



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

Youth Strategy 2013-2017



“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline.”

-Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General-



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executive summary

Young people and their contributions are important to the Macedon Ranges Shire. According to *Victoria in Future 2012, DPCD* the population of young people in Macedon Ranges Shire aged 10-24 is predicted to experience steady growth. The 2011 Census indicated that Macedon Ranges is home to a total of 8093 young people aged 10-24, which is 19.7% of the overall population.

In recognition of young people's contribution and their ongoing importance to the Shire, Macedon Ranges Shire Council has prepared a four year plan to guide Council's Youth Development Unit's commitment to young people across the municipality.

The development of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy was informed by:

- **Young People:** the Youth Summit research (2011) undertaken by the Youth Ambassadors was reviewed and shaped actions within the strategy. Young people were also invited to fill in a survey.
- **Youth Service Providers:** Key stakeholders working with or planning for young people were invited to attend a focus group or complete a survey.
- **Macedon Ranges Shire Council Staff:** staff across a broad range of Council departments were invited to attend a focus group or complete a survey.
- **Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Development Unit (YDU) Staff:** YDU staff attended workshops that reviewed their work and later presented consultation findings and focussed on action planning.
- **Existing Research:** key local research such as: Youth Summit, Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review and Live4Life Future Options were reviewed and informed the overall development of the Youth Strategy.

Five key strategy areas were emphasised as a result of the consultation process:



A range of corresponding actions are captured for each strategy area within the Youth Strategy Action Plan. These actions will require the ongoing commitment of the whole of Council as well as key community stakeholders.

Importantly, the Youth Strategy must have the guidance and participation of young people wherever possible to ensure its ongoing relevance.

introduction

The Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy 2013-2017 is a four year strategic plan that will provide overall direction for Council's Youth Development Unit and guide the programs, initiatives, advocacy and support work for young people and their families.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council values the skills, contributions and vibrancy that young people bring to the locality. The Youth Strategy acknowledges and recognises the role that young people have in the future development of their communities.

Defining Young People

This Strategy relates to all young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years old, who live, study or work in the Macedon Ranges Shire.

The Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy articulates a purpose and role for the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Development Unit for the next four years. This strategic document captures clear directions including, but not limited to:

- youth participation
- community partnerships
- advocacy
- mental health and wellbeing
- new project initiatives; and
- strengthened internal and external partnerships

The four key overarching objectives of the Youth Strategy are to:

- 1) Document the evidence base that underpins the framework and actions of the MRSC Youth Strategy 2013-2017.
- 2) Identify key internal and external relationships in delivering the MRSC Youth Strategy 2013-2017.
- 3) Involve young people throughout the Youth Strategy process.
- 4) Define the strategic directions and proposed outcomes for MRSC YDU for the next four years.

key youth stats & facts

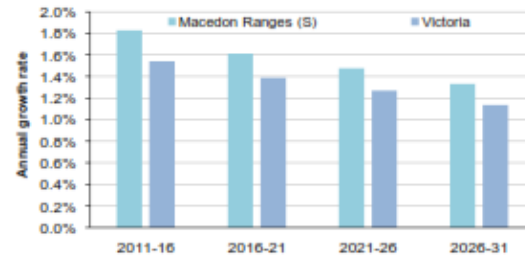
Population

Macedon Ranges (S)



Location: 70 km north-west of Melbourne
 Area (2011): 1,748 km²
 Pop. Density (2011): 24.7 persons per km²
 Major Centres: Gisborne; Kyneton; Woodend; Romsey

Average annual population growth rate 2011 to 2031



In the 2011 Census, there were 41,860 people in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) of these, 49.2% were male and 50.8% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 0.5% of the population. **Young people aged 10-24 made up 19.7% of the population.**

According to *Victoria in Future 2012*, DPCD the population of young people in Macedon Ranges Shire aged 10-24 is predicted to experience steady growth.

Source: *Victoria in Future 2012*, DPCD

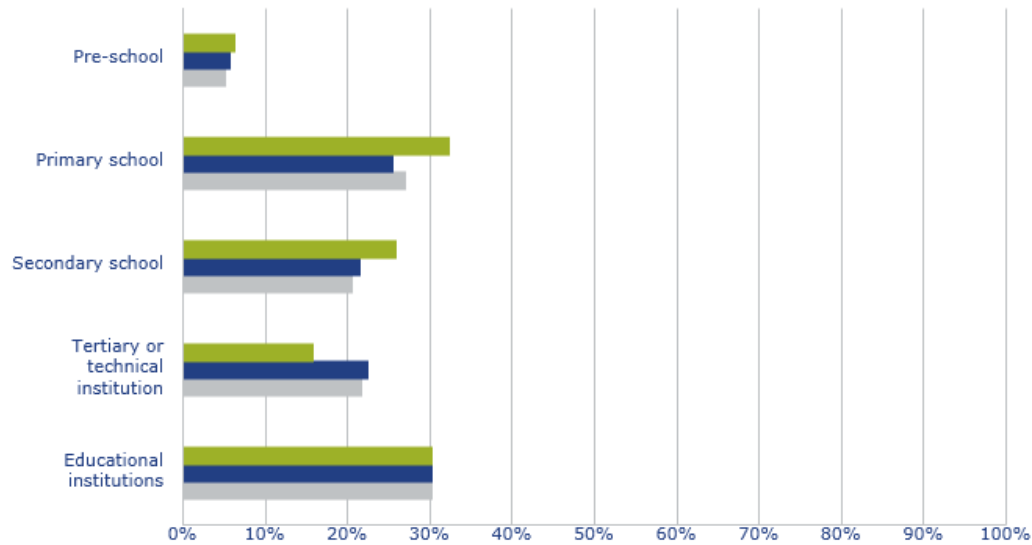
Employed people aged 15 years and over

<u>Median weekly incomes</u>	Macedon Ranges (S)	%	Victoria	%	Australia	%
People aged 15 years and over						
Personal	593	--	561	--	577	--
Family	1,661	--	1,460	--	1,481	--
Household	1,395	--	1,216	--	1,234	--

The median weekly personal income for people aged 15 years and over in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) was \$593.

Source: ABS Census 2011

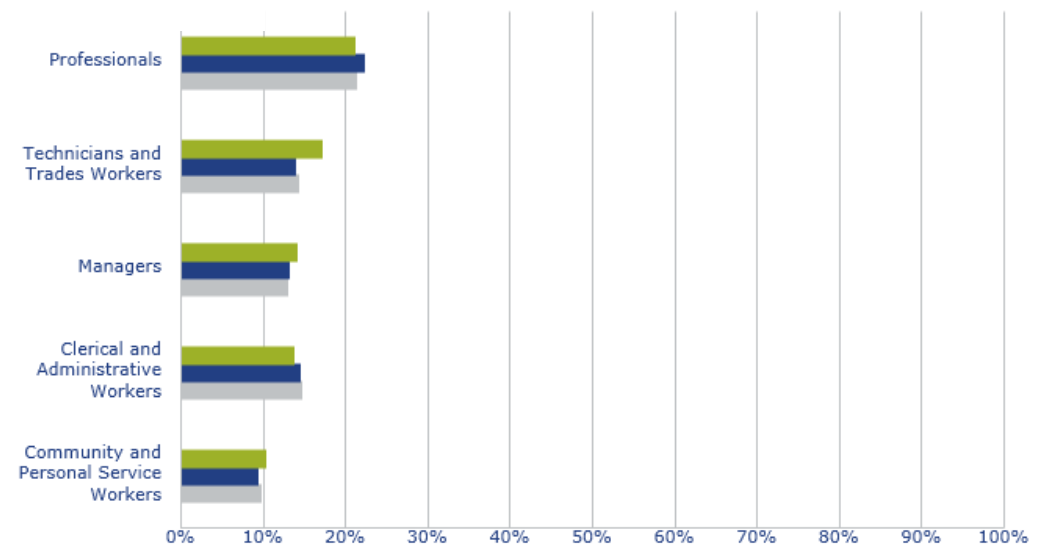
Education



In Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) 30.2% of people were attending an educational institution. Of these, 32.4% were in primary school, 25.9% in secondary school and 15.8% in a tertiary or technical institution.

(Source: ABS Census 2011)

Occupation



The most common occupations in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) included Professionals 21.0%, Technicians and Trades Workers 17.1%, Managers 14.0%, Clerical and Administrative Workers 13.7%, and Community and Personal Service Workers 10.2%.

(Source: ABS Census 2011)

Dwellings — household composition

<u>Household composition</u>	Macedon Ranges (S)	%	Victoria	%	Australia	%
Family households	11,356	78.2	1,385,188	71.2	5,550,614	71.5
Single (or lone) person households	2,900	20.0	476,869	24.5	1,888,698	24.3
Group households	267	1.8	82,630	4.2	321,007	4.1

Source: ABS Census 2011

In Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas), of all households, 78.2% were family households, 20.0% were single person households and 1.8% were group households.

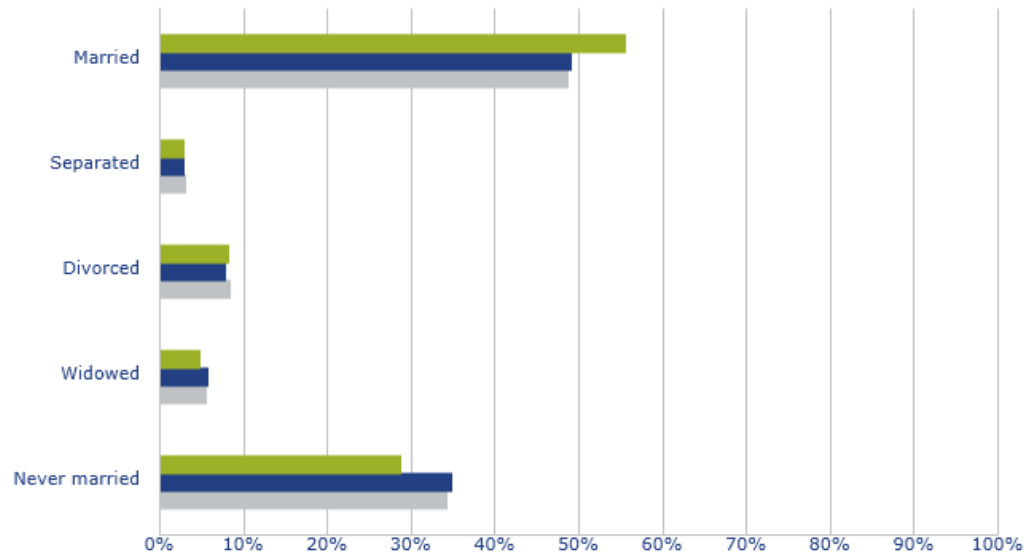
Families — family composition

<u>Family composition</u>	Macedon Ranges (S)	%	Victoria	%	Australia	%
Couple family without children	4,356	37.8	518,535	36.7	2,150,299	37.8
Couple family with children	5,674	49.3	651,071	46.0	2,534,397	44.6
One parent family	1,401	12.2	218,930	15.5	901,634	15.9
Other family	83	0.7	26,027	1.8	97,721	1.7

Source: ABS Census 2011

Of the families in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas), 49.3% were couple families with children, 37.8% were couple families without children and 12.2% were one parent families.

Marital Status



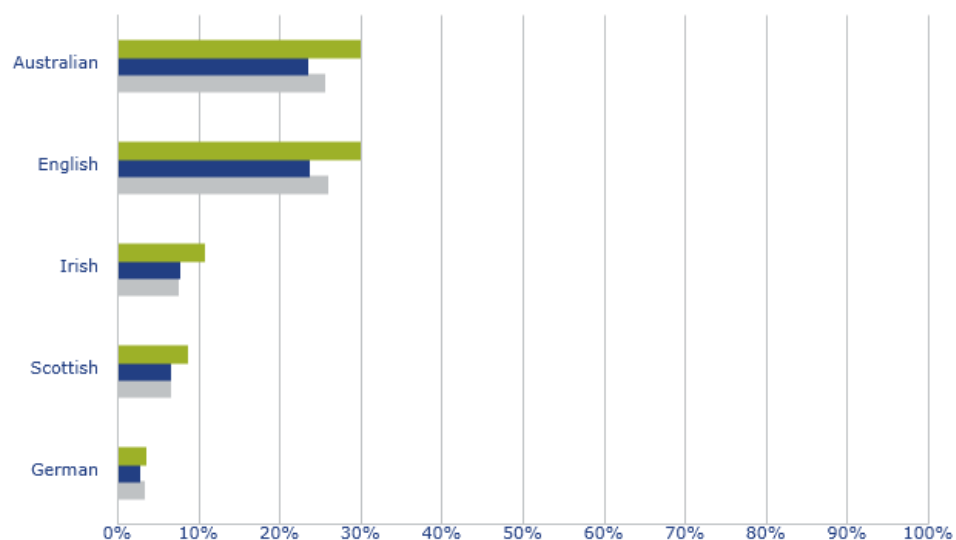
Of people in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) aged 15 years and over, 55.5% were married and 11.1% were either divorced or separated.
(Source: ABS Census 2011)

<u>Single (or lone) parents</u>	Macedon Ranges (S)	%	Victoria	%	Australia	%
Proportion of the total single (or lone) parent population						
Male	--	19.1	--	17.2	--	17.6
Female	--	80.9	--	82.8	--	82.4

(Source: ABS Census 2011)

In Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) 19.1% of single parents were male and 80.9% were female. Single male parents are higher in Macedon Ranges compared to state and national figures.

Ancestry



The most common ancestries in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas) were Australian 29.9%, English 29.8%, Irish 10.6%, Scottish 8.6% and German 3.4%.
(Source: ABS Census 2011)

<u>Birthplace of parents, stated responses</u>	Macedon Ranges (S)	%	Victoria	%	Australia	%
Both parents born overseas	7,467	18.8	1,911,658	38.1	6,876,586	34.3
Father only born overseas	3,240	8.1	343,515	6.9	1,407,270	7.0
Mother only born overseas	2,098	5.3	230,297	4.6	989,220	4.9
Both parents born in Australia	26,977	67.8	2,528,189	50.4	10,757,087	53.7

(Source: ABS Census 2011)

In Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas), 67.8% of people had both parents born in Australia and 18.8% of people had both parents born overseas.

People characteristics - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

<u>People characteristics</u>	Macedon Ranges (S)		Victoria		Australia	
		%		%		%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	195	--	37,990	--	548,368	--
Male	98	50.3	18,675	49.2	270,331	49.3
Female	97	49.7	19,315	50.8	278,037	50.7
Median age	25	--	22	--	21	--

(Source: ABS Census 2011)

For the 2011 Census in Macedon Ranges (S) (Local Government Areas), there were 195 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Of these, 98 (or 50.3%) were male and 97 (or 49.7%) were female. The median age was 25 years.

Student Family Occupation Categories

Student Family Occupation Categories	
Category	Definition
A	Senior management in large business organisation, government administration and defence, and qualified professionals
B	Other business managers, arts/media/sportspersons and associate professionals
C	Tradesmen/women, clerks and skilled office, sales and service staff
D	Machine operators, hospitality staff, assistants, labourers and related workers
N	Not Employed
U	Unknown

Note: Categories D and N are considered the at risk categories in regards to youth transitions

19% of parents indicated that they were in category D and 8.9% indicated that they were unemployed.

Includes Community Strength Indicato

LGA	Proportion (%) of Full Time Enrolments in each SFO Categories, 2010					
	A	B	C	D	N	U
Macedon Ranges	18.9	26.3	24.0	19.0	8.9	2.9

(Source: Data Disk, DEECD 2011)

The subsequent data has been sourced from the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS), through the Macedon Ranges Adolescent Community Profile.

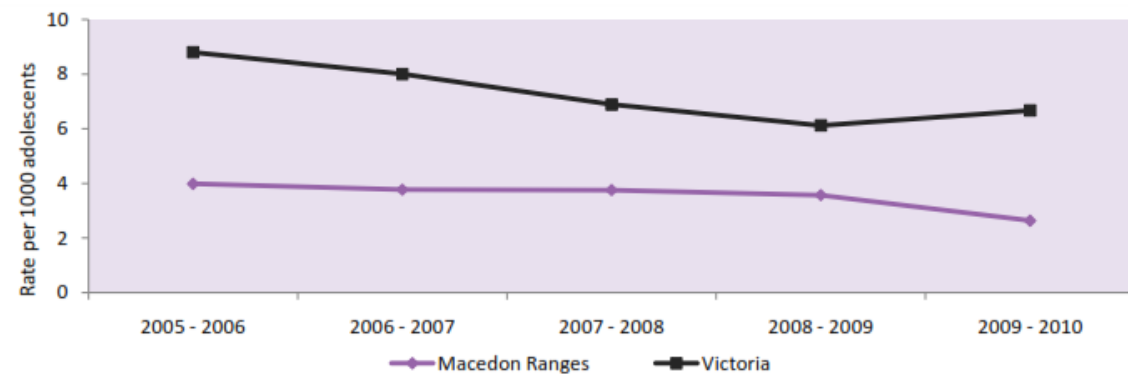
'VCAMS is a comprehensive, across government, monitoring system that reports on the safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing of children and young people, aged 0 to 17, in Victoria. It is intended to underpin planning for improvement at a program, local government and state-wide level, as well as to inform research and evaluation to generate new evidence on effectiveness on improving outcomes for children'.

2009 - 2010			
	Number of psychiatric hospital separations	Adolescent population at 30 June 2009	Rate per 1000 adolescent children
Macedon Ranges	14	5,313	2.6
Loddon Mallee region	222	37,181	6.0
Victoria	3,655	548,041	6.7

Source: Department of Health, 2010, Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset (VAED), Funding, Health Information Policy Branch, unpublished.
Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2010 (Cat no. 3201.0)

- During 2009 - 2010, there were 2.6 psychiatric hospitalisations per 1,000 adolescents in Macedon Ranges. This is less than one half of the psychiatric hospitalisation rate in the Loddon Mallee region (6.0 per 1,000 adolescents) and less than one half of the rate in Victoria (6.7 per 1,000 adolescents).

Figure 21: Psychiatric hospitalisation rate per 1,000 adolescents in Macedon Ranges and Victoria, 2005 - 2006 to 2009 - 2010.



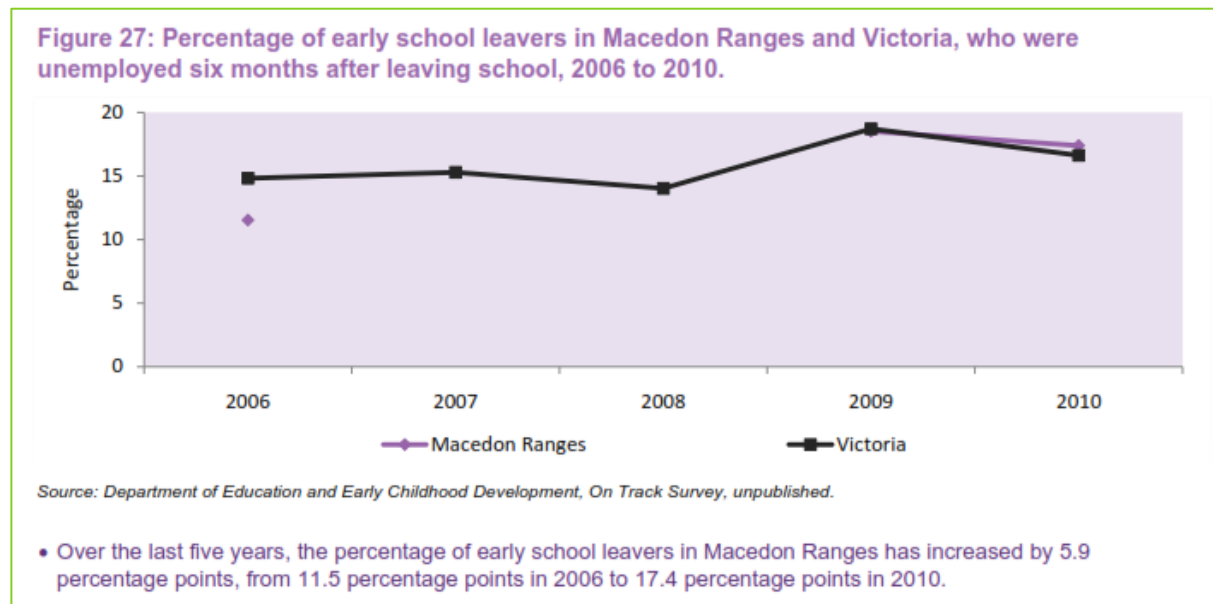
Source: Department of Health, 2010, Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset (VAED), Funding, Health Information Policy Branch, unpublished.
Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2010 (Cat no. 3201.0)

Year 12 or Equivalent Attainment at Age 19	
Year	Attainment Rate (%)
2007	80.1
2008	84.4
2009	78
2010	83.6
2011	80.5

(Source: On Track Data 2013)

Macedon Ranges year 12 or equivalent attainment at age 19 continues to fluctuate. In 2011 80.5% of 19 year olds had completed year 12 or equivalent schooling; this was a 3.1% drop from the previous 2010 figure of 83.6%.

Early school leaving had increased by 5.9 percentage points from 11.5% in 2006 to 17.4% in 2010.

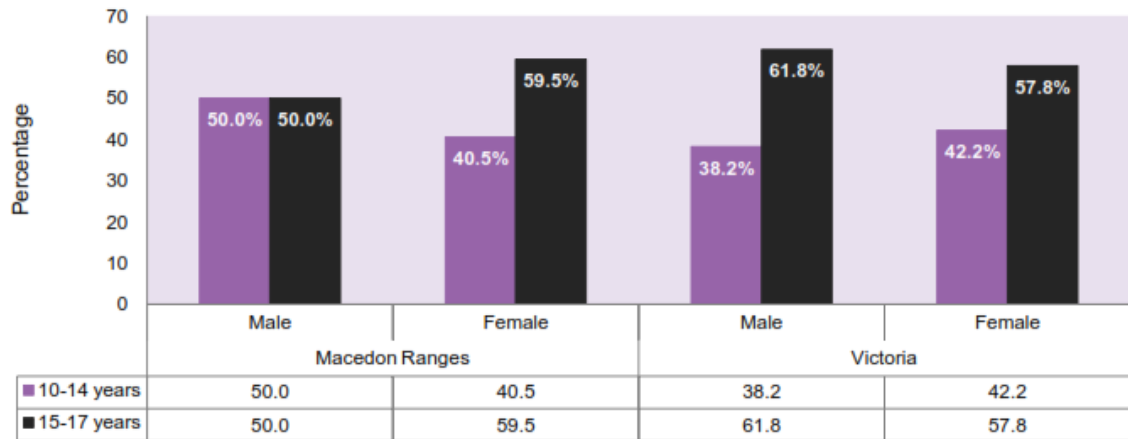


Number of adolescents in Macedon Ranges and Victoria who were victims of crime, by type of crime, 2005 - 2006 to 2009 - 2010.

		Crimes against the person		Crimes against property		All reported crime	
		Number	Rate per 1000 adolescents	Number	Rate per 1000 adolescents	Number	Rate per 1000 adolescents
Macedon Ranges	2005 - 2006	27	5.1	27	5.1	58	11.0
	2006 - 2007	48	9.1	25	4.7	74	14.0
	2007 - 2008	59	11.1	27	5.1	95	17.9
	2008 - 2009	58	10.9	21	3.9	82	15.4
	2009 - 2010	31	5.8	15	2.8	49	9.2
Victoria	2005 - 2006	5,752	10.6	4,095	7.6	10,018	18.5
	2006 - 2007	6,214	11.4	4,095	7.5	10,493	19.3
	2007 - 2008	6,277	11.5	3,730	6.8	10,217	18.7
	2008 - 2009	6,109	11.2	3,523	6.4	9,820	17.9
	2009 - 2010	6,088	11.1	3,287	6.0	9,606	17.5

Source: Law Enforcement Assessment Program data, Victoria Police, unpublished, ABS Estimated Resident Population at 30 June

Figure 29: Adolescents in Macedon Ranges and Victoria reported to be victims of crime, by age group and gender, 2009 - 2010.



Source: Law Enforcement Assessment Program data, Victoria Police, unpublished

Summary of AEDI Results for Macedon Ranges

The AEDI is a population measure of children's development. In 2009, the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)¹ was completed nationwide; information was collected on 261,147 Australian children (97.5 per cent of the estimated five-year-old population) in their first year of full-time school.

Domain	Percentage of children on track	Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable
Physical health and wellbeing	78.2%	6.4%
Social competence	76.3%	8.0%
Emotional maturity	75.5%	6.8%
Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	89.6%	3.2%
Communication skills and general knowledge	78.0%	5.3%

Overall there are 14.6 per cent of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDI and 8.5 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains.

¹ Australian Early Development Index <http://maps.aedi.org.au/>

youth resources & supports

The Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review (2012) recent service mapping work highlighted that:

There are a range of community based ‘youth specific’ supports for young people across the Macedon Ranges Shire. These range from health & well-being to education and recreation & leisure. Young people require a range of ‘holistic’ supports and services at various times in their lives.

Whilst not an exhaustive list, key organisations/supports available for young people in Macedon Ranges are:

Those able to provide outreach to places preferred by young people (their local township, home, school) are underlined:

KYNETON BASED	GISBORNE BASED	BASED ELSEWHERE IN MACEDON RANGES	BENDIGO BASED
<u>Macedon Ranges Shire Council</u>	Gisborne Secondary College	Braemar College (Mt Macedon)	<u>DHS – Disability Services</u>
<u>Cobaw Community Health Service</u>	<u>Macedon Ranges Health Service</u> (some)	Macedon Grammer	DHS – Office of Housing*
Kyneton Secondary College	Faithworks (Edifide)		Haven (Loddon Mallee Housing)*
Sacred Heart College	<u>Best CD</u>		<u>St Luke’s Anglicare (some)</u>
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	<u>Tracy the Placement People</u>		Bendigo Health
Kyneton Community and Learning Centre			
<u>Sureway</u>			
<u>CVGT</u>			

* may fund services or provide brokerage but do not provide direct services to the Macedon Ranges

In addition to the above list is the range of primary schools that are located across the municipality.

The service mapping exercise conducted within the Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review (2012) identified a number of strengths and gaps² within the current service system, they are:

Strengths	Gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Live4Life ▪ The high numbers of young people accessing Wellbeing Teams located within schools ▪ The increasing interest of local agencies to provide services within the school setting, rather than expecting young people to attend after school hours ▪ The willingness of some services to provide outreach to multiple sites in the Shire, recognising the limited transport options particularly from East to West and between Kyneton and Gisborne ▪ The dedication of services to continue to provide youth specific services to some of the hardest to engage young people, despite funding reductions and limited staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of generalist youth workers ▪ Limited crisis service response, particularly for young people with multiple psycho-social issues ▪ Lack of crisis accommodation options for young people ▪ Limited availability of tertiary mental health services due to the high demand ▪ Lack of affordable, youth specific counselling services for young people ▪ Lack of early intervention services for young people with emerging mental health issues ▪ Limitation of services able to actively engage and work with the family concurrently ▪ Limited pathways for early school leavers, particularly those disenfranchised with education and training

² Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review, 2012

relevant local research/planning

Macedon Ranges Youth Summit

In August 2011 a shire wide Youth Summit was held to explore youth issues across the Macedon Ranges Shire. A group of eighteen young people formed a 'Youth Ambassador' group that assisted with guiding the research.

These eighteen 'Youth Ambassadors' assisted with developing and running the summit as well as guiding survey development and dissemination of surveys to their peers to ascertain which youth issues should be focussed on at the Youth Summit.

More than 280 surveys were completed, with young people across Macedon Ranges naming the following eight issues as the most relevant to them:

- Drugs and Alcohol Issues (Including underage drinking)
- Education and Employment (including access to alternative education & more jobs for young people)
- Family Life/Issues at home (separation/divorce/violence)
- Body Image
- Pressures on young people (including pressure from family, from peers, from school and from self)
- Bullying (including cyber bullying)
- Relationships (family, partners, peers, same sex attracted)
- Growing Up (physical & emotional development)

Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review

The Macedon Ranges **Youth Services Review** is a crucial piece of local work that examined the youth services system across the Macedon Ranges Shire. The focus of the work was to:

- undertake service mapping to identify gaps and understand what supports already exist for young people
- review flexible learning options offered across Macedon Ranges; and
- examine local data that highlights the needs of young people

The desired outcomes for this piece of work were:

- 1) Strengthened capacity to advocate and plan for improved educational and wellbeing outcomes for young people in the Macedon Ranges
- 2) Sustainable and functioning place based local governance structure to guide youth planning

- 3) Formalised Cross Sectoral Partnerships
- 4) Strengthened cross sectoral commitment to, and understanding of, vulnerable youth

Three overarching strategic directions and thirty-four corresponding recommendations were formulated as a result of the review:

Strategic Direction 1: Engagement in Education

Recommendation 1: Explore funding and or partnerships to support welfare/wellbeing supports alongside teaching staff in flexible learning environments (case management support).

Recommendation 2: Develop a collaborative 'evidence based' model for the delivery of flexible learning options for young people who are disengaging from education.

Recommendation 3: Develop an evaluation framework for all flexible learning option programs so that program effectiveness can be measured, programs can be enhanced, learning's can be disseminated and data can be utilised to advocate for further support.

Recommendation 4: Develop a stronger transition focus for young people ensuring appropriate support during times of risk and vulnerability.

Recommendation 5: Advocate for government leadership around appropriate funding for flexible learning options in Macedon Ranges Shire.

Recommendation 6: Enhance current flexible learning option programs by offering more creative arts, camps, access to IT and hands on project based learning.

Recommendation 7: Explore capacity of schools to embed aspects of flexible learning options within existing curricula e.g. more individualised planning and "on your feet and off your chair" learning.

Recommendation 8: Develop a **school engagement plan** focussing on retaining engagement of 12-15 year olds in the school system (one pilot school could be focussed on initially).

Recommendation 9: Explore the capacity of local schools, JSA providers and early intervention workers to establish a collaborative triage system for young people at risk of educational disengagement with the commitment that the joint meeting only closes when an option is found (ensuring no young person slips through the cracks).

Recommendation 10: Work with schools, community and local businesses to create a broader suite of VET options for young people.

Recommendation 11: Encourage agencies to work together so they can offer schools a suite of in-school project opportunities, activities, and health promotion sessions etc. that meet the school curricula needs and are engaging for young people.

Strategic Direction 2: Effective Services & Supports

Recommendation 1: Explore options for the funding of a Generalist Youth Worker position that would allow for a range of flexible support responses for young people.

Recommendation 2: Improve parent engagement and support and increase interventions with young people that are family inclusive.

Recommendation 3: Explore the development of a **formal** joined up process that can be enacted in the event of a young person experiencing crisis -e.g. key agencies would commit to participating in a joint conference to determine what can be done (Bendigo based services could be included using videoconferencing or Skype capabilities).

Recommendation 4: Advocate to government for improved provision of emergency housing support and accommodation for young people in Macedon Ranges.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen relationships between secondary schools, community service agencies and primary schools to focus greater attention, early intervention support and personal development opportunities towards the middle years (age 9-12).

Recommendation 6: Work collaboratively with Bendigo based agencies to enhance their presence and capacity in the Macedon Ranges.

Recommendation 7: Create regular opportunities for schools (secondary and primary) to connect with youth service providers for the purpose of networking, information sharing, joint training and joined up service provision.

Recommendation 8: Form a working group to explore ways to improve collaboration and joined up service provision for young people (and their families).

Recommendation 9: Create a combined cross-service 'youth work' group supervision structure which could add to the professional development and skill capacity of local youth workers as well as indirectly lead to collaborative practice and an enhanced focus on family inclusion.

Recommendation 10: Develop 'youth and community friendly' ways to share information so that agencies, schools, parents and young people understand what services, supports and opportunities are available for young people across the Macedon Ranges Shire.

Recommendation 11: Explore opportunities that could offer a broader range of employment and training prospects for young people.

Recommendation 12: Create youth informed and led campaigns focussing on cyber bullying, respectful relationships, drug and alcohol use and body image.

Strategic Direction 3: Partnerships, Planning and Resources

Recommendation 1: Form a Place Based Governance Group for Macedon Ranges Shire, comprised of cross-sectoral membership at **decision making level** committed to guiding strategic directions that improve outcomes for young people aged 10-18.

Recommendation 2: Ensure membership of the governance group includes representation from key regional direct service providers based in Bendigo and tasked with outreach to the Shire.

Recommendation 3: Embed the membership of the Governance Group into job descriptions and KPI's of key decision making members.

Recommendation 4: Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for the Place Based Governance Group that details a shared vision and clear agreed aims and roles for the group.

Recommendation 5: Develop and implement processes that facilitate improved cross sectoral **local data collection** so that data can inform local planning and be used to advocate for the needs of young people.

Recommendation 6: Advocate to government for appropriate resources to support the local governance mechanism.

Recommendation 7: Support schools to develop an easy to use system for capturing data from well-being support offered in school settings.

Recommendation 8: Examine resources available to support young people and review where combining resources could create savings and streamlining of support.

Recommendation 9: Review and complete all youth focussed funding opportunities together (via governance group) to increase cooperative planning and stronger partnership possibilities.

Recommendation 10: Advocate to government for flexible and stable funding arrangements so that efficient local place based solutions can be devised and implemented.

Recommendation 11: Explore business, philanthropic, government and community partnership opportunities that could enhance outcomes for young people across the Macedon Ranges Shire.

To implement these recommendations, the report states that:

The work going forward requires the sustained commitment of local and state government; schools and key youth support agencies to assure enhanced service provision and improved pathways and opportunities for young people (especially vulnerable young people) across Macedon Ranges.

These recommendations have been thoughtfully considered in shaping the future work of the Youth Development Unit.

Macedon Ranges Live4life Future Directions Report

Live4Life is an initiative of the Macedon Ranges Shire that uses a school and community engagement approach to promote youth mental health. Focusing on young people 12–18 years, the initiative combines a targeted program for Year 8 students, a youth leadership/participation component, parental mental health literacy education and community mental health promotion to effect change.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council undertook a research project in 2013 to examine potential models for Live4Life that could strengthen future sustainability of the initiative. ***At the time of writing this strategy the emerging preferred option from this targeted research was Option C (outlined below).***

The *Live4Life Future Directions Report* (2013) recommended that Live4Life be established as an independent, incorporated association and seek charitable and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, enabling it to attract philanthropic and grant funding. At the same time, it was suggested the Live4Life Macedon Ranges Live4Life Partnership Group be continued to direct activity at the local level, ensuring ongoing community ownership and involvement. Therefore under the proposed model two entities would emerge:

1. Live4Life Inc. Committee (or Board)
2. Macedon Ranges Live4Life Partnership Group

The report delivers more than 40 recommendations aimed at assisting the gradual and phased introduction of the new model over the next three years. This phased approach will see the consolidation and strengthening of the local Live4Life activities, under the guidance of the Partnership Group and with the continued leadership and coordination from Council. The Partnership Group's strategic priority over the next 3 years will be to expand the initiative to other year levels within Macedon Ranges' schools and/or expand the scope of activities delivered to local schools or the community.

At the same time, a new Live4Life Inc. Committee will be recruited to ensure strong governance, networking and strategic expertise. This new entity will have a broader, national focus and its primary role during the first 3 year strategic cycle will be to secure external funding and establish its niche in the national youth mental health promotion sector.

Council and the key stakeholders of the Live4Life Partnership Group will have pivotal roles in supporting Live4Life during these important changes. In recognition of this and given the Youth Strategy's strong focus on preventative health and well-being, key actions shaped by recommendations in the ***Live4Life Future Directions Report*** have been incorporated into the action plan.

strategic linkages

Local Government

Macedon Ranges Shire Council Plan (2013-2017) articulates Council's focus for the next four years. The Council Plan has three overarching strategy areas to guide the focus of their work, they are:

1. An Inspiring Place

Goals:

- Our lifestyle, culture and sense of place is strengthened by best practice planning and development.
- Our environment and landscape is protected and sustained.
- Our infrastructure supports the needs of future generations.

2. An Empowered Community

Goals:

- Our economy is diverse, strong and prosperous.
- Our community is inclusive and connected and enjoys strong mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Our community is well-prepared, resilient and safe.

3. A High Performing Organisation

Goals:

- We proactively engage with and show accountability to the community.
- We provide quality and efficient services that meet community needs.
- We lead and advocate for the best interests of the community.

The goals and objectives within the **Macedon Ranges Shire Council Plan (2013-2017)** have been linked with correlated actions within the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy to ensure that the work going forward integrates with Councils overarching focus.

State Government

Youth Partnerships Initiative

Youth Partnerships is a Victorian Government initiative that is trialling and testing ways for the service system to better support the needs of vulnerable young people aged 10-17. Macedon Ranges Shire is one of the demonstration sites that are looking at ways to improve the coordination and delivery of services to young people. Cobaw Community Health, Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network (CRLLEN) and Macedon Ranges Shire Council comprise the executive working group that have been leading the initiative.

In 2012 Macedon Ranges Youth Partnerships undertook a Youth Services Review which has identified recommendations to strengthen and improve the youth service sector across the Shire. Macedon Ranges Youth Partnerships are now focussing on devising a strong governance structure to guide the implementation of the recommendations from the Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review.

Youth Statement: Engage, Involve, Create 2012

The Victorian Government launched their Youth Statement: *Engage, Involve, Create* in April 2012. This is the first statement of the State Government's vision for young people and the sector that supports them since the development of Future Directions policy in 2006.

Aims:

- Engage – young people are engaged in education and training, further education and training pathways, employment.
- Involve – young people are involved in decision making, activities and programs and their communities
- Create – young people can create change, enterprise and culture.

Priorities:

- Getting young people involved - Supporting active participation and engagement of young people to ensure social, community and economic participation.
- Services that better meet the needs of young people – Creating improved outcomes by ensuring access services that are youth focussed, integrated and provided in a timely way.
- Create new ideas and partnerships – Families and young people, government, business, community and philanthropic organisations all working together to provide improved outcomes for young people.

Human Rights

Local Government now must comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (The Charter) and other Victorian and Commonwealth legislation relating to human rights and social justice.

The Charter is fundamentally about the relationship between Victorian Governments (state and local) and the Victorian public. It requires all public authorities in Victoria to think about human rights when they make decisions about people. The Charter consists of 20 human rights protected by Victorian law. Councils must comply with these rights when making decisions, creating laws, setting policies and providing services. The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities also places a responsibility on local councils in Victoria to respect human rights in the way they go about their work and how they deliver their services.

Federal Government

National Strategy for Young Australians - 2010

The National Strategy for Young Australians highlights the vision that all young people can and should grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient. The National Strategy highlights eight priority areas: health and wellbeing, education, families, communities, online, work, early intervention and safety.

The aims are:

- Equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through education
- Supporting young Australians within their families
- Empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities
- Equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need to gain and be successful in employment
- Enabling young Australians to participate confidentially and safely online
- Strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people to get their lives back on track.

our current work

Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Youth Development Unit (YDU) offers a range of programs that engage and support young people aged 12-25 across the municipality.

Current programs being offered by the Youth Development Unit are:

- Live 4 Life
- Youth Spaces
- Music in the Sticks
- Youth Ambassadors
- Youth Awards

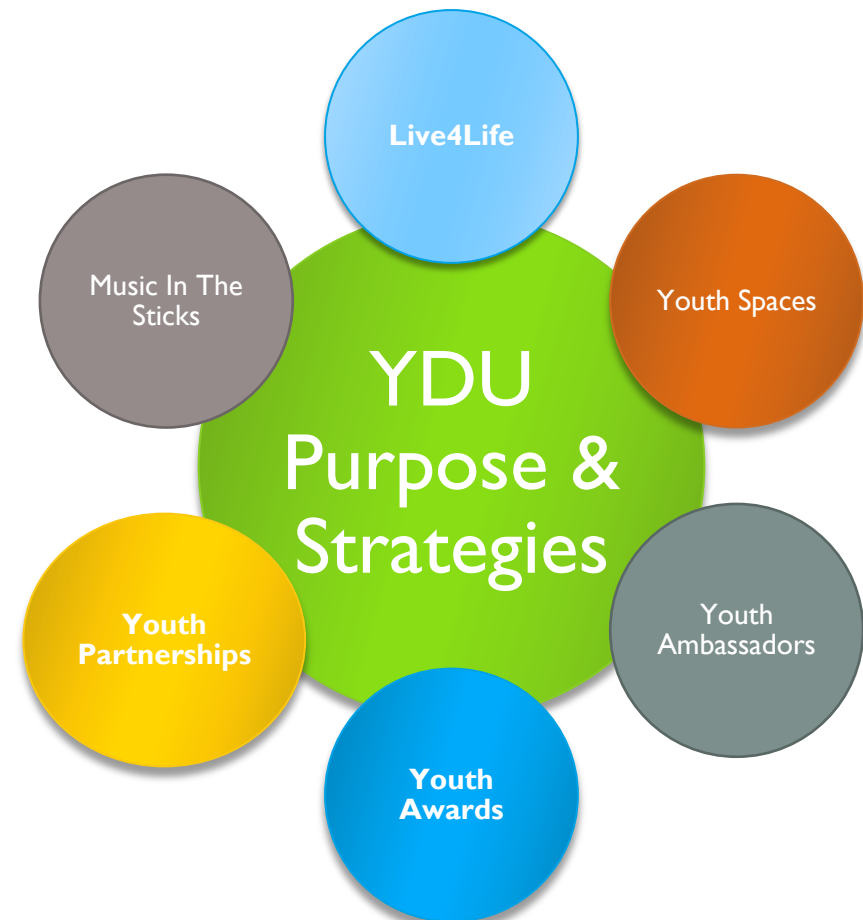
In addition, the Youth Development Unit has been strongly involved in the State Governments Youth Partnerships Initiative which focusses on improved supports for vulnerable young people aged 10-18.

The overarching strategies that guide the current work of the YDU and enact their current purpose **of improving mental health and well-being for young people** are:

- Connection to safe spaces & places
- Connection to safe, supportive, healthy relationships
- Connection to opportunities for healthy self-development

More broadly, the YDU aspires to deliver on Council's 'Community Wellbeing' Outcomes by:

- Understanding community demographics
- Identifying a purpose that will ultimately enable each community wellbeing outcome to become a reality
- Providing (evidence-based) service programs and activities that are efficient and effective; and
- Regularly evaluating programs and activities in order to establish efficiency and effectiveness, community needs and new opportunities.



methodology



The Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy was developed with the input of many key stakeholders. A range of consultation methods were used:

- A Youth Survey
- A Key Stakeholder Survey
- Focus Groups
- Interviews; and
- Workshops

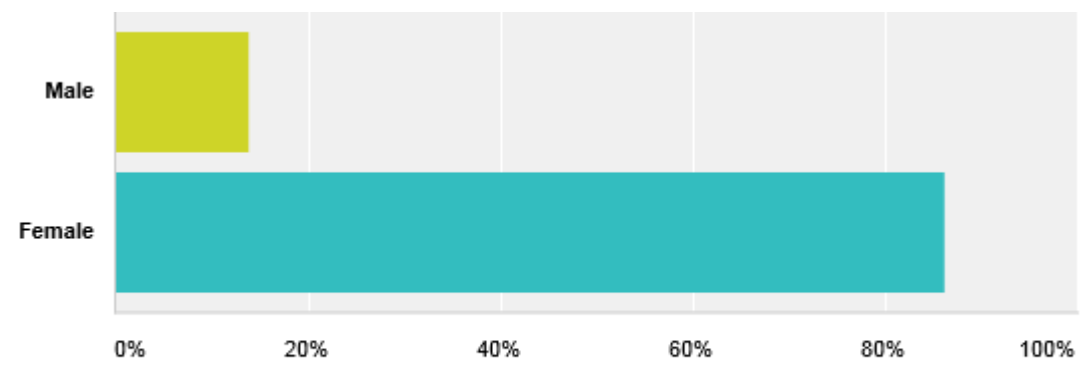
The consultation process engaged the following key stakeholders: Young People, Cobaw Community Health, Braemar College, Kyneton Secondary College, Sacred Heart College, Gisborne Secondary College, Central Ranges LLEN, CAMHS, Victoria Police, as well as a broad representation of internal Council departments.

consultation results

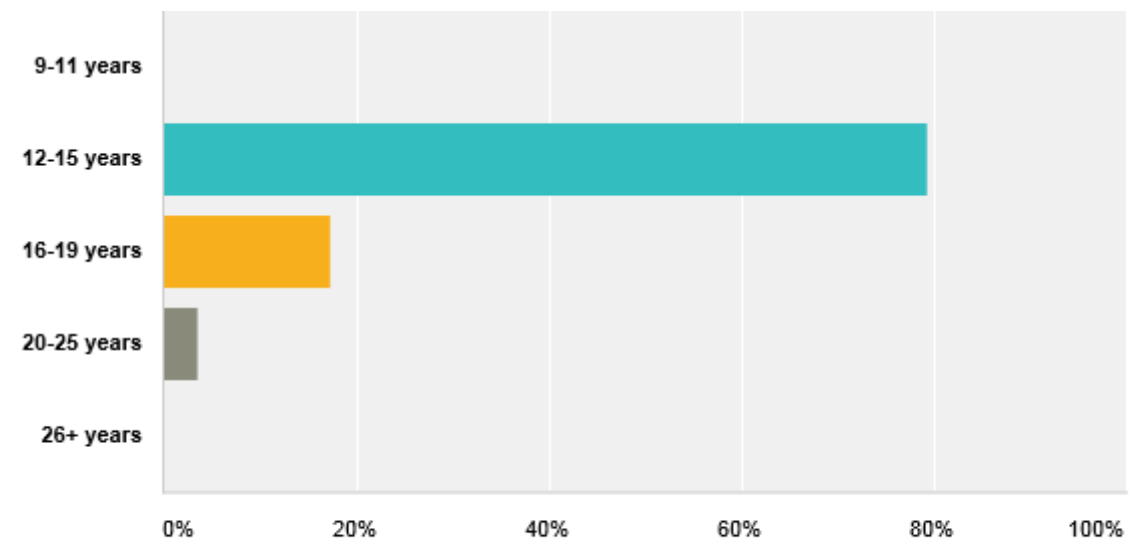
What Young People Said

Summary Results from the Youth Survey:

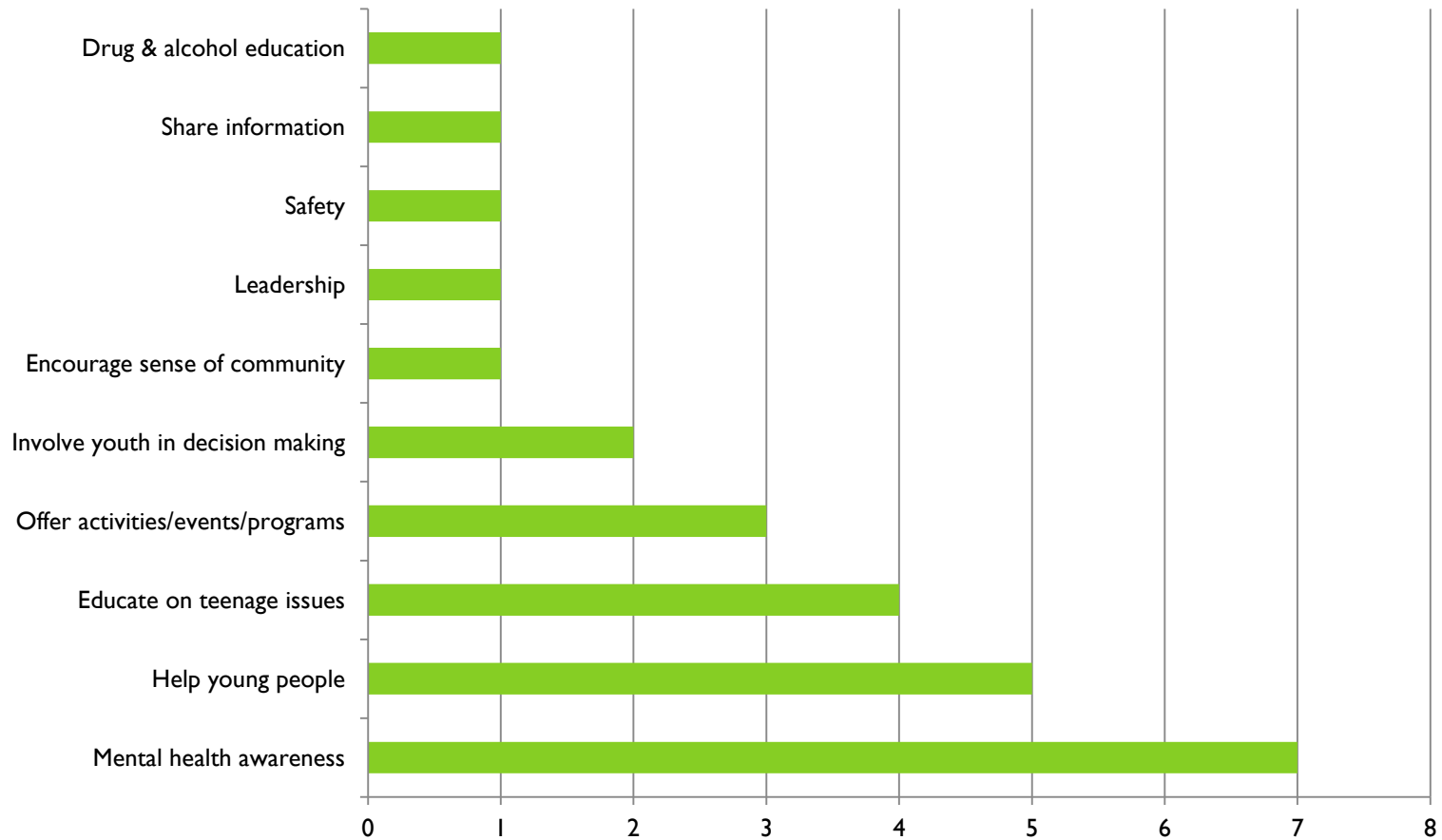
Q1: Are you male or female?



Q2: What is your age?

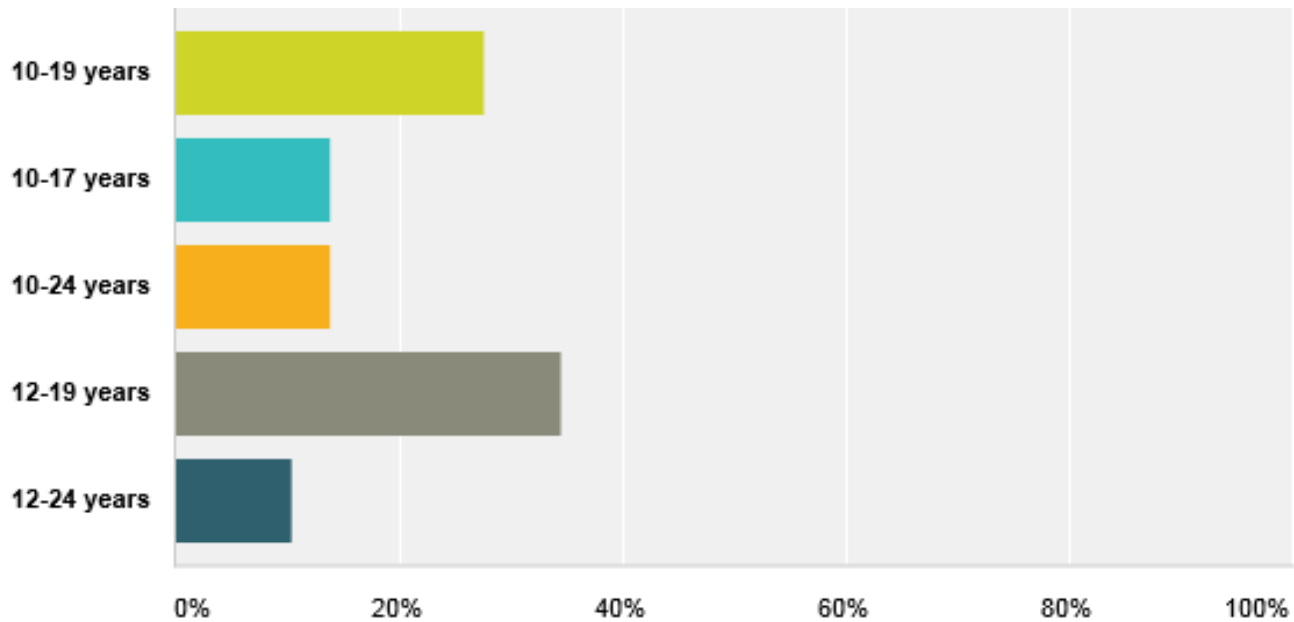


Q3: How would you describe what Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Youth Development Unit does?



Young people surveyed shared that mental health awareness, helping young people, educating on teen issues, offering activities/events and programs and involving youth in decision making as the main things they see the Youth Development Unit doing.

Q4: What age range do you think the Youth Development Unit should focus on?



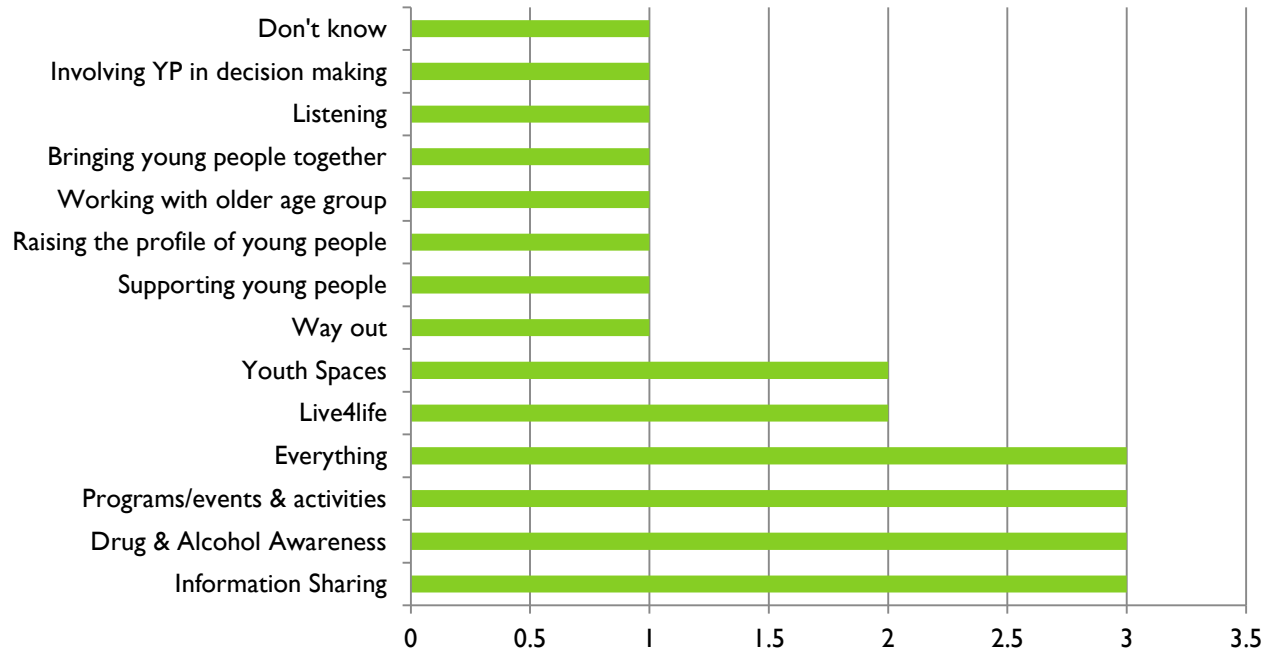
Survey respondents indicated that 12-19 (35%) and 10-19 (28%) were the most prevalent age ranges that the Youth Development Unit should focus on. A lesser 14% supported 10-17 and 10-24 followed by 10% indicating the 12-24 age range.

“Starting at a young age is good but anything over 19 can become to 'immature' for them”.

“10 might be too young to start addressing these ideas within the wider community, but by 12 many of the issues encountered at Live4Life are beginning”.

“Because 10 – 19 are the tender ages where a person can be changed dramatically with one small incident or fight/breakup/peer pressure....”.

Q5: What do you think the MRSC Youth Development Unit is doing well?



Young people surveyed indicated that information sharing, drug & alcohol awareness, programs/events and activities, everything, Live4life and Youth Spaces as the work they see the YDU doing really well.

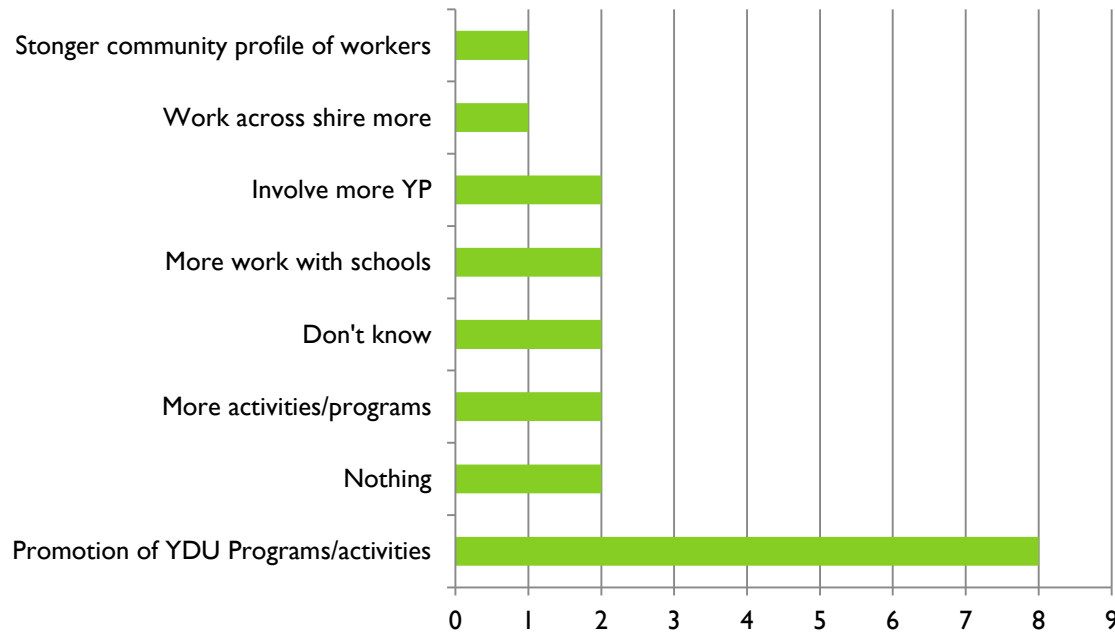
“I think the information that we are receiving is very great, we are always very informed and learning new things”.

“Live4life is awesome”.

“Making people aware of their services and bringing young people together”.

“Working with young people in shaping deciaions and plans for us—they are listening to us, so thank you”.

Q6: What do you think the MRSC Youth Development Unit could improve on?



Overwhelmingly, respondents wanted the MRSC Youth Development Unit to improve its promotion of programs and activities.

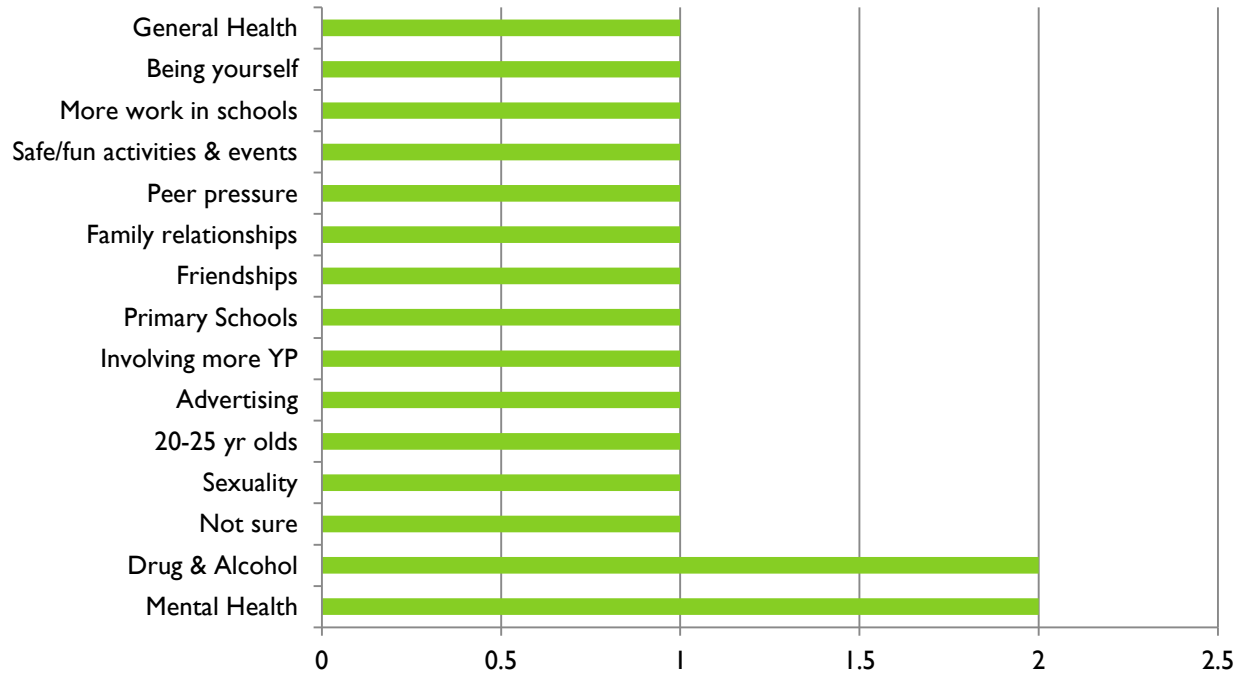
“Making people more aware of the resources that are available”.

“Maybe they could change the information because a lot of the time it overlaps”.

“The individual workers could make themselves more known to the youth of the Macedon Ranges so they know someone to talk to if they need help”.

“Local classes rather than mum and dad having to drive me as far as Kyneton”

Q7: What would you like to see MRSC Youth Development Unit focus on as a priority for the future?



The two most popular things that young people surveyed want the MRSC Youth Development Unit to focus on as priorities were Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol. Other responses were of equal priority.

“Do more school events so that people know where to go for help”.

“I think that depression and all the different causes and effects/risks of taking drugs and alcohol would be a good thing to learn more on”.

Q8: Other Comments?

"I love this unit so much and you guys are awesome at your jobs!!!!"

"I have had loads of fun with the MRSC Youth Development unit's program so thank you!!!!!"

Great job :)

"Keep up the great work with working with & helping our youth. Annie Rowland is AMAZING. Her level of support & determination to help us in our community gives us the courage to have our say. Thanks"

"I really like the Live 4 Life and Sensibility programs"

"Have camps and programs more regularly"

"Teach people what it (YDU) is"

What Internal Stakeholders Said

Internal Stakeholder Focus Group March 1, 2013 (4 Council departments present)

Q1: What are the current and future opportunities across Council that relate to young people (or could relate to young people)?

- Actively supporting young people to engage with **Community Planning**
- **Environment**- could engage young people to be on advisory committee
- Engaging young people through **social media**
- **Human Resources**- succession planning to support education and employment opportunities for young people through:
 - Mentoring
 - Work experience
 - Traineeships
 - Coaching
 - Cadetships
- **Volunteering:**
 - Rethinking volunteering- how do young people want to volunteer?
 - Build in episodic volunteering
 - Online volunteering
 - Career path volunteering
 - Develop policy & procedures
 - Training young people to volunteer during emergencies
 - Need to mentor & coach young people
 - Need to support other organisations to better engage young people in volunteering
 - Rethink meeting structures

- **Library:**
 - learning centres, think about name change
 - internet available
 - Explore youth spaces, media rooms in libraries
- **Promotion of Health & Wellbeing**
 - Education with schools e.g. immunisations
 - Smoking, alcohol, physical activity, sexual health
- **Youth Friendly Spaces:**
 - Community gardens and parks
 - Get place making group to model how to engage young people
 - Youth space in Gisborne
- **Advocacy**
 - Housing for young people- serious lack of youth housing
- **Facilitation Role**
- **Strengthening Local Families**-e.g. mental health and support of young parents

Q2: How can the YDU work more closely with your business unit?

- **Job Swap**- develop job shadowing e.g. a 'day in the life of...' where key departments learn about what the YDU does (& vice versa)
- **Stronger promotion** of what the YDU does e.g. people don't know about the Youth Ambassador Program
- **Develop case studies** to highlight exciting practice
- **Improve communication** across units
- **Counter being in the other building**
- **More joint projects together**
- **Develop a stronger understanding of what the YDU does** e.g. invite YDU to present to other business units
- **Showcase how the YDU relates to other work in Council**
- **Shine the light on young people**- 'spread the word'

Workshop with the Youth Development Unit- February 5th, 2013

Q1: What are the current strengths of the YDU?

- Community relationships
- Four Councillors are members of the Youth Advisory Group
- Networking
- Flexibility
- Genuine youth engagement and participation
- Retainment of young people
- Parent engagement
- Advocacy
- Ability to re-organise the YDU

“Our flexibility is our greatest strength”

Q2: What isn't working so well (weaknesses)?

- Knee jerk reactions/developing things on the run
- Whole of Council understanding of what the YDU does
- Data collection/using data to plan
- Adequate resourcing of projects
- Reluctance to appoint casual staff
- Networking-relationships need strengthening
- YDU picking up project work without adequate handover

Q4: What are the current threats to the YDU?

- Bureaucracy
- Inadequate Internal communication
- Under representation at influential gatherings/meetings
- Short term funding
- Inadequate funding
- Lack of continuity of casual staff for young people
- Staff shortages
- Lack of infrastructure- spaces for young people
- Fragmented service system

Q5: What are the opportunities?

- Live4life: extension into primary schools
- Youth Spaces in each community, grow into Lancefield and Riddle's Creek
- Music in the sticks- branch out
- Grow the Youth Ambassador Program
- Continue supporting/working on Flexible Learning Options
- Youth Partnerships Initiative
- Advocacy
- Grant and funding seeking
- Working with young people who have a disability
- Strengthen partnerships- across sector: local, State and Federally
- Investigate practical tool for 'case note' recording
- Improve collection of data
- Use of technology e.g. map location of young people involved in YDU programs

What External Stakeholders Said

External Stakeholder Focus Group March 1, 2013 (11 stakeholders present)

Q1: What do you think Council should be doing more of, less of and what should they continue doing?

More of	Less of	Continue Doing
Localised research		Youth spaces
Affordable transport		Music programs
Youth spaces		Live4life
Employment for young people		Sensibility (needs tweaking, but continue to offer)
Mental Health First Aid- extend to parents		Youth Mental Health First Aid
Using technology		Youth Ambassadors (make it higher profile)
Arts based programs		Key strategic projects e.g. Youth Partnerships
Connecting disengaged young people		Youth Awards
Information sharing e.g. youth directory		Advocacy e.g. transport issues
Holiday programs		
Partnerships		
Funding for programs		
Youth friendly spaces e.g. libraries, hubs, open spaces, businesses		
Advocacy		
Live4life		
Leadership work (e.g. Youth Ambassadors)		
Leadership on youth issues within Council		
Representation at meetings and events in community		
Youth empowerment, voice and opinions		
Male youth workers		
Capacity building within Live4life- skill teachers up		

Q2: What age range do you think that the Youth Development Unit should be focussing on?

Thoughts on age groups -

- 12-25 years is a good age range
- Early 20s are generally leaving for tertiary study so perhaps it should be 12-21 years
- Still need to focus on 20-25 years – less funding and programs directed at them so to cut them out would significantly disadvantage this group
- Grade 6s/transitioning age should be included and focussed on
- 11-12 year old male struggle with transition between PS and HS
- Could target younger age groups through parents
- Current gap in middle years- ages 10 and 11

Q3: How can the Youth Development Unit support you in your work with young people?

Thoughts on how the work by YDU could support the work of local agencies

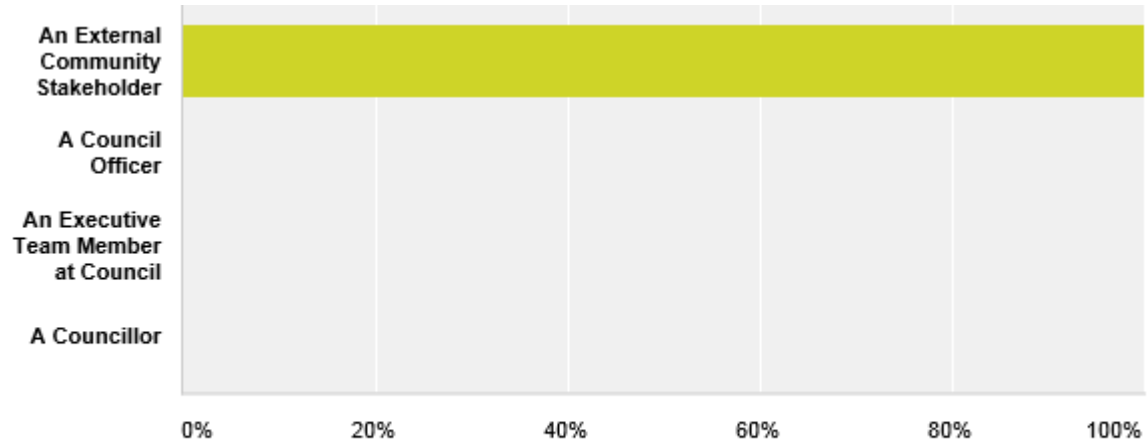
- Emphasis on localised research
- Support with information sharing e.g. lists of services, contact cards to be distributed
- More education for parents – challenges engaging parents especially the least informed parents (i.e. if we hold an information evening, usually the parents most likely to attend are already quite informed and knowledgeable).
- Facilitate discussion/forum about YMHFA/parent tips
- Involve parents in problem solving rather
- Planning around how to get info to parents
- Facilitate planning/brainstorming/networking

Q4: What key partnerships should the YDU enhance and develop?

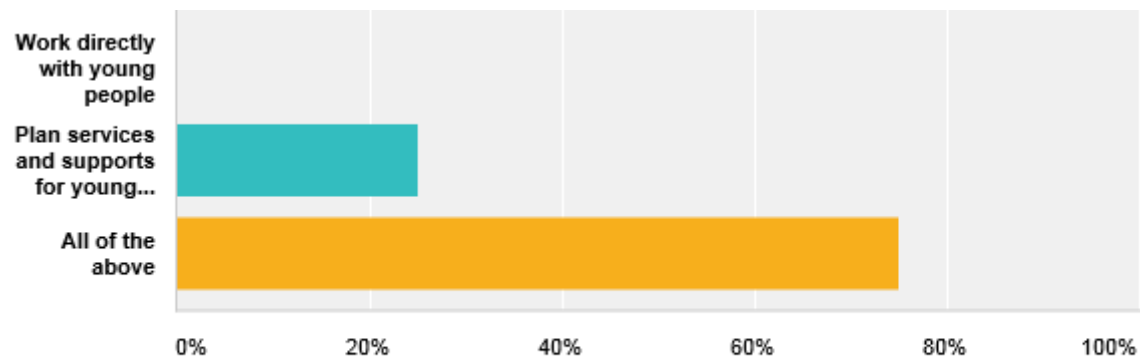
- Parents
- Businesses
- Neighbourhood houses/living & learning centres
- Youth Partnerships project is vital – Council should be a key partner in these conversations. Governance should be driven by someone at Pauline's level.
- Senior decision makers e.g. local, state and federal government

Summary Results for Key Stakeholder Survey

Q1: Are you?



Q2: Do you?

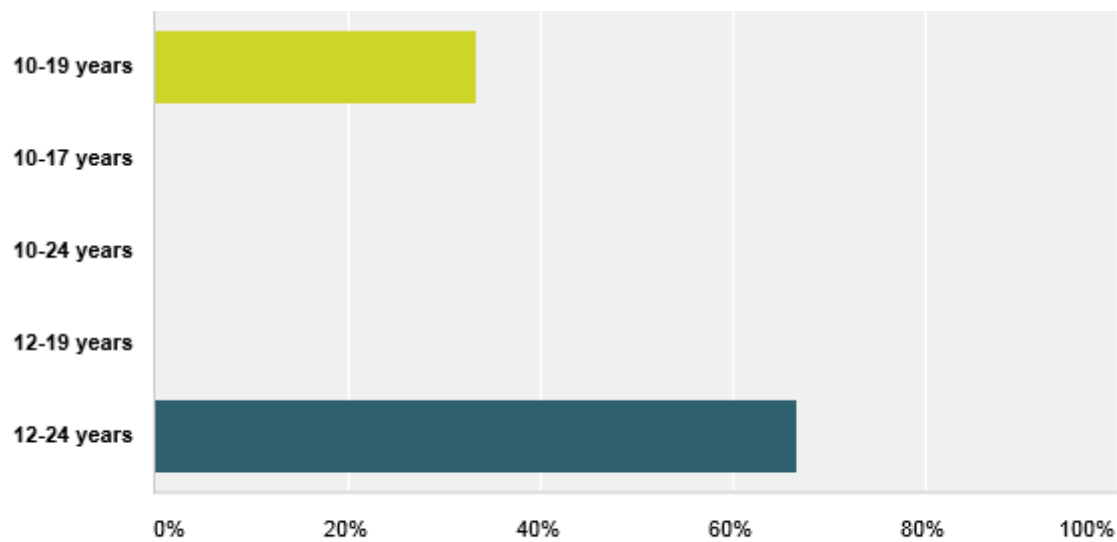


Q3: How would you describe what the Macedon Ranges YDU does?

- Service provision
- Networking support
- Advocacy
- Youth planning
- Live4life
- Youth engagement and participation

“Representing the voices of young people alongside young people at local government and beyond level”.

Q4: What age range do you think the Youth Development Unit should focus on?



Q5: What do you think the Youth Development Unit is doing well?

- Live4life
- Youth Ambassadors
- Youth Spaces
- Planning & networking
- Flexible Learning Options work
- Youth Partnerships work
- Providing education to other service providers

“Connecting with young people, putting young people's needs out there and involving young people in decision making”.

Q6: What do you think the Youth Development Unit could improve on?

- Nothing!

Q7: What would you like to see the MRSC Youth Development Unit focus on as a priority for the future?

- Partnerships
- Disengaged young people
- Sexual health
- Healthy relationships

strategy areas

The overarching five key strategy areas and corresponding actions were formed based on consultation with young people, Youth Development Unit staff; key youth service providers, broader Council department feedback and an extensive review of local research.



Strategy 1: Leadership, Engagement & Participation

Strategy 2: Planning, Partnerships, Facilitation & Advocacy

Strategy 3: Youth Friendly Spaces & Places

Strategy 4: Preventative Health & Wellbeing

Strategy 5: Volunteering, Employment & Training

youth strategy action plan

Strategy 1: Leadership, Engagement & Participation

To increase genuine youth inclusion and participation across the whole of Council and grow young leaders for the future.

Action	Desired Outcome(s)	Internal Partnerships/Linkages	External Partnerships/Linkages	Timeframe
1. Develop cross departmental coaching, mentoring and leadership opportunities for young people.	Increased youth participation across the whole of Council Skill and knowledge development for young people	All of Council Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Music Industry Festival /Event Managers Businesses	2014
2. Develop and implement youth leadership opportunities that engage and cater for a diverse range of young people.	An increase in community leadership opportunities for young people	YDU Councillors Executive Staff Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Foundation for Young Australians Local Service Clubs Local Businesses AYAC/YACVIC Schools	2015-2017
3. Develop a Youth Charter to affirm Council's commitment to young people and guide their engagement with Council into the future.	An increase in Young people's understanding of local government Improved youth participation and engagement across the whole of Council	All of Council	Young People DHS- Youth Inclusion grant	2014-2015
4. Identify areas within Council where young people could take part in planning and decision making.	Young people are involved in decisions that affect them Positive role models for young people	All of Council Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Key Community Stakeholders	2013
5. Highlight exciting youth engagement practices and showcase cross departmental work with young people	A higher profile for youth leaders Celebration and sharing of promising practices	All of Council	Key Community Stakeholders	2014-2017
6. Recognise, promote and celebrate the achievements of young people.	Youth Awards Increase in positive media stories	All of Council	Key Community Stakeholders	2013-2017
7. Utilise 'up to date' technology to better connect with young people and their families.	Improved communication between the YDU, young people and their families	All of Council	Young People and their families	2014-2017

Strategy 2: Planning, Partnerships, Facilitation & Advocacy

To plan, facilitate and advocate for young people's needs and develop effective community partnerships that will improve outcomes for young people living in the Macedon Ranges.

Action	Desired Outcome(s)	Internal Partnerships/Linkages	External Partnerships/ Linkages	Timeframe
1. Formally commit to participating in the governance of the Macedon Ranges Youth Partnerships Initiative.	Formalised partnerships to improve outcomes for youth	joined up to improve Youth Development Unit	DEECD Cobaw CRLLEN	2014
2. Urgently advocate for a Generalist Youth Worker position that can support young people across the Shire in a flexible and seamless way.	Flexible supports for young people Improved service responses for young people	YDU Councillors Executive Staff Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review Cobaw/CRLLEN	2015-2017
3. Strengthen partnerships with primary schools to facilitate improved resources and supports for the middle years.	Improved support for the early years Strengthened partnerships	Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review Primary Schools	2014-2015
4. Explore business and community partnerships that could enhance youth awards, Live4Life and broader program delivery that will improve outcomes for young people.	Increased resources to support youth initiatives	Economic Development	Businesses	2015
5. Strengthen and enhance Macedon Ranges Youth Sector Networks so that workers can be better linked with each other.	Improved communication and linkages between services and workers	Youth Development Unit	Networks that support youth services providers	2016
6. Advocate for improved transportation methods across Macedon Ranges Shire, including safe bike paths and improved access to Vline.	Improved transportation across the Macedon Ranges Shire	All of Council Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Transportation providers Young people	2013-2017
7. Advocate for improved youth housing (particularly emergency housing) in Macedon Ranges Shire.	An increase in housing options for emergency and longer term housing for young people		Haven Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review	2013
8. Strengthen partnerships with State and Federal members as well as government departments that are responsible for the needs of young people.	Improved partnerships between local, state and federal governments		DEECD DHS State and Federal Members	2013-2017

Strategy 2: Planning, Partnerships, Facilitation & Advocacy (continued)

To plan, facilitate and advocate for young people's needs and develop effective community partnerships that will improve outcomes for young people living in the Macedon Ranges.

Action	Desired Outcome(s)	Internal Partnerships/Linkages	External Partnerships/Linkages	Timeframe
9. Develop initiatives that improve cross departmental understanding and synergies with the Youth Development Unit.	Strengthened understanding, relationships and joint work between YDU and broader Council departments	All of Council		2014-2017
10. Identify internal systems and processes that can streamline grant seeking processes for the Youth Development Unit.	Improved communication around grant seeking resulting Collaborative grant seeking	All of Council	Grant providers Philanthropic trusts	2014
11. Develop a process that enables schools and the broader community to respond to emerging trends and emergency events that are specific to young people.	Improved cross sectoral communication and support for the emerging needs of young people	Youth Development Unit	Young People Schools Police Key youth service providers	2014

Strategy 3: Youth Friendly Spaces & Places

To provide a range of inviting youth friendly spaces and places across the Macedon Ranges Shire where young people feel comfortable, supported and are able to express themselves.

Action	Desired Outcome(s)	Internal Partnerships/Linkages	External Partnerships/Linkages	Timeframe
1. Conduct a review and evaluation of existing youth spaces to ascertain the overall effectiveness of the model and capacity to expand into other townships.	A range of youth spaces in communities across the Macedon Ranges Shire.	Youth Space Staff Open Space Strategy Council Plan Strategy#1: An Inspiring Place	Young People Key Stakeholder	2014
2. Develop an audit tool with young people to review the level of youth friendliness that spaces, businesses and services across the Macedon Ranges Shire currently offer.	An increased understanding of the level of youth friendliness across the Shire.	Open Space Strategy Council Plan Strategy#1: An Inspiring Place	Young People Businesses Youth Service Providers	2015-2017
3. Incorporate young people's views into planning for community spaces and places across the Shire.	An increase in youth friendly spaces and places Young people are involved in matters that affect them.	Place Making Group Environment Group Community Planning Open Space Strategy Council Plan Strategy#1: An Inspiring Place	Young People Schools Youth Service Providers	2014-2015

Strategy 4: Preventative Health & Well Being

To deliver preventative health initiatives for young people (and their families) that will strengthen their overall health and well-being outcomes, particularly mental health outcomes, and ensure that young people and their families are engaged and well informed on available services and supports.

Action	Desired Outcome(s)	Internal Partnerships/Linkages	External Partnerships/Linkages	Timeframe
1. Introduce Teen Mental Health First Aid training to 15-18 year olds.	Improved preventative mental health education and supports for young people	Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Schools Young People	2014
2. Conduct a joint mapping exercise to ascertain what Drug and Alcohol information is being disseminated to young people in schools and across the wider community.	Identification of gaps A coordinated approach to AOD education across Macedon Ranges Sec Schools	Youth Development Unit	Schools Key Youth Service Providers	2015-2017
3. Develop and maintain an online directory of services and supports for young people and their families.	Improved information sharing	Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review	2014-2015
4. Examine opportunities where the Youth Development Unit could include the middle year's ages (10 & 11 years) and report to Council.	Understanding of the middle years gap and corresponding needs	Youth Development Unit	Macedon Ranges Youth Services Review	2013-2014
5. Implement the recommendations of the Live4Life Future Directions report.	A sustainable and broader reaching model for Live4Life	Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Live4Life Group Key Community Stakeholders	2013-2017
6. Gradually expand the reach of Live4Life Macedon Ranges to the whole school community.	Improved mental health supports and outcomes for young people	Council Plan Strategy#2: An Empowered Community	Live4Life Group Schools Partnership	2015-2017
7. Continually promote the Youth Development Unit's programs and activities to young people, parents, schools and youth service providers.	Improved marketing and promotion of activities/events Increased attendance at events and activities Increased awareness of the work of the YDU		Youth Service Providers Young People Parents	2013-2017
8. Investigate innovative parent engagement methods across the shire to better understand and broadly disseminate how to increase parental engagement.	An increase in parental involvement		Schools LLEN Parents	2014-2015

Strategy 5: Volunteering, Employment & Training

To utilise and strengthen the skills of young people through improved community and work experience volunteering and youth specific employment and training opportunities within Council.

Action	Desired Outcome(s)	Internal Partnerships/Linkages	External Partnerships/Linkages	Timeframe
1. Seek support for an internal youth employment policy that will guide cadetships, traineeships and work experience volunteering and promote Local Government as a career path for young people.	An increase in employment, training, volunteering and career opportunities for young people across the Shire	All of Council	Young People CRLEN Youth Employment Services	2014
2. Map volunteer opportunities within Council where young people could build skills and strengthen their civic engagement.	An understanding of volunteering opportunities for young people	All of Council	CRLEN Young People	2015-2017
3. Explore and strengthen the role of young people in emergency response volunteering.	An increase in the number of Young people engaged and informed about emergency response	Emergency Management	Young People Emergency response agencies e.g. SES, CFA etc.	2014-2015
4. Facilitate broader community understanding of youth engagement and youth friendly volunteer principles and explore non-traditional methods of volunteering including episodic and on-line volunteering.	An increase in young people volunteering Improved knowledge of youth engagement across the community	All of Council	Cobaw LLEN Volunteering Australia Service Clubs Young People	2015-2016
5. Identify and provide professional development opportunities for YDU staff that will lead to improved outcomes for the young people they work with.	Improved knowledge of issues that impact on young people Improved skills for YDU staff	Human Resources Council Plan Strategy#3: A High Performing Organisation	Training providers	2013-2017

guiding evidence

The action plan has been developed based on feedback from key internal and external stakeholders and an in depth review of local research. The ensuing section of the report captures key underpinning evidence that supports the overall direction of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy.

Strategy 1: Leadership, Engagement & Participation

Youth Charter

The MAV sourced resource by Nadden and Hill (2004) details the benefits of connecting young people to Council:

- Councils are more effective in their planning and decision making when connections are built between community and young people
- Mutual understanding is enhanced, and stereotypes are challenged
- The energy, leadership and fresh perspectives of 20 per cent of the population become more effectively engaged in social, economic, cultural and environmental renewal
- Young people and communities grow into active citizenship in order to tackle social problems and act on opportunities
- Inclusion and fairness is promoted for all sections of the population

Youth Participation and Engagement

Participation refers "to the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives" (Hart, 1992, p. 5). According to UNICEF it is the fundamental right of citizenship and the means by which democracies should be measured (Hart, 1992)³.

Children and young people are not passive participants in the life of society and towns and cities...[they are] fully-fledged citizens...[and] may therefore participate in the life of the community, in particular through advisory services for children and young people at a municipal level. (UNESCO, 1996, section II4)

³ Hart, R. (1992). Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship, *Innocenti Essays No. 4*, Florence: UNICEF.

Youth participation is the process of building partnerships between adults and young people to promote the role of young people in decision making on issues that affect them - within services, programs and society more broadly (Youth Affairs Council VIC, 2004).

Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities will be less depressed, have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities and will more likely reach full and healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).

Being able to participate in and influence the decisions affecting their lives is important to the wellbeing children and young people. This decision making includes being able to make choices in everyday situations, and influence everyday occurrences at home and at school as well as being involved in larger decisions about their lives and the achievement of their goals (Parliament of NSW, 2009, 29).

It is by questioning; expressing their views and having their opinions taken seriously that young people develop skills, build competencies, acquire confidence and form aspirations. It is a virtuous circle. The more opportunities a young person has for meaningful participation, the more experienced and competent he or she becomes. This allows more effective participation, which in turn enhances [his/her] development (United Nations, 2004, p. 276).

Additional research revealed that when children and young people participated in decision-making they had a greater sense of autonomy and self-efficacy over their lives and were more positive in establishing their own direction (Parliament of NSW, 2009, 30).

When youth and adults share decision-making about affairs usually dominated by adults, intergenerational relationships are strengthened. Shared decision-making also builds bridges between the needs and interests of adults and youth, leading to more inclusive and sustainable community development (Geggie, L., 2003).

Further to this young people who believed their lives were largely within their own control were more likely to have positive attitudes towards others, were more likely to respect others, be more committed to the decisions that were made, feel responsibility for those decisions and to differentiate between and accept what they could and could not influence (Parliament of NSW, 2009, 30).

Most civic habits develop between the midteens and the early twenties. Thus, youth participation in governance will increase the probability of citizen engagement in adulthood, and over time will increase overall rates of participation (Carpini, M., no date).

Strategy 2: Planning, Partnerships, Facilitation & Advocacy

Governance

Countless researchers now believe an area-based approach to tackling health inequalities, as part of a wider policy for community regeneration, is an essential and important part of a national response to the health gap between rich and poor (Hunter & Killoran, 2004, Fincher, 2008).

A report into youth service gaps in Victoria, *Who's Carrying the Can?* found that local area planning processes and structures would improve the service response to the needs of young people. Such planning would help ensure improved infrastructure, continuum of care, and a more robust and integrated service system that can better ensure that every young person has every chance to reach their potential (Rose & Atkins, 2006).

Studies have shown that communities with collaborative governance are more effective at attracting and maintaining relevant resources, services and initiatives including recreational space, sporting facilities, community health services, clinics, police and resources for crime control, fire services, improved amenity, traffic safety improvements and social activities (Wilkinson & Kawahi, 1998; Gillies, 1998; Szreter, 2002; Browning & Cagney, 2002; McNeil, Krueger & Subramanian 2006).

Partnerships

In describing factors for a successful partnership, *the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation* proposes that partners need to develop long term relationships. It suggests that members of successful partnerships usually share:

- a goal that is larger than that of a single research project; and
- that they understand that the project at hand is one step toward solving the overall problem.

The dimensions of the Vic Health partnership analysis tool⁴ provide a useful overview of what's required for a successful partnership. This includes:

- Agreed and understood need for the partnership with a clear vision;
- Right members in the partnership;
- Support from members organisations for participation in the partnership;
- Capacity for the partnership to function (admin, decision making processes, clear roles and expectations for members);
- Mechanisms for collaborative planning;
- Mechanisms for joint action;
- Review and evaluation mechanisms for joint work and the functioning of the partnership.

⁴ <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/About%20Us/Attachments/VHP%20part%20toollow%20res.ashx>

Strategy 3: Youth Friendly Spaces & Places

What is a 'youth friendly' space?

“...venues or amenities of all types, where the general atmosphere is one in which young people are treated with respect and dignity, and where they feel safe, secure and welcome
(White and Wyn, 2004)

Independent access to their neighbourhood is important for young people to develop physically and socially (Tranter & Pawson 2001; Hubsmith 2006).

Independent access:

- Leads to personal, intellectual and psychological development;
- Enables young people to access opportunities without being reliant on parents; and
- Is important to the community itself – communities without children suffer because they lack youthful liveliness, creativity, and diversity.
(Malone 2006)

Strategy 4: Preventative Health & Wellbeing

Generalist Youth Workers

'Generalist youth workers' are youth specific, universally available and flexible in their approach, they are seen as 'boundary less' as they are not limited by restrictive eligibility criteria.

Consultations with young people conducted for the 2008 VYF overwhelmingly supported a generalist youth services/support approach.

The 2006 Youth Support Services: Who's Carrying the Can? report agrees and recommended that the Victorian Government dedicate new resources to creating more generalist youth support positions and services in Victoria, and that these be delivered within flexible funding models that allow for a range of support responses to young people. Authors Rose & Atkins go on to say:

Generalist youth support workers provide a very important link between young people and more specialised supports they need often operating as the conduit through which that young person accesses the service. A lack of generalist youth support services means that young people are less likely to access existing more specialised support when they need it.

The Middle Years

Research confirms that intervening in the middle years can be effective, and that this period of major transition and heightened risk can be a key turning point for children and young people (Parliament of NSW, 2009). The Australian Temperament Study is one such piece of research, finding that a considerable number of children identified as being 'at risk' of antisocial behaviour at 11-12 years engaged in little or no antisocial behaviour at age 17. The Study found that individuals whose personal characteristics placed them 'at risk' of developing adolescent antisocial behaviour were still amenable to change during late childhood and early adolescence; and that **interventions aimed at enhancing family relationships, discouraging detrimental peer relationships and fostering school attachment** diverted young people from traversing an antisocial pathway in adolescence (Parliament of NSW, 2009). This research illustrates that developmental pathways can change, that children who exhibit difficult characteristics during childhood do not necessarily become 'difficult' during adolescence (Hampshire & Borer, 2005, 4).

Evidence to the NSW 'Missing Middle' Inquiry identified a variety of needs of young people in their middle years, including the need to:

- have good self-esteem;
- belong, feel connected and supported (reliable adults);
- have increasing independence in a safe environment;
- be able to achieve, learn and feel competent; and
- be heard, participate, and be listened to (Parliament of NSW, 2009).

Research previously carried out for Action for Children has also shown that emotional wellbeing at age 10 – agency, self-esteem and some behavioural and emotional indicators – have a more significant relationship with mental health outcomes and some behavioural indicators for older teenagers at age 16, than other factors, controlling for a wide range of other variables. This further highlights the importance of the middle years in shaping emotional wellbeing and of developing these protective behavioural skills and traits during the pre and early adolescent years (Sodha, 2008, 30).

Parent Engagement/Involvement

During the 'Missing Middle' Inquiry the importance of family support was noted as a recurring theme. Importantly this was not only about supporting the young person but also supporting the family unit, particularly in times of crisis, as an essential element in strengthening the resilience of young people (Parliament of NSW, 2009, 22).

Whilst a myriad of studies confirm that parents and family are vital in the lives of children and young people, the results of Tucci's (2006) research also clearly indicates that children are turning to a range of other adults in search of support and reassurance and protection. Authority figures such as teachers, doctors and police are people in whom children have confidence (Tucci, et. al. 2006, 22). Research that flies in the face of the long held perceptions of adolescence as a period of rebelliousness against authority figures. Madge (2006) interviewed 2000 children and 507 adults and found that children and

adults had very different understandings about the main influences on children. Whilst children indicated that parents and family were the most important influences on children, adults believed the important influences to be friends and peer pressure (Madge, 2006).

Research proposes that despite family factors often contributing to the young person's difficulties, families frequently remain significant in the young person's support network (Hill, 1999; Ungar 2004).

Preventative Mental Health

A growing body of evidence now indicates that the opportunities for preventing mental health disorders are greatest when focussed on children and young people, and that early intervention strategies can be effective in preventing, or delaying or the onset of these disorders, and certainly alleviating 'collateral damage' not only to the affected individual's social and vocational functioning, but family dynamics or functioning (McGorry and Yung, 2003).

Preventive and early intervention strategies in schools, especially in the late primary and early high school years, can be successful with a focus on all children (universal), those at risk (selective), and/or those experiencing early signs and symptoms but who do not meet criteria for a mental health disorder (targeted). The school setting provides many advantages for universal interventions, including reducing recruitment and attrition difficulties, reaching a broad range of students with varying levels of risk for mental health problems, reducing stigmatization, and reducing psychosocial problems in the classroom (Kubiszyn, 1999).

A systematic review of Australian school-based prevention and early intervention programs found that both indicated and universal approaches appear to produce short- to mid-term small-to-moderate reduction in anxiety and depression (Neil and Christensen, 2007).

In a recent international study, estimates of the lifetime prevalence of DSM-IV mental disorders in a large sample of adolescents aged 13 to 18 years were presented (Merikangas et al., 2010). Anxiety disorders were the most common presentation (32%), followed by behaviour disorders (including ADHD, ODD, CD; 19%), mood disorders (14%), substance use disorders (11%), and eating disorders (3%). Approximately 40% of individuals had two concurrent disorders from different classes (Merikangas et al., 2010). There are also high rates of self-harm in young people and suicide is a leading cause of death in this age group (Patel et al., 2007).

Youth Employment

The 2010 “How Young People are Faring” report reinforced the need for Education, Employers and Community to partner and raise retention rates (reduce the 16% levels of disengagement) and tackle the spike in youth unemployment (17.9% to less than 12% before the GFC). More specifically it recommends that partners develop alternative pathways to further education and employment – including apprenticeships.

The engaging with Young People, Local Government in Action report captures examples of how Councils can be more proactive around youth employment:

Many Councils have strategies to increase youth employment within their own workforce. Councils are recognising that being 'employers of choice' to young people is important to enhancing their sustainability. Councils often apply strategies for 'youth friendly' recruitment processes, marketing, student placements and engagement of young people as volunteers. Economic development departments can extend this to encouraging similar initiatives from local business.

Some examples of ‘promising practice’ for Councils supporting youth employment are:

Wellington Shire set itself a quota of youth trainee positions to increase youth employment and reduce the exodus of young people.

The City of **Hampton, Virginia** created two part-time positions for youth in the City Planning Department. In this ongoing program, the teens were hired to work 15 hours a week for a two-year term. Highlights of the “youth planners” work has included:

- Developing a handbook to help businesses and officials become more “youth friendly”
- Working with the local transit agency to research better transportation options for youth.
- Working with the parks/recreation department to give ideas for youth events.
- Gathering information from peers.

(California Center For Community Participation 2005)

Youth Volunteering

Volunteering Australia defines formal volunteering as an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- ✓ to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- ✓ of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- ✓ for no financial payment
- ✓ in designated volunteer positions only'.

Media portrayal of youth is not always positive, contributing to a perception that they are an alienated section of the community. They are often designated as self-interested, enclosed in their own narrow culture, lacking political savvy and largely disinterested in accepting responsibility.

By providing volunteering opportunities to young people, organisations are making a conscious decision to assist young people develop the skills and competencies that will benefit them well into adulthood (Ausyouth 2002).

Research (Shondel & Boehm 2000, Jones 2000, Ferrier, Roos & Long 2004) supports that here are a number of factors that motivate young people to volunteer:

- because their friends are volunteering
- because of a school (compulsory) program/requirement
- they believe in the cause (i.e. global warming, youth homelessness) or the volunteering is meaningful
- it provides the opportunity to use existing skills and experience
- it allows them to explore their own strengths and abilities
- they like to helping others less fortunate or in difficult circumstances
- it makes them feel good about themselves
- wanting to meet new people and make new friends
- loneliness
- external expectations, encouragement or pressure from others (i.e. parents/care givers)
- wanting to feel a sense of achievement
- having a sense of social responsibility
- thanks from others
- working in groups with other young people
- being able to see the results of their efforts

Research by Ferrier and others provides some indicators that Generation Y:

- are time poor – they juggle many commitments, from school to part time work
- are often from a higher socio-economic background
- have higher self esteem and a stronger sense of self concept
- are more likely to be from rural areas
- are women
- are more likely to be full time students
- are more likely to volunteer if there are job/career related benefits
- are people with a disability
- are often not asked to volunteer

Wajs-Chaczko (2008) suggests that Generation Y has a very different experience of the world than previous generations (such as the Baby Boomers). Gen Y is an information seeking generation that is always 'switched on'. They heavily rely on technology to communicate, and on social networking websites, such as *Facebook* for the immediate delivery of information.

Research by Handsin (2000) found that when young people do contribute to the community, they do not always gain support for their viewpoint. '...young people need to be encouraged to have their own vision for the future and be equipped with the skills and opportunities to be involved in shaping it. Until we can accept (as a national community) that young people will and do contribute in their own ways, many of their efforts will be overlooked, underestimated or even ignored.

This supports the need for broader community education around youth volunteering and the importance of an open mind to flexible volunteering.

implementation

A wide range of actions are captured within the Youth Strategy Action Plan, these actions will require the ongoing commitment of the whole of Council as well as key community stakeholders, including young people. Whilst the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy has been developed to guide the internal work of Councils Youth Development Unit, wider support and partnerships are paramount to its success.

It is suggested that the Youth Strategy be used as a 'living document' that can adapt to the changing and emerging needs of young people within the Macedon Ranges Shire. To maximise the successful implementation of the Youth Strategy it is recommended that:

- 1) The ***Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy 2013-2017*** have the continuing guidance and participation of young people wherever possible to ensure its ongoing relevance. Young people being actively involved will guarantee that the actions are delivered in youth friendly, youth relevant ways.
- 2) Internal and external partnerships are developed and utilised to enhance the capability and resources available to implement the strategic priorities and actions.
- 3) The Youth Strategy Action Plan is fully supported by the whole of Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

A whole of Council and broader community approach to improving outcomes for young people is essential for the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy to flourish. These vital partnerships centred on young people across the Macedon Ranges will boost the resourcing, knowledge and expertise available for the work ahead.

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