Draft Youth Strategy 2026-2031

CITY OF WODONGA VIC



Acknowledgement of Country

Wodonga Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of the Country. We also acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and Custodians across various lands. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, Elders, children and young people. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise their continuous connections to lands, waters and communities across the country.

CITY OF WODONGA VIC

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ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

The Wodonga *Youth Strategy 2026-2031* (the Strategy) is part of Wodonga Council's integrated planning framework and guides how the council supports young people aged 12 to 24 who live, learn, work or spend time in Wodonga.

It provides a consistent framework for decision-making, partnerships and advocacy, ensuring the needs of young people are intentionally considered across the organisation and community.

The strategy builds on previous policy and engagement work and reflects the priorities identified by young people. It aligns with the *Wodonga 2050 Community Vision*, translating the city's long-term vision for inclusion, connection, opportunity and liveability into practical, age-appropriate priorities for today and the future.

Supporting the *Council Plan 2025-2029*, the Strategy applies a clear youth lens to council priorities, guiding resources and actions to achieve positive outcomes. It also aligns with the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029* by addressing the key factors that shape young people's wellbeing, including connection, safety, participation and access to opportunity.

Together, these plans provide a coordinated approach that strengthens decision-making and lasting outcomes for young people in Wodonga.



POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Wodonga Council operates within environments that shape the lives and opportunities of young people. Outcomes are influenced by Commonwealth, state and local government policy settings, funding arrangements and service systems that operate across multiple portfolios and sectors.

Most young people engage primarily with universal settings such as schools, sport and recreation, public spaces, libraries and community facilities. The council plays its strongest role at this level by shaping the environments, places and opportunities that support connection, safety, participation and inclusion.

Through planning, infrastructure, youth-friendly spaces, partnerships and advocacy, Wodonga Council helps create the conditions that support wellbeing and reduce the likelihood that challenges escalate.

Some young people require additional or targeted supports. While the council does not deliver most secondary services, it plays an enabling role by advocating for services.

Figure 1: The puzzle pieces that form the youth services eco-system

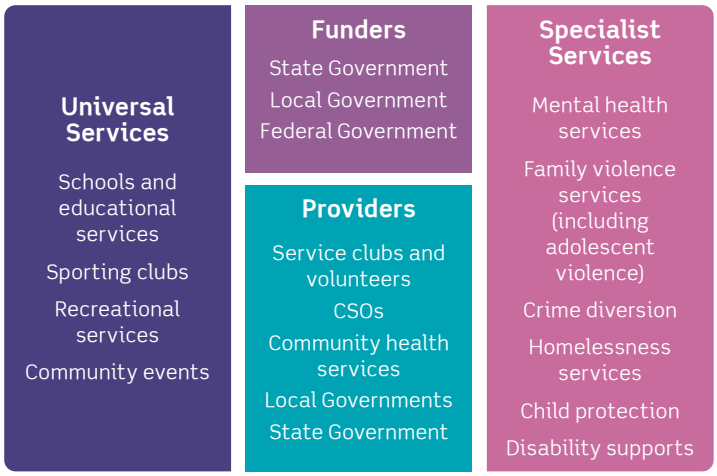


Figure 2: Service examples



Wodonga demographic data: profile.id.com.au/wodonga

THE YOUTH STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

The *Youth Strategy Framework* (the Framework) translates Wodonga Council's vision of a vibrant, well-planned city where people, nature and opportunity thrive through connection, resilience and leadership into a clear, youth-centred approach. It also enables the council's mission to provide strong leadership, deliver responsive services and support positive outcomes now and into the future.

The Framework is guided by the council's values, which emphasise trust, respect, integrity and learning. These values shape how the council listens to young people, makes decisions and delivers services, ensuring that young people are considered in a way that is fair, transparent and grounded in community needs.

Within council's infrastructure role, the Framework is built around four domains that reflect what young people told the council matters most to them - feeling safe and valued, being connected to people and places, having a genuine voice in decisions, and being supported to explore interests, develop skills and navigate future pathways. Structuring the strategy around these areas allows the council to apply a consistent youth lens across planning, services and advocacy. Furthermore, the Framework guides decision-making, supports clear prioritisation and alignment across the organisation,and focuses effort on areas where Wodonga Council can strengthen foundations, improve coordination and contribute to positive, long-term outcomes for young people and the wider community.

Domain	Focus
01 Wellbeing	Through access to appropriate infrastructure, supporting young people to feel valued, accepted and safe in communities and everyday environments, recognising that belonging and safety are foundational to wellbeing and resilience.
02 Connection	Strengthening networks and places that support young people's wellbeing, including trusted relationships and access to welcoming spaces that reduce isolation and support participation.
03 Voice and influence	Enabling young people to shape decisions and actively contribute to civic, cultural, and community life.
04 Pathways and Passion	Supporting young people to explore interests, develop skills and access pathways into learning, work, volunteering and community contribution, while advocating to address barriers and support opportunities.



FROM STRATEGY TO ACTION

Many actions within this Strategy build on and leverage existing commitments and initiatives outlined in the *Council Plan 2025-2029* and the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029*.

The Strategy applies a clear youth lens to existing activity, strengthens alignment across the council, and identifies opportunities for targeted action and advocacy.

Actions will be prioritised and delivered through Wodonga Council's annual planning and budgeting processes. Clear responsibilities, timeframes and resource requirements will be identified to support implementation. Progress will be reviewed each year, allowing the council to respond to emerging issues and opportunities affecting young people in Wodonga while maintaining focus on agreed priorities.



COUNCIL CONTRIBUTES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS ...



Planner

Wodonga Council applies a youth lens across strategic planning, policy development and decision-making to ensure young people are considered in how the city grows, services are delivered and priorities are set.



Enabler

The council creates the conditions for positive youth outcomes by supporting safe, inclusive environments, participation opportunities and community-led initiatives that strengthen connection and wellbeing.



Partner

The council works with all community by providing necessary systems and infrastructure, recognising that collaboration leads to stronger and more sustainable outcomes.



Service provider

The council delivers a range of universal services, facilities and programs that young people use every day, including libraries, recreation facilities, community spaces and engagement activities that support connection, participation and wellbeing.



Advocate

Wodonga Council advocates for the needs, priorities and voices of young people at local, regional and state levels, informed by evidence, engagement and lived experience.

DOMAIN 01

WELLBEING

Wodonga Council's focus

The council's role is to strengthen the conditions that support wellbeing for all young people. The council will focus on:

- Creating safe, inclusive and welcoming public spaces and facilities.
- Supporting environments and initiatives that promote health and resilience.
- Advocating for improved access to services where gaps exist.

Area of focus	Key initiatives	Local gov. role	Area responsible	Timing
Creating safe, inclusive and welcoming public spaces and facilities	Apply a youth inclusive and safe lens to the planning, design and ongoing management of public spaces and facilities used by young people.	• Planner • Enabler	• Community Development • City Services • Projects and Assets	Annual
	Ensure council-managed services, programs and events apply youth-safe, inclusive and alcohol-harm aware practices, embedding harm-reduction.	• Planner • Enabler • Service provider	• Community Development • Cultural Services	Annual
Supporting health, connection and resilience	Engage with health, youth and community services to deliver coordinated health promotion and resilience-building activities that support young people's wellbeing and social connection in line with the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.	• Enabler • Advocate	• Community Development	Annual
Improving access to services and supports	Develop, maintain and promote a centralised, youth-friendly service directory that provides clear information about local services, supports and opportunities for young people.	• Enabler	• Community Development • Governance, Performance and Engagement	Year 3 Year 4 Year 5
	Actively participate in cross-sector coordination forums, including the Albury Wodonga Youth Area Meeting Group, to improve service alignment, information sharing and coordinated responses for young people.	• Enabler	• Community Development	Annual

DOMAIN 02

CONNECTION

Wodonga Council's focus

The council plays a central role in shaping the places and opportunities that support connection. The council will focus on:

- Improving access to youth-friendly public spaces and facilities through planning, infrastructure and transport considerations.

Area of focus	Key initiatives	Local gov. role	Area responsible	Timing
Support activities that connect young people with local businesses, civic organisations and democratic processes	Establish and embed a mentor-matching program for young people with local services, businesses and education providers to support leadership, participation and aspiration.	• Enabler • Service provider	• Community Development • People, Safety and Customer Experience	Year 2 Year 3 Year 4 Year 5
	Support initiatives, working with clubs and organisations, to increase participation in recreational, social, sporting and cultural activities.	• Enabler	• Community Development • Cultural Services	Annual
Improving access to youth-friendly public spaces and facilities	Advocate for and plan for safe, youth-friendly places and spaces for young people to gather, connect and participate locally.	• Planner	• Community Development • City Services • Projects and Assets • Cultural Services	Annual

DOMAIN 03

VOICE AND INFLUENCE

Wodonga Council's focus

The council's role is to create the conditions for meaningful youth participation. The council will focus on:

- Supporting youth leadership and advisory structures.

Area of focus	Key initiatives	Local gov. role	Area responsible	Timing
Providing accessible and inclusive opportunities for young people to have a say	Establish and coordinate a Youth Action Group that connects young people from a range of interests with the council, business, industry and government to inform decision-making and local priorities.	• Planner • Enabler • Service provider	• Community Development	Annual
	Develop an annual program of sporting and community outreach and engagement opportunities to inform young people of council initiatives and ways young people can have their say.	• Planner • Enabler • Service provider	• Community Development	Annual
Support youth leadership and advisory structures while strengthening the council's capacity to engage with and respond to young people	Support Youth Action Group participants in leadership skills, participatory decision making, civic engagement and broad cross sectorial engagement.	• Enabler • Partner • Service provider	• Community Development	Annual
	Engage a dedicated Youth Officer for coordinating youth initiatives and supporting the implementation of the Strategy.	• Service provider	• Community Development	Annual
Recognising and promoting young people's contributions	Promote positive representations of young people through council communications, including refreshing the youth landing page on the council's website to highlight opportunities, stories and achievements.	• Advocate • Enabler • Service provider	• Governance, Performance and Engagement • Community Development	Annual
	Recognise young people's contributions to community life through the annual Wodonga Young Citizen of the Year Award and biennial Volunteer of the Year Awards.	• Advocate • Enabler • Service provider	• Governance, Performance and Engagement • Community Development	Annual

DOMAIN 04

PATHWAYS AND PASSION

Wodonga Council's focus

The council supports pathways and passion through coordination, place-based action. The council will focus on:

- Reducing practical barriers such as transport and access to information.

Area of focus	Key initiatives	Local gov. role	Area responsible	Timing
Supporting access to spaces and places	Support youth-led arts, music, creative and cultural activities through access to council spaces and spaces.	• Enabler • Partner	• Community Development	Annual
Enabling pathways that support young people to transition into education, training, skills development and employment	Create structured opportunities for young people to engage with civic leadership, including an annual Councillor Experience, to build understanding of local government and civic leadership.	• Enabler • Partner • Service provider	• Community Development • People, Safety and Customer Experience	Year 2 Year 3 Year 4 Year 5
Reducing practical barriers to participation	Identify and advocate to reduce barriers, such as access to transport or resources, for young people participating in education, work, training and community life.	• Advocate • Planner	• Community Development • Projects and Assets	Annual

MONITORING REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Wodonga Council is committed to ensuring this Youth Strategy leads to practical, meaningful outcomes for young people. Responsibility for implementation sits across the council, with the Strategy guiding decision-making, planning and service delivery through a consistent youth lens. It is intended to influence how the council works with and for young people across all its functions, as well as implement the key initiatives outlined in the plan.

The Youth Strategy action plan identifies key initiatives, responsibilities and timeframes. Progress will be monitored through existing council planning and reporting processes to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Strategy will be reviewed during its life to ensure it remains relevant, responsive and aligned with council priorities, community needs and broader policy settings.



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