EXPLORE, ENGAGE, EMPOWER
YOUNG PEOPLE IN GREATER BENDIGO

YOUTH STRATEGY
2017-2021
Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Greater Bendigo is on both Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country, whose ancestors and their descendants are the traditional owners of this country.

The City of Greater Bendigo acknowledges that they have been custodians for many centuries and continue to perform age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................... 3
Background ......................................... 4
Young people in Greater Bendigo ... 5
Priority areas for young people ...... 6
Policy context ........................................ 7
Action plan summary ......................... 8
Acknowledgements ......................... 11
Abbreviations ................................. 11

Aimee Croft, 18, Project Reference Group member

“Collaborating with young people within the community is essential to the ongoing success and future planning of the Greater Bendigo region.

In collaboration with a variety of young people the youth strategy aims to explore a range of opportunities and engage with the young members of the community, to empower them for their future endeavours.

Our ‘Explore, Engage, Empower’ vision is clear, logical and aspirational. The strategy has provided young people with a voice and experiences that have inspired us to make a difference in our community.”
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the City of Greater Bendigo’s new strategy for young people called Explore, Engage, Empower – Young People in Greater Bendigo (2017-2021).

The new strategy for young people is based on a significant amount of community engagement, research and analysis to identify and describe the important issues facing young people in Greater Bendigo today. In response to these issues, the strategy discusses the opportunities young people aspire to and how the City of Greater Bendigo (City) can support young people and enable them to reach their potential.

By listening to young people and considering the important issues, a vision and principles have been developed to guide the City in its role with young people.

OUR VISION

Young people in Greater Bendigo are heard, valued, connected and inspired so that they make the most of life’s opportunities.

OUR PRINCIPLES

**EXPLORE**

We explore opportunities with young people that increase inclusion and connection.

**ENGAGE**

We engage with young people to ensure their needs and opinions are heard and valued.

**EMPOWER**

We empower and inspire young people to shape the world they live in.

The strategy is for four years and builds upon the current services and policies provided by the City along with the valued support of the Victorian Government through grants that help provide programs to empower young people and encourage their leadership and participation in community life.

Our aims:

In particular, the strategy aims to respond to the key learnings that emerged from the engagement, research and review process, these being:

- Ways to achieve young people’s leadership and empowerment
- Partnerships with the State Government and local youth agencies to coordinate programs and joint responses to the important issues
- Actions the City can undertake within available resources and
- Having goals and objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely)

Throughout our involvement, we discovered that the needs, potentials and aspirations of young people in Greater Bendigo continue to change and evolve. We really hope that through our participation the Councillors, City staff and local community agencies can feel a greater connection and empathy with young people and understand the importance young people place on being listened to and having a say about important issues in their community.

Thank you

– Aimee Croft, Ashley Eadon, Caitlin Allman, Kathryn Northill, Ruby Baker and Ryan Peterson from the Project Reference Group.
Explore, Engage, Empower – Young People in Greater Bendigo (2017-2021) is the City of Greater Bendigo’s strategy for young people aged 12 to 24 years. The Youth Strategy is a partnership between the City and young people. The youth strategy provides a framework for the City to understand and prioritise needs and respond with actions, partnerships and resources to improve outcomes for local young people.

The Youth Strategy has been developed by a project reference group that included an enthusiastic group of young people, City staff and representatives of local schools and agencies.

Seven background reports were prepared as part of the Strategy’s development (available upon request):

- Youth Strategy Engagement Report
- Youth Issues Profile
- Demographic Profile
- Review of Plans, Policies and Reports
- Benchmarking Report
- Service Mapping Report
- COG Vision and Strategy Plan (45 Mundy Street Facility)

Discussions with young people took place through workshops, surveys and youth summits.
Youth Strategy 2017-2021

Census data shows that young people make up a large part of Greater Bendigo’s population.

- In 2016 there were 18,723 young people aged 12 to 24 years in Greater Bendigo. This was 16.9% of overall population of 110,477 residents which is slightly above the Victorian average of 16.4%.
- It is predicted that by 2036 there will be 25,890 12 to 24 year olds in Greater Bendigo or 16.6% of an overall population of 156,151.
- There are approximately 400 young people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander which is 2.2% of the population of young people.
- 15% of young people or 2,880 lived in rural areas.
- 92.3% of 12 to 24 year olds were born in Australia compared to the average Victorian rate of 78.7%.
- The most common countries of birth for 12 to 24 year olds other than Australia were Thailand (0.5%), United Kingdom (0.5%), China (0.4%), New Zealand (0.3%) and Myanmar (0.3%).
- The most common languages spoken at home were English (94%), Karen, Auslan, Indonesian, Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.
- 4.3% of 10 to 19 year olds (598 young people) identified as requiring assistance with core activities due to disability, which is higher than the Victorian average of 2.9%.
To assist the development of the strategy, young people and local services were asked about the most important areas of concern for young people.

The eight priority areas identified were:

- Mental health
- Employment
- Education and training
- Events
- Having a say
- Personal safety
- Drugs and alcohol
- Transport

MENTAL HEALTH
Especially coping with stress, body image and depression. Fortunately there are a number of services available in Greater Bendigo to assist young people experiencing mental health issues however waiting times and accessibility were concerns.

EMPLOYMENT
Ensure a range of local employment opportunities both part-time and full-time are available for young people.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Provide more information about training opportunities, tertiary courses and more leadership programs.

EVENTS
Access to more free and/or low cost events and activities including sport, music and creative workshops and more events in rural areas.

HAVING A SAY
Having the City actively involve young people in decision making processes and for their voices to be heard.

PERSONAL SAFETY
Personal safety at home, on public transport and in the neighbourhood and that public spaces were more inclusive.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
More education in schools about the effects of drugs and alcohol.

TRANSPORT
Improved public transport including more options for rural areas and improved timetables.

“If there is a community project such as a swimming pool or skate park being designed or built get young people on board to help with the planning”

– Alicia, 17
The City plans and delivers a range of programs for young people that encourages leadership, learning and fun.

Programs provide opportunities to:

- Participate in decision making that increases opportunities and improves community wellbeing
- Respond to young people’s ideas and priority areas
- Raise young people’s profile to achieve greater recognition and better outcomes for themselves and peers

Many other City plans and strategies include actions about young people eg. the Municipal Early Years Plan, Reconciliation Plan, Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan, Rural Communities Strategy, Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy, and Economic Development Strategy to name a few.

Having so many plans and strategies means that City units need to make the connections required to respond effectively to the needs of young people.

The City and the State Government share a commitment to young people’s empowerment and leadership, participation in decision making, and advocacy on important issues. Our shared commitment is essential in enabling the City to meet its commitments to young people.

The City is involved in a number of local networks such as The First Quarter and the Loddon Children and Youth Area Partnership. It is important for the City to continue participating in networks with other community and government agencies and continue developing new partnerships for the Strategy to achieve its vision, principles and goals.

“...I think that it’s really important that young people were given the opportunity to work on a project such as this, especially when it’s all based around the young people of Bendigo.

It’s really gratifying to be able to give genuine feedback on a project like this, instead of being on a committee just to fill some criteria.

It helps us (young people) to be a part of the community, and make real and tangible change in Bendigo.

I personally feel empowered by the fact that the community wants to listen to and collaborate with young people.

Young people in Bendigo need to know where great opportunities are and this project helps that a lot.”

– Ryan Peterson, 18, Project Reference Group member
ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

The Action Plan’s goals and actions respond to the eight priority areas identified by young people and does this by:

- Programs and activities to make sure more young people are being heard, valued, connected and inspired
- Building on existing partnerships
- Continuing to attract grants from the State Government and other sources

Goal 1 – We provide opportunities for young people to have their say

*Actions include:*
- Strengthen the Youth Action Group to become a Youth Council and increase connections between Councillors, young people and the community to advocate on priority areas.
- Include young people from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities.

Goal 2 – We promote young people as valuable citizens who make a positive contribution to the community

*Actions include:*
- Develop Youth Awards to recognise excellence and achievement in the community.
- Promote young people’s positive contribution to the community through the YO Media website.

Goal 3 – We provide innovative opportunities for young people to develop new skills

*Actions include:*
- Provide leadership workshops at secondary schools and expand to involve tertiary students.
- Conduct creative arts workshops and life skills training.

Goal 4 – We increase collaboration with education providers, industry and community to enhance employment opportunities

*Actions include:*
- Provide student learning, work experience and internship opportunities through Career Horizons.
- Support advocacy efforts for the creation of more apprenticeships, traineeships and youth employment opportunities.

Goal 5 – We deliver inclusive, accessible events and programs for all the community

*Actions include:*
- Promote programs, activities and workshops in rural communities.
- Provide skill development opportunities in event management and promotion.

Goal 6 – We increase collaboration to strengthen partnerships, networks and advocacy in priority areas

*Actions include:*
- Network with State and Federal Governments and local services to explore opportunities for new funding and strategic partnerships.
- Advocate for an increase in health and wellbeing services to enable improved access and support.

Goal 7 – We create spaces that are inclusive, safe and welcoming for all the community

*Actions include:*
- Implement the Vision and Strategy Plan for the YO Bendigo facility at 45 Mundy Street.
- Partner in community safety initiatives.
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<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>What success looks like</th>
<th>Key Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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| 1. We provide opportunities for young people to have their say.    | 1. Strengthen the Youth Action Group to become a Youth Council and increase connections between Councillors, young people and the community to advocate on priority areas.  | • The Youth Action Group becomes a Youth Council which provides an accessible platform to respond to priority issues and meet with the Mayor and Councillors.  
• The Youth Council includes opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds.  
• A strong governance structure is in place.  
• Members meet at least 12 times per year.  
• Advocacy and planning in responses to priority areas.  
• Provide feedback to the Councillors and City units on key issues and strategies.  | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• BDAC  
• La Trobe University  
• LCMS  
• Local youth agencies  
• Mayor and Councillors  
• Secondary schools  
• State Government  
• VicSRC  
• YACVic  |
|                                                                     | 2. Include young people from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities.                                                                                                                                 | • Young people of diverse backgrounds provide feedback through the YO Bendigo facility at 45 Mundy Street, FReeZA and YO Media Team.  |                                                                                                   |
|                                                                     | 3. Hold an annual youth summit/forum.                                                                                                                                                                | • Minimum attendance of 60 young people from diverse backgrounds.  |                                                                                                   |
| 2. We promote young people as valuable citizens who make a positive contribution to the community. | 1. Develop a Youth Awards program to recognise excellence and achievements in the community.                                                                                                       | • Hold annual youth awards program in collaboration with young people, agencies and City service units.  | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• La Trobe University  
• Local youth agencies  
• State Government  
• Secondary schools  |
|                                                                     | 2. Develop a Young Ambassadors Program.                                                                                                                                                              | • Trial a Young Ambassadors program at the YO Bendigo facility.  | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• La Trobe University  
• Local youth agencies  
• State Government  
• Secondary schools  |
|                                                                     | 3. Promote young people’s positive contribution to the community through the YO Media website.                                                                                                        | • Regular articles are published on YO Bendigo website and social media accounts.  
• A minimum of four editions of Ambedo magazine are published annually.  | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• La Trobe University  
• Local youth agencies  
• State Government  
• Secondary schools  |
| 3. We provide innovative opportunities for young people to develop new skills. | 1. Provide leadership workshops at secondary schools and expand to tertiary students.                                                                                                                 | • Minimum of five workshops in schools per year.  
• At least one workshop for tertiary students per year.  | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• La Trobe University  
• Secondary schools  
• State Government  |
|                                                                     | 2. Conduct creative arts workshops and life skills training.                                                                                                                                     | • Minimum of eight workshops annually.  |                                                                                                   |
| 4. We increase collaboration with education providers, industry and community to enhance employment opportunities. | 1. Provide student learning, work experience and internship opportunities through Career Horizons.                                                                                                  | • At least two secondary students and two tertiary students undertake placements with Community Partnership Unit and other City Units annually.  | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• DET  
• Employment agencies  
• Federal and State Government  
• GLLEN  
• La Trobe University  
• Secondary schools  
• Workspace Australia  |
|                                                                     | 2. Support advocacy efforts for the creation of more apprenticeships, traineeships and youth employment opportunities.                                                                               | • Greater Bendigo has adequate apprenticeships, traineeships and employment to meet the demand of young people.  
• Research, letters of support, advocacy, submissions, and participation in advisory/reference groups.  |                                                                                                   |
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| **5. We deliver inclusive, accessible events and programs for all the community.** | 1. Promote programs, activities and workshops in rural communities. | • Minimum of five events in rural communities annually.  
• Increased level of involvement of rural young people in the planning of events.  
• Minimum of 300 attendees per year. | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• BCHS  
• BDAC  
• Community groups  
• Headspace  
• Heathcote Community House  
• Heathcote Health  
• La Trobe University  
• LCMS  
• Local youth agencies  
• Secondary schools  
• State Government |
| | 2. Provide skill development opportunities in event management and promotion. | • Increase number of young people in committee organising events.  
• Minimum of six FReeZA events annually.  
• Minimum of two skill development workshops for FReeZA Committee.  
• At least 2,000 attend events per year. | | |
| | 3. Deliver programs and events for young people from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities. | • There is diversity in attendance in programs and events including the YO Bendigo facility at 45 Mundy Street, Youth Council and YO Media. | | |
| **6. We increase collaboration to strengthen partnerships, networks and advocacy in priority areas.** | 1. Participate in partnerships to develop and deliver programs to improve health and wellbeing. | • Maintain four condom vending machines at rural locations.  
• Explore options to install additional machines.  
• Assist young people’s participation in grant applications to agencies such as VCHEALTH, Heywire, State and Federal Government. | • Bendigo Health  
• BCHS  
• BDAC  
• CERSH  
• DET  
• Headspace  
• Heathcote Health  
• Local youth agencies  
• Mind Australia  
• Murray PHN  
• Salvation Army  
• Secondary schools  
• State Government  
• St John of God  
• YACVic  
• YSAS |
| | 2. Network with State and Federal Governments and local services to explore opportunities for new funding and strategic partnerships. | • Attend local network, partnership and forum meetings including the First Quarter – Youth Coordination Group and Young Adults Group.  
• At least one new strategic partnership project per year.  
• Minimum of six meetings with other agencies annually.  
• Participation in State Government & YACVic events. | | |
| | 3. Advocate for an increase in health and wellbeing services to enable improved access and support. | • The municipality is well resourced with health and wellbeing services.  
• The City provides partner agencies with support when required – eg demographic profiles, research, letters of support, policy submission and joint grant applications. | | |
| **7. We create spaces that are inclusive, safe and welcoming for all the community.** | 1. Partner in community safety initiatives. | • At least one initiative per year is implemented to help young people feel safer in the community.  
• Participate in Youth Justice Panels & provide community work experience opportunities.  
• Attend Bendigo Safe Community Forum meetings and encourage participation in White Ribbon Day. | • Alternative education providers  
• Bendigo TAFE  
• Blue Light committee  
• BRYMCA  
• BSCF  
• CBD Action Group  
• Commission for Children and Young People  
• DOJ  
• La Trobe University  
• Local youth agencies  
• Secondary schools  
• State Government  
• Victoria Police  
• Workspace Australia  
• YO Bendigo licensees  
• YO Bendigo Youth Advisory Group |
| | 2. Implement Child Safety Standards. | • Whole of City commitment, implementation plan and review process for the safety and protection of children and young people aged under 18 years. | | |
| | 3. Implement the Vision and Strategy Plan for the YO Bendigo facility at 45 Mundy Street. | • Implement facility upgrades to be more youth friendly and accessible.  
• Promote and market facility.  
• New governance process involving young people.  
• Increased access by young people to events and activities.  
• Annual increase in the number of young people using facility. | | |
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City wishes to acknowledge the dedicated work of the Youth Strategy Project Reference Group in preparing background reports, analysing findings, researching key issues, engaging with young people and overseeing the development of Explore Engage Empower - Young People in Greater Bendigo (2017 – 2021).

Thank you to:

Young people
Caitlin Allman
Ruby Baker
Aimee Croft
Ashley Eadon
Kathryn Northill
Ryan Peterson

Agency representatives
Kylie Hand – Student Manager, Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Ben Keath – Headspace, Bendigo
Linda Lyons – Assistant Principal, Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Cath O’Leary – Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership
Bethea Robertson – Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership
Jordan Tamblyn – Department of Justice and Regulation
Paul Taylor – Bendigo Community Health Services

Project consultant
Wendy Holland – communityvibe

ABBREVIATIONS

BCHS  Bendigo Community Health Services
BDAC  Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative
BRYMCA Bendigo Regional Young Men’s Christian Association
BSCF  Bendigo Safe Community Forum
DET   Department of Education and Training (State Government)
DOJ   Department of Justice and Regulation (State Government)
GLLEN Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network
LCMS  Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
Alternative education providers  DOXA School Bendigo, NETschool, Flexible Learning Options School
Murray PHN  Murray Public Health Network
VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council
YAC Vic Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
YSAS  Youth Support and Advocacy Service
For more information contact the Inclusive Communities team on 5434 6000.