

LAKE
MACQUARIE
CITY

YOUTH STRATEGY

2025-2029



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Lake Macquarie City Council dhumaan Awabakala ngarrakal yalawaa, yalawan, yalawanan.

Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges the Awabakal people and Elders past, present and future.

Dhumaan ngayin ngarrakalu kirraanan barayidin.
We remember and respect the Ancestors who cared for and nurtured this Country.

Ngarrakalumba yuludaka bibayilin barayida baaduka.

It is in their footsteps that we travel these lands and waters.

Wording by the Aboriginal Reference Group and translated by Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre.

Lake Macquarie City Council recognises that within this city, many cultures reside. This includes the Awabakal people and many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the nation. We are committed to acknowledging the vital importance and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to strengthening and enriching our city and region. We respect and are dedicated to conserving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices, traditional sites and significant places.

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MESSAGE FROM MAYOR ADAM SHULTZ

As a father of three young children, I understand the importance of fostering the growth and development of our young people. By providing opportunities and resources that help young people navigate their transition from education to employment, engage with nature, prioritise their health and wellbeing, and encourage civic participation, we create an environment where they can thrive, succeed and contribute meaningfully to society.

The Youth Strategy 2025-2029 outlines comprehensive initiatives to support young people in their transition from education to sustainable employment. As Mayor, I'm proud of the annual Mayoral Award for HSC achievers, promotion of the Education to Employment program and addressing cost-of-living challenges through partnerships with youth sector organisations to advocate for government support. These actions aim to enhance employment diversity and educational attainment.

The strategy includes the development of a youth-friendly guide to natural areas and collaboration with Aboriginal Land Councils to integrate traditional land care knowledge. These efforts aim to increase youth involvement in sustainability, enhance satisfaction with environmental protection measures and raise awareness of our climate adaptation and conservation initiatives.

Health, wellbeing and cultural inclusion are prioritised to improve physical, social and mental health outcomes. The strategy supports the promotion of mental health resources, the delivery of annual Youth Week programs and the celebration of cultural events that promote diversity and Aboriginal heritage. By funding community programs and increasing youth-targeted communication, the strategy seeks to foster a sense of belonging, safety and cultural appreciation among young people.

Youth representation and civic participation are strengthened through regular Youth Council meetings, the development of annual workplans and structured consultation opportunities with Council staff and external organisations.

We are proud of our diversity in Lake Macquarie. Ensuring our young people - as one of the many demographics within our city - feel heard, represented and actively involved in shaping their community is key to our success and exactly what our Youth Strategy 2025-2029 aims to achieve.

Mayor Adam Shultz

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people, while representing the future, must also be seen as citizens of the present. They require Council's support and access to services as much as anyone else. Above all, Council needs to consult with and listen to our young people, which will be achieved by:

- Ensuring the continued existence and resourcing of the Lake Macquarie Youth Council so that young people may continue to have a voice in Council
- Acknowledging the effects Council decisions will have on young people and their involvement in our community
- Consulting with young people when making decisions that will directly affect them
- Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by young people in terms of accessing transportation
- Recognising the role that participation in youth cultural and artistic forms and activities plays in helping young people to derive meaning and help shape their lives
- Actively promoting youth employment opportunities (including traineeships and apprenticeships) and actively work to prevent the exploitation of young people in the workforce
- Advocating for ensure that proper resources and programs are available to aid young people suffering from both physical and mental illness
- Helping to safeguard our environment and landscape so it may be enjoyed by future generations, and
- Developing and promoting strategies and policies that provide adequate access to housing and basic necessities for young people in our community.





VISION

The vision of the Youth strategy 2025-2029 is to create a city where young people thrive through opportunity to participate in the cultural life, environmental stewardship and the economic future of Lake Macquarie. This is achieved by ensuring the voice and aspirations of young people are represented in the planning and delivery of services to the Lake Macquarie community.

THE PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE SPAN ACROSS A RANGE OF COUNCIL SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS. THIS STRATEGY AIMS TO:

- understand what our young people need and want and how Council can meet these needs through service delivery
- identify how priorities can be achieved through the effective use of time, resources and networks to achieve youth priorities and
- ensure young people priorities are reflected in other strategic planning documents across Council.

STRATEGIC LINKS

The Youth Strategy reflects Council's commitment to recognising and delivering outcomes to address the needs of young people. The strategy also supports the achievement of our city's overarching 10-year Community Strategic Plan by ensuring young people's priorities and needs are proactively recognised and included in the delivery of our plan vision for strategic growth for a sustainable future.

Economic A CITY WITH A DIVERSE AND THRIVING ECONOMY



- 1.3 Our local and strategic centres provide housing, jobs and activities
- 1.5 Our city has a workforce with skills for growing industries and jobs of the future

Environmental A CITY THAT PROTECTS AND SHOWCASES ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND IS RESILIENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE



- 2.1 Our city protects and enhances biodiversity
- 2.2 Our lake and waterways are healthy

Social A CITY WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND WORK, AND FEEL CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER



- 3.1 Our city is welcoming, inclusive and safe
- 3.2 People in our city can access the facilities and services they need
- 3.3 Everyone can enjoy open, active and social spaces
- 3.4 We value our First Nations people; past, present and emerging
- 3.5 Our community values and celebrates the art, history and cultures of our city

Governance A COUNCIL THAT OPERATES WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND RESPECT



- 4.1 Our community is involved in decisions that affect them
- 4.3 Council services meet community needs
- 4.4 Council collaborates with businesses, government organisations and the community to improve our city



OTHER STRATEGIC PLANS WITHIN COUNCIL WHICH SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025
- Aboriginal Community Development Plan
- Active Recreation Strategy
- Aquatic Facilities Strategy
- Arts, Heritage and Cultural Plan 2017-2027
- Community Participation Plan 2024-2028
- Delivery Program 2025-2029
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2027
- Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028
- Lake Mac Libraries, Kawumalyikilba Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028
- Lake Macquarie Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035
- Lake Macquarie Sports Strategy 2021-2031
- Toronto Foreshore Master Plan
- Urban and Public Art Strategy 2019-2029
- Urban Greening Strategy
- Walking, Cycling and Better Streets Strategy
- Waste and Circular Materials Strategy

These strategies and related action plans are delivered by a number of departments.



THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Governments work hard to understand the needs and priorities of the people who make up the Australian community.

It is the needs of people that shape the way Governments plan and utilise the resources available to them. In NSW, the Advocate for Children and Young People was established to ensure that government not only listens to children and young people but shape their planning and delivery of services giving special attention to the input of these vulnerable groups.

The Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024 is a whole-of-government plan for all children and young people in NSW produced by the NSW Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. Launched in April 2022 and informed by the voices of more than 41,000 children and young people in NSW, the plan articulates the needs and hopes of children and young people. The goal of the plan is to create a future where all children and young people have the supports they need to thrive.

In the report, Children and Young people indicated how the NSW Government could improve life for people like them.

The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Tracking Report 03, p66; viewed online May 2025
<https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/strategic-plan-2022-2024>).

IN 2024, THE TOP RECOMMENDATIONS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MADE TO THE NSW GOVERNMENT WERE TO:

- have better control over social media and help them become less dependent on technology
- help keep the community safe
- improve and increase support services available.

Children and young people also indicated that they would like increased provision of financial support for those in need; recreational/entertainment facilities/playgrounds/parks; events, workshops and fun activities for young people; job opportunities for graduates/more career opportunities, and making housing and rent more affordable.

In 2022, the Committee for the Hunter commissioned research to ensure the voice of young people (15-29 years old) was documented to ensure a better understanding of the aspirations, perspectives and ideas of young people across the Hunter Region. The *Youth Voice 2022 – Priorities for Young People in the Hunter* report was published in April 2022 and lists the three top concerns of young people as:

- cost of living and financial security – now and in the future
- housing – access and affordability
- climate change (Committee for the Hunter, April 2022, p2).

Other issues of concern to young people identified in the report in order of importance include: access to mental health and wellbeing services; environmental change and degradation; job opportunities; transport and accessibility; and nightlife and places to be social (Committee for the Hunter, April 2022, p8).

“More ambient lighting around public areas at night, particular round the lake to improve perception of safety (e.g. fairy lights)”

– YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER

“Young people want to feel safer in public places during nighttime hours”

– WARNERS BAY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

“Cultural festivals and celebrations at Morisset showground promoting Aboriginal and diverse cultures”

– MORISSET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

YOUNG PEOPLE IN LAKE MACQUARIE



Young people make up a significant proportion of the population and their active participation in the life of the city helps shape the character of our community.

"Improve pathways and walking tracks around the Lake"
- WARNERS BAY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

"Raise awareness and celebrate different cultures"

- HUNTER SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



In 2021, young people (those aged 12-24 years old) represented **15%** of the population of Lake Macquarie or about **34,000** people.



It is projected that by 2029 this will rise to **35,500** representing about **14.7%** of the total population.

(Remplan 2024, app.remplan.com.au/lakemacquarie/community/population)



In 2021, approximately **45%** of young people completed Year 12 or equivalent, while another **37%** completed Years 10 or 11, or equivalent.



In 2021 **34%** of people aged 15-19 years were studying full-time and not working, while **35%** were working and studying, and **6%** were working full-time and not studying.



17% of young people were born overseas and approximately **5%** were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



“Reliable public transport across the city to help with getting to work, social activities and getting around the area”

– HUNTER SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



“Cultural burns, working with firesticks”

– MORISSET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



LAKE MACQUARIE YOUTH COUNCIL

Council established the Lake Macquarie Youth Council in 2008 as part of our longstanding commitment to young people. The Youth Council provides the opportunity for young people to participate in our city's public life.

THE COMMITTEE WAS ESTABLISHED WITH THREE OBJECTIVES:

- Offer the young people of the city the opportunity to participate in the public life of Lake Macquarie
- Find out about issues that are important to young people in the local area and provide advice to Council about addressing issues facing young people
- participate in the planning, running and evaluation of local initiatives and projects for young people

Since 2009, the Lake Macquarie Youth Council has played a vital role informing Council about views and needs of young people. The activities of this committee have reinforced to Council the value and legitimate place of the voice of young people in the life of the city.

"Improve disability access at community events and in community spaces"

— GLENDALE TAFE STUDENTS



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Consultation for the development of this strategy ensures that the voices of young people are heard and their priorities realised and addressed.

With this objective in mind, a four-phase consultation process was undertaken to shape the strategy.

The first phase was a series of nine face-to-face workshops with young people across a range of settings to capture a diverse range of people and perspectives. This included:

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Toronto High School
- Hunter Sports High School
- Morisset High School
- Glendale Technology High School
- Warners Bay High School
- Glendale TAFE students

YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Arise Community Support afternoon drop-in
- Ready Up Skills employment program for young people LIVING with a disability.

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE VOICE

- Lake Macquarie Youth Council
- Toronto High School Leap Program

In the initial consultation, we spoke with 163 young people aged 12-24 years. They identified 28 priority areas for action. These actions have been mapped to the focus areas identified in Council's Strategic Plan and were used to inform the content of the online community survey.

Consultations were designed so that young people who participated could make genuine contributions, by using a youth-centred engagement process. This approach ensured that the young people who participated understood the outcome-focused approach of Council and participated in ways meaningful to them, their lifestyles and future aspirations as residents of Lake Macquarie.

The second phase of consultation was conducted via an online survey targeting young people, those who work with young people and those who care about the wellbeing of young people. The survey asked respondents to prioritise actions requested by young people.

ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY ENGAGEMENT



85,746

reached through our social media platforms



11,950

reached via Council's e-newsletters



130

survey respondents members of the community including 41 people aged 12-24 years

"Increase entertainment opportunities for young people in local places and spaces"

— GLENDALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



This third phase of consultation included internal investigation and documentation of Council services and programs that deliver outcomes consistent with the priorities of young people. Representatives from a range of departments of Council participated in internal consultation including:

- Arts, Culture and Tourism
- Assets Management - Recreation and Land Planning, and Natural and Built Environments
- City Works - City Presentation
- City Projects
- Communications
- Development Assessment and Compliance
- Integrated and Strategic Planning
- Leisure Services
- Community Partnerships - Social and Community Planning, Landcare and Sustainability Engagement
- Councillors

The final phase of consultation involved placing the draft strategy on exhibition for 28 days. During exhibition Council presented the draft strategy to young people to ensure it accurately reflected their priorities and hopes as residents of Lake Macquarie.



“There are not enough employment opportunities for young people with a disability”

– READYUP EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Vision: A city where young people thrive through opportunity to participate in the cultural life, environmental stewardship and economic future of Lake Macquarie.

ACTION PLAN



OUTCOME ECONOMIC

Young people are employed in sustainable roles.

Young people are supported to transition from education into sustainable employment.

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
1. Create an annual Mayoral Award to recognise the achievement of students completing their HSC	Employment diversity (Australian Bureau of Statistics)	1. Social and community planning	Improve support options for young people transitioning from education to employment
2. Promote the Education to Employment program to increase awareness among young people.	Number of people in the city with a tertiary qualification (Australian Bureau of Statistics)	2. People support/Social and community planning	Identify and promote cost of living support available to young people to live and work independently
3. Partner with organisations in the youth sector to advocate to State and Federal Government for increased support for young people experiencing cost of living disadvantage		3. Social and community planning/Community Activities Lake Macquarie	Increase the perception of safety, comfort and accurate information at bus stops
4. Provide information to young people and families about local services and programs providing relief from cost of living disadvantage		4. Social and community planning	
5. Participate in interagency meetings to encourage and support collaboration between services to support young people		5. Social and community planning/Community Activities Lake Macquarie	



OUTCOME ENVIRONMENTAL

Young people are supported to increase their voluntary participation in environmental programs.
Young people are contributing to the environmental protection of Lake Macquarie.

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
6. Promote opportunities for young people to participate in volunteer programs with Landcare and other environmental protection programs (e.g. Intrepid Landcare)	Satisfaction with protection of the natural environment (Australian Liveability Census)	6. Landcare/Social and community planning	Support the acquisition of traditional wisdom/approaches into Council systems for management of natural areas
7. Develop a 'youth-friendly' guide to sensitive natural areas and how Council is protecting them	Satisfaction with how Council is adapting to climate change (Community Satisfaction Survey)	7. Social and community planning	Identify and disseminate information to young people about opportunities to get involved in protecting the natural environment
8. Work with Local Aboriginal Land Councils, to increase young people's understanding of Awabakal and Worimi approaches to caring for land.	Satisfaction with sustainable behaviours in the community (water management, solar panels, recycling etc.) (Australian Liveability Census)	8. Social and community planning/ Local Aboriginal Land Councils	Increase support for greening of new developments and facilities (e.g. vertical gardens, green power generation technology) Increase the refit and reuse of vacant facilities (public and private) to reduce need for expansion of development Provide education to young people and community about how Council protects natural areas, limits urban sprawl through increasing housing density levels and works with other stakeholders to rehabilitate lands and native habitats

"Ensure a balance is maintained between the increased need for affordable housing and the protection of bushland"

– GLENDALE TAFE TVET STUDENT



Young people experience improved physical, social and mental health outcomes.
 Young people can participate in the city's cultural life.
 Young people expand their understanding of culturally diverse communities and experiences.

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
9. Promote information, resources and events to improve mental health and wellbeing to young people and support networks	Satisfaction with community being welcoming to all people (Australian Liveability Census)	9. Social and community planning	Improvement capability of existing public sporting and recreation facilities for all weather usage
10. Deliver the annual Youth Week program	Satisfaction with belonging in the community (Australian Liveability Census)	10. Social and community planning	Facilitate improved accessibility for young people to existing recreation and exercise opportunities (e.g. no cost/low cost, local, all abilities, fitness passport)
11. Apply for grants to deliver local activities for young people	Percentage of participants reporting positive behaviour change following participation in programs delivered by Council (Council)	11. Social and community planning	Facilitate opportunities for young people to access information and resources to maintain good mental health
12. Promote opportunities for young people to participate and attend cultural events and festivals that celebrate Aboriginal culture and heritage	Sense of neighbourhood safety (from crime, traffic, pollution etc.) (Australian Liveability Census)	12. Social and community planning/ACT	Improve pedestrian pathways and tracks to provide continuous accessibility around the city to enhance connection to desired destinations (around lake, shopping centres, public transport hubs)
13. Conduct research to identify the communication preferences of young people	Sense of personal safety (for all ages, genders, day or night) (Australian Liveability Census)	13. Communications/ Social and community planning	Consider innovative ways of increasing activation of lake for recreation and mobility for young people
14. Provide funding to community organisations to support programs that welcome young people from culturally diverse backgrounds to Lake Macquarie	Levels of crime in the city (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research)	14. Social and community planning	Provide and/or facilitate opportunities for young people to gather in safe and accessible social environments Consider design and refit of public places to improve perception of safety during night-time hours for young people Increase the creation of public spaces that encourage unstructured social activity to encourage young people presence and engagement Promote existing opportunities for young people to gather in social settings that encourage and embrace diverse cultural and lifestyle expression Improve the engagement with and dissemination of information to young people about how to get involved in opportunities provided by Council Facilitate city-wide opportunities for young people to gather, learn about and celebrate cultural diversity Increase youth-targeted promotion of cultural experiences through online and social media channels Increase the presence of art created by young people and of interest to young people in public places and spaces Increase the amount of public information to educate people about places/sites of significance across the city



OUTCOME GOVERNANCE

The needs of young people are incorporated into planning of Council facilities and services.
Young people feel represented by Council activities.
Young people participate in Council decision-making.

ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
15. Deliver 11 meetings of Youth Council annually	Satisfaction with belonging in the community (Australian Liveability Census)	15. Social and community planning	Increase the capacity of Council to upgrade and better maintain public toilets, footpaths, roadways, median and nature strips etc.
16. Develop and deliver an annual workplan with Youth council	Percentage of participants reporting positive behaviour change following participation in programs delivered by Council (Council)	16. Social and community planning	Ensure toilet paper supplied in public toilets is better quality and adequately supplied
17. Facilitate opportunities for Council staff to consult with members of Youth Council		17. Social and community planning	Improve the promotion of natural area sites that young people can access and attend
18. Promote Youth Council twice a year to managers so they are aware they are available to consult		18. Social and community planning	Build a large indoor venue to host events and entertainment so people don't have to travel outside area
19. Facilitate opportunities for external organisations to consult with members of Youth Council		19. Social and community planning/Community Activities Lake Macquarie	Advocate for the replacement of the roundabout with traffic lights at the intersection of Hillsborough and Macquarie Rd, Warners Bay
20. Improve the engagement with and dissemination of information to young people about how to get involved in opportunities provided by Council		20. Social and community planning/Community Activities Lake Macquarie	Increase seating and shelter at public skateboarding facilities. Specifically Bahloo Reserve and Bolton Point Skate Park.

"Increase access to low or no-cost recreation facilities (i.e. gyms, exercise equipment, sporting fields)"

– GLENDALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



