

Supporting our young citizens in realising their full potential

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years and Youth Strategy 2015-18: Summary



About this document

Surf Coast Shire Council's Early Years and Youth Strategy 2015-18 focuses on achieving better outcomes for children and young people by guiding our work over the next three years across the key areas of:

- planning and delivering services to support young citizens' wellbeing and development needs (ie physical, intellectual, social) during their formative years
- advocating to ensure these needs are considered at local, state and national levels, and
- providing infrastructure to enable them to access and engage in activities focused on supporting them in connecting with others and realising their full potential.

This summary will introduce you to the strategy's key points. You can access the complete document at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au or by contacting Customer Services (P. 5261 0600 E. info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

Themes and principles provide the foundation

The strategy's goals and objectives are built around five key themes identified by the desktop research and confirmed by the community during the consultation phase. These are:

- Access
- Knowledge
- Connection
- Quality frameworks, and
- Change.

The strategy is also underpinned by the following guiding principles based on the concept of Surf Coast Shire as an 'all ages friendly community':

1. Accessible and inclusive built and natural environments, services and facilities, information, events and activities.
2. Safe and supportive environments and open spaces.

3. Responsive programs, services and policies, taking into account the specific needs of each life stage from birth to old age.
4. Providing opportunities to participate, socialise and have fun in the community.
5. Respect and dignity including the right to express opinions and contribute to decision-making.
6. Diversity as characterised by our communities' diverse attributes and needs requiring targeted approaches.
7. Holistic in working together and with others to create an 'all ages friendly community'.

Together the themes and principles provide the foundation for the strategy's goals and objectives, and their implementation via its actions and outcomes.



Our roadmap

We are committed to working together, with our community, our partners and others to support Surf Coast Shire's young citizens in realising their full potential.

Goal 1 ACCESS

We make it easy for young citizens and their families to access what they need.

Objectives

- 1.1 Continue to develop and promote service access for early year's key developmental stages focusing on supporting parents to meet their children's wellbeing and development needs.
- 1.2 Pursue integrated service/information provision and intergenerational activities and programs.
- 1.3 Facilitate the ability of young citizens to access information, making it easier for them to get what they need.
- 1.4 Ensure Council's planning, community infrastructure and advocacy programs provide for young citizens' access needs.

We will know we have succeeded when we see:

- effective partnerships and integrated service delivery across service providers
- intergenerational activities across the early years, youth and older age groups
- communication and engagement options aimed at young citizens embedded in the organisation, and
- young citizens and their family's needs represented in Council's advocacy efforts.

Goal 2 KNOWLEDGE

We build and use knowledge to respond to the needs of young citizens and their families.

Objectives

- 2.1 Maximise use of available data to better inform services/program planning and delivery.
- 2.2 Continue to strengthen our interagency partnerships for early years and youth sectors to build industry knowledge, improve best practice and inform funding availability.
- 2.3 Consult and engage with children, the wider community and internal stakeholders to ensure the needs of young citizens and their families are reflected in Council's services and program planning.
- 2.4 Support services and program planning and delivery on an ongoing basis.

We will know we have succeeded when we see:

- children's voices represented in broader communication and engagement processes
- interagency partnership approaches to funding and service planning
- increased use of data to inform service development, and
- regular reports and evaluation of projects, programs and services.

Goal 3

CONNECTION:

We facilitate connections between young citizens, their families and the Surf Coast community.

Objectives

- 3.1 Explore existing and new avenues within current services and programs for promoting community connections, including for people new to the area.
- 3.2 Actively work with local communities to facilitate initiatives encouraging connection/participation, including opportunities for intergenerational relationships.
- 3.3 Investigate ways of facilitating connections for people who are hard-to-reach/overlooked.
- 3.4 Continue to advocate ensuring all services and infrastructure support community connection.

We will know we have succeeded when we see:

- increased community participation in early years and youth activities
- increased opportunities for intergenerational activities, and
- improved engagement with hard-to-reach groups.

Goal 5

CHANGE

We plan ahead to enable our services and programs to adapt to change.

Objectives

- 5.1 Build organisational capacity to adapt to ongoing policy and sector reforms through effective planning.
- 5.3 Build organisational capacity to stay abreast of and respond to population growth, demographic and other significant changes (eg political, economic, social, technological).
- 5.2 Advocate on our community's behalf to ensure critical gaps in services/program provision and community infrastructure are adequately addressed.

Goal 4

QUALITY FRAMEWORKS:

Our direct services and programs meet quality framework standards.

Objectives

- 4.1 Ensure direct services and programs meet legislative requirements, funding agreement terms, best practice frameworks and industry standards.
- 4.2 Continue to improve governance arrangements, including regular reporting to Council, funding bodies and clients/community.

We will know we have succeeded when we see:

- service improvement plans in place and regularly monitored
- assessment ratings achieved, and
- increased reporting to Council and the community on program and service achievements.

We will know we have succeeded when we see:

- service planning and development in response to demographic changes
- service reviews completed and informing future needs and opportunities for early years and youth, and
- successful advocacy for services, infrastructure and programs for our growing community.

The need for a new strategy

The Council Plan 2013-17 identifies reviewing our existing Early Years Plan (adopted in 2009) as critical to building quality services, long-term community partnerships, healthy, safe environments, and accessible, well-maintained infrastructure.

At the same time, the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17 aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all Surf Coast residents, including children and young people. The Accessible and Inclusive Surf Coast Shire Strategic Plan 2014-24 also focuses on making our shire more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

These key Council documents, along with the recent integration of the Early Years and Youth Development teams, provide a sound internal basis for developing a new strategy, incorporating early years and youth age groups from birth to 25.

Ongoing population growth and continuing reforms at State and Federal Government levels represent critical external catalysts. For example:

- children and young people currently comprise close to one-third (31.9%) of our total population, forecast to grow by 24 per cent and 20 per cent respectively between 2011 and 2018, and
- following the introduction of the National Quality Framework and other major reforms (eg changes to hours funded and staffing ratios), the implementation of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning recommendations and the ongoing roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme are expected to drive additional reforms across the early years sector.

Developing the strategy

The process of developing the strategy included:

- a three-pronged research approach, involving desktop research, demographic analysis and community consultation
- meetings with Early Years and Youth staff members to discuss key findings and determine strategic directions
- briefings with Council and the Executive Management Team to seek feedback on the draft strategy, and
- a public exhibition process to seek community feedback.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the strategy's development.

More information

The complete strategy is available at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au

Enquiries can be directed to our Aged and Family Services Department

P. 5261 0600 E. info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au

