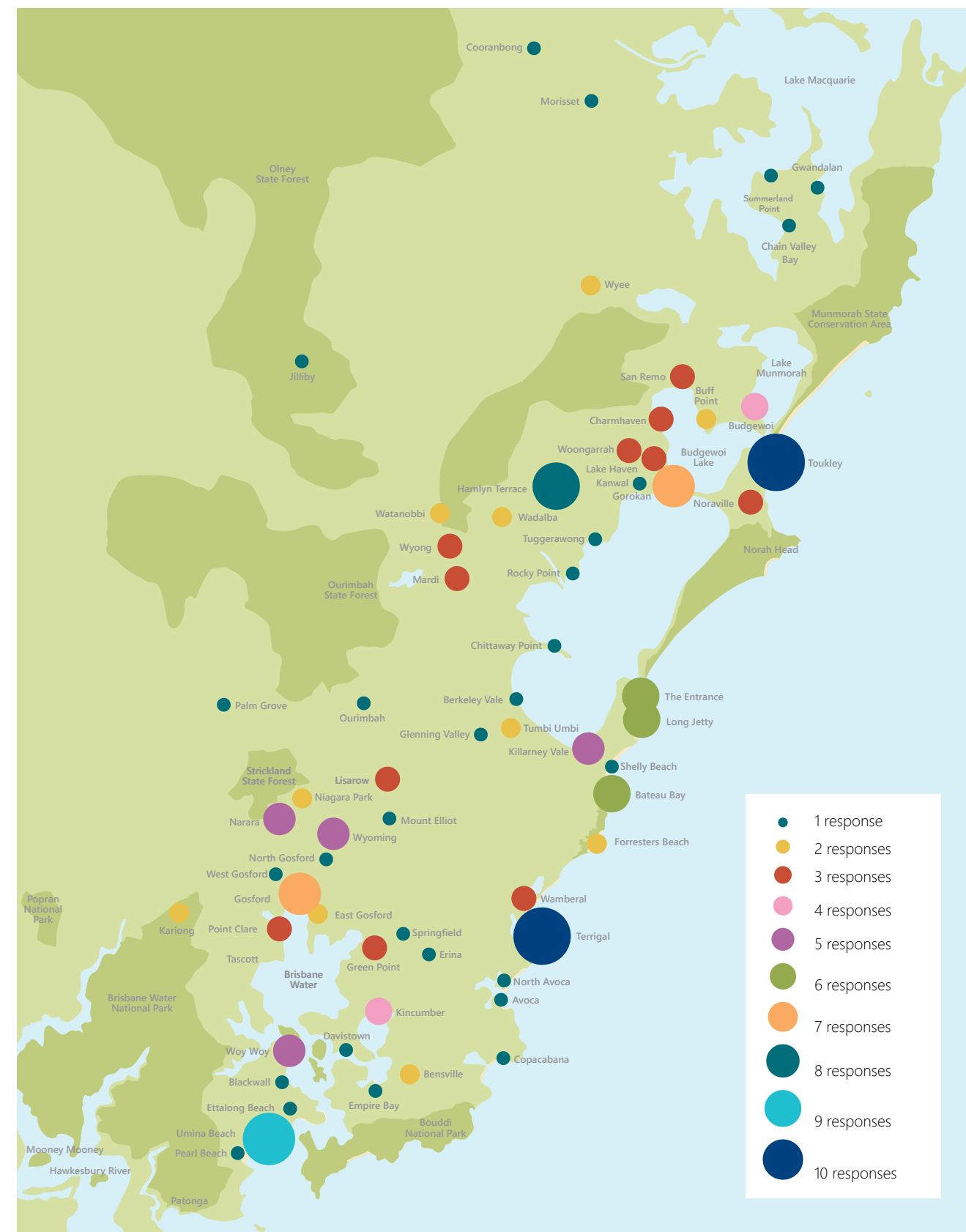


Figure 3: Answer to 'Do you identify as any of the following' Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 171 responses



Where ideas flowed

We heard from voices all over the Central Coast, with the highest number of responses coming from Terrigal, Toukley, Umina Beach and Hamlyn Terrace.



What you told us

So, across all engagement activities, what did you tell us?

We took every piece of feedback gathered, from post-it notes to survey responses, tagged it and sorted it into themes. From this analysis, 6 key themes emerged to paint a picture of what matters most to young people.

Key Themes

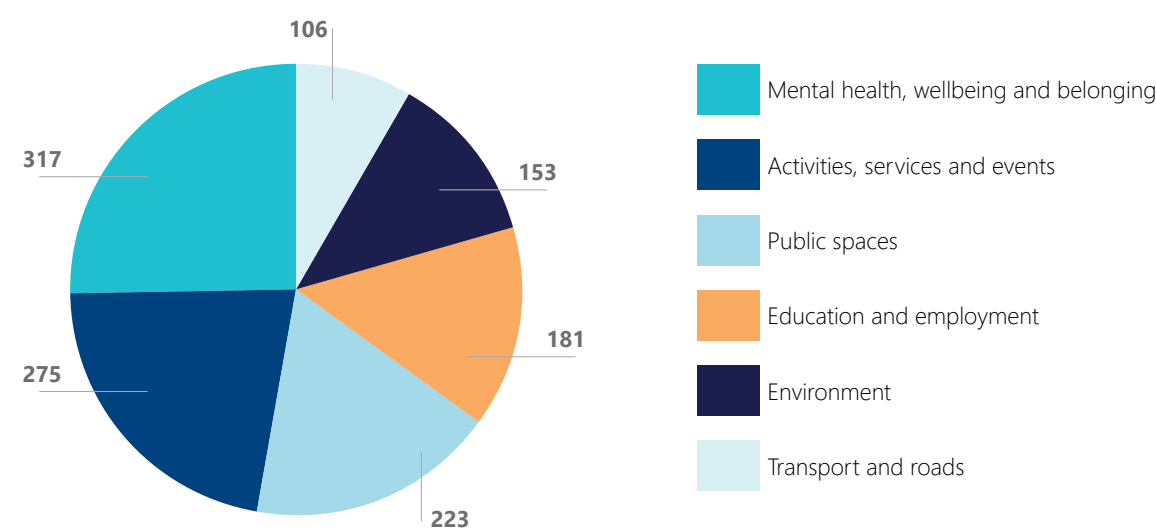


Figure 4: Key themes coded from workshops, online survey, & ideas board, August to October, total comments: 855 *Comments could cover multiple themes.



Mental health, wellbeing and belonging

When we look at key themes - mental health, wellbeing and belonging stood out the most, being mentioned 317 times.

- Belonging, family and friends are very important to young people
- A strong sense of community is something many young people love about the Coast
- Young people want to see more awareness and support for their mental health
- Diversity and inclusion matter to many young people, who want to see more education, acceptance, support and safe spaces for people with different backgrounds and identities

Key themes

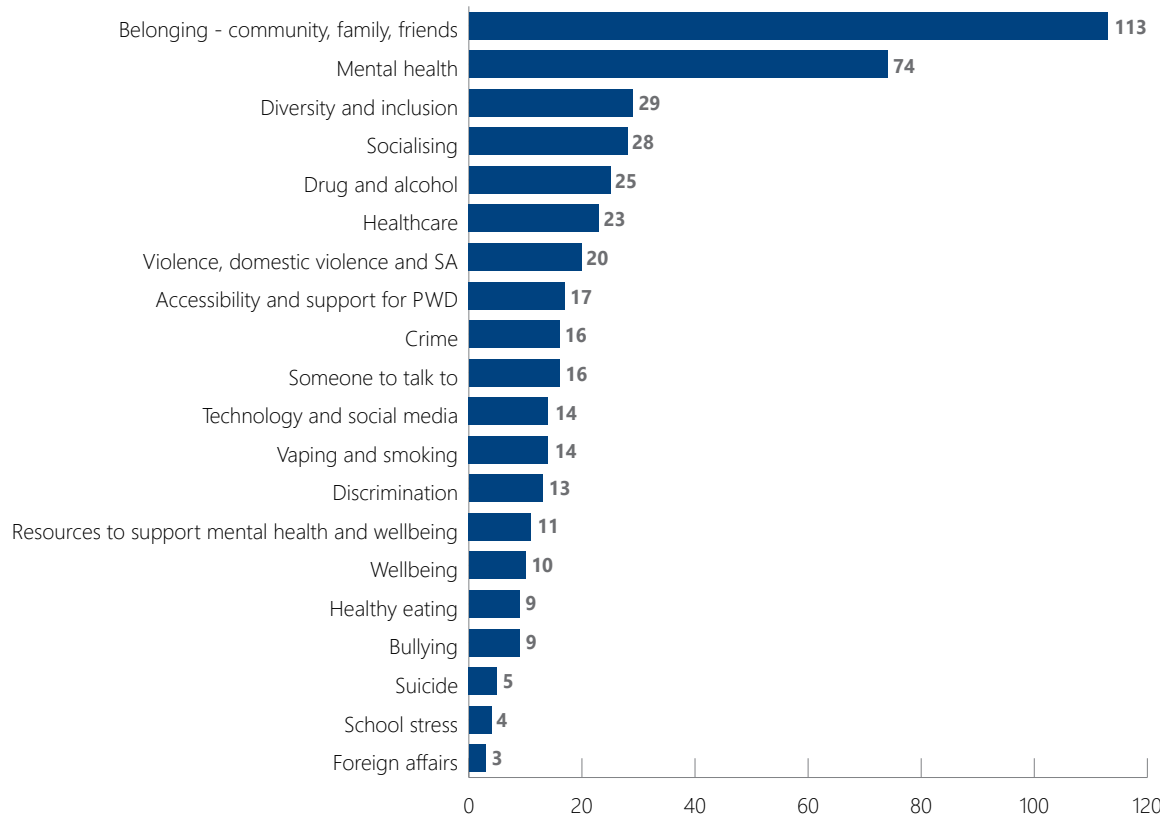


Figure 5: Key themes relating to mental health, wellbeing and belonging from workshops, online survey and ideas board, August to October, total comments: 317 *Comments could cover multiple themes.

You said

“What I love about the Central Coast is the sense of community it has, wherever you go there is always something to go see or do. With many markets, beaches, cafes and places with live music you can just always find such an awesome sense of community with so many lovely locals.” (Young person, online survey)

“Make sure we really reinforce the whole idea of getting help does not make you weak and make sure there is safe spaces to talk to people without worry of it getting out.” (Young person, online survey)

“[There should be] More acceptance and support for people struggling with their sexual, cultural or gender identity (Young person, online survey)

“I feel accepted and included in my community”

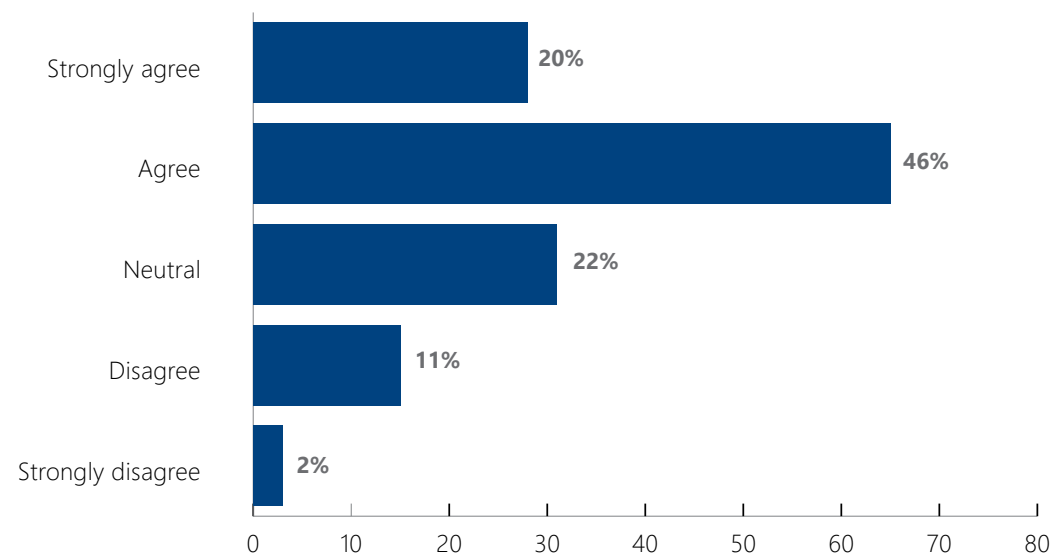


Figure 6: 'I feel accepted and included in my community' responses Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 142 responses

“I know where to go to seek help when I am struggling”

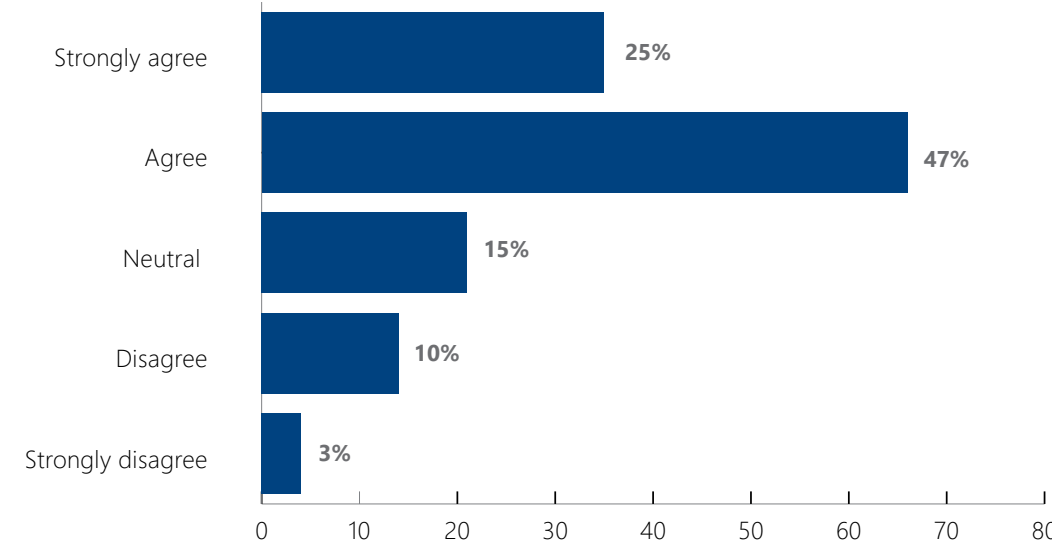


Figure 7: 'I know where to go to seek help when I am struggling' responses Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 140 responses



Activities, services and events

The second most common theme was activities, services and events, with 275 mentions.

- Young people want more low cost and fun things to do, including sports/fitness activities and creative/live music events
- Respondents want to see better access to services and programs that support young people
- The Youth Sector would like to see Council provide more support to organisations and encourages stronger collaboration with Council

Key themes

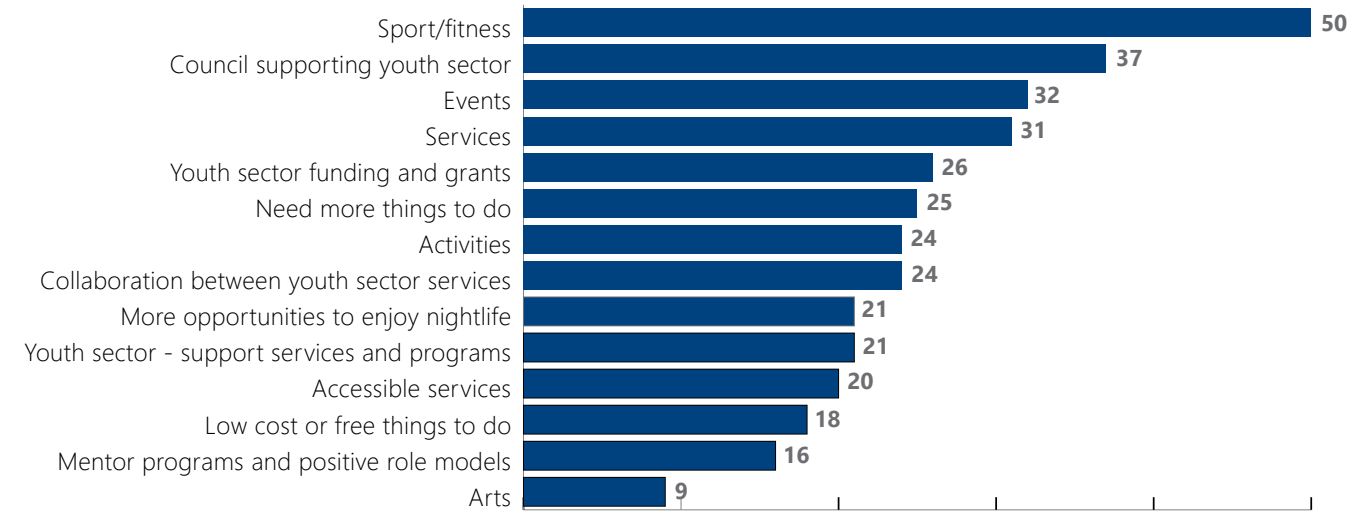


Figure 8: Key themes relating to activities, services and events from workshops, online survey, and ideas board, August to October, total comments: 275 *Comments could cover multiple themes.

You said

- “More recreational activities to bring us together” (Young person, survey)
- “Have more activities/things to do for teens/pre-teens that don’t cost any money or a small amount of money and is easily accessible.” (Young person, survey)
- “Live music. Places and opportunities to go see bands. More opportunities, venues to perform at. An improvement of pay for artists.” (Young person, survey)
- “Access to services for free or limited cost also knowing what services are available to them.” (Youth sector, survey)
- “Youth events such as youth day out, battle of the bands etc - it’s a fun space for young people to connect and have fun.” (Young person, survey)
- “Work together better! (make us)” (Youth sector workshop)

Public Spaces

Public spaces was the third most popular theme, with 223 mentions.

- Young people enjoy visiting the beach, parks and shopping centres the most
- Young people want more spaces to hang out where they feel safe and welcome, particularly women and girls
- Young people would like to see more parks, ovals, sporting grounds and facilities tailored to their interests and spread across the Coast

Key themes

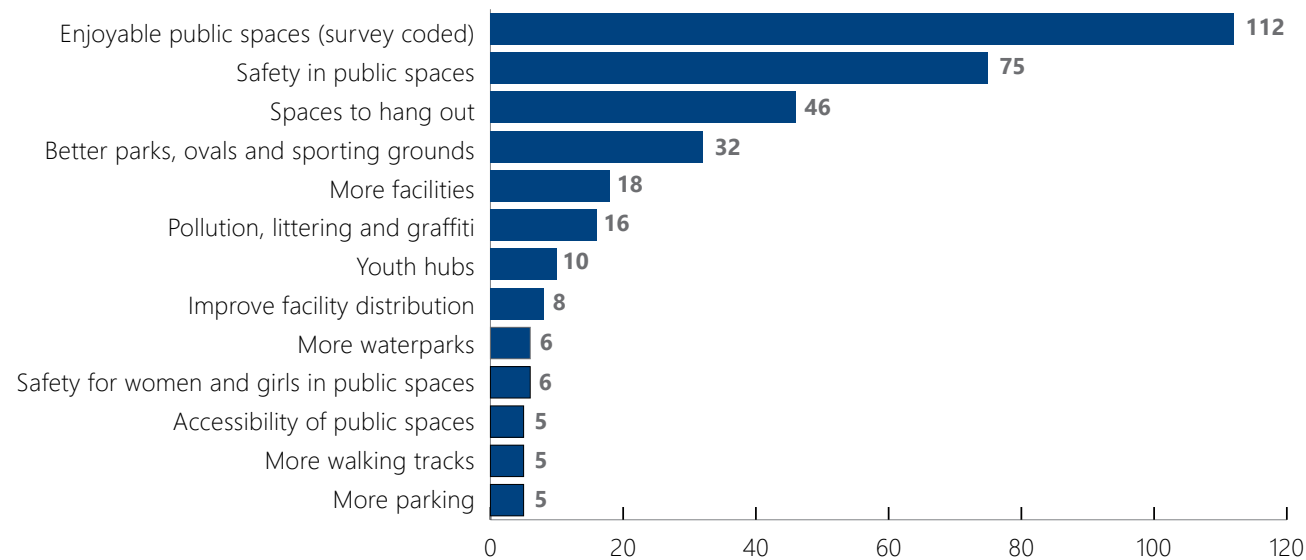


Figure 9: Key themes relating to public spaces from workshops, online survey, and ideas board, August to October, total comments: 223 *Comments could cover multiple themes.

You said

"I typically visit Shelly Beach quite often and I've always felt safe and welcomed there. After being at work all day, I enjoy being able to get some sun and fresh sea air. 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." (Young person, survey)

"I dream of safe & free spaces for young people to spend their time together, offline & face to face with their friends. (Young person, ideas board)"

"Parks and recreational centres targeted towards teenage and younger adult interests as opposed to young children. Many parks or public areas feel targeted towards young children or dogs and often feel unwelcoming towards groups of teenagers." (Young person, survey)

What public spaces do you enjoy?

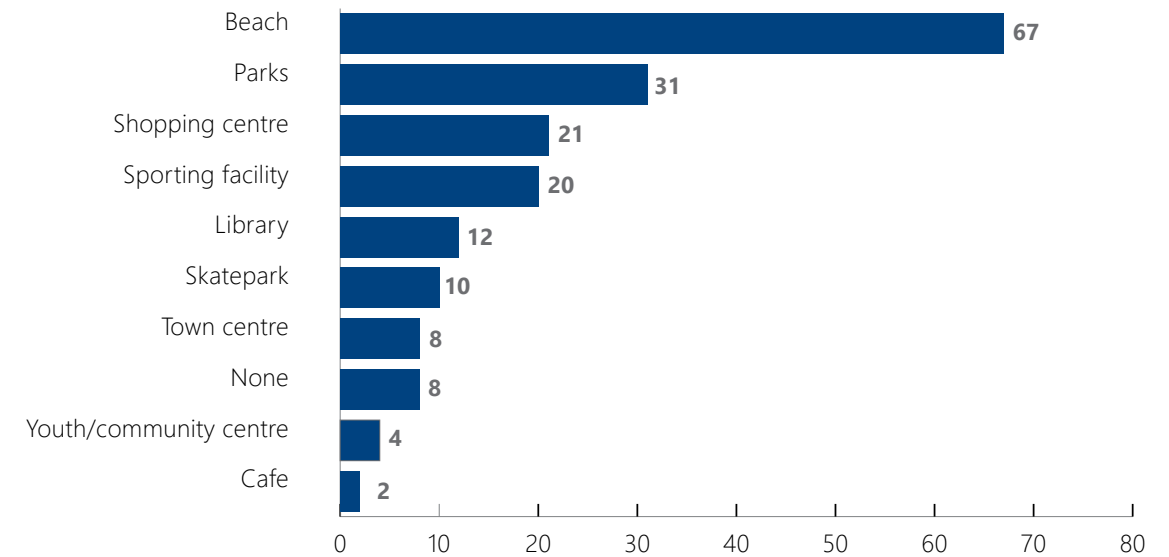


Figure 10: 'What public spaces do you enjoy' responses Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 138 responses *Comments could cover multiple themes.

"Public spaces in my area are safe and welcoming for young people"

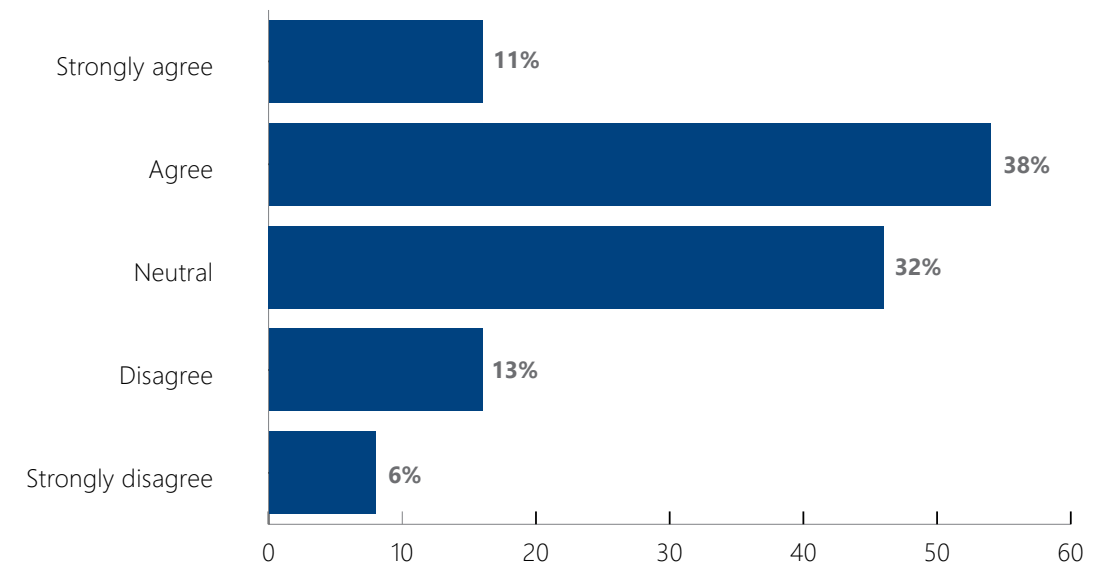


Figure 11: 'Public spaces in my area are safe and welcoming for young people' responses Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 140 responses



Education and employment

Topics related to education and employment received 181 mentions.

- Young people want to see action on cost-of-living and housing pressures to reduce stress and insecurity
- Young people would like to see more employment and career support, and opportunities to build skills and experience
- Limited education and employment availability on the Coast can be a challenge for young people, who would like to see improved access and opportunities

Key themes

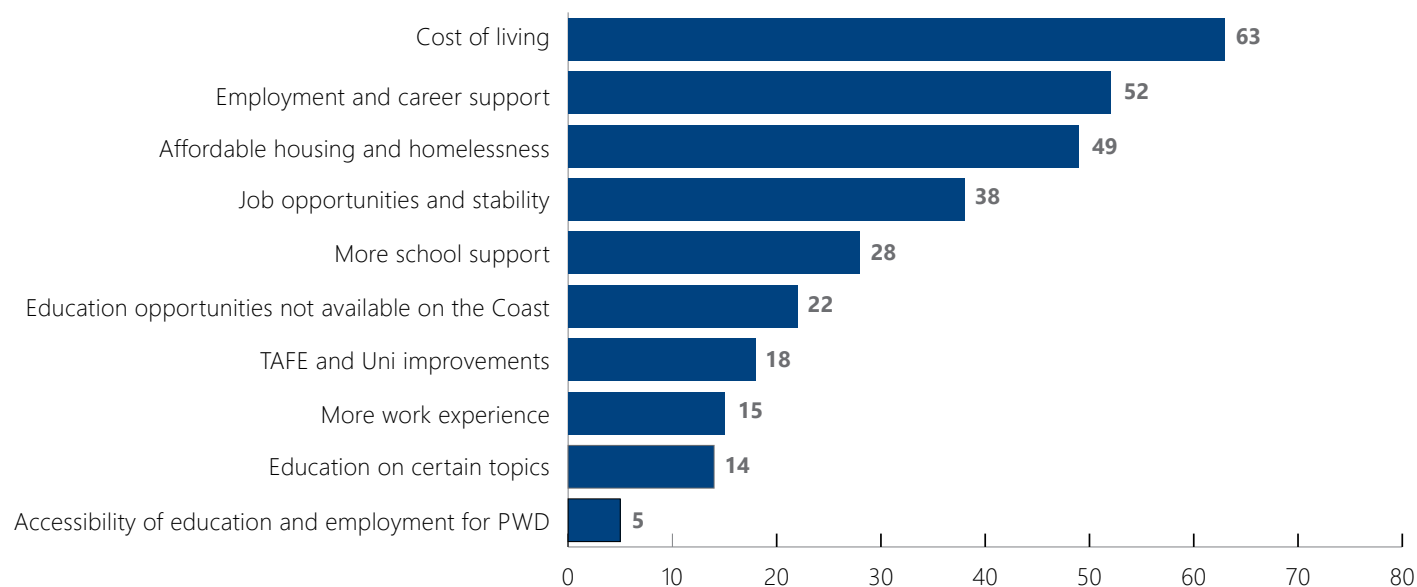


Figure 12: Key themes relating to education and employment from workshops, online survey, and ideas board, August to October, total comments: 181 *Comments could cover multiple themes.

You said

"I don't want to struggle every day to live I have 2 part-time jobs, have to travel to Newcastle for work and uni, and can barely afford to live a fun life. I'm bored but also have no money or time left to have fun and be in my twenties." (Young person, survey)

"A community centre where I can learn new skills like woodworking, electronics, website development and design, computer animation. Lack of skills and high cost of TAFE means unemployment for me." (Young person, survey)

"Only having one university option offering a small amount of degrees. Same applies to TAFE with minimal courses available without travel. More access to tutors and study groups" (Young person, survey)

"I feel confident about my future career and/or education options"

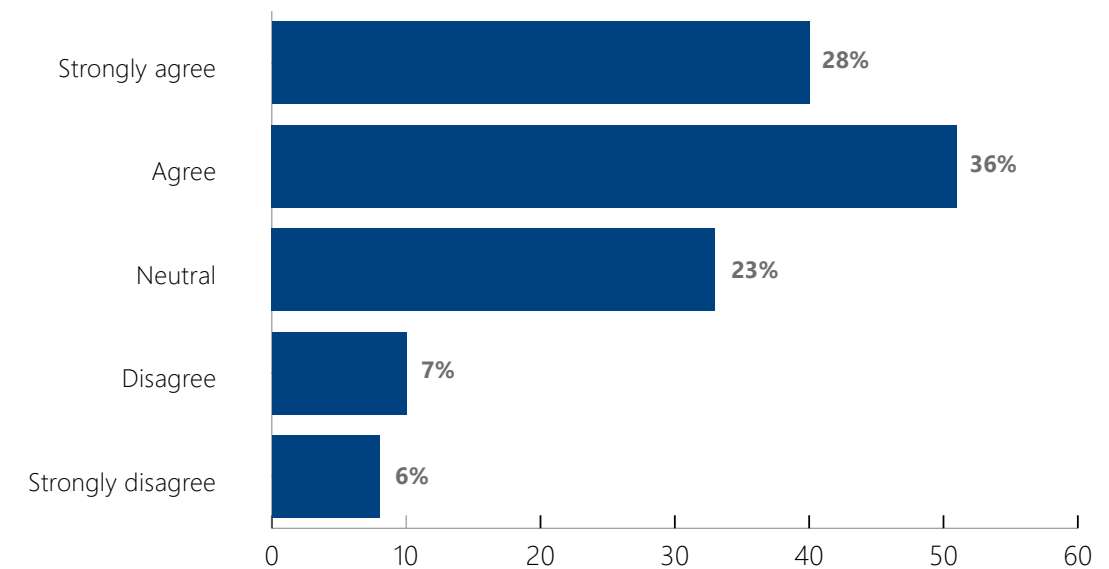


Figure 13: 'I feel confident about my future career/education options' responses Survey on Your Voice Our Coast, 1 October to 31 October, 142 responses

Environment

The environment was mentioned 153 times.

- Overwhelmingly, young people love the beaches and nature on the Coast
- Some respondents mentioned the need to act on climate change
- Others mentioned issues such as flooding and bushfires and highlighted the need to keep the environment clean and protect our waterways

Environment

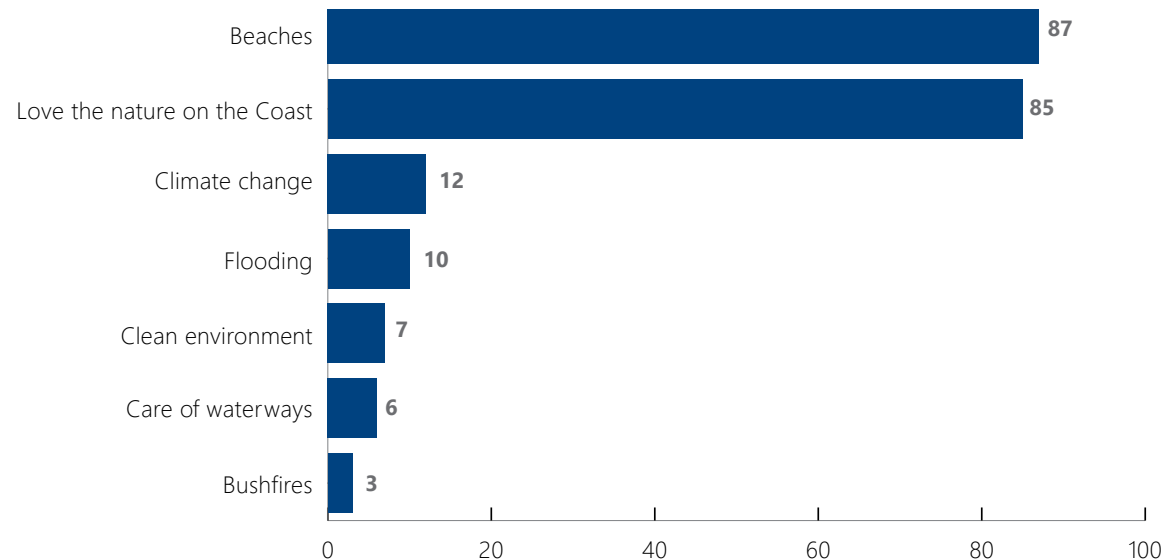


Figure 14: Key themes relating to environment from workshops, online survey, and ideas board, August to October, total comments: 153 *Comments could cover multiple themes.

Transport and roads

Lastly, transport and roads were mentioned 106 times

- Young people mentioned that public transport on the Coast needs improving
- Young people want to see a transport system that is accessible, reliable, affordable and safe
- Potholes are a concern for young people, particularly for learner drivers

Transport and roads

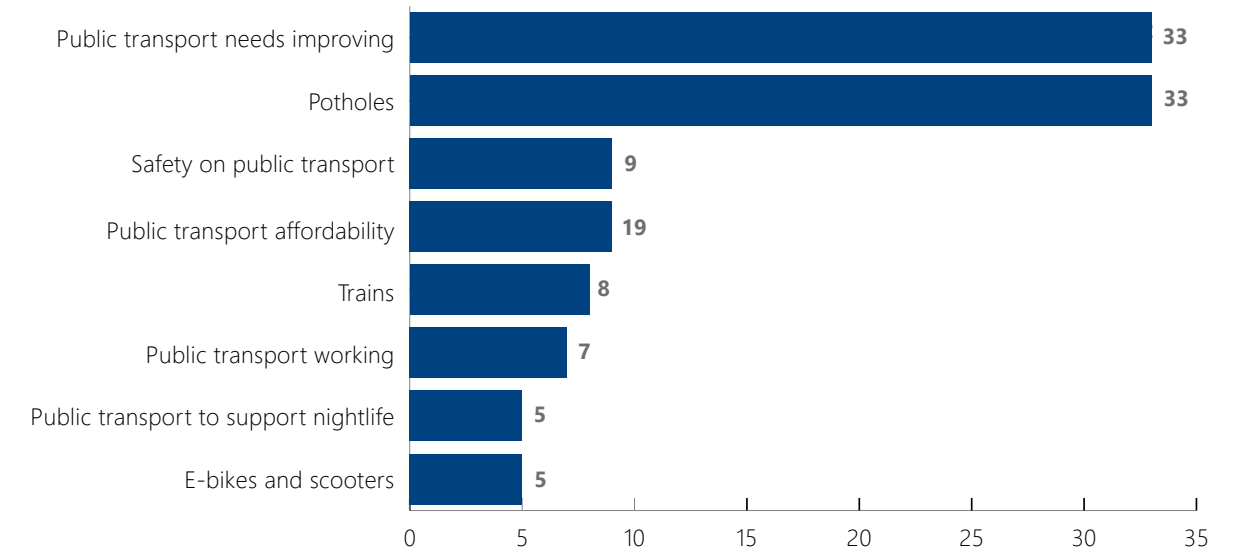


Figure 15: Key themes relating to transport and roads from workshops, online survey, and ideas board, August to October, total comments: 106 *Comments could cover multiple themes.

You said

Our access to nature - beaches, parks and bushlands! We have it all (Young person, survey)

For me personally the environment and keeping it clean and helping it through climate change is very important. Many people have ignored climate change but it is growing at a rapid rate and it is not something that can be ignored as the planet needs help. (Young person, survey)

Keep local waterways clean and healthy for marine animals so I can keep fishing and enforce illegal fish laws!! (Young person, The Entrance High)

You said

"Accessibility - being able to get around the coast efficiently and safely is vitally important. When I was a teenager I depended on bus services to get to work or get to the shops, and had extremely limited options that took an extremely long time to travel on and only came once an hour." (Young person, survey)

"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 person, survey)

"PLEASE THE ROADS!!!! Learning to drive is already hard enough. Please fix the potholes. It feels like playing Mario kart trying to dodge the massive craters in the road every few metres." (Young person, survey)



Next Steps

Thank you to every young person, youth worker and community member who shared what matters most.

Your voices are at the heart of this work, and we are now deep in the feedback, using your ideas and lived experiences to shape the new Youth Strategy.

Stay tuned!

This won't be the only chance to share your thoughts and ideas for our new Youth Strategy.

Once a draft is ready, we'll bring it back to you for more feedback - because we want to make sure we get it right!

Follow the Your Voice Our Coast Youth Strategy page to sign up for updates and be the first to know when the draft Youth Strategy is open for feedback.

Timeline

1. **Community consultation**
You shared your feedback, we listened
2. **Develop draft Strategy**
We're turning your feedback into our plan for the next 5 years
3. **Community feedback on draft Strategy**
Take a look at the strategy and tell us if we got it right
4. **Youth Strategy finalised and adopted**
Councillors review the strategy and it gets formally adopted
5. **Youth Strategy 2026-2030 delivered**
6. **We turn the plan into action!**



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