



Murrindindi
Shire Council

DRAFT MURRINDINDI YOUTH STRATEGY 2012-2015 SUMMARY DOCUMENT



Introduction

Young people are greatly valued by the Murrindindi Shire Council and the wider community. Given young people's importance, Council initiated the development of a community based Youth Strategy that would capture the needs, hopes and aspirations of young people and support young people to achieve their goals and be active and valued community members.

The consultation process engaged 544 young people (a 29% response rate), service providers, parents and community groups. Three groups of 'youth researchers' from Kinglake, Yea and Alexandra strongly guided the development of the strategy by creating the youth survey and informing and conducting research in their communities.

Young people shared similar concerns as their state and national counterparts do with bullying, drugs, success at school, smoking and transport amongst the issues most mentioned.

Murrindindi Shire youth value their communities and have a strong connection to them. They treasure the nature, open space and small localities that they live in. Most cherished are the people in their communities with friends, family and friendly community members rating as the things that they love most about where they live.

Aims of the Youth Strategy:

The Murrindindi Youth Strategy will provide a framework for Council to facilitate and support the key priorities highlighted from the consultation along with young people and key community stakeholders.

Importantly, the Murrindindi Youth Strategy will require a community-based approach including young people, service providers, community groups, schools and parents working together to provide the best outcomes for young people.

Crucial to this Strategy is the recognition of the continuing impact of the 2009 bush fires on young people, their families and their communities. The trauma, loss of life, homes and community infrastructure has had an ongoing effect on young people which should be carefully considered when planning for the future.



There are six key focus areas within the Murrindindi Youth Strategy:

- Key Area 1: Health & Wellbeing
- Key Area 2: Education, Training & Employment
- Key Area 3: Recreation, Activities & Events
- Key Area 4: Leadership, Participation & Citizenship
- Key Area 5: Effective Services & Supports
- Key Area 6: Transportation

"I love my community and the nature surrounding it".

Key Area 1: Health & Well Being

Introduction

Health and well being is what young people in Murrindindi were most concerned about. Their health and well being concerns included issues such as bullying, cyber-bullying, mental health issues, self-harm, drugs, alcohol, body image, physical health, family conflict and eating disorders.

Young people said:

- 44.3% of all young people who completed the youth survey said they were concerned about bullying and 27.3% said they were concerned about cyber bullying
- 39.7% of young people surveyed said they were concerned about drugs
- 36.7% said smoking was an issue of concern
- 25.3% said that family conflict was a concern to them
- 25.3% said that body image was an issue of concern
- 23.6% said that alcohol was an issue that concerned them
- 20.4% said that the mental health of themselves or others was a concern
- 19.2% said their physical health was a concern
- 18% said that eating disorders were a concern to them
- 16.1% said self harm was a concern to them

Service Providers/Community Members said:

Service providers and community members want young people to be healthy and well. They said they would like:

- A holistic approach to supporting young people
- Improved parent engagement
- Improved access to specialist/visiting services
- Improved mental health support

“Bullying is stupid and needs to be stopped and mental health needs more funding and recognition”.



Our Commitment:

1. Conduct a shire wide mapping exercise of bullying awareness and education programs currently being delivered.
2. Undertake an evaluation of the Safe & Caring Communities model.
3. Develop and implement youth led and informed anti bullying interventions.
4. Conduct shire wide research into drug, alcohol and tobacco use to inform the development of targeted interventions.
5. Develop and implement youth informed interventions to address drug, alcohol and tobacco use.
6. Ensure that access to mental health support is available for young people, particularly young people who have experienced trauma as a result of the 2009 bushfires.
7. Identify and implement programs that will promote physical activity and healthy eating in young people.

Key Area 2: Education, Training & Employment

Introduction

Education, training and employment are important to the futures of young people across Murrindindi Shire. Young people were most concerned about keeping up with school work, having transport to access study and employment, finding jobs, career opportunities for the future and having an income.

Young people said:

- 38.4% of all young people who completed the youth survey said they were concerned about not keeping up with school work
- 38.4% said that they were currently looking for work
- 22.6% said that they were concerned about career/employment opportunities for the future
- 17% were concerned about financial pressures
- 18.2% of young people indicated that they planned on leaving school prior to completing year 12

Service Providers/Community Members said:

Service providers and community members want young people to have education, training and employment opportunities. They said they would like:

- More job/career opportunities
- More training/education options for young people
- Shire based alternative education options
- A High School in Kinglake

“We need more career/employment opportunities for the future”.

“We need a better working relationship between Council, businesses and the Economic Development Department to create more employment for young people”.



Our commitment:

1. Develop and implement career/job forums that feature small business start up information for year nine students
2. Develop and implement school mentoring/homework programs for students.
3. Investigate and develop flexible learning options for young people across Murrindindi Shire.
4. Examine education and training options that are currently available for young people living in Murrindindi Shire and work to improve the accessibility and range of options for young people.
5. Explore economic/business development initiatives that could offer increased employment opportunities for young people.
6. Offer workshops targeting young people for small business start up.
7. Increase the availability of work experience programs for young people.

Key Area 3: Recreation, Activities & Events

Introduction

Having things to do is important to young people across Murrindindi. Young people wanted access to more night time and weekend activities and events, youth friendly spaces and infrastructure in their communities that would provide recreation opportunities e.g. pools, skate parks and BMX tracks.

Young people said:

- 22% of young people said they didn't like that there was nothing to do in their community
- 31% said they would like better infrastructure where they live
- 25% said they would like more events and activities
- 4% said they would like youth friendly spaces

Service Providers/Community Members said:

Recreation, activities and events for young people were seen as important by service providers and community members alike. They said they would like:

- More sports and recreation facilities
- More alcohol free activities
- Youth Space
- Improved community facilities
- More interactive activities

"I would like to see increased access to services e.g. longer operating hours for libraries, gym and the leisure centre".

"Encourage young people to get together and do activities".

"Have more activities or fun youth days planned".



Our commitment:

1. Inform and engage parents to ensure young people are supported to access recreational activities and events.
2. Involve young people in the design and delivery of activities and events.
3. Investigate the extension of swimming pool opening hours.
4. Plan and develop a collaborative calendar of events for the year.
5. Source sustainable funding to allow for successful programs to be run long term.
6. Utilise technology to promote recreational activities and events to young people

Key Area 4: Leadership, Participation & Citizenship

Introduction

Being involved in community life and having a say in matters that affect them is important to young people living in the Murrindindi Shire. Young people want to be involved in the decisions that affect them and they want opportunities to learn and utilise leadership skills.

Young people said:

- 22% of young people surveyed said they had nothing to do
- 54.1% of young people said they were planning on leaving the area
- 11.4% of young people said they were concerned about having a voice in the community
- 3% said they would like to strengthen youth voice and participation

Service Providers/Community Members said:

Involving young people and encouraging and supporting youth leadership was seen as important by service providers and community members. They said they would like:

- Young people involved in decisions that affect them
- Improved youth engagement/participation
- Youth leadership programs
- Opportunities for young people to utilise their leadership skills

“We need to involve youth in decision making”.

“Give young people a chance to work on a project in the town”.



Our commitment:

1. Map existing leadership initiatives and programs currently being offered across the Shire.
2. Identify barriers to youth participation.
3. Develop a Citizenship Program that supports young people to understand Council and how they can get involved.
4. Develop a mechanism for connecting young people’s voice to Murrindindi Shire Council.
5. Formally recognise and celebrate youth leadership and achievements.
6. Investigate the opportunity for Men’s Sheds to deliver mentoring programs.
7. Engage service clubs to develop and implement leadership opportunities for young people.

Key Area 5: Effective Services & Supports

Introduction

Adolescence can be a time of change and challenge for young people. Having services and supports that can assist young people and their families is vital. Young people expressed the most concern about bullying, drugs, not keeping up with school work, smoking and family conflict. Importantly, young people and their parents/caregivers want services that are readily available and accessible across the geographic spread of the Shire.

Young people said:

- 44% of young people surveyed said that they were concerned about bullying
- 39.7% said they were concerned about drugs
- 38.4% said they were concerned about keeping up with their school work
- 25.3% said they were concerned about family conflict

Service Providers/Community Members said:

- 81.5% of service providers surveyed said that service provision in Murrindindi was 'good', but some improvement could be done
- 83.3% said that there were gaps in service provision
- 50% said that reduced funding from the Victorian Bushfire appeal fund would impact on their organisations ability to support young people across the Murrindindi Shire
- Service providers said they would like a more collaborative approach to supporting young people
- Community groups said they would like to see youth workers in each community

“Communication processes between schools, parents, agencies & RTO’s aren’t working as well as they could”.

“There is an imbalance in servicing for some areas; some places are serviced more than others”.



Our commitment:

1. Update Council’s Community Service Directory.
2. Create a coordinated visiting services calendar to better inform services, young people and their families of visiting service availability.
3. Investigate shared space or ‘hub options’ for services to utilise, particularly visiting services.
4. Strengthen governance and partnerships for youth service delivery.
5. Create an easy to use information sharing resource that identifies service providers and programs operating in the Murrindindi Shire Council.
6. Explore options for integrated service delivery.
7. Examine and develop service delivery options to ensure that services and supports are offered appropriately across the geographic expanse of the Shire.
8. Investigate ‘Youth Space’ options for young people across the Shire.

Key Area 6: Transportation

Introduction

Young people want to be able to get around independently. Having good transport to assist with engaging in recreation, employment and education was very important to young people in Murrindindi.

Young people said:

- 68.1% of young people surveyed were working or volunteering
- 36.7% said they were concerned about the lack of transport where they live
- 23% said that what they don't like about where they live is the isolation
- 22% said that what they don't like about where they live is that there is nothing to do
- 17% said if they could do one thing to make a difference to young people where they live they would improve transport

Service Providers/Community Members said:

Transportation is a key concern for service providers and community members. They said they would like:

- Public transport that links with education and employment
- Improved transport overall
- Creative transportation options explored
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"It's hard to find transport to get to TAFE and work".

"There is a lack of opportunity for training and a lack of transport to get to any training or work opportunities".



Our commitment:

1. Conduct further research with young people and their parents to better understand the issues surrounding transport.
2. Advocate for education and training timetabling options to match with current transportation timetables.
3. Develop creative community transportation options that utilise existing resources.
4. Advocate for increased transportation services across the Shire.
5. Review the use of community buses across the Shire to enable improved use of the resource.

Implementation of the Murrindindi Youth Strategy

It is proposed that the Youth Strategy be used as a living document that can adapt to the changing needs of communities and youth within the Murrindindi Shire Council. To maximise successful implementation of the Youth Strategy it is recommended that:

- 1) The Murrindindi Shire Council **Youth Partnership Group reform as a LGA Place Based Youth Governance Group** and guide the implementation of the **Youth Strategy Action Plan 2012-2015**. This would require a formal commitment from key agencies (through a MOU) and representation that reflects the geographic expanse of the Shire. Members would be required to have decision making authority for their organisation.
- 2) Murrindindi Shire Council seeks funding to employ a full time Youth Development Officer. This position would be responsible for youth planning, youth engagement and supporting the implementation of the Murrindindi Youth Strategy.
- 3) Formal partnerships be developed and utilised to enhance the capability and resources available to implement the strategic priorities and actions.
- 4) The Youth Strategy Action Plan be fully supported by Youth Partnership members.
- 5) Review the Youth Strategy Focus Area's and Actions yearly to gauge progress, prioritise and revise actions wherever required.

The work going forward from the Murrindindi Shire's Youth Strategy is work that requires the combined commitment of Council, schools, service providers and the wider community. It is essential that communities recognise the significance of young people and work collectively with Council to build a bright future for young people within the Shire.

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

-Henry Ford-