SHIRE OF York

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

and

ACTION PLAN 2026–2031



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of York acknowledges the Ballardong people of the Noongar Nation who are the Traditional Owners of this country and recognise their continuing connection to land, water, sky and culture. We pay our respects to all these people and their Elders past, present and emerging.



FOREWORD

In the Shire of York, our young people are at the heart of the region's future and their voices, ambitions and wellbeing are vital to our shared success.

This Youth Development Strategy is a five-year plan that reflects our deep commitment to supporting children and young people aged 0 to 24 across their diverse life stages from early childhood to young adulthood.

We know that strong beginnings, community connection and meaningful participation build strong futures. That's why this strategy was shaped by the experiences and insights of young people, families, educators, local services and community leaders.

The strong community spirit present in York provides many existing community and sporting groups catering to our young people for activities including various sports, playgroup, dance, story-time and many more.

We are proud to present this strategy as a guiding framework for positive change, and we look forward to working with our community to create an inclusive, inspiring and youth-friendly Shire for all.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shire of York's Youth Development Strategy and Action Plan 2026–2031 reflects a shared commitment to creating a connected, inclusive and vibrant Shire where children and young people are safe, supported, valued and empowered to thrive. Young people are central to York's future, and their wellbeing, participation and opportunities matter at every stage of life, from early childhood through to young adulthood.

This Strategy takes a whole-of-community approach to supporting young people aged 0 to 24, recognising that different life stages bring different needs, aspirations and challenges. It provides a clear framework to guide planning, services, infrastructure and partnerships that respond to those needs in meaningful and practical ways. Actions are organised across three focus areas that support safe early starts, empowered adolescence and strong futures for young adults.

The Strategy has been informed by engagement with young people, families, educators, service providers and community organisations across the Shire. While engagement has shaped the direction of this work, the focus of the Strategy is firmly on outcomes, action and long-term impact.

Through its roles as provider, facilitator and advocate, the Shire will embed a youth lens across Council decision-making and community life. This Strategy represents an ongoing commitment to working alongside young people to ensure York remains a place where they can grow, contribute and build confident futures.



Cr Chris Gibbs
Shire President



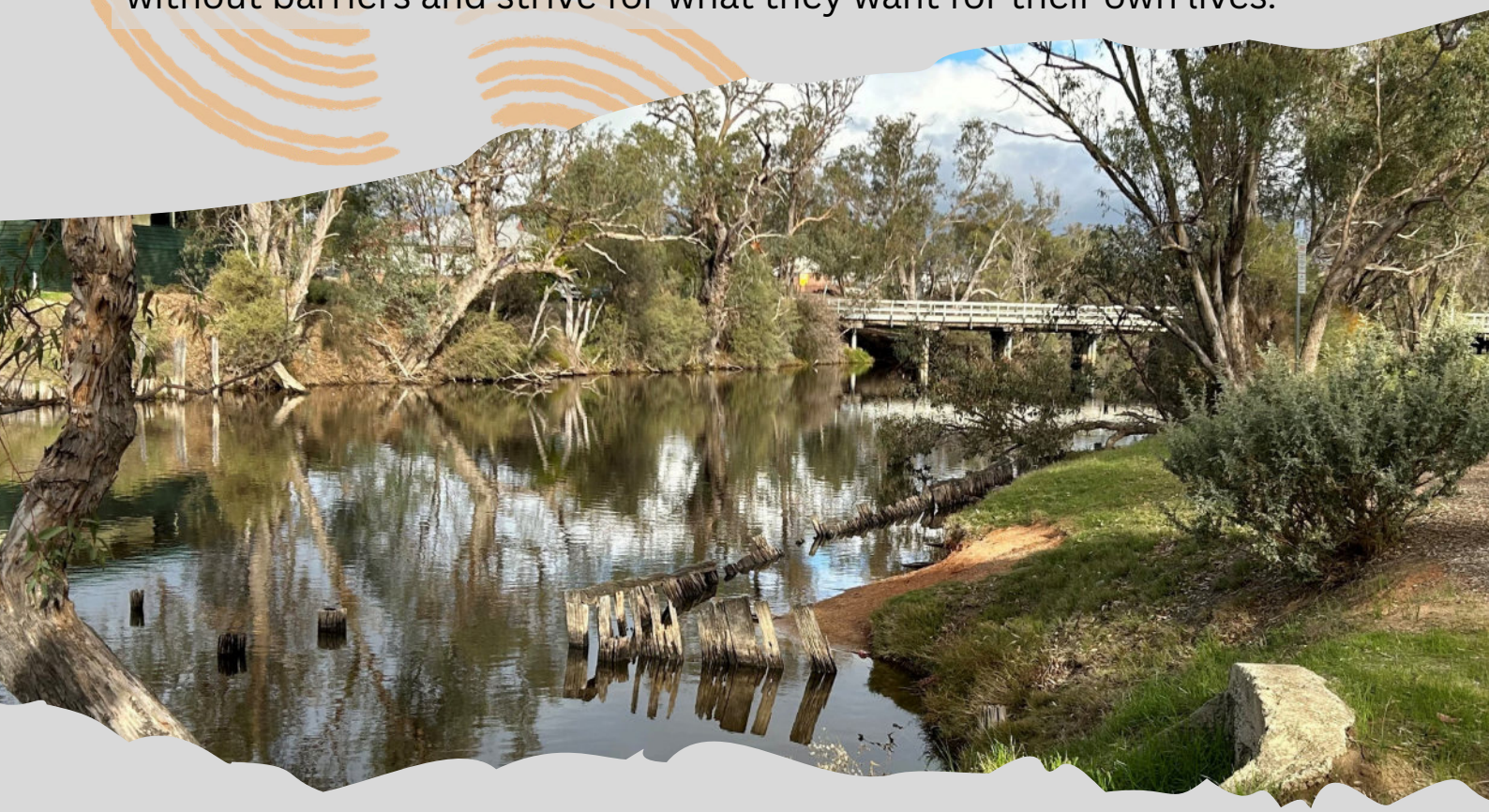
Alina Behan
Temporary CEO

INTRODUCTION

The Shire of York's Youth Development Strategy is a whole-of-community plan that seeks to create an environment where every young person can thrive.

It recognises the important role young people play in shaping our community today and in the future.

It is about every child and young adult having the opportunity to grow without barriers and strive for what they want for their own lives.



This strategy covers the full developmental arc of childhood and youth including early childhood (0–9 years), youth (10–17 years) and young adults (18–24 years).

Each stage is marked by different needs, challenges and aspirations, and requires age-appropriate responses in services, infrastructure, programs and support systems.

VISION

A connected, inclusive and vibrant Shire where young people from all backgrounds and cultures are safe, supported, valued and empowered to reach their full potential



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Strategy captures the voices of young people, families, and local organisations who shared their perspectives through surveys, one-on-one conversations, and engagement with youth-focused community groups. Their lived experiences, ideas, and aspirations have directly shaped the priorities and actions outlined in this plan.

This Strategy has been designed to meet the needs of the community, to support other Shire plans and goals, and to align with the WA Youth Action Plan.



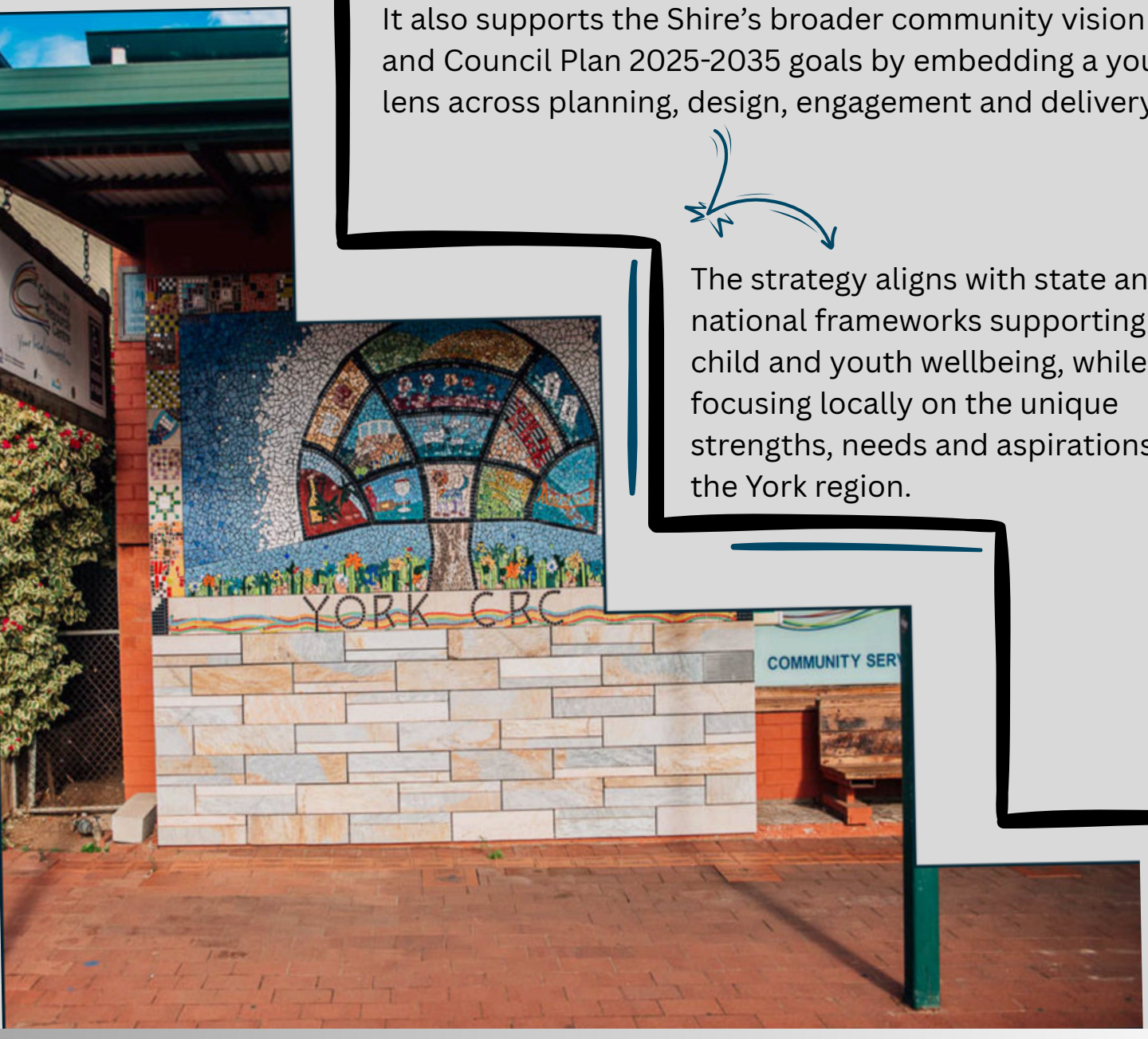
Image 2: Contribution and alignment of existing plans and strategies

WHY A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR YORK

Young people want to be heard, understood and included in the decisions that affect them. This strategy gives structure to that aspiration, guiding how the Shire, community services, education providers, local Aboriginal groups and other partners can work together to deliver real outcomes.

It also supports the Shire's broader community vision and Council Plan 2025-2035 goals by embedding a youth lens across planning, design, engagement and delivery

The strategy aligns with state and national frameworks supporting child and youth wellbeing, while focusing locally on the unique strengths, needs and aspirations of the York region.

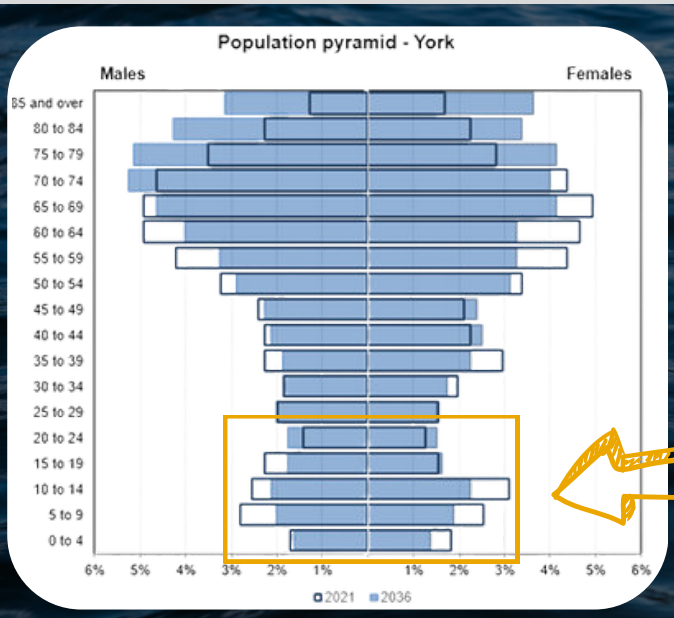


OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Shire of York is home to a diverse group of young people representing approximately 20% of the population. From babies and toddlers learning to understand the world, to young people navigating their path into work, study and adult life, our youth population is dynamic.



Many young people in York enjoy strong ties to family and community, Indigenous culture, participation in sport and recreation, and access to nature. However, like other regional towns they also face challenges such as limited transport, fewer education and training options, housing insecurity, mental health pressures, and reduced access to youth-specific services.



Graph 1: Current and forecast population displayed by age bracket and sex. Source: WA Tomorrow 12 – April 2025 release

4.1%
Indigenous

3649
Population

3.9%
Speaks language other than English

24 &UNDER
20%
aged 24 & under

213,159
Hectares in Shire

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025) York 2021 Census All Person QuickStats

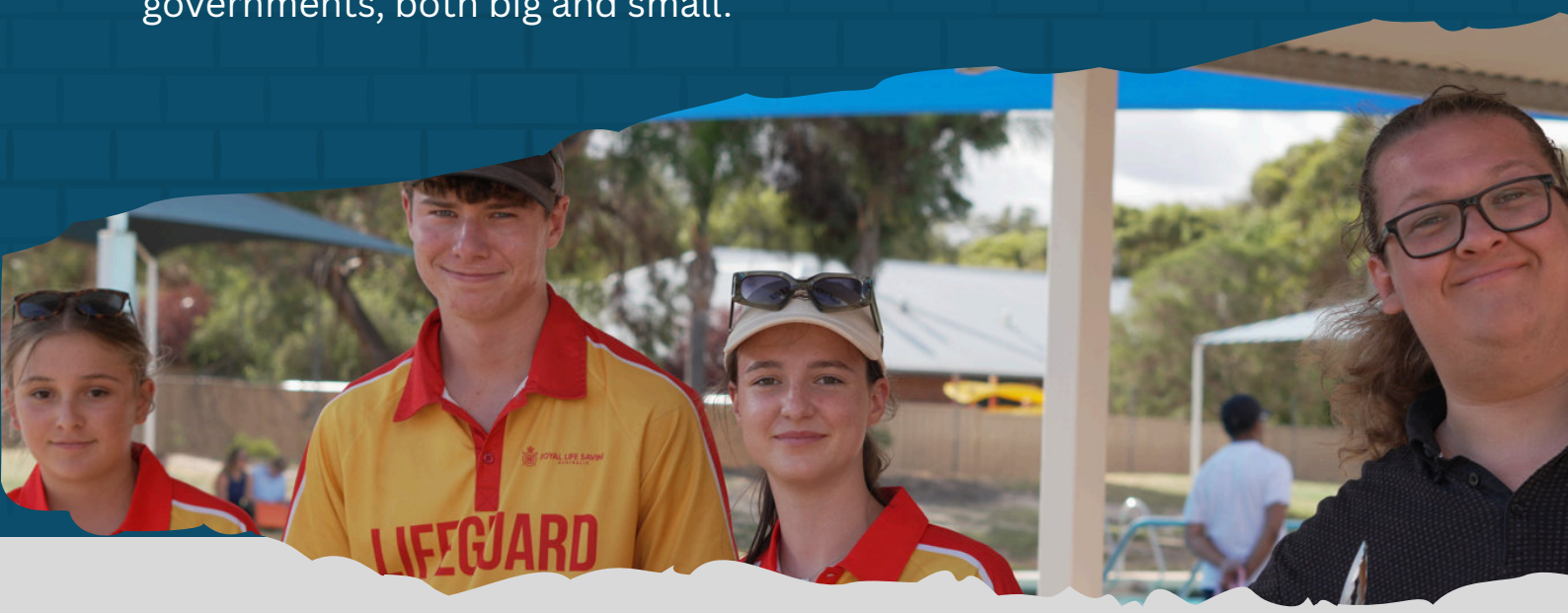
HOW WE BUILT THIS PLAN

The Shire of York's Youth Development Strategy has been shaped through conversations and engagement with young people, families, service providers and community organisations who support youth across our region.

In mid-2025, the Shire launched a dedicated engagement process to hear directly from young people aged 0 to 24, as well as parents, WA Police, educators, early childhood networks, representatives of local Aboriginal youth, sporting clubs and other key voices in the community.

Surveys were distributed to gather a broad range of ideas, concerns and aspirations, while one-on-one conversations and visits to schools, early learning centres and service agencies allowed for deeper insight into the day-to-day experiences of our younger population and their families. This information was then combined with other community consultation responses received from the recent Shire of York Council Plan, the Wellbeing Plan and the Access and Inclusion Plan.

To ensure we delivered the most effective strategy, in-depth research was undertaken across the state and Australia to discover industry best practice and encompass ideas that have work for other local governments, both big and small.



HOW WE BUILT THIS PLAN

During the community consultation period, we were welcomed into people's homes and community spaces, and grateful for the candid feedback received. The process has helped the Shire better understand what supports are working, where the gaps are, and how we can create a more youth-friendly and inclusive community.



From this consultation, we learnt the communities' main priorities for our youth and of those who care and provide for them.
This included the want for more support for children under the age of 5 to access important early learning, more childcare and play based opportunities; increased Aboriginal culture sharing; school aged children having a wider range of activities outside of school hours; job opportunities, training & transport options for young adults; and affordable sports and artistic activities for all ages.

WHAT WE HEARD

Across all age groups, the following themes and desires underpinned the responses we received during consultation:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces

An expressed desire for welcoming, accessible places where children and young people feel safe, respected, and included.

Connection and Belonging

Emphasis on strong community ties, friendships, and opportunities to connect with others, reducing isolation.

Activities and Things to Do

Consistent calls for more local events, recreation options, youth spaces, and creative or outdoor activities.

Environment and Outdoor Spaces

Appreciation for York's natural surroundings and a wish to protect and activate outdoor areas for play, recreation, and connection.

Affordability and Access to Services

Concern about costs of programs, limited service availability, and access barriers for families.

Learning and Pathways

Interest in learning through real-world experiences, local traineeships, creative learning, and mentoring opportunities.

Transport and Accessibility

Limited public or youth transport options affecting access to higher learning, sport, social, and employment opportunities.

Community Voice and Participation

Strong desire for children and young people to be heard, included, and involved in community decision-making.

Health and Wellbeing

Recognition of the need for mental health support, healthy lifestyles, and access to wellbeing programs.

Supportive Adults and Role Models

Recognition that caring, trustworthy adults such as coaches, teachers, youth workers, and community members play a vital role in supporting confidence and resilience.

YOUTH FOCUS SECTORS

Based on the feedback and ideas received, this Strategy and it's resulting actions have been expressed through three youth focus sectors that help provide clear and impactful deliverables to specific age groups.

Some deliverables will provide outcomes across multiple age groups whilst others will be age specific. These focus sectors are:

1. **SAFE, SUPPORTIVE STARTS - EARLY CHILDHOOD**
   AGES 0 TO 9
2. **EMPOWERED AND CONNECTED YOUTH**
   AGES 10 TO 17
3. **STRONG FUTURES - YOUNG ADULTS**
   AGES 18 TO 24

INCLUSION, RESPECT AND REPRESENTATION

Across all age groups, youth want their views to be respected, not dismissed. They want the opportunity to participate in community life and shape where they live.

Across all youth focus sectors, the Shire will:

- Develop a Shire-wide youth engagement framework that does not impede other deliverables
- Ensure Shire events, projects and policies actively include young people's voices
- Promote diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination across youth services
- Showcase and celebrate local youth achievements in media and public spaces

SAFE, SUPPORTIVE STARTS

YOUTH FOCUS SECTOR 1 - AGES 0 TO 9

Children in their early years benefit from nurturing environments, play-based learning, and strong relationships with caring adults. Families in York emphasised the need for accessible early childhood programs, opportunities for outdoor and creative play, and stronger links between schools, community groups, and local services to support children's wellbeing and development from the earliest years.

Some key concerns and needs identified by the community were:

- Safe, and engaging playgrounds with more variety, shade, seating, and equipment suitable for different ages and abilities.
- Referenced studies confirming that focused time, funding and opportunities provided in early childhood provides compounding returns
- More and varied childcare options with concerns over waiting lists and inadequate capacity for different working arrangements.
- Wanting more activities such as rhyme time, messy play, kinder gym, art/craft sessions, toddler swimming lessons, and indoor play for winter.
- An expressed desire for community spaces, shared family-friendly hubs combining playgroup, youth group, seniors' groups on different days.
- Increased and ongoing connection and involvement between childcare, after school care, early years groups and local schools

EMPOWERED AND CONNECTED YOUTH

2 YOUTH FOCUS SECTOR 2 - AGES 10 TO 17

Adolescents are navigating identity, independence and new responsibilities. They expressed the need for safe gathering spaces, more youth events and better access to mental health support locally.

As they leave early childhood and move into upper primary and high school, it is important they are allowed the opportunity to discover who they are and explore who they want to be.

Some key concerns and needs identified by the community were:

- A youth drop-in or activity centre as a safe, social place to hang out, with games, music, arts, and mentoring.
- More things to do after school and during holidays like drama, music, Lego club, Dungeons & Dragons, PCYC-style programs.
- Expanded sport and recreation options and improved rec centre, indoor facilities, gymnastics, jungle gyms, pump/BMX track.
- Mental health and resilience support for youth mentoring, inclusion programs, and activities that build confidence and belonging.
- Better education access with calls to extend York DHS to Year 12 or expand TAFE options and support in town.
- More youth involvement and youth voice opportunities to contribute to ideas and projects, leadership roles, and creative expression in town.

STRONG FUTURES - YOUNG ADULTS

YOUTH FOCUS SECTOR 3 - AGES 18 TO 24

Young adults are making critical life decisions around study, work, relationships and housing. Many feel disconnected once they leave school and are seeking more opportunity and belonging. Whilst this age group are the most likely to leave town for work, education or expanded life experiences, those wanting to stay are looking for more local opportunities.

Some key concerns and wants identified by the community were:

- Job creation & local employment pathways like traineeships, apprenticeships, mentoring & incentives for local businesses to hire.
- Affordable housing options with a critical concern over limited rentals and lack of starter housing to help young adults stay in York.
- Improved public transport especially to Northam, Perth, and other training or work centres.
- Social and lifestyle opportunities such as more events, live music, family dining, and spaces for young people to gather.
- Further education and training access locally with clearer pathways to Uni / TAFE, local study spaces, and CRC-based learning options.
- Support for young families such as childcare, flexible work options, and community events that make York a place to build a future.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2026-2031



The Youth Development Action Plan has been developed in alignment with the Youth Development strategy and by ongoing community consultation.

The following pages will outline the actions chosen to best deliver the future outcomes of each focus sector.

Each action will display the responsible Shire department involved and the Shire's role in fulfilling the action.

The Shire's roles are Provide, Facilitate, Advocate, Fund and Regulate.



The Shire delivers the service, program or infrastructure directly.

The Shire uses its statutory powers to make or enforce rules, policies or local laws.





The Shire uses its position and relationships to influence other levels of government, organisations, or decision-makers.

The Shire allocates budget towards Council approved projects and funding to support local projects by local groups





The Shire brings people together, supports coordination, and enables others to deliver outcomes.

FOCUS SECTOR 1 - ACTIONS

Safe Supportive Starts - Ages 0-9

#	Action	Shire's Role	Responsible Department
1.1	Explore options to improve playground accessibility and safety	Provide	Infrastructure
1.2	Support early years service providers to deliver parenting workshops, play-based learning programs and family support services	Advocate / Facilitate	Community & Place
1.3	Provide school holiday programming for early childhood with a focus on variety (creative, active and social) and co-design with youth input	Provide / Facilitate	Community & Place
1.4	Support diversified and alternative services and facilities to meet community demand	Advocate	Community & Place / Executive
1.5	Continue to provide weekly Story Time at the Shire library	Provide	Community & Place
1.6	Support new and existing childcare providers in expanding and/or providing alternative care options in York	Advocate / Facilitate	Community & Place / Executive



FOCUS SECTOR 2 - ACTIONS

Empowered & Connected Youth - Ages 10-17

#	Action	Shire's Role	Responsible Department
2.1	Provide school holiday programming for upper primary and high school ages with a focus on variety (creative, active, social) and co-design with youth input	Provide / Facilitate	Community & Place
2.2	Support the development of a youth space for young people to connect, and co-deliver activities such as music gigs, skate meets, and movie sessions	Facilitate / Advocate	Community & Place / Tourism
2.3	Support qualified mental wellness and mental health providers and organisations to provide workshops and ongoing programs in York for school aged youth	Facilitate / Advocate	Community & Place / Tourism
2.4	Introduce a Youth Leadership Advisory Group to guide decisions and inform Council on youth needs	Provide / Facilitate	Community & Place / Executive
2.5	Partner with schools, training providers and local businesses to increase exposure to TAFE, trade, and future career pathways	Advocate	Community & Place
2.6	Advocate for youth-friendly public transport options for school, work, training and social needs	Advocate	Executive / Community & Place
2.7	Promote the free access to Lumen Study Hub at the Community Resource Centre for all higher education and training needs	Provide	Community & Place





FOCUS SECTOR 3 - ACTIONS

Strong Futures, Young Adults - Ages 18-24

#	Action	Shire's Role	Responsible Department
3.1	Facilitate mentoring for young people to start their own creative projects or business opportunities	Facilitate	Community & Place / Economic Development
3.2	Advocate for affordable housing options for young adults and families	Advocate	Executive
3.3	Support qualified mental wellness and mental health providers and organisations to provide workshops and ongoing programs in York for young adults	Facilitate / Advocate	Community & Place / Tourism
3.4	Improve communication with youth by using platforms they already use or altering our messaging to reach them with local updates	Provide	Communications
3.5	Support and co-deliver regular local youth events such as music gigs, skate jams, open mic nights and movie sessions	Facilitate / Advocate	Community & Place
3.6	Introduce a Youth Leadership Advisory Group to guide decisions and inform Council on youth needs	Provide / Facilitate	Community & Place / Executive
3.7	Partner with schools, training providers and local businesses to increase exposure to TAFE, trade, and future career and study pathways	Advocate	Community & Place



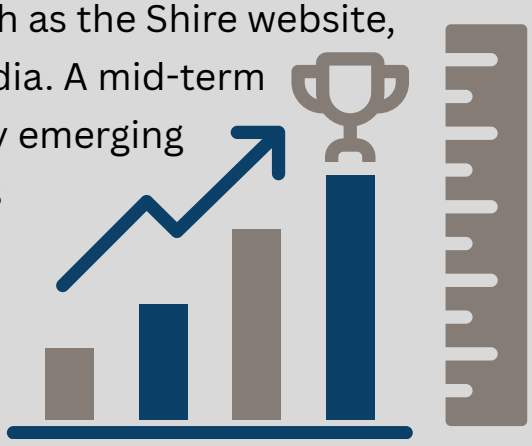
GOVERNANCE, IMPLEMENTATION & MEASURING SUCCESS

The Shire of York Youth Development Strategy will be led by the Shire's Community and Place Team, in partnership with other Shire departments, local schools, youth-serving organisations, community groups, young people, parents and carers, and key service providers. The Shire will take a whole-of-community implementation approach, ensuring that youth voices are actively included in planning, delivery, and review processes.

Implementation of the Strategy will be aligned with the Shire's broader strategic and operational frameworks, including the Council Plan, Access and Inclusion Plan, Age-Friendly Strategy, Wellbeing Plan, and Local Planning Strategy. This alignment will ensure that actions supporting children and young people are integrated across Council functions and community initiatives and using Shire resources efficiently.

Success will be measured through the delivery of the Youth Action Plan and the achievement of outcomes that strengthen opportunities, wellbeing, and participation for young people across the Shire. The Action Plan will remain a living document, updated as priorities evolve and informed by ongoing consultation with young people and community stakeholders.

Progress reporting will occur as key milestones are reached, with formal updates provided annually to Council and shared with the community through appropriate communication channels such as the Shire website, youth networks, community groups and social media. A mid-term review in 2028 will evaluate achievements, identify emerging needs, and refine the Strategy to ensure it remains relevant and responsive.



FINAL WORD

The Youth Development Strategy and Action Plan 2026–2031 marks a shared commitment to nurturing the youngest members of our community through every stage of their journey. It recognises that young people are not only the leaders, creators and change-makers of tomorrow, they are valued contributors of York today.

Throughout this process, we listened. We heard from children discovering their world, teenagers exploring identity and independence, young adults carving out their future, and the families, educators, services and community members who support them.

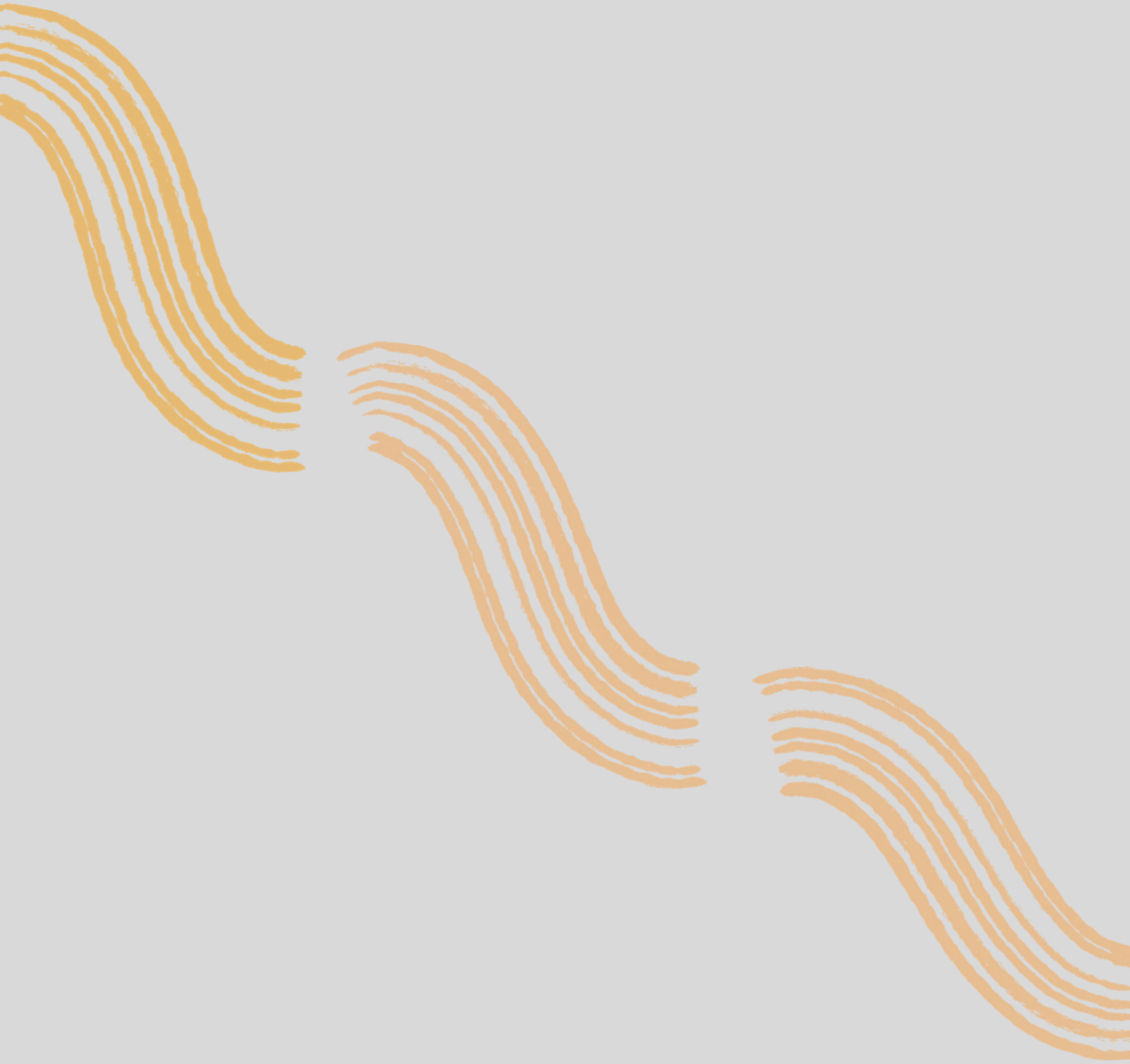
Their voices have shaped this Strategy, reminding us all that strong foundations, meaningful opportunities and a sense of belonging are essential for every young person to thrive.

The Shire of York is proud to stand alongside our community in championing the ideas, energy and potential of young people. As this Strategy comes to life through programs, partnerships, infrastructure and continuous engagement we will work to ensure our community remains a place where young people are safe, supported, confident and empowered.

This is not a final step, but the beginning of a renewed focus on youth wellbeing and participation. Over the next five years, we will continue learning from and with our young people, adapting as needs evolve and celebrating achievements along the way.

Together, we can build a future where every young person in the Shire of York has the opportunity to grow, contribute, dream boldly and succeed.





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SHIRE OF York