

NARRABRI SHIRE

Youth

STRATEGY

2022/2026





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

"Narrabri Shire Council acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters, and communities of people of the Gamilaraay/Gamilaroi/Gomeroi/Kamilaroi Nation, and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

Narrabri Shire Council acknowledges the various spellings of 'Gamilaraay, Gamilaroi, Gomeroi, and Kamilaroi' as valid and interchangeable, guided by the Shire's Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

The Narrabri Shire has a rich history of culture. Council endeavours to unite the Community in preserving the unique heritage, celebrating community strengths and diversities, and achieving social justice by redressing past wrongs through Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Council recognises the valuable contribution to the Narrabri Shire made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and looks forward to a future of mutual respect and harmony."


THANK YOU

Thank you to the young people who contributed to developing this strategy, including the 2021/2022 Narrabri Shire Youth Council. Thank you for generously lending Council your time to contribute to the development of this Strategy. You elevated your voices during the hardest years in our recent history, which took a significant toll on young people across the Shire. We are so grateful for your commitment to ensuring this Strategy reflects your voices and makes a difference to the lives of young people across our Shire.



CONTENTS

Acknowledgement of Country	2
Thank You	2
Contents	3
General Manager's Foreword.....	4
Introduction	6
About the Shire.....	6
About the Shire's Youth.....	7
Education in the Shire	10
Engaging with the Shire's Youth	11
Insights from Engagement	12
Strategic Alignment	13
Key Priorities	13
Implementation & Monitoring	14
Integration with our Community Strategic Plan	15
Narrabri Shire 2022/2032 Community Strategic Plan - Snapshot	16
Regional NSW Youth Framework 2020 - Snapshot	17
The Strategy at Glance.....	18
Current Position.....	19
The Strategy	22
1. Health and Wellbeing	23
2. Community Engagement and Leadership	25
3. Education and Skill Development.....	27
4. Entrepreneurship and Employment	29
5. Cultural Enrichment	31
6. Infrastructure and Environment.....	33
References	35



General Manager's *foreword*

I am honored to introduce the 2022/2026 Youth Strategy, a document which represents Council's unwavering commitment to the boundless potential of our incredible young residents. As Narrabri Shire Council's General Manager it is both a privilege and a responsibility to champion the needs and aspirations of our community.

Council recognises the invaluable contributions that young people make to the tapestry of our community. They are not just the future; they are an integral part of our present. This Youth Strategy is a testament to our dedication to providing a supportive environment that nurtures their growth, empowers their voices, and celebrates their unique talents.

In crafting this strategy, we have listened to the concerns, dreams, and ideas of our youth. We understand the challenges they face in a rural setting, and we are committed to overcoming these hurdles together. The Youth Strategy encompasses a range of initiatives designed to foster education, skill development, and civic engagement, ensuring that our young residents have the tools they need to thrive.

Through collaborative efforts with all levels of government, local organisations, educational institutions, and community leaders, we aim to create a dynamic ecosystem that encourages innovation, creativity, and a sense of belonging. We believe that investing in our youth is an investment in the resilience and prosperity of our entire community.

I invite every member of our community to actively participate in the implementation of the Youth Strategy. By working together, we can build a community where young people feel heard, valued, and inspired to contribute to the collective success of our home.

Thank you for joining us on this journey towards a brighter, more inclusive future for the Narrabri Shire.

Sincerely,

Rob Williams
General Manager

Youth Mayor's message



As the outgoing Youth Mayor, I am pleased to present the 2022/2026 Youth Strategy, a fantastic initiative aimed at cultivating a more vibrant and inclusive community. The Youth Strategy was an initiative of the Narrabri Shire Youth Council and as the Narrabri Shire Youth Mayor for 2023, I am thrilled to see this Strategy come to life and the prospects it holds for our young residents.

I have been delighted and honoured to have been elected as the Narrabri Shire Youth Council's Mayor for the past 12 months and the Deputy Mayor for 6 months prior to that. With thanks to Council's Community Development Coordinator Elodie Labonte, who has given up numerous hours of her time and the rest of the Youth Council, we have been able to achieve many great things over the past two years for the promotion of youth engagement in the Narrabri Shire. I am very proud of our progress as a youth support team, especially in our activities such as our Family Fun Day, multiple movie nights and council promotion at our local markets and most importantly being a voice for the youth in our Shire.

Now, we need YOU in the spotlight. Your ideas, your energy, your passion. Let's create a community where people of all ages enjoy living and can thrive. Education, skill development, and active participation are the foundations of the Youth Council. Our goal is to create an environment that provides the necessary resources for our young residents to not only dream ambitiously but also to translate those aspirations into tangible achievements.

I encourage active participation from the community as a whole as we embark on the implementation of this Strategy. Your insights, ideas, and collaboration are integral to the success of this initiative. Together, let us build a community that nurtures the potential of our youth and ensures they play a central role in shaping the trajectory of the Shire.

Thank you for your support and commitment to our future.

Mackenzie Jones
Youth Mayor

INTRODUCTION

The 2022/2026 Youth Strategy (**the Strategy**) is a four-year strategic plan developed to provide strategic direction for the delivery of support, programs, activities, and events that meet the needs of our diverse population of young people. The Youth Strategy guides and focuses the way we work with our community to support and empower the Shire's youth. Council has completed an all-embracing community engagement process across the Shire.

The Strategy aims to address the unique needs and aspirations of our young people. The Strategy focuses on fostering youth empowerment, and development. It seeks to identify opportunities for skill-building, education, support, and ensuring that young people have a voice in local decision-making processes. By addressing the specific challenges faced by the Shire's youth and youth in a rural setting, the Strategy aims to create a supportive environment that encourages their active participation in community life and contributes to the overall well-being and vitality of the Shire.

ABOUT THE SHIRE

The Narrabri Shire Local Government Area covers 13,031 square kilometres in North West New South Wales and is home to over 12,000 residents.¹ Located halfway between Sydney and Brisbane, the Shire is an exciting and diverse region of NSW and is home to a vast array of National Parks, Aboriginal Cultural Areas, Conservation Areas, and Nature Reserves.

The Shire sits within the Federal Government electorate of Parkes and the State Government seat of Barwon and is known as 'Australia's Sportiest Shire'.²



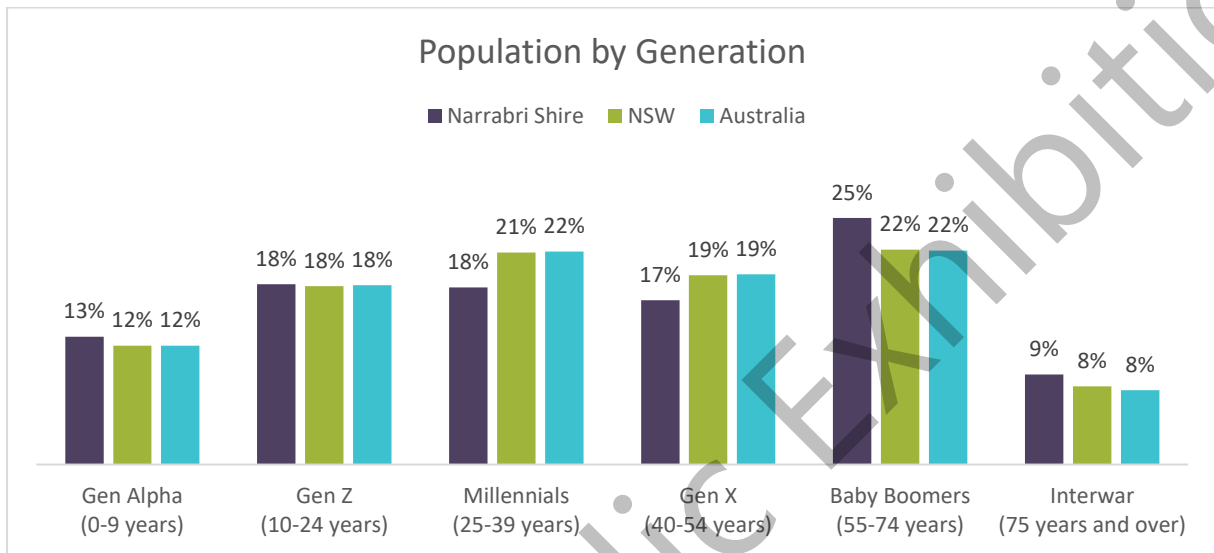
¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2021 Census.

² In 2001 Narrabri was identified as Australia's Sportiest town by Cannel Nine's Today Show, based on the sports persons from the town and district. Over one hundred and ten Australian representatives and champions showcasing forty-four sports were either born or started their sporting career in the Narrabri Shire.

ABOUT THE SHIRE'S YOUTH

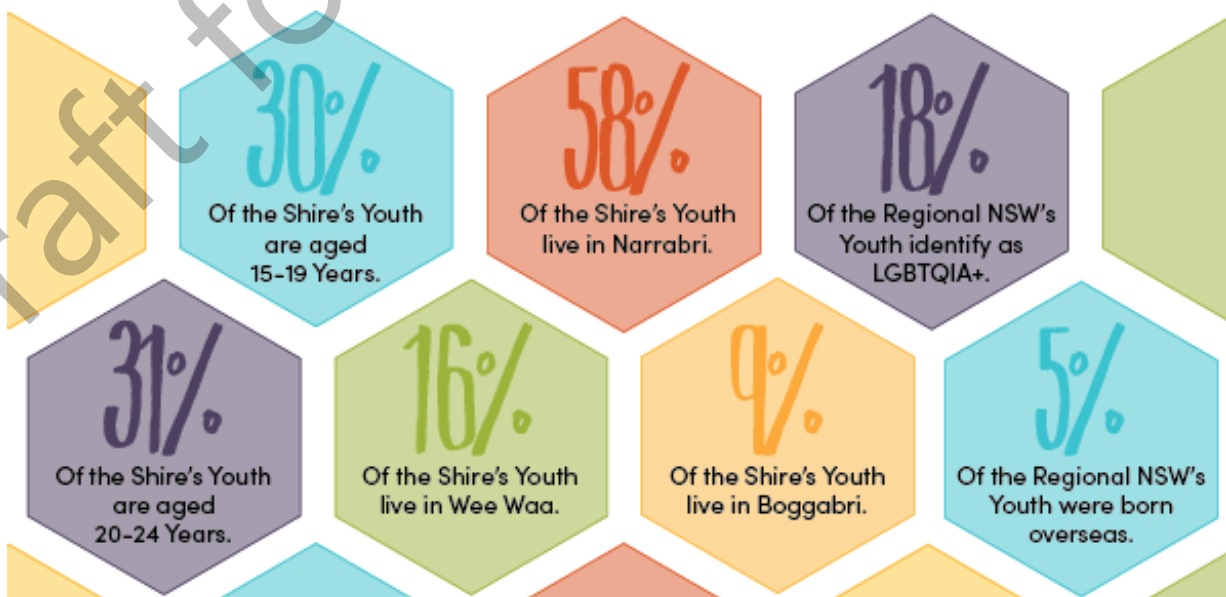
According to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics Census (2021) Narrabri Shire LGA (the Shire) population is approximately 12,703 with 2,372 young people living in the Narrabri Shire aged between 10 – 24 years making up 18% of the total population.

For the purpose of the Strategy, 'Youth' is defined as a person aged between 10 to 24 years of age. This group is more commonly referred to as Generation Z.



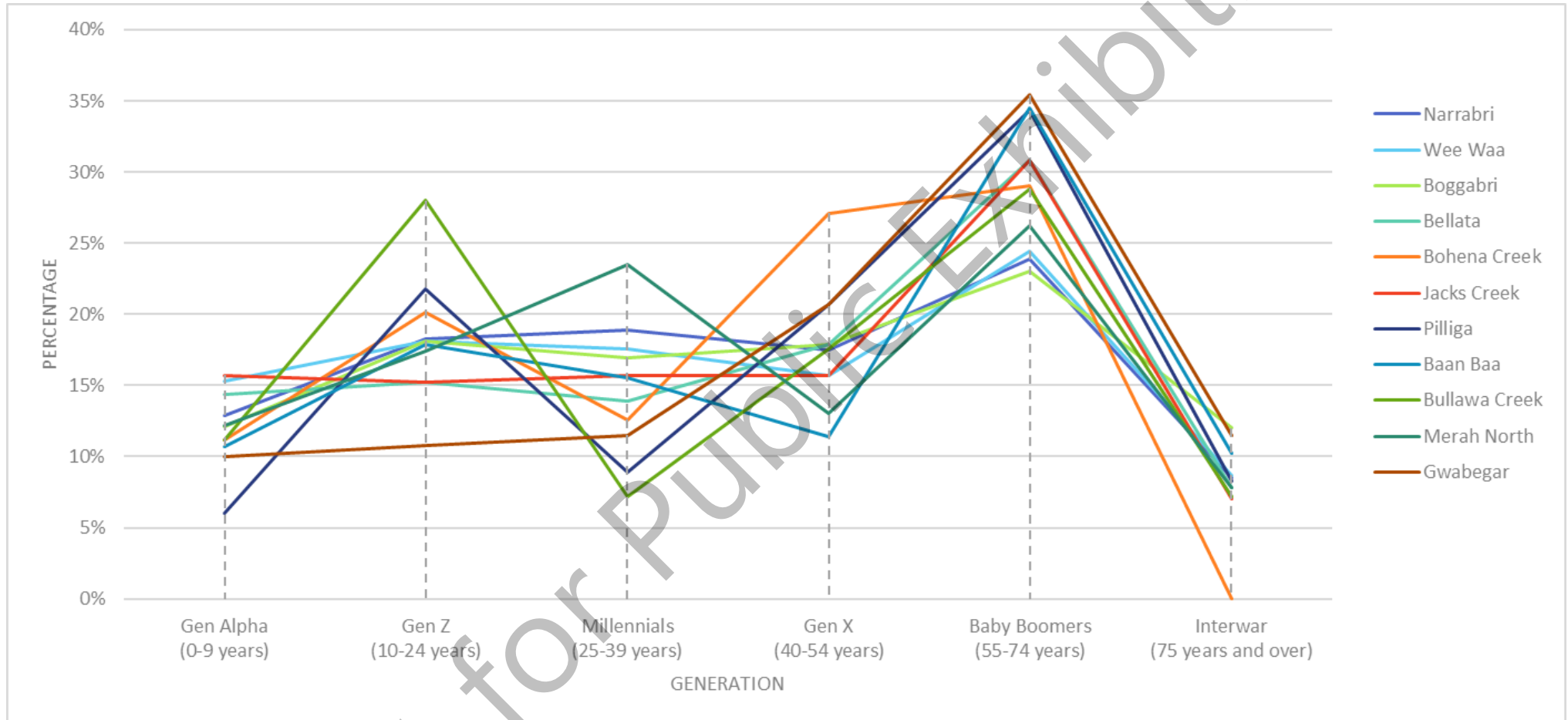
The Shire is enriched by the contributions of its youth, who possess a clear vision for the future and a passionate drive to instigate positive change. In recent times, we've witnessed young individuals actively contributing to making our community and the nation a more equitable and just place. Their energy and aspirations are instrumental in shaping a better tomorrow.

This era of youth resides in an ever-evolving world marked by unprecedented times, emerging technologies and transformations in industries and the job market. Continuously adapting, they explore innovative methods of communication, engaging with friends, peers, families, and the broader community.

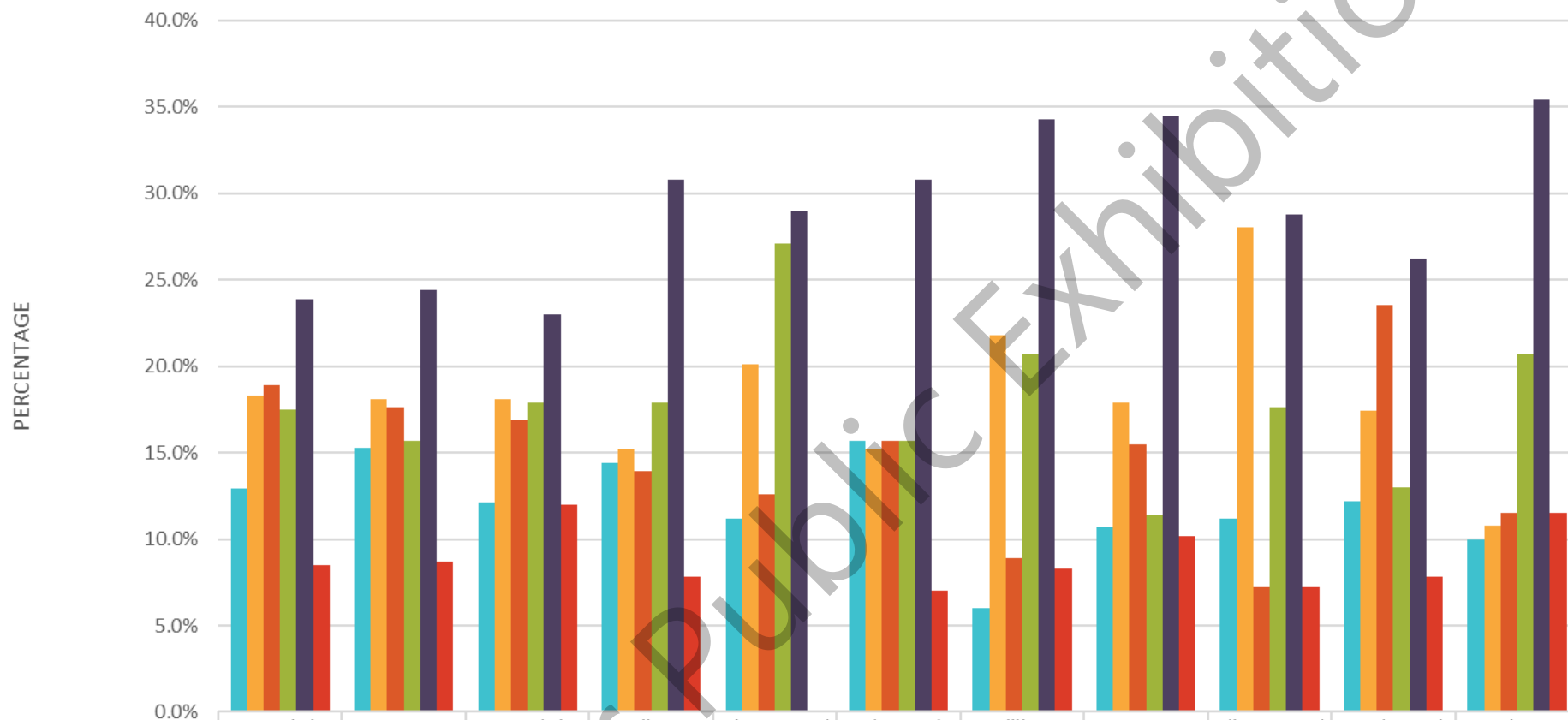


Whilst the distribution of generations across the Shire appears to be consistent, for the most part, with that of the overall Shire, there remain some noticeable outliers:

- Bullawa Creek has a far higher proportion of Youth to that of the other townships; and
- Gwabegar has a far lower proportion of Youth to that of the other townships.



Generation by Township



	Narrabri	Wee Waa	Boggabri	Bellata	Bohena Creek	Jacks Creek	Pilliga	Baan Baa	Bullawa Creek	Merah North	Gwabegar
Gen Alpha (0-9 years)	12.9%	15.3%	12.1%	14.4%	11.2%	15.7%	6.0%	10.7%	11.2%	12.2%	10.0%
Gen Z (10-24 years)	18.3%	18.1%	18.1%	15.2%	20.1%	15.2%	21.8%	17.9%	28.0%	17.4%	10.8%
Millennials (25-39 years)	18.9%	17.6%	16.9%	13.9%	12.6%	15.7%	8.9%	15.5%	7.2%	23.5%	11.5%
Gen X (40-54 years)	17.5%	15.7%	17.9%	17.9%	27.1%	15.7%	20.7%	11.4%	17.6%	13.0%	20.7%
Baby Boomers (55-74 years)	23.9%	24.4%	23.0%	30.8%	29.0%	30.8%	34.3%	34.5%	28.8%	26.2%	35.4%
Interwar (75 years and over)	8.5%	8.7%	12.0%	7.8%	0.0%	7.0%	8.3%	10.2%	7.2%	7.8%	11.5%

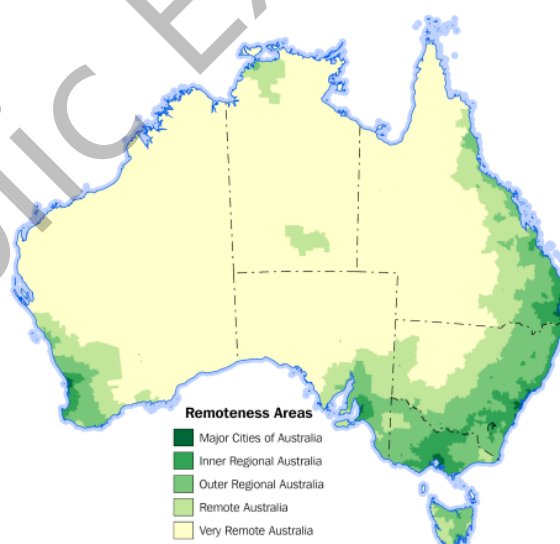
EDUCATION IN THE SHIRE³

The Shire is home to 13 schools, each playing a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape of the area's young people. Of these 13 schools, two (2) are Secondary institutions, with one (1) Primary School expanding into Year 7 enrolments. Schools play a crucial role in fostering the holistic development of young individuals. Therefore, it is important to ensure they receive the necessary resources to establish a safe and conducive learning environment for all enrolled.

Township	Classification	No. of Schools	No. of Students Enrolled Across All Schools	Ave. of Students who Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders	Ave. of Linguistically Diverse Students
Bellata	Outer Regional	1	15	40%	13%
Boggabri	Outer Regional	2	126	24%	3%
Gwabegar	Remote	1	9	67%	0%
Narrabri	Outer Regional	4 ⁴	1,348	28%	4%
Pilliga	Remote	1	11	55%	0%
Wee Waa	Outer Regional	4 ⁵	419	38%	1%

Within the Shire, 11 schools are classified as being Outer Regional, with the remaining 2 in Pilliga and Gwabegar being classified as Remote. These classifications are based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure, as shown below.⁶ Remoteness is derived by measuring road distance from various populated locations and services.

The Shire also has access to higher education and vocational training opportunities. The presence of TAFE, the Community College and the Country University Centre, as well as several training providers ensures that residents have access to quality learning experiences. Whether pursuing higher education degrees or vocational skills, the community benefits from a range of programs that align with both local and broader industry needs. However, despite the diverse opportunities available, the geographical remoteness of the region necessitates significant efforts and resources for individuals seeking educational advancement. Addressing this challenge requires innovative solutions to enhance accessibility and bridge the gap, ensuring that all residents have equitable access to higher education and vocational training opportunities without facing the constraints of extensive travel.



³ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (2022): Enrolment Data.

⁴ 1 of which is wholly a Secondary School.

⁵ 1 of which is wholly Secondary School.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics: Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3.

ENGAGING WITH THE SHIRE'S YOUTH

Between 2021 and 2023, Narrabri Shire Council endeavored to engage with the Shire's young people, in accordance with Council's adopted to better understand their needs, wants and desires for themselves and the community. Council had set the goal to engage with 10% of the youth proportionally across the Shire. Council captured only 5% of the Shire's youth population through this engagement process and have identified the following potential barriers:

- **Promotion and communication** – Whilst youth use social media, online advertising is not the best way to reach them, and face to face meetings are better as you have their attention and can help with their queries and concerns immediately.
- **Lack of confidence** – The youth feel overwhelmed to participate in community decision-making, as they lack the tools to communicate with adults and believe their ideas and concerns will not be actioned. They are also afraid that if they do speak, they will get shut down therefore, will not speak again.
- **Reaching diverse youth** – The Shire youth have a variety of backgrounds, skills, interests, and experiences. It is important to remember that not everyone has the means to access to technology, to discover and undertake the survey information.

Although Council did identify potential barriers there were also some positive engagement results with 30% of the participants identifying as Aboriginal. Further, every age category was captured during engagement.

INSIGHTS FROM ENGAGEMENT

Top 3 Concerns:

1. Mental health⁷
2. Alcohol, drugs, and vaping⁸
3. Crime and community safety⁹

Top 3 Challenges:

1. School stress
2. Bullying
3. Money

Top 3 Aspirations:

1. University
2. Travel
3. Employment

- **INFORMATION:** When asked where the Youth surveyed get their information from, School (55%), Facebook (49%) and Email (42%) ranked the highest.
- **INTERESTS:** Majority of Youth surveyed are interested in participating in sport (52%), with agriculture and STEM (42%), food preparation (39%), and music, art and dance (39%) following close behind. When asked what events the Youth surveyed would like to see more of in the Shire, Youth Spaces (47%), Skills Programs (43%) and large sporting events (41%) ranked the highest.
- **ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS:** When asked where the Youth's future aspirations were, majority of those surveyed answered to study at university (52%).
- **SAFE SPACES:** When asked where the Youth surveyed like to spend their time, parks and playgrounds and sporting fields were the highest-ranking answers (with cafes and the cinema following closely behind). Respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were more likely to spend their free time at parks and playgrounds, the cinema, and pools than those who did not. When asked where the Youth surveyed would seek assistance for personal problems, friends (40%) and parents (37%) were the highest-ranking answers.
- **ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES:** Majority of Youth surveyed want an indoor sport and recreational facility (63%) and a waterslide (51%). 42% of Youth surveyed felt that is insufficient public transport in their area. Majority of Youth surveyed felt that increased work experience opportunities (64%) would help them achieve their goals, followed by better access to TAFE (41%). 51.73% of those surveyed did not have a connection to reliable internet and this was impacting their ability to achieve their goals.
- **HEALTH AND WELLBEING:** A vast majority of Youth surveyed are concerned about mental health (75%), followed by alcohol, vaping, and illegal drugs (58%). Those respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were more concerned about bullying (42%), and eating healthy and body image (33%).
- **STRESSES:** Majority of Youth surveyed are concerned with school (61%). Money was the second highest concern of Youth Surveyed (42%).
- **ENVIRONMENT:** Whilst **62%** of Youth surveyed are interested in the preservation of the environment, only **55%** said they were likely to change their lifestyle to better suit the environment. Those respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were more likely to change their lifestyle to better suit the environment than those who did not.

⁷ With those aged 13-16 years the most concerned.

⁸ With those aged 13-16 years the most concerned.

⁹ With those aged 13-18 years the most concerned.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The development of the Youth Strategy originated from a Narrabri Shire Youth Council initiative which was adopted into Narrabri Shire Council's [2022/2026 Delivery Program](#) (Action 4.1.1.2) in June 2022.

The development of the Strategy aligns with the Narrabri Shire [2022/2032 Community Strategic Plan \(CSP\)](#), and aims to enhance the overall well-being and dynamism of the Shire:

- In prioritising the safety and health of the Shire's young residents, the strategy integrates mental health initiatives and community safety programs.
- By fostering a vibrant and connected community, it actively engages youth in cultural and recreational activities, promoting a sense of belonging.
- The Strategy aims to equip the Shire's youth with essential skills and leadership development opportunities, contributing to the overall strength of the Shire's community.
- Furthermore, in line with the Shire's commitment to a diverse economy, the Strategy focuses on job training, entrepreneurship support, and industry partnerships, ensuring the Shire's youth actively participate in and contribute to the economic diversity and growth of the local area.

The Youth Strategy, therefore, stands as a cornerstone for achieving the overarching priorities of creating a safe, healthy, vibrant, resilient, and economically diverse community.

Further, the Strategy was designed to align with the NSW Government's Regional NSW Youth Framework and the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People's Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024:

KEY PRIORITIES

The Strategy's six (6) core priorities were developed in response to what Youth told Council was important to them, and these priorities will help to direct Council's efforts to better support and respond to the needs of the Shire's Youth.



Health and Wellbeing



Community Engagement and Leadership



Education and Skill Development



Entrepreneurship and Employment



Cultural Enrichment



Infrastructure and Environment

IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

Many of the Objectives outlined in the Strategy will need to be pursued over the four-year period. Because the Strategy captures long-term Objectives of the Shire's Youth, it is integral that Council monitors and measure our progress against each Action.

Reporting on performance is an important part of the integrated planning process to ensure Council is transparent and accountable in its journey to deliver on our commitments to the community.

- Each financial quarter, Council presents Operational and Service Plan Quarterly Progress Reports and Quarterly Budget Reviews to demonstrate how Council is progressing with completing all Actions established in the Operational Plan;
- Every six months, Council presents Half Yearly Delivery Program Progress Reports to demonstrate how the work Council, the community and key stakeholders is impacting the broader Narrabri Shire and if this work is having a positive effect in achieving the Objectives outlines in the Community Strategic Plan;
- Each financial year, Council presents an Annual Report, which included detailed financial and statutory information and outlines what Council did and did not achieve against the Actions established in the Operational Plan;
- Each Council Term (four years), Council presents a State of the Shire Report (previously known as an End of Term Report), to outline Council's overall progress in delivering it's overall Delivery Program and how this has made a positive impact towards achieving the Objectives established by the Community Strategic Plan

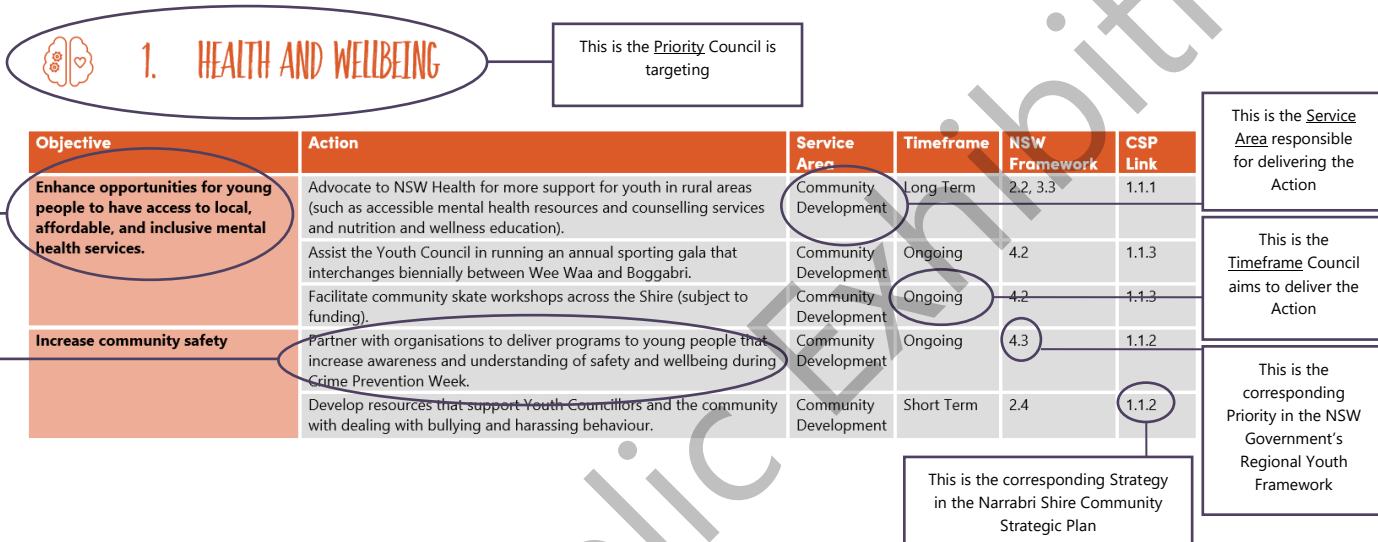
Timeframe	Proposed Implementation
Ongoing	These actions will be established as ongoing Council operations and may carry on after the four-year period.
Short Term	These actions will be established as annual deliverables.
Medium Term	These actions will be established as multi-year deliverables that are likely be delivered by the conclusion of the four-year period.
Long Term	These actions will be established as multi-year deliverables and may carry on after the four-year period.

INTEGRATION WITH OUR COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2022/2032 Community Strategic Plan belongs to all members of the Narrabri Shire community and relies on Council, community and key stakeholders working together to achieve the Objectives.

It is important to understand that all Council's actions established in the Strategy are linked to the Community Strategic Plan.

The Strategy details the Actions which will be incorporated into Council's future Operational Plans. Each Action is linked to one of the Strategies of the 2022/2032 Community Strategic Plan and one of the Priorities in the NSW Government's NSW Regional Youth Framework and Action Plan (2020).









NARRABRI SHIRE 2022/2032 COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN – SNAPSHOT

Theme 1:	Society - An empowered, inclusive, and connected community
Objective 1.1:	A safe and healthy community
Strategy 1.1.1:	Support, encourage and enhance health and wellbeing services and programs across the Shire
Strategy 1.1.2:	Implement programs to improve crime prevention and risk management across the Shire
Strategy 1.1.3:	Enhance opportunities for participation in sport and recreation across the Shire
Strategy 1.1.4:	Work to ensure that aged and child care services meet the current and future needs of the Shire
Objective 1.2:	A vibrant and connected community
Strategy 1.2.1:	Improve digital connectivity and access to technology across the Shire
Strategy 1.2.2:	Develop, maintain, and enhance quality community spaces and facilities
Strategy 1.2.3:	Ensure an accessible Shire for all
Strategy 1.2.4:	Enhance access to arts and culture across the Shire
Objective 1.3:	A resilient and strong community
Strategy 1.3.1:	Implement programs to revitalise townships across the Shire
Strategy 1.3.2:	Empower the community's volunteers
Strategy 1.3.3:	Strengthen community resilience through collaboration and capacity building
Strategy 1.3.4:	Increase public amenity across all townships
Theme 2:	Environment - A sustainable and compatible natural and built environment
Objective 2.1:	A protected and enhanced natural environment
Strategy 2.1.1:	Protect Aboriginal and non-Indigenous heritage whilst educating the broader community on its significance
Strategy 2.1.2:	Protect and enhance the Shire's natural bushland, open spaces, and national parks
Strategy 2.1.3:	Protect the Shire's natural environment through improved awareness and mitigation of destructive and invasive flora and fauna
Strategy 2.1.4:	Promote and implement where appropriate sustainable practices, energy efficient and renewable technologies
Objective 2.2:	An integrated and strategic built environment
Strategy 2.2.1:	Maintain, enhance, and support an integrated, diverse and safe transport network: Pedestrian; Road; Rail; and Air
Strategy 2.2.2:	Support the development of appropriate housing across the Shire
Strategy 2.2.3:	Reduce the impact the built environment has on the natural environment
Strategy 2.2.4:	Support strategic and non-conflicting land use that supports sustainable growth through zoning and advocacy
Objective 2.3:	A resilient and sustainable environment
Strategy 2.3.1:	Mitigate impacts of adverse events through strategic planning and preparedness
Strategy 2.3.2:	Ensure appropriate planning controls are implemented for the benefit of the community
Strategy 2.3.3:	Responsibly manage, conserve, and protect water resources
Strategy 2.3.4:	Responsibly manage waste disposal and support the transition to a circular waste economy
Theme 3:	Economy - A strong, diverse, and sustainable economy
Objective 3.1:	A diverse economy
Strategy 3.1.1:	Support local employment opportunities
Strategy 3.1.2:	Actively engage with and support capacity building opportunities for local businesses and innovators
Strategy 3.1.3:	Attract and support opportunities for investment and value-add industries within the Shire
Strategy 3.1.4:	Advocate for and support diverse education and personal development opportunities to ensure available skills meet local demand
Objective 3.2:	A regionally renowned economy
Strategy 3.2.1:	Develop a state significant manufacturing, transport, and logistics hub
Strategy 3.2.2:	Promote the Shire as an attractive environment to invest, visit and live
Strategy 3.2.3:	Develop and support a variety of events and tourism opportunities in the Shire
Strategy 3.2.4:	Capitalise on state significant development that occurs in the Shire for the benefit of the community
Objective 3.3:	A resilient and sustainable economy
Strategy 3.3.1:	Support the resilience, growth, and diversity of the local economy
Strategy 3.3.2:	Revenue from grants and funding programs is maximised and responsibly managed
Strategy 3.3.3:	Achieve economic sustainability through supporting local businesses
Strategy 3.3.4:	Advocate for and invest in infrastructure to support and future-proof the local and broader economy.
Theme 4:	Civic Leadership – Council as a strong leader for the Community
Objective 4.1:	A transparent and accountable Council
Strategy 4.1.1:	Ensure all operations are pre-planned and executed in the best interests of the community
Strategy 4.1.2:	Enforce good governance, risk management, and statutory compliance
Strategy 4.1.3:	Increase awareness of Council's role in the community including the services and facilities provided
Strategy 4.1.4:	Ensures transparent and accountable decision making for our community
Objective 4.2:	A strong Council that advocates for the Community
Strategy 4.2.1:	Communicate and engage with the community regarding decision-making
Strategy 4.2.2:	Work cooperatively and appropriately with external parties to advocate for the community's best interests
Strategy 4.2.3:	Deliver clear and effective communication
Strategy 4.2.4:	Deliver high quality and informative customer service
Objective 4.3:	A resilient and sustainable Council
Strategy 4.3.1:	Ensure policies and procedures are effective and implemented in accordance with legislative requirements and best practice principles
Strategy 4.3.2:	Sustainably manage Council's finances, assets, and workforce
Strategy 4.3.3:	Deliver reliable and quality services through innovation and continuous improvement
Strategy 4.3.4:	Provide a safe and healthy working environment

REGIONAL NSW YOUTH FRAMEWORK 2020 – SNAPSHOT

Key pillars	1. Work ready Prepared for regional jobs of the future	2. Wellbeing Mentally and physically healthy	3. Connectivity Able to access services and opportunities easily	4. Community Connected and valued by their community
	<p>Priorities</p> <p>1.1 Young people have better access to great education and training opportunities</p> <p>1.2 Young people have improved skills and knowledge to navigate the pathways into careers</p> <p>1.3 Young people have clearer options to take them from school to training, work and further education opportunities</p> <p>1.4 Disadvantaged or at-risk young people are better supported to learn and achieve</p> <p>1.5 Young people have increased understanding of the workforce</p>	<p>Priorities</p> <p>2.1 Young people and their families are supported to improve wellbeing</p> <p>2.2 Increasing young people's understanding of their health needs and navigate the health system</p> <p>2.3 Young people have access to culturally and youth-appropriate services</p> <p>2.4 Increasing the number of young people who can get help, wherever and however they choose to seek it</p>	<p>Priorities</p> <p>3.1 Young people have increased access to safe private transport</p> <p>3.2 Young people have increased access to safe public transport to the places they need to go</p> <p>3.3 Young people are able to access services without traveling long distances</p> <p>3.4 Young people have the skills to navigate and use information and systems</p>	<p>Priorities</p> <p>4.1 Young people are provided the opportunity to shape their communities</p> <p>4.2 Young people have increased access to a variety of youth-appropriate activities</p> <p>4.3 Young people feel safe in, connected to, and valued by their communities and connected to their culture.</p>

THE STRATEGY AT GLANCE

	 Health and Wellbeing	 Community Engagement and Leadership	 Education and Skill Development	 Entrepreneurship and Employment	 Cultural Enrichment	 Infrastructure and Environment
Council will support the community to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for accessible and inclusive health services tailored to the Youth's needs. Prioritise mental health awareness and de-stigmatisation. Promote holistic well-being through initiatives that address physical, emotional, and social health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster active participation in local decision-making processes. Cultivate leadership skills through mentorship and training programs. Facilitate opportunities for youth-led community projects and initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for diverse and inclusive educational opportunities. Promote practical skill development aligned with current and future job markets. Enhance access to vocational training and apprenticeship programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support initiatives that encourage youth entrepreneurship. Enhance access to resources and networks for job placement and career advancement. Advocate for policies promoting equal employment opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote cultural exchange programs within the community. Support initiatives that celebrate diversity and multiculturalism. Advocate for inclusive cultural education in schools and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for sustainable practices in community development. Promote green infrastructure and eco-friendly initiatives. Engage in environmental conservation projects to safeguard the community's natural resources for future generations to come.
Council will support Youth to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness about mental health among peers through open conversations and initiatives. Advocate for youth-friendly health services that cater to Youth's unique needs. Organise events promoting a healthy lifestyle that blends physical, mental, and social well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplify Youth's voices by actively participating in decision-making at the local level. Cultivate leadership skills through interactive workshops and mentorship opportunities. Launch youth-led projects that address community needs and showcase our leadership potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rally for diverse educational experiences that resonate with the Shire's youth's interests and aspirations. Champion practical skill-building opportunities that align with current job trends. Advocate to make vocational training and apprenticeships more accessible and appealing to youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage mentorship programs to empower young entrepreneurs. Advocate for fair employment policies that consider the Shire's youth's unique challenges. Create networks connecting youth with job opportunities and professional growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate diversity. Advocate for inclusive cultural education. Support youth-driven projects that celebrate and showcase the diversity within our community. Facilitate and encourage youth's creative endeavours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the charge for sustainable community development practices. Promote eco-friendly projects that align with our commitment to environmental stewardship. Engage in hands-on conservation efforts to preserve the natural beauty of our community for future generations.
Council will advocate for initiatives to treat...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress and anxiety related to school or study. Bullying and cyberbullying. Domestic and family violence. Concerns regarding respectful relationships. Suicide and self-injury. Lack of informal mental health supports and long waiting times for professional mental health supports. Lack of support for young people experiencing addiction or problematic use of alcohol and other drugs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a sense of belonging. Lack of safe, youth friendly and accessible spaces. Lack of mentorship programs. Negative stereotypes regarding naivety of youth in leadership roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of practical life skills resources for young people. Disengagement from education from early childhood to high school. Cost of living preventing access to education and training opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness of employment opportunities for young people. Lack of resources and support networks to assist youth in getting to employment opportunities. Negative biases towards youth in the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racism and discrimination related to age, disability, religion, gender or sexuality. Overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the Youth Justice and Out-of-home care (OOHC) systems. Lack of access to cultural education and enrichment opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantage due to geographical isolation. Lack of transport in regional areas. Lack of access to digital infrastructure and reliable telecommunications networks. Perceived powerlessness.

CURRENT POSITION

Council has demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing the lives of the area's young people through a series of initiatives. Council has invested in creating vibrant community spaces and recreational facilities tailored to the interests of youth, fostering a sense of belonging and well-being. Additionally, proactive engagement programs, such as the Narrabri Shire Youth Council and leadership development opportunities, have empowered young individuals to actively participate in shaping the future of the Shire. Collaborative efforts with local schools and organisations reflect the council's dedication to supporting education and skill development among youth. As at July 2023, Council has undertaken the following projects and program in order to support and empower youth in the Shire:

Program/Project	Timeline	Overview
Youth Week	Annual event held in April	Organisation of various activities including free movie screening for the Youth of the Shire. It is run in collaboration with local organisations such as NDCAS and the schools.
Local Government Week	Annual event held in August	Members of the Narrabri Shire Youth Council attend the stall at the Local Narrabri Market to showcase what they do as a Youth Council and the various projects they have initiated for example: Good Talk, Great Mate (Youth Mental Health Podcast Project launched in 2023)
Crime Prevention Week	Annual event held in June	Council in collaboration with key stakeholders run a series of information sessions across the Shire targeting students in both primary and secondary schools with topics such as harm minimisation, bullying, cyber safety and drug and alcohol minimisation amongst others.
Early Literacy Programs	Ongoing	<p>Council runs early literacy programs from the Narrabri (weekly), Wee Waa (monthly), and Boggabri (monthly) libraries for children aged 0-5 years; treating literacy issues in this age bracket directly impacts their readiness for school and therefore their future education prospects.</p> <p>Sub-projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dolly Parton Imagination Library • Baby Rhyme Time and Storytime in all shire branches and the region's preschools • 1000 Books Before School program
Literacy/Science Programs	Narrabri (weekly), outer towns and villages (monthly).	<p>Council runs literacy and STEAM programs for those aged 8 to 14 across the Shire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrabri Shire Mobile Library hold monthly STEAM and Storytime programs to the smaller communities across the Shire for those aged 6-12; and • Young Einstein's Science (YES) Club for those aged 8-14 years.

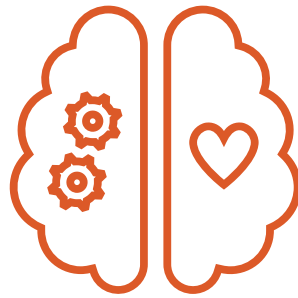
Program/Project	Timeline	Overview
Youth Aboriginal Astronomy and Night Star Gazing in the Park	May 2023	Council secured funding in 2022 from the NSW Government's Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery Scheme to deliver Aboriginal Astronomy presentations and get hands on experience with sophisticated telescopes in the parks of Narrabri, Wee Waa and Boggabri. Kamilaroi man, Len Waters, also visited Gwabegar and Pilliga schools to deliver Aboriginal Astronomy presentations.
Youth Employment Capacity Building	From 2021	Council secured funding in 2021 and worked collaboratively with the schools to deliver Youth Employment Capacity Building sessions to students at Narrabri and Wee Waa High Schools in Year 9, 10, 11 and 12. In 2023, selected students undertook accredited training to gain employment skills in White Card, Responsible Service of Alcohol, Responsible conduct of gambling and Food Handling.
Youth Mental Health Podcast project	Launched April 2023	Council obtained funding from the NSW Department of Communities & Justice to facilitate the Youth Mental Health Podcast Project. Nine youths from across the Narrabri Shire took part in a mental health first-aid training course before embarking on the production of their podcast series. Learning new skills from recording, scripting, and researching to the editing and designing techniques required to create the podcast. 'The Good Talk, Great Mate' podcast has been created by young people for young people, encouraging people to take a mental health break by tuning into their inspiring interview chats by the banks of the Namoi River.
Shaded Youth Spaces	2018-2023	<p>Council has delivered the following projects in the past five years to increase the amount of shaded youth spaces across the Shire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shade sails over the skate park at Vickery Park Boggabri (\$36,000); • Developed the Green Space at the corner of Rose and George Street in Wee Waa (\$124,000); and • Shade sails at the Narrabri Aquatic Centre (\$30,000).

Council is also aware of several community-led initiatives that focus on supporting youth:

Program/Project	Timeline	Overview
Rotaract Mentorship Program	Weekly	<p>The Rotaract Mentorship program is a transformative initiative aimed at preparing students from Year 10, 11 and 12 for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter after completing their education. With a focus on fostering essential skills and traits for success, this program provides students with a well-rounded education that extends beyond the classroom. One of the key strengths of the program lies in its collaboration with local businesses. By partnering with community organisations and professionals, students are exposed to real world scenarios and gain valuable insights into various industries. Through internships, workshops, and mentorship opportunities, they acquire practical skills, industry knowledge, and a deeper understanding of potential career paths.</p> <p>Moreover, the program goes beyond skill-building to nurture personal growth and character development. Students are encouraged to develop traits such as leadership, resilience, teamwork, and adaptability. These attributes are crucial in today's dynamic and rapidly evolving job market, and they empower students to face challenges head-on and thrive in any professional environment.</p>
Future EDU	Fortnightly	<p>Future EDU Inc. is a Narrabri local not-for-profit community group whose vision is to support the creation of a region of future ready citizens to have confidence and competence in STEM areas and are ready to work with and for local organisations. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month and encourage students to become involved. Future EDU support the youth of the Shire by holding STEM awards every year and encourage all schools within the Shire to enter.</p>
Country Education Fund	Ongoing	<p>The Country Education Foundation of the Namoi provide much needed financial assistance and support to local youth to help them achieve their post high school education, training, and vocation aspirations. Country Education Foundation believes in vibrant and thriving rural and regional communities where school-leavers of any background or ability can access the services and resources they need in order to fulfil their personal potential and contribute fully to the communities in which they live and broader Australian Society. Country Education Foundation support a diverse range of education and career pursuits including apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, degrees, diplomas and certificate level studies or entry careers.</p>
Namoi Jobs and Trade Show (NJATS)	Annually (July)	<p>The Namoi Jobs and Trades Show (NJATS) is a collaborative event organised by NIN and Future EDU aimed at promoting positive engagement, local employment and future growth in the Narrabri Shire. Council provides in-kind support for this event and provided transport funding for High School students to attend.</p>

THE STRATEGY





1. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Desired Outcome: Youth are provided with the necessary support and encouragement to nurture and promote their mental, physical, and emotional health, fostering an environment where they can flourish.

Rationale: Prioritising health and wellbeing is paramount due to its immense impact on the overall development and success of Youth. Good mental, physical, and emotional health are the foundation of positive life experiences, contributing to a young person's ability to navigate the complexities of life efficiently. With suicide being the leading cause of death for young people in Australia,¹⁰ it is more important than ever to ensure Council is advocating for accessible and suitable resources in the Shire that will have a positive outcome on both Youth and the community.

OBJECTIVES

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Majority of Youth consider mental health and wellbeing to be significant issue in the Shire. Youth informed Council that mental health and wellbeing should be Council's top priority for supporting the youth moving forward. Further, Youth living in rural areas are more likely to face barriers accessing health care, than their metropolitan counterparts.

Crime and Community Safety

Feeling unsafe at school and in their home with the elevated crime levels is making them stressed. Young people would like to see stronger discipline at school and more visible police at night. Exposure to crime and violence can have a damaging impact on health, education, social, emotional, and behavioural outcomes. Further, illegal substance usage was considered a significant issue with our youth. vaping is the main issue concerning them.

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.



1. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Objective	Action	Service Area	Timeframe	NSW Framework	CSP Link
Enhance opportunities for young people to have access to local, affordable, and inclusive mental health services.	Advocate to NSW Health for more support for youth in rural areas (such as accessible mental health resources and counselling services and nutrition and wellness education).	Community Development	Long Term	2.2, 3.3	1.1.1
	Assist the Youth Council in running an annual sporting gala that interchanges biennially between Wee Waa and Boggabri.	Community Development	Ongoing	4.2	1.1.3
	Facilitate community skate workshops across the Shire (subject to funding).	Community Development	Ongoing	4.2	1.1.3
Increase community safety	Partner with organisations to deliver programs to young people that increase awareness and understanding of safety and wellbeing during Crime Prevention Week.	Community Development	Ongoing	4.3	1.1.2
	Develop resources that support Youth Councillors and the community with dealing with bullying and harassing behaviour.	Community Development	Short Term	2.4	1.1.2
	Investigate and advocate for a PCYC that operates outreach services across the Shire	Community Development	Long Term	4.2	4.2.2



2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Desired Outcome: Youth are empowered to engage with all levels of government and become leaders and are provided with continuous opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes, community projects, and initiatives that shape the collective future

Rationale: Participation in community engagement and leadership is essential for fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment, and active participation among Youth. Council aims to encourage a community where Youth feel safe to contribute to decision-making processes, community projects, and the overall development of their township. Encouraging leadership skills ensures that the next generation is equipped to take on roles of responsibility and influence, contributing to the positive growth of the community.

OBJECTIVES

Leadership Opportunities

The Shire's Youth want increased access to leadership training and mentorship programs specifically designed for emerging leaders, to provide them with the skills, knowledge, and support needed to take on leadership roles in community projects. It is important to nurture a new generation of leaders who are equipped to drive positive change and actively contribute to the growth and resilience of the rural community.

Empowerment

Recognising young people's perspectives and innovative ideas as catalysts for positive change. Youth want more opportunities to be involved in government decision making, to cultivate a generation of proactive and engaged young leaders who actively contribute to the betterment of our community.



2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Objective	Action	Service Area	Timeframe	NSW Framework	CSP Link
Facilitate Youth-led community projects and initiatives	Encourage community groups to provide opportunities for social inclusion and connection through leadership programs.	Community Development	Short Term	1.2	3.1.2
	Continue to support the Youth Council to provide input on local decision-making.	Community Engagement	Ongoing	4.1	4.2.1
Empower Youth to engage with the community, all levels of government and the private sector	Facilitate and run leadership workshops for the Shire's youth (subject to funding).	Community Development	Medium Term	1.2	3.1.2
	Investigate opportunities for Council to host youth volunteers to assist with community programs as part of their school's Community Hours.	Library Services	Medium Term	1.2, 1.5	3.1.4
	Embed youth inclusion methods across Council to create youth-friendly and inclusive opportunities at Council events, engagement activities and programs.	Community Engagement	Long Term	4.1	4.2.1



3. EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Desired Outcome: Youth have access to education and development that nurtures their passions, encourages critical thinking, and equips them with both academic and practical skills, ensuring they are well-prepared for a future of limitless possibilities.

Rationale: Emphasising the importance of education ensures Youth have access to quality learning experiences to enhance numeracy and literacy, critical thinking and creativity. Equitable access to education and skill development will assist Youth seeking employment in an ever-evolving job market equipping youth with practical and adaptable competencies. Focusing on enhancing the Shire's access to education and development aims to empower Youth to pursue their passions and position them as valuable contributors to the Shire.

OBJECTIVES

Education

The Shire's Youth informed Council that there they often do not feel safe at school, with some also experiencing a lack of support at home and school. Along with lack of support and direction with work experience and placement for students who will not be going to university.

Skilled Program

Youth are struggling with direction on finding affordable upskilling programs that are easily accessible in their local township. Quite often, TAFE students are required to travel over 500 kilometres, at their own expense, to metropolitan areas in order to complete their apprenticeships and certifications. Many struggle to afford this travel due to the lower wages of apprentices and the increased costs of living, which further contributes to the stress of the Shire's Youth.



3. EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Objective	Action	Service Area	Timeframe	NSW Framework	CSP Link
Enhance access to academic support	Ensure Council run public facilities (libraries and community spaces) have access to reliable internet to support youth's academic endeavours.	Library Services	Ongoing	1.1, 3.4	1.2.1
	Continue to support the Country University Centre's presence in the Shire.	Commercial Services	Ongoing	1.1, 1.3	3.1.4
Increase opportunities for practical skills development	Empower the Youth Council to advocate to NSW Department of Education for an enhanced curriculum with real-world applications.	Community Development	Ongoing	1.1, 4.1	3.1.4
	Continue to provide access to digital literacy training through the Shire's Libraries.	Library Services	Ongoing	1.2, 3.4	1.2.1
	Facilitate access to information and resources to increase financial literacy for the Shire's youth.	Library Services	Medium Term	1.2, 3.4	3.1.2



4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT

Desired Outcome: Youth have access to resources, mentorship, and collaborative platforms, leading to a society where entrepreneurship flourishes, and meaningful employment opportunities abound.

Rationale: Access to entrepreneurship and employment opportunities is imperative to unlock the potential for innovation, economic growth, and self-sufficiency among Youth. It is important to cultivate a culture of creativity, risk-taking, and initiative, empowering youth to become not just job seekers but entrepreneurs and contributors to the local economy. Focusing on entrepreneurship encourages a mindset of innovation and problem-solving, fostering a community that thrives on diversity and resilience. Simultaneously, addressing employment opportunities ensures that youth have access to meaningful and sustainable work, contributing to the economic vibrancy of the Shire.

OBJECTIVES

Startup Incubation

The Shire's Youth want to be able to start their own businesses and make their innovative ideas come to life. Establishing initiatives, providing resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities will foster a culture of entrepreneurship, encouraging young individuals to innovate, create businesses, and contribute to the economic diversity of the rural community.

Access to Employment

With many youths coming from a low socio-economic family, youth are struggling with meeting the expenses of every day-to-day essentials and are therefore seeking more opportunities for casual and stable employment to balance with their studies.



4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT

Objective	Action	Service Area	Timeframe	NSW Framework	CSP Link
Encourage entrepreneurship and development of Youth led small businesses	Assist youth in applying for grants for youth-led startup projects.	Grants	Ongoing	1.2	3.1.2
	Support mentorship programs pairing local youth with community leaders.	Economic Development	Long Term	1.2	3.1.1
Increase vocational learning opportunities to connect young people to meaningful pathways to employment	Facilitate and support workshops on business planning, and financial management.	Economic Development	Long Term	1.1, 1.5	3.1.2
	Advocate for more local businesses to provide internship and apprenticeship opportunities for Youth.	Economic Development	Long Term	1.2	3.1.1
	Continue to support pathways to engage, train and retain young people in the workforce, such as Council's School Based Traineeships.	People and Values	Ongoing	1.2	3.1.1



5. CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

Desired Outcome: Youth have pride in their culture, embrace diversity and are fostered by an environment free from discrimination, racism, and structural violence, ensuring that every young person feels valued and respected.

Rationale: embracing all aspects of culture (including diversity and the arts) is fundamental for fostering creativity, understanding, and a rich sense of identity among Youth. Exposure to various artistic forms, coupled with a celebration of diversity, nurtures an environment where Youth are not only inspired to express themselves creatively but also gain a profound appreciation for different cultural perspectives. The Strategy aims to develop a community that thrives on the unique blend of cultures and artistic expressions.

OBJECTIVES

Connection to Culture

Youth want to better understand their own culture and embrace diversity amongst the community. Implementing cultural education initiatives and exchange programs that celebrate the diversity will foster a sense of unity and understanding. Further, supporting community arts and heritage projects that empower Youth to express their identity through artistic mediums will contribute to the enhancement of social health and wellbeing.

Events

The Shire's Youth are also seeking more opportunities to access large events locally, such as when professional sports teams come to play in the area. Organising cultural events provides an opportunity for positive youth engagement.



5. CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

Objective	Action	Service Area	Timeframe	NSW Framework	CSP Link
Promote diversity and understanding	Facilitate cultural festivals and fairs organised by and for youth (subject to funding).	Community Development	Long Term	4.2, 4.3	1.2.4
	Facilitate opportunities to promote the diversity of the Shire with specific focus on Aboriginal cultural heritage.	Library Services	Ongoing	2.3, 4.3	2.1.1
Encourage and enhance opportunities for creative expression	Facilitate cultural expression through music, writing and illustration workshops for youth.	Library Services	Ongoing	4.2, 4.3	1.2.4
	Support arts and creative expression workshops (including music, dancing, painting, bush tucker).	Cultural Services	Long Term	1.2, 4.3	1.2.4



6. INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Desired Outcome: Sustainable practices are seamlessly integrated into every aspect of community life and youth are able to participate in innovative initiatives to ensure a the balance between nature and human development is maintained for generations to come.

Rationale: Prioritising sustainable development and resilience is essential to ensure that the environment we enjoy today is here for the Youth of tomorrow. Well-planned and sustainable infrastructure, coupled with environmental stewardship, creates a foundation for community ownership and accountability of their area. Council aims to provide youth with access to modern amenities, digital resources, and well-maintained public spaces, and instil a sense of responsibility and connection to both the natural and built environment.

OBJECTIVES

Youth Spaces

Youth are mainly spending their time at home or friends' houses and are looking for a safe space. The creation of dedicated youth spaces fosters social inclusion. Further, due to the Shire's geographical isolation, reliable and fast internet connection can be hard to find. The Shire's Youth want spaces where they can access secure internet connection, digital resources, fostering educational and skill development opportunities to better help them achieve their goals.

Environmental Initiatives

Youth are interested in the preservation of the environment but often feel engaging in sustainable practices is challenging. Increasing opportunities for youth to actively participate in environmental conservation projects will promote a sense of responsibility and connection to the local environment.



6. INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Objective	Action	Service Area	Timeframe	NSW Framework	CSP Link
Provide safe and welcoming environments for young people	Identify and activate welcoming places, such as parks and precincts, for young people in the Shire.	Parks and Open Spaces	Long Term	4.3	1.2.2
	Identify suitable funding opportunities for improved community infrastructure and open spaces.	Grants	Ongoing	4.3	1.2.2
Encourage environmental responsibility to ensure a sustainable future	Facilitate and encourage sustainable practices and waste education.	Waste Services	Ongoing	4.1	2.1.4
	Encourage Youth involvement in local environmental conservation projects.	Parks and Open Spaces	Long Term	4.1	2.1.2

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