

Gladstone Region Youth Council
2024 -2025 Action Plan





Acknowledgement of Country

Gladstone Regional Council would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Bailai, the Gurang, the Cooreng Cooreng and the Taribelang Bunda people.

We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Gladstone Regional Council is committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion and connectedness, acknowledging that our communities are richer when diversity is embraced.

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MESSAGE FROM THE 2023 YOUTH COUNCIL

The 2023 Youth Council have been actively involved in meetings, training workshops, and events to better their understanding of local issues, to actively represent young people in the region and to contribute positively to the community.

The Gladstone Region Youth Council (the Youth Council) acts as a formal Advisory Committee to Gladstone Regional Council (Council) on youth related matters within the region. The core function of the Youth Council is to:

- Provide the opportunity for young people to input into the public governance of their Region.
- Provide young people with exposure and personal development opportunities related to public governance and to strengthen youth leadership.
- To provide Council with a further opportunity to engage with young people in a structured and formal way.
- Involve young people in public activities that they may not have otherwise considered participating in.
- Seek the assistance of young people in engaging with their peers on community related issues
- Be a voice for young people on Council related matters and initiatives

With the inaugural Youth Summit being held last year, 2023 has seen an increased focus on what the Youth Council can do to create the conditions for young people in the Gladstone region to thrive and prosper. The Youth Council are actively advocating for more young people to be involved in their community and to stand up and be heard on youth matters.



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Gladstone Region Youth Council 2024 - 2025 Action Plan (Action Plan) is to provide direction on future activities to be undertaken by the Gladstone Region Youth Council (Youth Council) to help address key issues faced by young people in the region. These issues were previously identified at the Youth Summit held in September 2022 which provided a forum for young people aged 15 to 25 years, from across the Gladstone Region, to advocate for issues and matters concerning them.

The basis of this Action Plan has been formed from the [Gladstone Region 2022 Youth Summit Key Reflections Report](#) in addition to data obtained from the [2022 Mission Australia Youth Survey](#). Throughout the first half of 2023, the Youth Council have analysed this data further through participation in workshops and planning days and from this have developed 10 action plan items stemming from six key priority areas:

1. Environment (2)
2. Education (2)
3. Employment (2)
4. Equity & Discrimination (1)
5. Health (2)
6. Social Issues (1)

This Action Plan is intended to remain open to ongoing engagement and further feedback in order to continue to understand the needs of young people in the region.

PRIORITY AREAS

PRIORITY AREA	ACTIONS 2024/25
ENVIRONMENT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Champion a voice for young people on environmental issues 2. Increase awareness and education on environmental issues within a local context
EDUCATION 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Support disengaged and disadvantaged students 4. Assist and educate young people transitioning into adulthood
EMPLOYMENT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop employment training, support and mentorship for young people 6. Develop and support young entrepreneurs in the Gladstone Region
EQUITY & DISCRIMINATION 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Embrace unique gifts to promote kindness and inclusivity
HEALTH 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Reduce barriers for young people seeking mental health support 9. Improve access to timely and affordable health services for youth
SOCIAL ISSUES 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Activate local spaces across the region for young people by young people

ENVIRONMENT



The state of the environment is a significant concern for young people today and research shows those concerns are steadily increasing. In fact, the environment is the top concern among young people with a recent survey conducted by Mission Australia reporting that 51% of people identified the environment as the most important issue facing young people today compared with 38.0% of young people in 2021 and 29.8% in 2020 (Mission Australia, 2023). More than a quarter of respondents say they are 'very concerned' or 'extremely concerned' about the climate crisis, and 38% of those respondents say they experience high psychological distress (Mission Australia, 2023) or also known as 'eco-anxiety', a term used to explain the associated worry and despair surrounding climate change (Rennie 2023).

Young people in the Gladstone Region echoed these sentiments at the 2022 Youth Summit and from these concerns two actions have been identified:

- Champion a voice for young people on environmental issues
- Increase awareness and education on environmental issues within a local context

ACTION 1 - Champion a voice for young people on environmental issues

The Gladstone Region is an industrial hub situated amidst a pristine natural environment which includes the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef. Young people are concerned about the environment and are seeking further information to gain a better understanding of what to expect in the future and how it will impact them, with a particular focus on the impact of local industries, the transition to green energy, the conservation of our waterways, and the protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

PRIORITY AREA

Environment

OBJECTIVE

Champion a voice for young people on environmental issues

DESCRIPTION

Create opportunities for young people to connect and collaborate with industries and environmental organisations by liaising with environmental teams at council and major industries and through regular attendance at industry and environmental meetings

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Environment and Conservation, Communications

External - Gladstone Region Industries, Environmental Agencies

OUTCOMES

- Young people are actively involved in decision making on environmental issues that affect them
- Young people feel confident and hopeful for the future of their local environment

ACTION 2 - Increase awareness on environmental issues within a local context

Gladstone's youth are seeking greater awareness and education on environmental issues in their area, and they are wanting to engage in behaviours and actions that reduce negative environmental impact. By connecting and working with environmental organisations and creating opportunities to participate, community leadership of young people can be developed in areas of environmental awareness and protection.

Young people in the region have also expressed a strong desire to work together with traditional owners of the land to help understand, care for, and respect the land and waterways. The Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda nations are the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters of the Gladstone Region.

PRIORITY AREA

Environment

OBJECTIVE

Increase awareness on environmental issues within a local context

DESCRIPTION

Connect with local industries, First Nations traditional owners and organisations to promote environmental awareness and encourage volunteering in activities such as Ecofest, Clean Up Australia, Waste Education and Beach Clean-up days

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Communications, Environment and Conservation

External - First National Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Taribelang Bunda (FNBGGTB) People, Australian Conservation Volunteers, Environmental Agencies, Tangaro Blue, Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership

OUTCOMES

- Young people are aware of key environmental issues in the local area
- Increased opportunities for young people in environmental activities and volunteering
- Young people understand First Nation's People traditional practices and culture

EDUCATION



Education plays an important role in the development of young people, however, for some going to school particularly in traditional learning environments, can be a struggle. Not only do some students face difficulties coping with schoolwork, but also, they are often subjected to judgement from others for being different. As we increasingly recognise the strength of diversity in our community so too should our learning environment reflect the unique needs of learners. Young people in the region have recognised a need for more support for diverse learners or disengaged youth.

For young people, the transition to adult life can be a daunting and anxious time. Life skills training has been gaining more attention in recent years and young people in Gladstone are no exception, recognising a need for suitable training and support to manage this important milestone. Young people have told us that while at school and living at home there are many support systems in place, however as they journey into adulthood a different type of knowledge and support is required. Life skills training can assist with helping to manage emotions, mental and physical health, finances, relationships, and study or employment.

This action plan will aim to:

- Support disengaged and disadvantaged students encouraging diverse learning pathways
- Assist and educate young people transitioning into adulthood

ACTION 3 - Support disengaged and disadvantaged students

Everybody has the right to an education free from judgment and to learn in their own unique ways and young people in the region have recognised a need to support diverse learners or disengaged youth by providing support tailored to their needs.

This action aims to raise awareness and support for students from diverse backgrounds, including but not limited to those with mental health needs, students in out-of-home care, culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, rural and remote students, gifted and talented students, and LGBTIQ+ students.

PRIORITY AREA

Education

OBJECTIVE

Support disengaged and disadvantaged students encouraging diverse learning options

DESCRIPTION

Raise awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by disengaged and or disadvantaged youth by liaising with and supporting schools and youth service providers

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Neighbourhood Centre
External - Schools, Smith Family, Headspace, Roseberry Queensland, CQ Youth Engagement Service (Dept of Education)

OUTCOMES

- Diverse learning pathways and a culture of acceptance are encouraged through awareness and education
- Students are engaged in inclusive education, actively participating in learning alongside their peers in an inclusive learning environment

ACTION 4 - Assist and educate young people transitioning into adulthood

Being equipped with adequate life skills can help a person successfully navigate the ups and downs of everyday life when becoming an adult. While there is no one size fits all solution, this strategy aims to connect and equip young people with the necessary supports, knowledge, and training in life skills to help transition to adult life, full time employment and/ or tertiary study, and create a confident, capable, and positive younger generation of citizens. Life skills can help with problem solving and decision making while improving self-esteem and positive self-image in young people.

PRIORITY AREA

Education

OBJECTIVE

Assist and educate young people transitioning into adulthood

DESCRIPTION

Facilitate opportunities for life skills training and create awareness of resources and community supports available for young people such as Life skills Training, Tenancy Skills training, and financial literacy courses

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Neighbourhood Centre, Biosecurity and Environmental Health

External - Youth service providers, The Salvation Army, Roseberry Queensland, Headspace, COGSY - Community of Gladstone Supporting Youth

OUTCOMES

- Young people are confident and independent in transitioning to adult life to become active members of the community
- Young people are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to be confident, and independent while transitioning into the adult world

EMPLOYMENT



There is enormous pressure on young people today to select a career pathway from an early age. While some are already confident in selecting their career path for others this can be a tricky and stressful time to navigate. Young people have told us that there exist expectations that they should have a clear vision of their future which can place pressure on them to make big decisions they may not be ready for.

The employment landscape is changing for young people, particularly post-Covid. This has brought many challenges for young people but has also provided alternative options for employment such as youth entrepreneurship through e-commerce and pop-up businesses. These non-traditional employment options provide individuals and communities with increased benefits while fostering youth entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable economic development.

This action plan endeavours to alleviate the pressures placed on young people, to provide professional and emotional support, and to encourage alternate employment opportunities by:

- Provide employment training, support, and mentorship opportunities
- Develop and support young entrepreneurs and innovators

ACTION 5 - Develop employment training, support, and mentorship opportunities

There are several challenges to gaining sustainable employment for young people today. In Australia, research shows that '80% of young people struggle to find or keep jobs, 90% of those living in regional or remote areas said there was not enough opportunities to work in the area where they live, and 53% said they don't believe what they learned at school helped them find the job they want.' (YMCA 2021).

This action plan aims to ensure that young people are well connected, confident, and informed, and have appropriate professional and personal support to realistically manage their employment and career aspirations.

PRIORITY AREA

Employment

OBJECTIVE

Develop employment training, support, and mentorship opportunities for young people

DESCRIPTION

Promote mentorship opportunities and employment training and support for young jobseekers by collaborating with Career Mentoring and Young Mentors program providers

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Learning and Development, People Services

External - Apprentice and Trainees Queensland, Headspace Career Mentoring

OUTCOMES

- Young people are engaged in sustainable employment, training or volunteering with improve skills and confidence in the local region
- Young jobseekers are informed of opportunities for learning and career options and can make informed decisions about future prospects

ACTION 6 - Develop and support young entrepreneurs and innovators

With the future of work rapidly changing especially post-Covid, it has become apparent that traditional pathways to employment may not always work for everyone. Recently, self-employment has become an attractive option for young people seeking alternative career pathways, flexibility, work life balance, power to make their own decisions and opportunities to work on projects that they are passionate about. Alternative employment options can assist young people in gaining skills in communication, management and financial literacy as well as provide opportunities to create and be innovative. The benefits to the community include creating new businesses and economic growth while reducing the impact of unemployment.

PRIORITY AREA

Employment

OBJECTIVE

Develop and support young entrepreneurs and innovators in the Gladstone Region

DESCRIPTION

Connect young people with funding options to support entrepreneurship including State and Federal Funding options including the Young Starters Fund as well as promote development opportunities via the Young Entrepreneurs Summit and YEP Careers programs

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council

External - Queensland Government, Advance Queensland, Youth Career support agencies, Turtle Tank, Start Up Gladstone

OUTCOMES

- Young entrepreneurs are offered opportunities for funding, business growth and development
- Young entrepreneurs are equipped with skills and confidence to engage in sustainable self-employment practices

EQUITY AND DISCRIMINATION



Equity and discrimination issues are a significant area of concern among young people with 35% of young Australians identifying equity and discrimination as one of the most important issues in Australia (Mission Australia 2022). While there are laws to protect people against harassment, bullying and or discrimination, 89% of Australians aged 13-17 have experienced racism or have seen it happen to someone else (Australian Human Rights Commission 2023).

Young people may be discriminated based on their age, disability, race, sex, intersex status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or education level. Findings from the Youth Summit suggest that acts of discrimination, harassment and bullying are often conducted online.

This action item will focus on and encourage the use of acts of kindness and gratitude to turn the tide on the consistent negative wave of online messaging that young people are faced with on social media by:

- Encouraging young people to celebrate and embrace everyone's unique gifts to promote kindness and inclusivity

Action 7 - Embrace unique gifts to promote kindness and inclusivity

This action plan item focuses on tackling discrimination, harassment and bullying by focusing on taking proactive positive steps in creating a safe and inclusive youth community and encouraging more young people to engage in acts of kindness and inclusivity. By using social media as a positive tool in young people lives rather than perpetuating its use as a vehicle of negativity, acts of kindness and gratitude can work towards improving the messages and dialogue being received by young people in their everyday lives. This action also will focus on young people recognising individualism as a strength and something to be proud of, helping to support other young people and to foster a stronger and resilient youth community.

PRIORITY AREA

Equity and Discrimination

OBJECTIVE

Embrace unique gifts to promote kindness and inclusivity

DESCRIPTION

Utilise social media tools to focus on positive messaging to young people from young people and create activities that promote kindness and inclusion to raise awareness of support systems available for young people who may be discriminated against, harassed or bullied

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Brand and Communications

External - Schools, Youth Groups, Rainbow on the Reef, PCYC

OUTCOMES

- Young people are promoting kindness, inclusivity and gratitude among the community
- Social media is effectively used as a tool to advocate for kindness and inclusivity among young people

HEALTH



Leading an active and healthy life is important for everyone. For young people, it can affect how well they do at school, work, their relationships and their overall quality of life. Increasingly, mental health is a significant concern with 53.4% of young Australians requiring mental health supports (Mission Australia 2022). However, many young people are not seeking the help they need due to current stigma or shame associated with mental health issues.

Maintaining physical health is also a major concern among young people. Specifically, accessing affordable and timely health services in the region is a challenge, with many young people having to travel for services not available in the Gladstone region, or experiencing long waiting times and expensive fees. Young people have expressed concerns for not only themselves but also for family members in need of care.

This action plan item aims to:

- Reduce barriers for young people seeking mental health support
- Improve access to timely and affordable health services for young people

Action 8 - Reduce barriers for young people seeking mental health support

Despite a general understanding that mental health is important, many young people are not seeking the help they need due to shame and stigma surrounding mental health. According to young people in the Gladstone region, to improve this outcome young people need to be talking to other young people about mental health to help break down those barriers to people seeking support.

This action aims to promote increased mental wellbeing in young people by creating awareness about supporting themselves and others in need and by creating opportunities for young people to come together to share experiences freely and discuss issues and stigmas surrounding mental health for young people.

PRIORITY AREA

Health

OBJECTIVE

Reduce barriers for young people seeking mental health support

DESCRIPTION

Promote Mental Health awareness and encourage open dialogue and support among young people through youth led community events and activities that also work toward linking young people to mental health services providers and organisations

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council

External - Headspace, CQ Health Connect, Queensland Mental Health Commission, Queensland Mental Health Week, Gladstone Women's Health

OUTCOMES

- Create increased awareness of mental health issues and break down the stigma surrounding mental health for young people
- Provide opportunities for young people to engage in services provided and support peers on mental health issues

Action 9 - Support initiatives for timely and affordable health services

Young people in the region have identified several barriers to accessing health services. Some of these barriers are much the same as what the general population faces, however, young people have the added barriers of a lack of life experience and lower income that leads to many young people avoid going to the GP and consequently not receive the help they need. Other areas of concern that have been highlighted are a lack of local specialist services and having to travel to other cities to get what they need, a lack of transport and resulting out of pocket expenses, confidentiality, and privacy of information, as well as not feeling confident or knowing what to expect when accessing health services or speaking to health professionals.

PRIORITY AREA

Health

OBJECTIVE

Improve access to timely and affordable health services for young people

DESCRIPTION

Advocate on behalf of young people to address barriers to accessing health services to improve awareness and connection for young people and current health service available in the region

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council

External - Headspace, Roseberry Queensland, CQ Health Connect, Queensland Hospital and Health Service

OUTCOMES

- Enhance knowledge and awareness of service and service providers in the region
- Provide tools and resources for young people to access health care services
- Increase confidence and participation among young people in to engage with service providers

SOCIAL ISSUES



The Gladstone region boasts a warm and sunny climate year-round with beautiful spaces both natural and manmade to spend our time. At the Youth Summit, young people shared that they want more places, activities and events that they can call their own. While our region has numerous parks and spaces for young kids or families and older adults, young people in the 15 to 24-year age bracket are not often catered for. Young people want to see more spaces they can go that are welcoming and inclusive, designed by young people for young people so that they can feel like a part of the community.

'By actively involving young people in the placemaking process, communities can create public spaces that reflect the diversity and dynamic nature of the population, making them more vibrant and relevant to the needs of the community as a whole'
(Millard 2015)

This action plan aims to:

1. Activate local spaces across the region for young people by young people

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Action 10 - Activate local spaces in the region for young people by young people

Young people in the Gladstone Region want to see more spaces that are tailored for young people where they can enjoy themselves and feel safe. These action items aim to use existing space in the region and make them more appealing of for young people as well as seek the views and input of young people to design new and exciting spaces and events for young people. These could be structured events such as concerts or social gatherings or places people can go at whatever time of the day and feel comfortable. Seeking the input of young people is important to make sure that these places are created to meet the needs of the users.

PRIORITY AREA

Social Issues

OBJECTIVE

Activate local spaces in the region for young people by young people

DESCRIPTION

Encourage young people to participate in community events, workshops, and meetings to option to co design local placemaking initiatives in the Gladstone Region

STAKEHOLDERS

Internal - Community Development, Youth Council, Community Events, Neighbourhood Centre, Gladstone Entertainment and Convention Centre, Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum

External - Gladstone Festivals and Events, GAPDL, PCYC, Town Team Movement

OUTCOMES

- Young people use and enjoy public areas tailored to their requirements
- Young people are invested in their community with a strong sense of connection and pride
- Placemaking practices effectively use existing community spaces in sustainable ways

NEXT STEPS

The Youth Council, with the support of the Community Partnerships team, will begin to initiate the action items from 2024. The outcomes of the action plan will be evaluated throughout 2024 and an Action Plan Report Card will be produced at the end of 2025 to measure progress.

The Youth Council will continue to advocate on behalf of young people, actively engage with young people and the broader community and collaborate with others to create awareness and opportunities to participate to build the confidence and capability of young people in the region.

Actions and priorities in this plan are aligned with the Gladstone Regional Council [Corporate Plan](#) goal of *Connecting Communities* and their [Community Development Strategy 2021 - 2026](#) to progress the following objectives:

- Partner with the community to deliver and support empowering capacity building programs.
- Partner and empower advisory groups, community organisations and individuals to develop initiatives that strengthen the region.
- Develop innovative engagement and communication techniques to ensure we are engaging with the community effectively.
- Engage and plan with your diverse communities to develop effective programs, plans, strategies, activities, and events.
- Develop plans that reflect Council's commitment to an inclusive community.

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