

# Thriving Futures: Sunshine Coast Youth Plan 2026-31



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### **Acknowledgements**

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and stakeholders involved in the  
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### **Reference document**

This document should  
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## **Traditional acknowledgement**

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country,  
home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the Traditional  
Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share.

We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual,  
social and economic significance. The Traditional Custodians' unique  
values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of  
our community.

We commit to working in partnership with the Traditional Custodians  
and the broader First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)  
communities to support self-determination through economic and  
community development.

Truth telling is a significant part of our journey. We are committed to  
better understanding the collective histories of the Sunshine Coast and  
the experiences of First Nations peoples. Legacy issues resulting from  
colonisation are still experienced by Traditional Custodians and First  
Nations peoples.

We recognise our shared history and will continue to work in partnership  
to provide a foundation for building a shared future with the Kabi Kabi  
peoples and the Jinibara peoples.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and  
acknowledge the important role First Nations peoples continue to play  
within the Sunshine Coast community.

Together, we are all stronger.



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# Message from the Mayor and Strong Community Portfolio Councillors

**Our Sunshine Coast is at its best when young people help shape decisions, when they feel they belong in every neighbourhood, and when they can see a bright future here. Thriving Futures: Sunshine Coast Youth Plan 2026-31 sets a shared direction for how we will listen, act and partner with young people so our region remains connected, liveable and thriving for everyone.**

Over the past year, we invited young people to speak up, and we sought to meet them where they are. They took part online, at the Youth Forum and at pop-up events across the region. More than 1,000 young people told us what matters most to them: from housing and the cost of living to transport, mental health, opportunities to connect and how we care for our environment. Their insights shaped the priorities and actions in this plan and will continue to guide our work into the future.

We also want to recognise the members of the 2025 Young Leaders Academy. Their leadership helped us reach hundreds of young people. They co-created and co-facilitated the Youth Forum, advised us on the best ways to engage their peers and spoke with young people across the region. Their contribution has been invaluable, and they have shown how youth leadership can produce real impact.

This Youth Plan does not claim to solve every challenge. Instead, it gives clear voice to the priorities and challenges being experienced by young people and sets achievable actions we can take together. It also introduces simple, meaningful ways for young people to contribute to the Sunshine Coast they want to see.

Thank you to every young person, parent, carer, teacher and youth worker who took part in the engagement process to create this plan. Together, we can build a Sunshine Coast where every young person belongs, is heard, and has opportunities to learn, work, contribute and thrive.



## Message from young leaders



# Message from young leaders

**Being part of the Young Leaders Academy in 2025 has been an incredible experience. We have been involved in workshops, forums and conversations that helped shape the Youth Plan. We have had the chance to listen to young people from across the Sunshine Coast and hear directly about their priorities, their challenges and their hopes for the future. It has shown me just how powerful young voices can be when they are given the space to be heard.**

It has been inspiring to be surrounded by other young leaders who care deeply about our community. Together, we explored issues like accessibility, mental health, employment, housing, transport, safety and inclusion. I got to contribute my perspectives as a young person with lived experience of disability into the mix too, and to make sure all voices were represented. Being part of the process has made me feel valued, empowered and hopeful.

The Youth Plan is important because it gives Council a clear direction on what matters most to young people and how to act on it. It's not just a document, it's a promise to keep listening and to drive real change for our generation and the ones that come after us. We're proud to have played a part in building this vision and to stand alongside other young leaders in shaping a brighter, more inclusive future for the Sunshine Coast.

**Fin, representing members of the Young Leaders Academy 2025**

# 1. About the Youth Plan



# 1. About the Youth Plan

The Sunshine Coast has a large and growing community of young people who are vital contributors to the region. Young people enjoy many opportunities here but also face challenges like affordability and mental health. We want to work together to help young people achieve their goals. Based on input from young people, this Youth Plan includes actions that will help young people thrive.

## 1.1 Introduction

The Sunshine Coast is home to over 50,000 young people aged 12-24 years – a vibrant and diverse group that contributes significantly to the social, cultural and economic fabric of our region. By 2041, this number is expected to grow by approximately 20,000 people, underscoring the importance of planning for a future that supports young people to thrive.

Young people are at the heart of our community. They are students, workers, carers, volunteers, artists, athletes and entrepreneurs. They bring energy, creativity and innovation to our region. They are also navigating a rapidly changing world – one shaped by global challenges, technological disruption, and shifting social and economic landscapes.

The Sunshine Coast offers young people a range of opportunities, including a great lifestyle, high-quality schools and tertiary education options, good facilities and services, diverse employment opportunities, and access to our amazing natural environment. These are the foundations of a region where young people can achieve their goals.

But young people face real challenges. Through extensive engagement, young people shared their stress and anxiety, the struggle to be heard and taken seriously, and barriers related to affordability, transport, education and employment. Young people shared their hopes for a more inclusive, connected and supportive community – one where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.

Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, they are active contributors to our communities today. They are current leaders, innovators, creators and change-makers. Their voices, experiences and aspirations must shape current decision-making, now and for the future.

As a Council and community, improving opportunities for young people is a priority. We all want young people to feel a strong sense of belonging, be respected and included, and see a future for themselves here on the Sunshine Coast. We want young people to know they do not need to leave the region to achieve their goals in life. Instead, we will work together to create a region where young people can thrive.

## We belong here



### 1.1.1 Youth Plan

**This Youth Plan helps to prioritise actions that Council, together with young people and community partners, will take to improve the lives of young people. These actions will be implemented over the next five years to 2031.**

The actions are grouped into three priority areas: we belong here, we are valued and we have opportunities.

This plan builds on Council's commitment to all residents as outlined in the Sunshine Coast Community Strategy 2019–41 and its goal to contribute to a strong Sunshine Coast community.

Council and the community will go about this work utilising the principles and methods for action outlined in the Community Strategy:

#### Principles



Local



Collaborative



Evidenced



Equitable



Outcome-focused.

#### Methods



Encourage community involvement



Grow collective capacity



Partner and collaborate



Invest in community-led initiatives



Advocate together.

The Youth Plan also aligns with broader frameworks such as the Young Queenslanders Strategy 2024–26 and the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030.

Through implementation of the plan, Council aims to improve opportunities for young people to participate in our community. Council is committed to investing in our young people and recognising the value of their contributions in shaping our region's future.

## We are valued



## We have opportunities



## 1.2 How the plan was developed

Throughout 2025, engagement with young people was undertaken to shape the priorities and actions of the Youth Plan.

The lived experience of young people is valued by Council and has been the primary input to the development of this plan. Council has endeavoured to ensure that the experiences, knowledge and views of young people have been heard, understood and reflected in this plan.

### 1.2.1 Young Leaders Academy

The Young Leaders Academy is a youth development program facilitated by Council that focuses on exploring the principles of participatory leadership. This form of leadership prioritises collaboration, shared responsibility and valuing diverse perspectives.

In 2025, a group of eight young people were selected to be involved in the Young Leaders Academy. These young people were instrumental in supporting development of the Youth Plan. They advised Council on ways to engage young people in the development of the plan and co-created and co-hosted a youth forum. They also spoke with many young residents of the region to gather their input.

In the first six months of 2025, the Young Leaders attended eight meetings, the Youth Forum, and multiple engagement activities. They provided ongoing involvement throughout 2025 to help shape the plan. This was a significant commitment, especially when combined with studying, working and other personal responsibilities.

### 1.2.2 Community engagement

The whole Sunshine Coast community was invited to share their input on the priorities and challenges facing young people, as well as ideas for Council and community-led actions. Special efforts were made to encourage young people to participate in this engagement.

This resulted in up to **1,100** young residents of the Sunshine Coast providing input into the project.

A further 35 adults who work with young people completed a youth-services sector survey to provide their views on the needs of young people.

### Youth Forum

Around **85** young people participated in the Youth Forum in May 2025.

The day provided young people with an opportunity to connect and outline their vision for the future of the Sunshine Coast for young people. They also identified challenges facing young people, and potential actions that could improve the lives of young people over the next five years.

They also participated in an activity to share what personal actions they could take, individually or with others, to help make a difference.

The feedback from young people who participated in the youth forum was overwhelmingly positive.

### Online survey and pop-up activities

Input was also gathered through:

- An online survey which gathered **582** responses from young people
- Face-to-face discussions with **450** young residents at **12** engagement pop-up events within their local communities.

### 1.2.3 Feedback on draft Youth Plan

Based on community input and discussion with Council team members, a draft plan was developed. Young people and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the draft plan before it was finalised. Over 100 residents of the Sunshine Coast, primarily young people, provided feedback on the draft plan.

Actions in the plan were subsequently updated based on the feedback received.

## 1.3 Measuring impact

Council will implement each action in this action plan between 2026 and 2031. The actions have been spread out during this period to ensure there is capacity and budget within Council to achieve the desired outcomes.

Council will review the action plan halfway through its implementation. Reporting of achievements and impacts of the action plan will be monitored through the existing Community Strategy evaluation and reporting framework.

## 2. Young people on the Sunshine Coast



## 2. Young people on the Sunshine Coast

### 2.1 Youth snapshot



50,770 young people live on the Sunshine Coast, 14.8% of our total population.



The number of young people is expected to grow by around 20,000 people to 2041.



2,198 young people are First Nations people (4.3% of young people).



6,291 young people were born overseas (12.4% of young people).



The top five overseas countries of birth are England (1,763 people), New Zealand (1,311 people), South Africa (562 people), India (274 people) and the USA (240 people).



2,215 young people speak a language other than English at home (4.4% of young people).



An estimated 179 young people are experiencing homelessness and a further 139 are only marginally housed. These are low rates of homelessness compared to Queensland (35/10,000 population, compared to 57/10,000 for Queensland).



1,967 young people are experiencing a severe disability (3.9% of young people).



24,481 young people aged 15-24 years are working, while 2,396 young people are looking for work. This equates to a youth unemployment rate of 8.9%.



32,433 young people aged 15-24 years are engaged in employment, education and/or training (86.8% of young people). This compares to 78.2% for the total population aged 15-64 years.



13.2% of young people aged 15-24 years volunteered in the previous 12 months, compared to 15.7% of total Sunshine Coast residents.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2021.

## 2.2 Youth views

Measures of a strong community:

- 84% of young people agreed they have strong connections with friends and family
- 61% feel mentally healthy
- 61% feel optimistic about their future on the Sunshine Coast
- 52% think the Sunshine Coast is safe for young people
- 49% feel part of their local community
- 46% agree that social media supports their health and wellbeing
- 40% agree residents of the Sunshine Coast respect young people
- 38% feel young people can have a say on community issues important to them
- 22% agree that accommodation is available and affordable.

What makes the Sunshine Coast a great place to live?

- Friends and family (73%)
- Access to the natural environment (66%)
- Sporting facilities, clubs and activities (50%)
- Relaxed lifestyle (49%)
- Access to health services (49%)
- Easy to get around (48%)
- Education opportunities (47%)
- Safe neighbourhoods (45%).

What are the three most important issues facing young people?

- Mental health (160 responses)
- Safety including youth crime (115 responses)
- Employment concerns (105 responses)
- Cost of living (100 responses)
- Education issues (95 responses).

What needs to change to help young people thrive on the Sunshine Coast?

- Availability and affordability of housing (82%)
- Improved crime and safety (57%)
- Drug and alcohol issues (57%)
- More things to do, activities and events (55%)
- More youth friendly spaces and places (52%)
- More job opportunities (52%)
- Better mental health outcomes (50%).

In ten years, do you want to be living on the Sunshine Coast or elsewhere?

- 40% of young people said they wanted to live somewhere other than the Sunshine Coast in ten years' time.
- A fair proportion of these young people just wanted to try living somewhere else.
- Others wanted to leave to access:
  - More education options
  - More career opportunities
  - Lower cost of living and housing
  - Better public transport
  - A more vibrant community – more things to do, diversity and progressive culture.

Source: Youth Survey 2025, n=582.

## Youth voices:

### What young people like about living here:



"I like living here because there is great access to health services, and there are lots of career opportunities that are easily accessible. Most of the neighbourhoods feel safe as well which I love. I also like living here because of the people." (12-17 years, girl, central)



"I like living here because of the nice community and my supportive friends, and I like the beaches and the coastal pathway." (12-17 years, boy, south)



"I like living on the Sunshine Coast because it is a very safe and accepting area with great community and activities." (12-17 years, boy, west)



"I like the strong sense of community, the natural beauty, and the balance between lifestyle and opportunity. It's a place where you can build a meaningful life close to the ocean, the hinterland, and people who genuinely care." (18-24 years, woman, south)



"The Sunshine Coast is growing and changing, and I'm interested to see how it will change. Also, I have grown up here, it's home." (18-24 years, man, north)



"I like the Sunshine Coast because of the quiet and close communities who look out for each other and trust each other, and the beautiful environment." (12-17 years, boy, west)

### Challenges facing young people:



"Rent and home prices are rising so fast that many young people are being priced out of the area we grew up in. It's making independence and long-term stability really difficult." (18-24 years, woman, north)



"A lot of us struggle with stress, anxiety, or just feeling overwhelmed." (12-17 years, girl, central)



"Things can feel a bit limited here, especially for young people who want to be part of something fast-paced or creative. Public transport isn't great, and sometimes it feels like everything closes early or there's not much going on." (12-17, boy, north)



"I'm struggling to get hired for a first job as everywhere is either not looking for staff or only want experienced people." (12-17 years, girl, south)



"It's challenging to choose a career that best suits my interests after school." (12-17 years, boy, central)

Source: Youth Survey 2025, n=582.





Differences between young people who live on the coast versus the hinterland:

- Young people who live in the hinterland are more likely to agree they feel part of their local community.
- Young people who live on the coast are more likely to want more opportunities to meet and make friends.
- Young people who live on the coast are more likely to agree that valued characteristics of the region include safe neighbourhoods, health services, and sporting facilities, clubs and activities.
- Young people who live on the coast are more likely to agree they feel physically healthy.



Differences between young people with different genders:

- Girls and women are more likely to want action to improve safety and reduce discrimination and bullying.
- Boys and men are more likely to agree there are lots of things to do on the Sunshine Coast.
- Boys and men are more likely to agree that they feel mentally healthy, that residents of the Sunshine Coast respect young people, that they can have their say on important community issues, that there are good job opportunities available to them and that accommodation is available and affordable.

Note: There were 17 responses from young people who had a gender other than girl, woman, boy or man. Differences for this group could not be outlined given this number of responses.

Source: Youth Survey 2025, n=582.



Youth voices at the Youth Forum and pop-ups:

- More opportunities for connection including welcoming places and spaces and things to do with other young people.
- Rising cost of living including affordability of accommodation contributing to financial stress and uncertainty.
- Mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, self-esteem and other challenges.
- Feeling unsafe in neighbourhoods and online, as well as bullying and perceptions of youth crime.
- Lack of learning and employment options.
- Difficulty getting around particularly public transport access.
- Environmental impacts particularly pollution, habitat loss, urban sprawl and climate change.
- Not feeling heard, included or valued.

### 3. Action Plan

Council and our community are already doing a lot to support inclusion and improve opportunities for young people. This plan seeks to recognise that work and extend upon this impact by focusing on new actions to implement over the next five years.

Three priority areas have been identified based on the outcomes we want to see for young people:

- We belong here.
- We are valued.
- We have opportunities.



Theme 1.  
We belong here





## Theme 1. We belong here

### Michael's story:

My name is Michael, and I have lived around the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay regions for my whole life (closing in on 20 years). I have grown attached to the different communities within the region. I love seeing the oceans from the edge of our country and one day, I dream of venturing past it.

For most of my childhood I resided in the Redcliffe area and for a while I felt like I belonged there, until one day, I left home due to some domestic issues. I lived in an abandoned car for a long time to maintain my health. Since I've moved to the Sunshine Coast, I have seen what strong communities can look like, and I will continue to give what I can to make them better.

To me, people feel a sense of belonging when they are not being judged based on their outer appearance, or religion or sexuality, but they are welcome no matter what. That goes for residents and visitors alike – everyone wants to feel that warmth of belonging.

We all need to treat people the way we would like to be treated, especially new people in our communities. I have felt the difference in this approach. We should choose to make the experience of others as good as our own. Everyone deserves to feel included, respected and connected.

If you feel like you belong in a community, help others feel the same.



## Vision

Our vision of belonging:



**Community connections:** Young people are connected and actively engaged in their communities through clubs, activities and volunteering that foster meaningful relationships.



**Healthy and happy:** Young people live healthy lives with access to physical and mental health services, positive role models and the knowledge to make informed healthy choices.



**Inclusive:** Young people are respected, valued and empowered regardless of background, identity, ability or beliefs.



**Safe:** Young people feel safe at home, school and work, and confident to move freely throughout their communities.



**Places and spaces:** Places and spaces around the Sunshine Coast are welcoming, safe and inclusive for young people and support connection.



**Sense of belonging:** Young people feel connected to a united and welcoming community, where diversity is celebrated and connection is nurtured.



**Vibrant lifestyle with things to do:** The Sunshine Coast offers a safe, affordable and lively mix of arts, music, sports, nightlife, and entertainment activities that keep young people engaged, inspired, and connected.

## Challenges

Current challenges for young people related to belonging:



**Mental health challenges:** Mental health challenges include anxiety and depression, as well as matters of self-confidence, body image, bullying and stress associated with balancing school and work pressures. Young people are also concerned about their financial futures, the changing climate and global affairs. Access to mental health services is also a challenge.



**Feeling unsafe:** Young people are concerned about their physical safety in their neighbourhoods, youth crime (and the impact this has on perceptions of young people), and online safety.



**More things to do:** Many young people feel the Sunshine Coast lacks affordable things to do including arts, music, sports and other entertainment options. Young people want more events, activities and safe places to hang out to feel connected and engaged.



**Opportunities for connection:** Young people feel there is a need for more opportunities to socialise face-to-face to build connections with other young residents around the Sunshine Coast based on similar interests, rather than be limited to making connections at school or university.



These vision statements and challenges were identified by young people of the Sunshine Coast in 2025.





## Youth voices

### “ I want a future where...

- young people connect with each other. We need life after 5pm, to address issues with social media and reduce bullying.
- there are opportunities to participate in arts and creativity, including music festivals, performances, carnivals and markets.
- the Sunshine Coast is an inclusive community that strives for safety and security within our regions – no matter race, sexuality or gender.
- all kids can walk outside and not worry about their safety. ”

## Alignment with Community Strategy

- 1.1 Health and wellbeing
- 2.1 Community places and spaces
- 3.1 Inclusion
- 4.1 Community connection and resilience
- 4.2 Community safety
- 5.1 Arts, heritage and First Nations culture

## Alignment with UNSDGs



## Examples of current Council activities

- Delivering the Healthy Sunshine Coast program which offers a range of low-cost or free activities focusing on physical and mental health to residents of all ages.
- Coordinating and promoting annual Youth Week activities.
- Delivering various events, activities and programs contributing to the vibrancy of our community.
- Delivering welcoming community places and spaces for young people, including libraries, community meeting spaces, parks and recreation facilities.
- Investing in community organisations that provide services, programs and events to young people through grants.
- Supporting the Youth Connect network made up of representatives from organisations that work with young people.



## New Council actions (2026-31)

**Action 1.1** Facilitate delivery of safe, inclusive and welcoming spaces for young people – which are available for dedicated use by young people and offer areas to socialise, things to do and youth services where appropriate.

**Action 1.2** Facilitate delivery of youth-led initiatives supporting connection and good mental health.

**Action 1.3** Investigate opportunities to deliver a Youth Portal in partnership with others, offering a listing of activities and things to do as well as information relevant to young people (careers, practical skills, health information).

**Action 1.4** Expand Healthy Sunshine Coast to offer youth-focused activities (subject to funding availability).

**Action 1.5** Deliver youth-focused programming, events and resources (through Council libraries, community and sporting venues, arts and heritage venues) to maximise participation of young people.

**Action 1.6** Promote and cultivate interest-based community-led social youth groups, with a focus on interests such as creative arts, board games, technology, gaming etc.

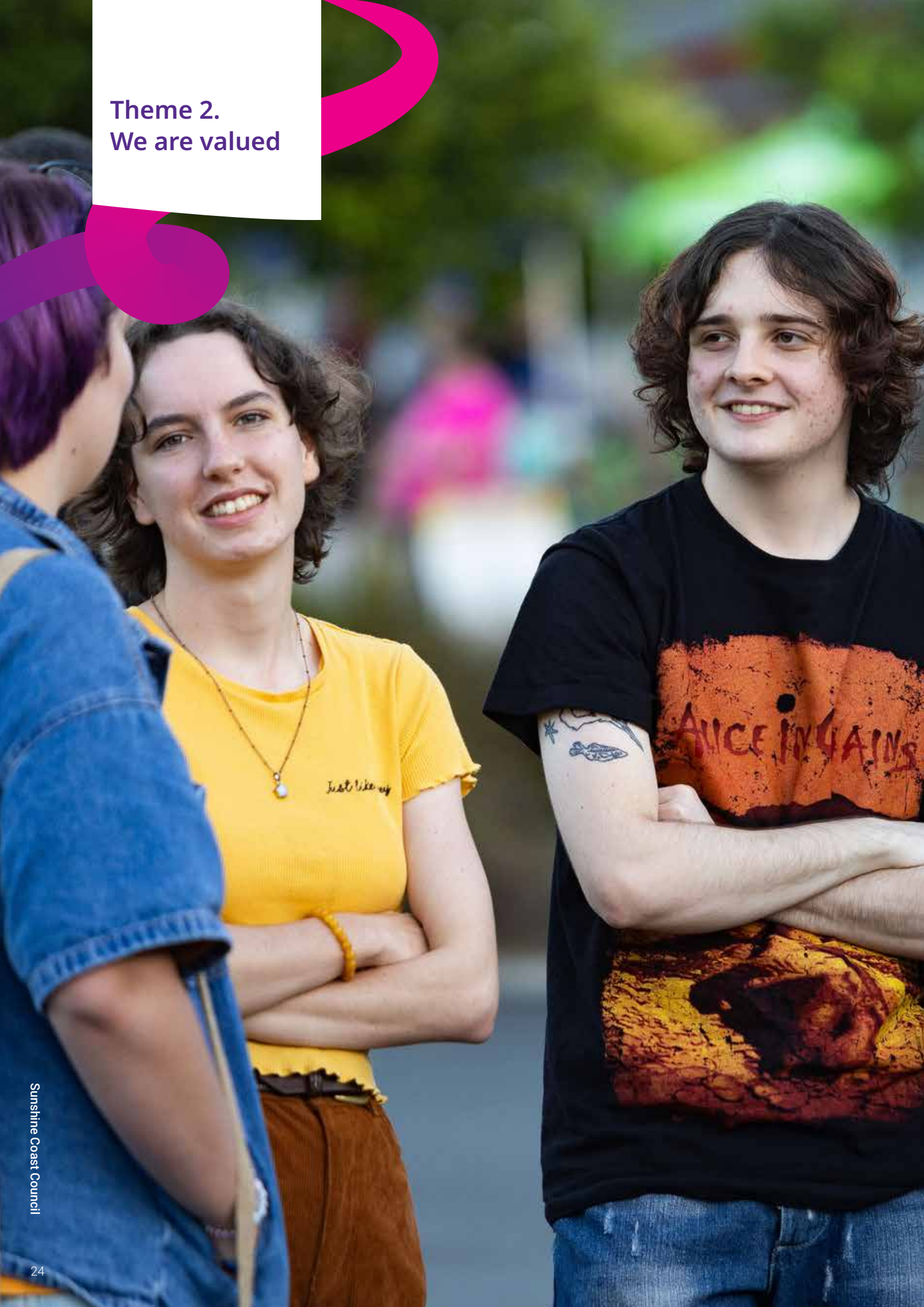
## Community actions

Ideas from young people about ways everyone can contribute to belonging:

- Create more student-led interest-based clubs at school.
- Listen and engage more deeply with friends and peers to see if they need support.
- Start a youth-led community garden and donate the produce.
- Start a social sports group or activity focused on new connections and having fun.
- Spread health information through my social media accounts.
- Share information and messages about respect for women.
- Be friendly and welcoming to people of other cultures by saying hello when I'm out and about.
- Hold a social activity at my local basketball court to encourage connection and promote healthy activities.
- Run a local music event for young people.



Theme 2.  
We are valued





## Theme 2. We are valued

### Samantha's story:

Hi, I'm Samantha, and I've lived on the Sunshine Coast for 17 years.

What I love most about the Coast is the connection to nature. The ocean, the mountains, the open space. But more than that, it's the community. There's a relaxed, welcoming vibe here that makes it feel like home.

To me, being heard means more than just someone listening. It's about feeling understood, respected, and taken seriously. It's knowing that your voice has value and that your ideas can help shape change.

In high school I applied to become a school captain. I expected to be brushed off, not having confidence in myself or my ability. But instead, I got the role for 2025. Using this role, I advocated for leadership, my fellow peers and the school community. I felt empowered, respected, and like my voice could actually make a difference. That experience stayed with me.

But there have also been times I've felt overlooked in group settings where older people dominated the conversation, or where decisions about youth programs were made without any young people in the room. In those moments, I felt small and frustrated like my perspective didn't matter.

What I want people to understand is that young people aren't just the "future", we're here now. We have lived experience, ideas, and energy that can bring real value. Being heard is important because it builds confidence and connection. It shows that we belong.

When young people feel genuinely heard, we're more likely to engage, to lead, and to believe we can help create a better future not just for ourselves, but for everyone.





## Vision

Our vision of feeling valued:



**Input into decision making:** Young people are actively involved in shaping their communities, with meaningful opportunities to participate, contribute and influence decisions that affect their lives.



**Recognition:** Young people feel valued and acknowledged for their contributions, talents and perspectives, and their efforts are celebrated.



**Representation:** Young people see themselves reflected in community leadership, ensuring diverse identities and experiences are visible, heard and included in public life.

## Challenges

Current challenges for young people related to feeling valued:



**Not feeling heard, included or valued:** Some young people feel stereotyped, misunderstood or excluded from decision-making. Experiences of discrimination, stigma, and negative media portrayals contribute to a sense of not being valued or heard.



These vision statements and challenges were identified by young people of the Sunshine Coast in 2025.

## Youth voices

### “ I want a future where...

- young people have more opportunities to have a say.
- teens are not judged straight away as being up to no good. ”

## Alignment with Community Strategy

3.1 Inclusion

3.3 Community engagement

4.1 Community connection and resilience

## Alignment with UNSDGs



## Examples of current Council activities

- Facilitating the Young Leaders Academy youth leadership program.
- Supporting the annual Sunshine Coast Biosphere Community Awards and Sunshine Coast Australia Day Community Awards which includes a Young Citizen of the Year category.
- Implementing best-practice community engagement through the application of Council's Excellence in Engagement Framework and Inclusive Engagement Guideline.
- Using social media platforms popular with young people to share opportunities to have a say on Council projects.

## New Council actions (2026-31)

**Action 2.1** Support Youth Week activities to showcase and celebrate young people.

**Action 2.2** Showcase young people contributing to our community through various platforms and channels.

**Action 2.3** Facilitate the Young Leaders Academy to support young people to develop participatory leadership skills to strengthen their communities.

**Action 2.4** Track the emerging priorities of young people to inform and adapt Council initiatives.

**Action 2.5** Regularly monitor and refine how Council communicates with young people through external communication channels to improve reach.

**Action 2.6** Run a pilot program to recruit diverse Sunshine Coast Youth Connectors who can share information with young people and provide input into Council projects.

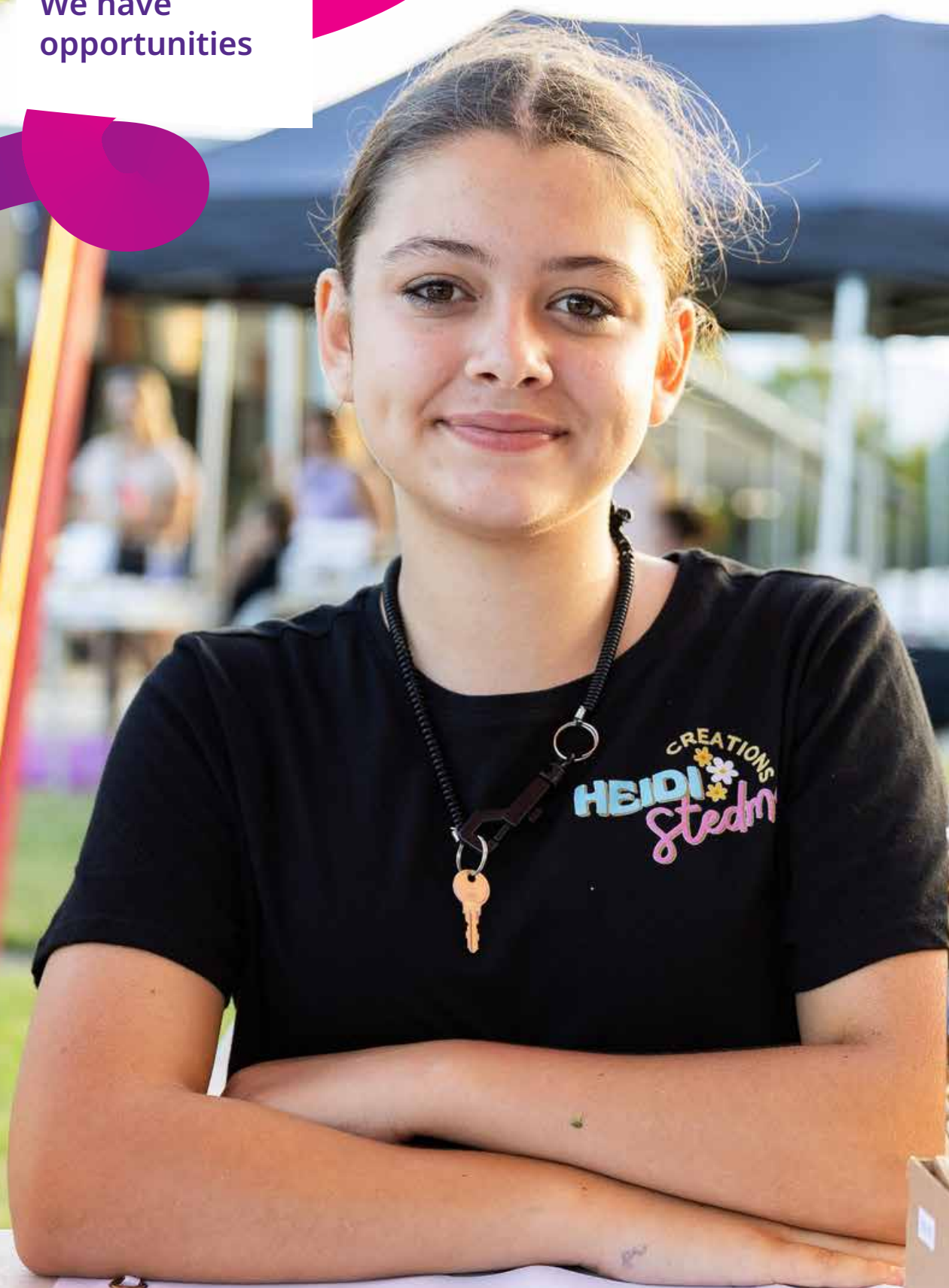
**Action 2.7** Hold a youth forum where a diverse group of young people can share youth priorities and shape new Youth Plan actions.

## Community actions

Ideas from young people about ways everyone can contribute to feeling valued:

- Volunteer on community reference groups.
- Participate in the student council at school to advocate for change on important challenges.
- Spread the word about opportunities to have a say.
- Think about your vote in Council elections.
- Talk with your local Councillor about challenges and opportunities for young people in your area.
- Create a group of young people so we can advocate for our concerns.

Theme 3.  
We have  
opportunities



CREATIONS  
HEIDI  
Stedman



## Theme 3. We have opportunities

### Jack's story:

Hi! My name is Jack, and I have been fortunate enough to live on the Sunshine Coast since I was born in Nambour.

While I have moved from suburb to suburb throughout my life, the main allures of the region have remained unchanged. The relaxed, community-oriented culture is all I have ever known, and it is something I could not be more grateful for.

Growing up here on the coast, the plentiful opportunities that have been available to me have been paramount in shaping the person I have become and guiding my future aspirations.

In 2024, my love of music drove me to join the Sunshine Coast Youth Orchestra, allowing me to take part in the Australian International Music Festival in Sydney. Performing on a global stage and collaborating with local and foreign musicians was an unforgettable experience that showed me how opportunities can connect people across backgrounds

and inspire leadership through collaboration – lessons that have guided my own aspirations to support and empower others.

Beyond music, on the Coast, I have also been lucky enough to explore leadership and volunteering opportunities through local community organisations and events. Having the chance to work alongside passionate people at Bloomhill Cancer Care throughout 2025 to organise a fundraising event taught me the power of collective action and demonstrated how the Sunshine Coast's supportive spirit can make a meaningful impact on the lives of others.

Looking towards the future, I am hopeful that the strong local programs that have guided and supported me will continue to expand and empower even more young people. I also hope that educational, employment, and creative pathways will continue to develop, ensuring future generations can stay on the Sunshine Coast rather than feeling the need to move to larger regions to find success.

## Vision

Our vision of opportunities:



**Education options:** Young people have access to affordable, flexible and inclusive education options that cater to diverse needs, support transition to adulthood and lead to careers within the region.



**Career opportunities:** There are a wide variety of career opportunities available to young people on the Sunshine Coast. Young people are aware of the growing industries on the Sunshine Coast so they can make informed career decisions.



**Ability to get around:** Young people can move about the region easily, safely and affordably, supported by reliable, regular and inclusive public transport, walkable neighbourhoods and active transport options.



**Affordable housing:** Housing is safe, affordable, diverse and accessible, supporting young people to live independently and remain in the region.



**Protected natural environment:** The region's natural environment is conserved for future generations with support from young people promoting values of sustainability, caring for Country, engaging in education and awareness, and leading conservation initiatives.

## Challenges

Current challenges for young people related to opportunities:



**Cost of living and financial stress:** Young people are concerned about the rising cost of living, including housing affordability, health care costs, education expenses and the price of fuel. Young people feel uncertain about their future financial security and fear they won't be able to afford to live locally or achieve a stable future in the region.



**Lack of learning and employment options:** The limited range of education and career options on the Sunshine Coast is seen as a challenge for young people. Making informed decisions about their future career pathways is also difficult due to a lack of information and understanding of their options.



**Difficulty getting around:** Inadequate public and active transport options limit the ability of young people to travel around independently and their access to education, employment and participation in community activities.



**Environmental degradation:** Young people are concerned about pollution, habitat loss, urban sprawl, climate change and e-waste impacting the natural environment.




These vision statements and challenges were identified by young people of the Sunshine Coast in 2025.



## Youth voices

### I want a future where...

- kids don't have to worry or stress about whether they will be able to afford to live here.
- there are more education and employment opportunities on the Sunshine Coast, so I'm not forced to move to the city.
- we build up not out. We need to reduce urban sprawl and embrace density that contributes to vibrancy and life after 5pm.
- we have walkable cities and fewer cars. 

## Alignment with Community Strategy

2.2 Transport

2.3 Housing and homelessness support

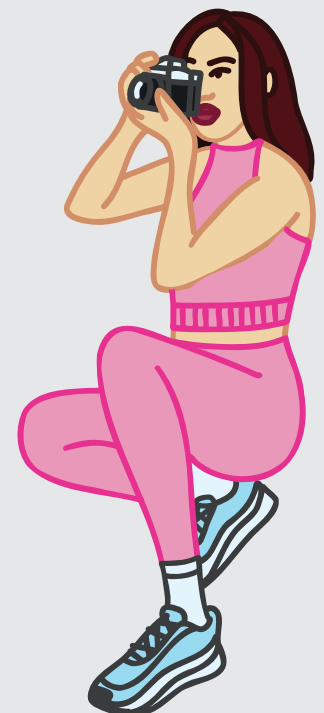
3.2 Volunteering

Plus, aligned with the strategies and actions outlined in the Environment and Liveability Strategy and Regional Economic Development Strategy.

## Examples of current Council activities

- Implementing strategies outlined in the Regional Economic Development Strategy that aim to expand employment opportunities in high-value industries.
- Supporting a range of activities and events that promote careers on offer on the Sunshine Coast.
- Attracting students, talent and workforce opportunities for the Sunshine Coast.
- Providing the My Summer Workplace internship program and work experience opportunities at Council.
- Implementing strategies in the Environment and Liveability Strategy aimed at guiding population growth and maintaining a healthy environment.
- Promoting and facilitating community involvement in environmental conservation activities.
- Implementing actions outlined in the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2023.

## Alignment with UNSDGs





## New Council actions (2026-31)

**Action 3.1** Prioritise and invest in Council's entry-level employment programs, including traineeship, internship, apprenticeship, graduate and cadetship programs, to expand employment and skill-building opportunities for young people (subject to funding availability).

**Action 3.2** Promote increased use of public transport, active transport and safe use of e-mobility options through youth-focused programs.

**Action 3.3** Support youth-led advocacy to the Queensland and Australian Government about the challenges facing young people in our region such as housing, transport, safety and career opportunities.

**Action 3.4** Investigate establishment of a 'Youth in Action' initiative, to complement the Kids in Action program, and explore opportunities to connect with global sustainability initiatives through the Sunshine Coast Biosphere (subject to funding availability).

**Action 3.5** Coordinate and promote delivery of life skills workshops featuring practical information and skills (for example, car maintenance, sustainable living, tax and financial advice, cooking, resume development, etc.)

## Community actions

Ideas from young people about ways everyone can contribute to belonging:

- Advocate for more career advice in schools.
- Volunteer for a charity or group that supports those struggling with homelessness.
- Plant native species in my backyard or join a group revegetating a natural area.
- Clean up litter from my local park.
- Work on dune revegetation at a local beach.
- Advocate for higher-density development to reduce urban sprawl, provide affordable housing and more things to do.
- Develop a youth-led climate action plan for my local neighbourhood.
- Send a letter to my local Queensland Government or Australian Government politician about the challenges of housing affordability and public transport access.
- Organise a regular clothes swap event to reduce environmental impact and socialise with others.

# Action Plan





## Action Plan

### Theme 1. We belong here

#	Action	Council role	Timeframe
<b>Action 1.1</b>	Facilitate delivery of safe, inclusive and welcoming spaces for young people – which are available for dedicated use by young people and offer areas to socialise, things to do and youth services where appropriate.	Deliver Facilitate Partner Advocate	Ongoing
<b>Action 1.2</b>	Facilitate delivery of youth-led initiatives supporting connection and good mental health.	Deliver Partner	Ongoing
<b>Action 1.3</b>	Investigate opportunities to deliver a Youth Portal in partnership with others, offering a listing of activities and things to do as well as information relevant to young people (careers, practical skills, health information).	Facilitate Partner	2027-28
<b>Action 1.4</b>	Expand Healthy Sunshine Coast to offer youth-focused activities (subject to funding availability).	Deliver Partner	2026-27
<b>Action 1.5</b>	Deliver youth-focused programming, events and resources (through Council libraries, community and sporting venues, arts and heritage venues) to maximise participation of young people.	Deliver	2026-27
<b>Action 1.6</b>	Promote and cultivate interest-based community-led social youth groups, with a focus on interests such as creative arts, board games, technology, gaming etc.	Deliver	2029-30



## Theme 2. We are valued

#	Action	Council role	Timeframe
<b>Action 2.1</b>	Support Youth Week activities to showcase and celebrate young people.	Deliver Facilitate Partner	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.2</b>	Showcase young people contributing to our community through various platforms and channels.	Deliver	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.3</b>	Facilitate the Young Leaders Academy to support young people to develop participatory leadership skills to strengthen their communities.	Deliver	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.4</b>	Track the emerging priorities of young people to inform and adapt Council initiatives.	Deliver	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.5</b>	Regularly monitor and refine how Council communicates with young people through external communication channels to improve reach.	Deliver	2026-27
<b>Action 2.6</b>	Run a pilot program to recruit diverse Sunshine Coast Youth Connectors who can share information with young people and provide input into Council projects.	Deliver	2027-28
<b>Action 2.7</b>	Hold a youth forum where a diverse group of young people can share youth priorities and shape new Youth Plan actions.	Deliver	2030-31



### Theme 3. We have opportunities

#	Action	Council role	Timeframe
<b>Action 3.1</b>	Prioritise and invest in Council's entry-level employment programs, including traineeship, internship, apprenticeship, graduate and cadetship programs, to expand employment and skill-building opportunities for young people (subject to funding availability).	Deliver	Ongoing
<b>Action 3.2</b>	Promote increased use of public transport, active transport and safe use of e-mobility options through youth-focused programs.	Deliver	Ongoing
<b>Action 3.3</b>	Support youth-led advocacy to the Queensland and Australian Government about the challenges facing young people in our region such as housing, transport, safety and career opportunities.	Deliver Facilitate	2027-28
<b>Action 3.4</b>	Investigate establishment of a Youth in Action initiative, to complement the Kids in Action program, and explore opportunities to connect with global sustainability initiatives through the Sunshine Coast Biosphere (subject to funding availability).	Deliver	2026-27 (planning) 2027-28 (delivery)
<b>Action 3.5</b>	Coordinate and promote delivery of life skills workshops featuring practical information and skills (for example, car maintenance, sustainable living, tax and financial advice, cooking, resume development, etc.)	Deliver Partner	2028-29

Shared goals



## Our global commitment



**In our Sunshine Coast Biosphere, we work together with our community for a sustainable future where we celebrate people and nature.**

This is an international recognition as part of a World Network of Biosphere Reserves, demonstrating our commitment to contribute to a sustainable planet and create a positive legacy for future generations. This also aligns with Council's vision as Australia's most sustainable region. Connected. Liveable. Thriving.

We all have a role to play in the Sunshine Coast Biosphere now and for all those who will live, work, learn and play here in the future.

Our biosphere spans the Sunshine Coast local government area and three nautical miles off the coast.

Caring for this special place brings new opportunities and a range of possible benefits to our natural environment, community, lifestyle and economy.

The [Sunshine Coast Biosphere](#) is centred around our four key objectives, all of which are intrinsically linked:

- **People** - A Sunshine Coast community that actively fosters and promotes sustainable practices, use and stewardship
- **Conservation** - Conserving, maintaining, and enhancing our natural environment from the hinterland to the coast, and connecting people and nature
- **Development** - Demonstrating leadership in delivering a diverse and resilient economy
- **Logistical support** - Inspiring and celebrating creativity, innovation, research, and a learning community.

## United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Implementing the Sunshine Coast Biosphere involves local actions delivering on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As we advance our vision as Australia's most sustainable region, the environmental, social, cultural and economic activities across the region must be carefully balanced to ensure we create a sustainable future.

Council is demonstrating regional leadership by committing to embed the SDGs in our strategies, plans and associated progress reporting. The Thriving Futures: Sunshine Coast Youth Plan 2026–31 supports the SDGs by outlining practical Council-led and community-led actions across all domains of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

This youth plan contributes to all of the SDGs, particularly:

**SDG 3, 5 and 10** – Good Health and Wellbeing; Gender Equality; Reduced Inequalities

The youth plan emphasises priorities of belonging, safety and mental health, which align with SDGs related to good health and wellbeing (Goal 3), gender equality (Goal 5) and reduced inequalities (Goal 10). By fostering inclusive communities where young people feel safe, respected and supported, the plan contributes to a more equitable and cohesive society. Its focus on connection, mental health, community safety, and inclusive spaces reflects a commitment to safety and holistic wellbeing.

**SDG 4, 8 and 9** – Quality Education; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The youth plan recognises the importance of education and employment and therefore aligns with SDGs related to quality education (Goal 4), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), and industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9). The plan supports continuing emphasis on youth employment initiatives that build a skilled and empowered youth population that can contribute meaningfully to the region's economic development.

**SDG 11, 13 and 15** – Sustainable Cities and Communities; Climate Action; Life on Land

The environmental focus of the youth plan aligns with SDGs related to sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11), climate action (Goal 13), and life on land (Goal 15). It encourages young people to engage in conservation, advocate for sustainable development and participate in climate initiatives. The youth plan emphasises activities which encourage youth leadership and advocacy and young people being active participants in shaping a resilient and liveable future.

**SDG 16 and 17** – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; Partnerships for the Goals

The youth plan promotes participatory governance and strong partnerships, aligning with SDGs on peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16) and partnerships for the goals (Goal 17). Through initiatives like the Young Leaders Academy and youth forums, the plan ensures that young people have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions. It also fosters collaboration between Council, community organisations and young people, strengthening civic engagement and participation.

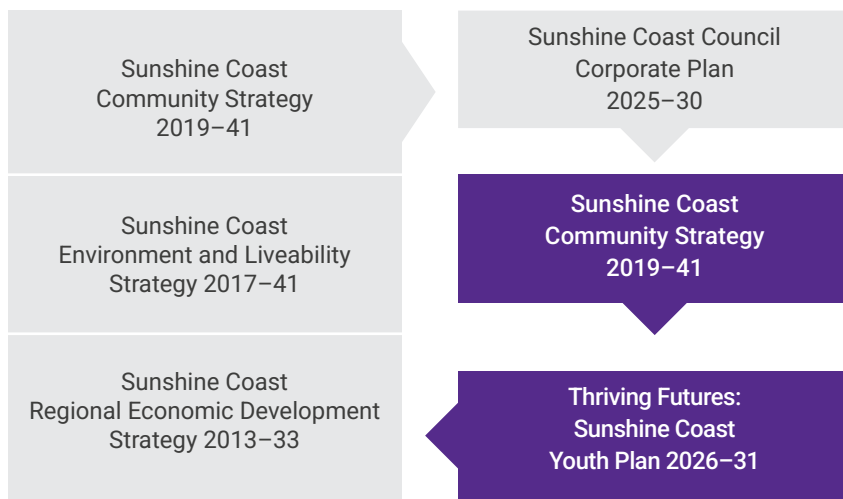




## Making progress together

### Working towards our vision

Australia's most sustainable region.  
Connected. Liveable. Thriving.



### Alignment to the regional strategies

The Youth Plan aligns with outcomes identified in all three of Council's regional strategies and the Corporate Plan, including topics related to health and wellbeing, connection, representation, sustainability, liveability and employment.

## Alignment to the corporate plan

The Sunshine Coast Council's Corporate Plan 2025-30 outlines an integrated approach to achieving our vision, informed by Council's long and medium-term strategies and plans. Our commitment to reconciliation is reflected under the five goals.



### Strong Community

The Youth Plan is strongly aligned with aspirations related to connection, belonging, safety, mental health and inclusion. The actions outlined in the plan aim to grow stronger community connections and resilience, deliver more inclusive activities and spaces, and offer more ways for young people to participate in community life.



### Managing for Growth

Young people are focused on their financial future and the impact that housing and cost of living pressures may have on their ability to stay in the region. Actions in the plan aim to amplify the voices of young people to advocate for continued focus on managing growth, housing affordability and the liveability of our region for their future.



### Environment and Liveability

The Youth Plan aligns with Council's intent to protect natural assets while creating inclusive and liveable communities. The plan includes actions that have an emphasis on delivering more safe, inclusive places and spaces and youth-friendly activities, encouraging active transport and safe e-mobility options, and engaging young people in sustainability and conservation action.



### Organisational Excellence

The Youth Plan has a strong focus on continuing to consider the priorities of young people in Council processes, including through tracking emerging youth priorities and piloting a Youth Connectors program. Most actions in the plan are outcome-focused to enable flexible delivery methods, and reporting and review processes are outlined to emphasise a focus on evolving priorities. The plan emphasises delivery of actions through collaboration with multiple Council branches, stakeholders and community members.



### Resilient Economy

Council is focused on fostering a resilient Sunshine Coast economy and expanding employment in high-value industries. The plan includes an action to prioritise entry-level employment programs at Council to expand employment and skill-building opportunities for young people. More broadly, the plan emphasises actions that help to position the Sunshine Coast as a vibrant and attractive place to study and work, which will support future industry capacity.

## Other Council strategies and plans

Other relevant Council strategies and plans include:

- Active Transport Plan 2011-31
- All Abilities Action Plan 2024-28
- Community Engagement Policy and Excellence in Engagement Framework 2021
- Community Strategy 2019-41 (2024 Refresh)
- Creative Arts Plan 2023-38
- Environment and Liveability Strategy 2017-41 (2023 Refresh)
- Healthy Coast Management Plan 2025
- Heritage Plan 2021-31
- Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2023
- Integrated Transport Strategy 2018
- Major Events Strategy 2018-28 (2023 Refresh)
- Recreation Parks Plan 2021-31
- Regional Economic Development Strategy 2013-33 (2023 Refresh)
- Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-28
- Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2011-26 (2024 Refresh)
- Working with Children and Young People Policy 2025

## State, national and international strategies

Other relevant state, national and international strategies and action plans include:

- Young Queenslanders Strategy 2024-26
- Australia's Youth Policy Framework
- United Nations Youth Strategy 2030
- Hangzhou Strategy and Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves 2026-35.



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