



Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020



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Mayoral Preface

On behalf of Lithgow City Council, it gives me pleasure to launch the Lithgow Council Youth Strategy 2016-2020.

The development and support for young people in the Lithgow LGA is a priority for Lithgow City Council. We are continuously working on innovative ways to help young people build their own lives, contribute to the lives of others and feel a part of our broader community.

This Youth Strategy 2016-2020 (the Strategy) builds upon the many programs and activities already developed by Council targeting local young people. The aim of this Strategy is to ensure local young people are included in decision-making and community life, are provided with opportunity and choice, and feel a strong sense of belonging and wellbeing.

I am proud to say that this strategy is based on extensive research and important input from many young people who live, work, study or visit the Lithgow LGA. A youth survey was conducted in 2014 and over 580 young people responded. We have used that information to hone in on the current concerns, needs and aspirations of young people.

The Strategy also contains an Action Plan which outlines the actions that Council will undertake in order to address the identified concerns, needs and aspirations of young people living in the Lithgow LGA. It also provides a basis for policy and action by government, business and non-government sectors.

Introduction

Lithgow City Council (Council) is committed to addressing and responding to the needs of young people living in the Lithgow LGA. As part of this commitment Council has developed a Youth Strategy and Action Plan, which provides greater insight into the current status of youth in Lithgow and highlights a number of priority issues, including:

- Employment and educational
- Health and wellbeing
- Crime and safety
- Family and relationships
- Recreation and leisure
- Participation and engagement

The Youth Strategy is designed to be a flexible document that can be changed to respond to the emerging needs of young people across the LGA over the next five years.



Demographic analysis

A significant amount of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing, as well as health and crime data, where available at the local level, has been analysed in the development of this strategy. To illustrate how Lithgow fares in relation to other areas across the state, it has been benchmarked against metropolitan Sydney and Regional NSW.

Age profile

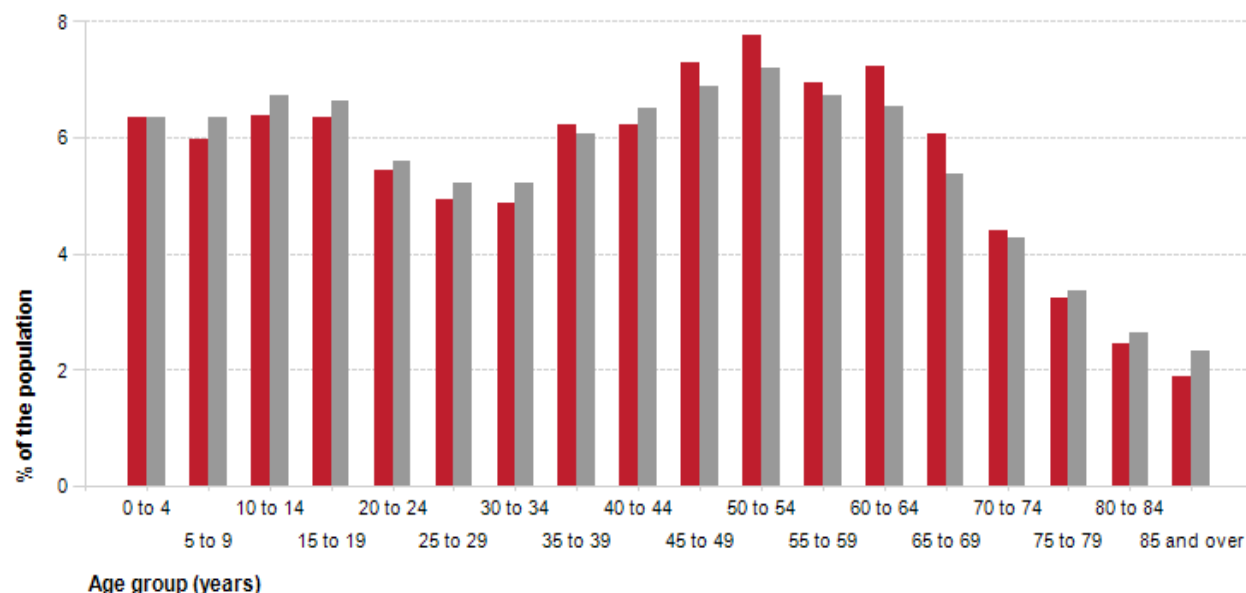
According to the 2011 Census, there are 3,668 young people aged 10 to 24 years residing in the Lithgow LGA. This represents 18.2% of the total population of the Lithgow LGA. Analysis of the five year age groups of Lithgow City in 2011 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion of people in the 10-24 years age group. Figure 1 below illustrates that 18.2% of the Lithgow population was aged between 10-24 years compared with 19.4% for Regional NSW.

Figure 1: Five year age structure, 2011

Age structure - five year age groups, 2011

Total persons

■ Lithgow City ■ Regional NSW



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

.id the population experts

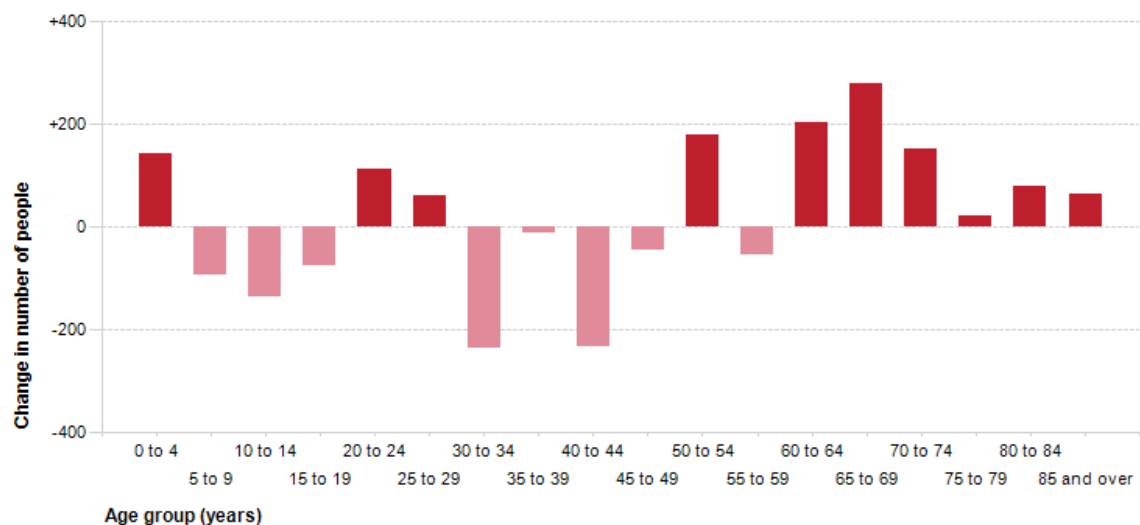
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

Further analysis of the five year age groups shows a change in the number of young people between 2006 and 2011. More specifically, in 2006 there were 1,421 ten to fourteen year olds, while in 2011 this number dropped by one hundred and thirty seven to 1,284. Similarly, the number of fifteen to nineteen year olds in 2006 was 1,355 and in 2011 this number dropped by seventy five to 1,280 young people. However, the number of 20-24 year olds increased by 113 young people from 2006-2011. In addition, the number of 0-4 year olds also grew by 144 children, which suggests the overall population of young people has remained stable since 2006. The graph below depicts these changes across age groups and across time.

Figure 2: Change in age structure

Change in age structure - five year age groups, 2006 to 2011

Lithgow City - Total persons



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2011 (Usual residence data)
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

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Indigenous young people

As of 2011, there were 279 Indigenous young people aged 10 to 24 years residing in the Lithgow LGA. This accounts for 7.6% of the total population of young people in the Lithgow LGA.

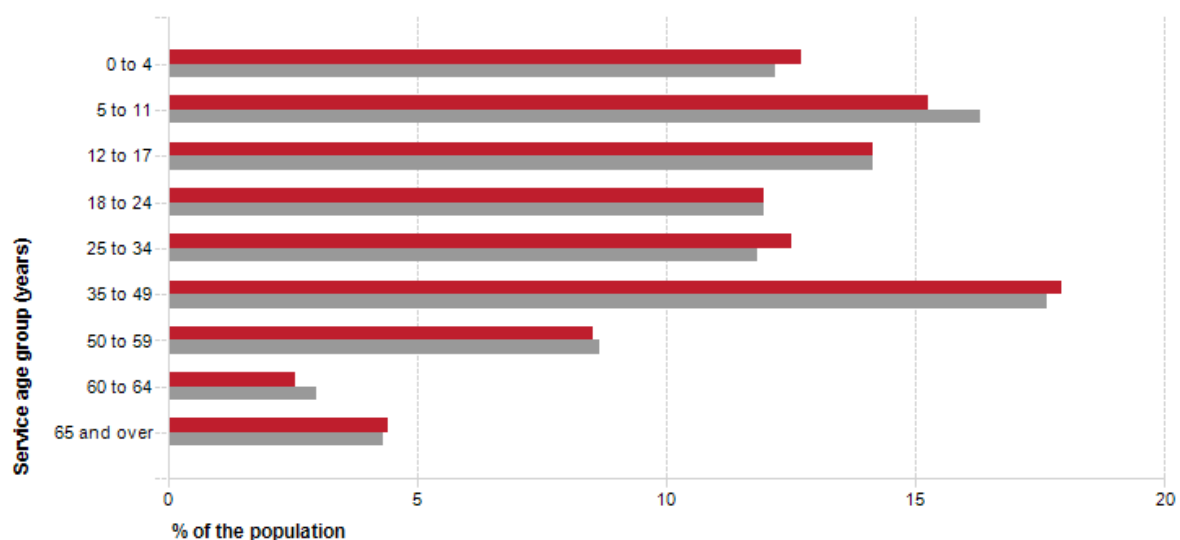
Analysis of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service age groups in Lithgow City in 2011 compared to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales - ATSI shows that there were a similar proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17 years). Overall, 42.1% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Lithgow City was aged between 0 and 17, compared with 42.6% for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales - ATSI.

Figure 3: Percentage of Indigenous Young People

Service age groups, 2011

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

■ Lithgow City - ATSI ■ New South Wales - ATSI



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

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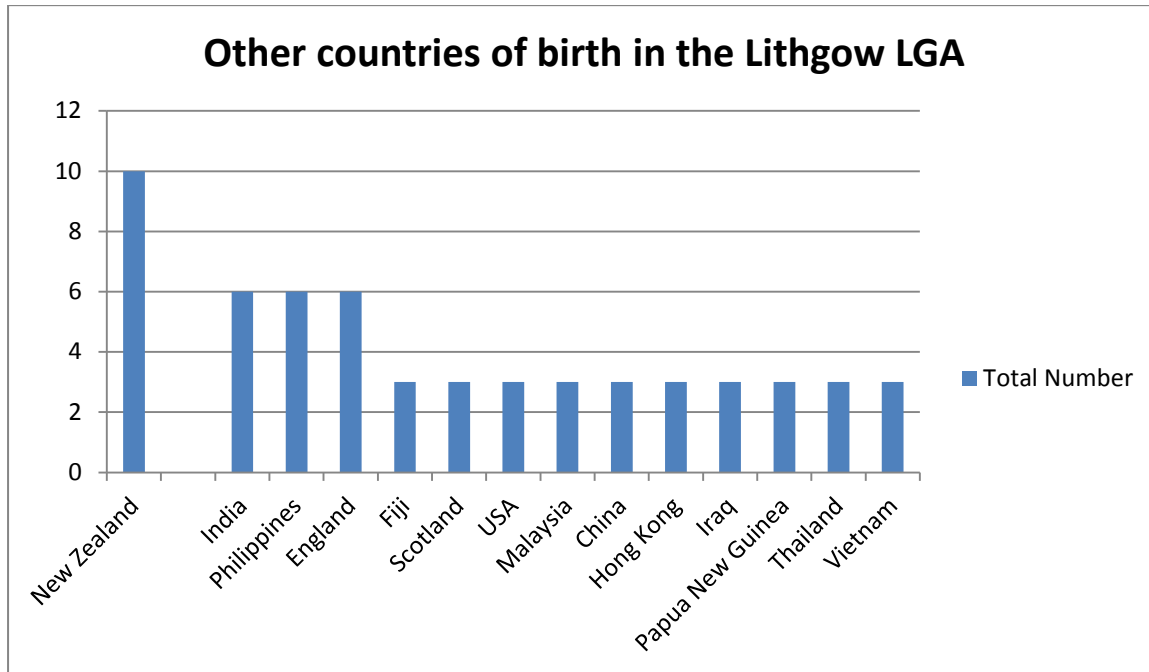
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011



Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people

As of 2011, 2199 or 92% of residents aged 15 to 24 years were born in Australia, compared with 85% for the overall population of Lithgow. The graph below shows the number of 15-24 year olds born in countries other than Australia.

Figure 4: Top countries of birth of residents aged 15-24 years



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2011)



Education and Employment

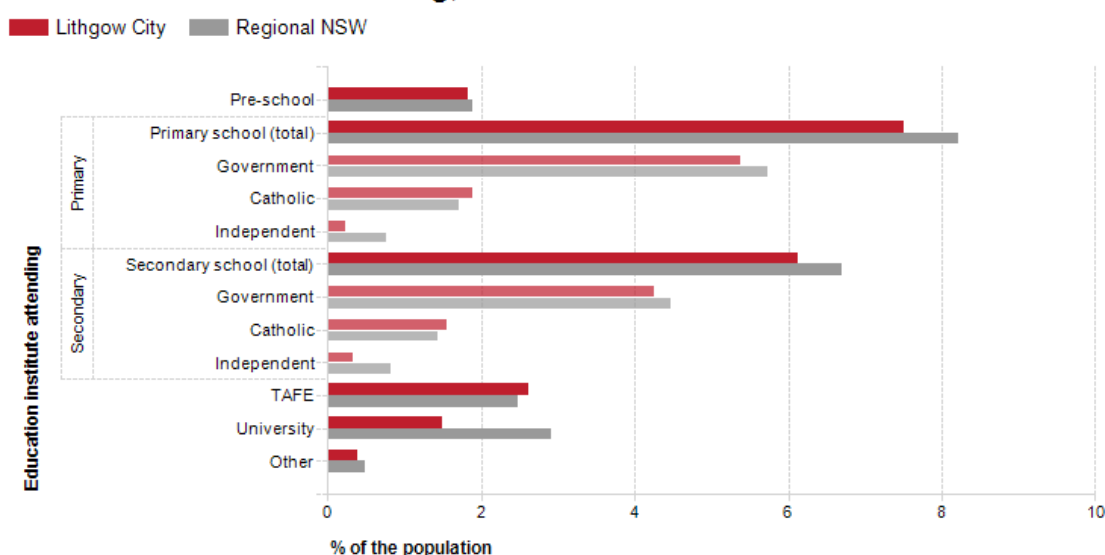
Analysis of the population attending educational institutions in Lithgow in 2011 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion attending primary school, a lower proportion attending secondary school, and a lower proportion engaged in tertiary level education. Overall, 7.5% of the population were attending primary school, 6.1% of the population were attending secondary institutions, and 4.1% were learning at a tertiary level, compared with 8.2%, 6.7% and 5.4% respectively for Regional NSW. The major difference between the share of the population attending learning institutions in Lithgow City and Regional NSW was:

- A smaller percentage of persons attending University (1.5% compared to 2.9%)

The figure below illustrates the percentage of young people attending various types of educational institutions in Lithgow City compared to Regional NSW.

Figure 5: Education institution attending

Education institution attending, 2011



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

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the population experts

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2011)

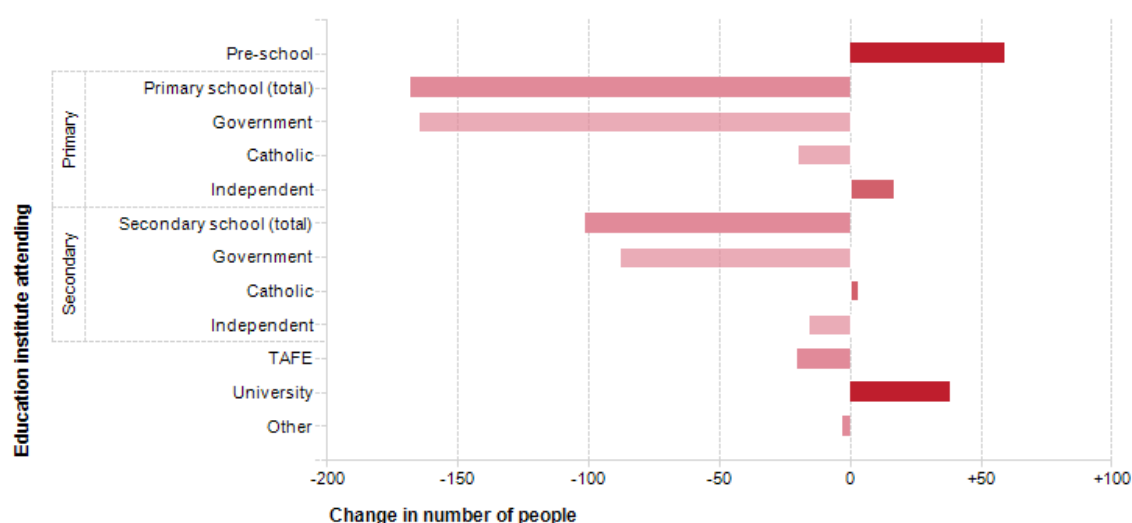


When comparing the 2011 Census data to the 2006 Census data we can see that there was a drop in primary and secondary school attendance in 2011. However, the number of pre-schoolers entering the education system rose by 59 and the number of 0-4 year olds also increased by 144 people in 2011. Therefore, if this trend continues the next Census should see a rise in primary school attendance but not necessarily high school attendance. The figure below shows the change in education institution attending from 2006 to 2011.

Figure 6: Change in education institution attending

Change in education institution attending, 2006 to 2011

Lithgow City - Total persons



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2011 (Usual residence data)
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The share of Lithgow City's population attending educational institutions reflects the age structure of the population, as it is influenced by the number of children attending school; proximity to tertiary education, which can mean young adults leaving home to be nearer to educational facilities and; the degree to which people are seeking out educational opportunities in adulthood, especially in their late teens and early twenties. In 2011, 13.7% of Lithgow City's labour force aged 15 to 24 years were classed as unemployed compared to 12.9% in Regional NSW. While Lithgow City had a higher rate of unemployment in the 15 to 24 year age group, it is important to note that this varied across the City. Proportions ranged from a low of 0.0% in South Bowenfels - Littleton - South Littleton to a high of 19.0% in Rural North - Marrangaroo. The five areas with the highest unemployment rates were:

- Rural North - Marrangaroo (19.0%)
- Wallerawang - Lidsdale (16.7%)
- Bowenfels (15.5%)
- Morts Estate - Oaky Park - Vale Of Clwydd (15.4%)
- Lithgow - Hermitage Flat and District (14.0%)

Youth unemployment is an issue of serious concern for the community. Persons aged 15 to 24 years are particularly vulnerable to unemployment, since the age group represents a transition from education to work, with generally higher unemployment rates than other age groups in most areas. The table below illustrates the youth unemployment rate in Lithgow and compares that to other regional towns in the Central West, the rest of NSW and Australia.

Table 1

Youth unemployment rate (persons aged 15-24), 2011			
Lithgow City - Usual residence			
Area	Number unemployed	Total labour force aged 15 to 24	Percent unemployed
Bowenfels	17	113	15.5
Lithgow - Hermitage Flat and District	66	468	14.0
Morts Estate - Oaky Park - Vale Of Clwydd	18	116	15.4
Portland	15	139	10.8
Rural North - Marrangaroo	20	105	19.0
Rural South - Little Hartley	15	136	11.1
South Bowenfels - Littleton - South Littleton	0	156	0.0
Wallerawang - Lidsdale	26	158	16.7
Lithgow Urban Area	101	854	11.8
Lithgow City	193	1,411	13.7
Regional NSW	24,594	190,005	12.9
Central West	1,684	14,732	11.4
Bathurst Region	464	3,692	12.6
Upper Blue Mountains	85	708	12.0
Mid-Western Regional Council area	174	1,482	11.7
New South Wales	66,449	520,425	12.8
Australia	213,815	1,754,092	12.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing](#) 2011. Compiled and presented in atlas.id by [.id](#), the population experts.



Policy Review

National Context

National Strategy for Young Australians

The National Strategy for Young Australians was adopted by the Australian Government in 2010 and is designed to provide young people with the support they need to succeed in life.

This strategy offers a means by which members of the youth sector can work with government agencies and communities in developing a vision shared by all. This strategy aims to:

- Empower young people to build their own lives
- Enable young Australians to take responsibility for their actions
- Build resilience in young Australians
- Build a healthier, safer and more productive Australia.

The strategy identifies eight priority areas for action in order to develop a response that takes into account 'what it is to be a young Australian'. These priority areas are:

- Health and wellbeing
- Education
- Families
- Communities
- Online
- Work
- Early Intervention
- Safety

Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians

The Australian Government, together with the states and territories through COAG, has set specific and ambitious targets to address Indigenous disadvantage. The six key targets that form the Closing the Gap objective include plans to end the 17-year life expectancy gap with that of non-Indigenous Australians within a generation. Included is a National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes.



NSW Context

NSW 2021

The NSW 2021 Plan is a long term plan for better service delivery across the public sector in NSW. The priorities in the plan are a result of consultation with the community, business and stakeholder groups.

This plan sets five immediate priorities for action, which include 32 goals and 180 targets. Through the priority area of Return Quality Services, six of the key targets that directly relate to service delivery for young people are:

- Better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage.
- Keep people healthy and out of hospital.
- Increase opportunities for people with disability by providing supports that meet their individual needs and realise their potential.
- Improve education and learning outcomes for all students.
- Prevent and reduce the level of crime.
- Prevent and reduce the level of reoffending.

Local Context

Integrated Planning and Reporting

Council's Community Strategic Plan was implemented in 2013 requiring Council to work towards an Integrated Planning Process where all strategies are linked. The Youth Strategy links to the new Council plans, processes and documents.

The ten year Community Strategic Plan consists of a more detailed four year Delivery Program and an annual Operational Plan.

The Youth Strategy is aligned with the following objectives of Council's Community Strategic Plan 2026:

- Objective 1.1 Planning and providing quality community and recreational facilities and services for a healthy, vibrant and harmonious community.
- Objective 1.2 Working together to support, celebrate and expand the social and cultural diversity of our community. Whilst promoting healthy, active lifestyles in a safe environment.
- Objective 2.1 Providing for sustainable and planned growth that supports a range of lifestyle choices and employment opportunities.
- Objective 2.2 Exploring and discovering the richness in our society through the pursuit of educational, creative and cultural opportunities to diversify our economy, skills base and employment opportunities.

- Objective 3.2 - Ensuring sustainable and planned growth through the provision of effective public and private transport options and suitable entertainment and recreational facilities to enhance the lifestyle choices of the community.

Consultation

Between 2014 and 2016 Council completed a number of consultations with young people and service providers in the local area. Overall, more than 580 young people were surveyed using a range of different techniques, including a youth Forum, youth survey, and a sector questionnaire. From this consultation process a number of priority areas emerged, which are outlined below. For a detailed analysis and report on the priority areas for youth, please see Youth Issues Paper 2015 (Appendix 1).

Priority Area 1: Employment and education

- Provide more learning and training opportunities for young people in Lithgow.
- Enhance employment opportunities for young people in Lithgow, including a diverse range of apprenticeships and traineeships for young people.

Priority Area 2: Health and wellbeing

- Support projects for Aboriginal young people.
- Provide a range of health and wellbeing services which meet the needs of young people in the Lithgow LGA.

Priority Area 3: Crime and safety

- Facilitate a safe community.

Priority Area 4: Family and relationships

- Develop the Lithgow LGA as a Family Friendly Community.

Priority Area 5: Recreation and leisure

- Provide accessible and affordable recreational activities/ opportunities for young people.
- Provide affordable and accessible entertainment and leisure activities for young people.
- Provide and maintain a wide range of recreational facilities for young people.

Priority Area 6: Participation and engagement

- Support and facilitate Youth Council.
- Support the engagement and participation of young people in youth activities and events.
- Increase awareness of services available to young people in the Lithgow LGA.
- Increase youth engagement and aspiration through providing greater opportunities of participation.
- Support services to be more accessible to young people.

Current Council Actions and Achievements

Council employs a Community Development Officer and part of their role is to work with young people in the resourcing of groups and delivery of programs.

The Community Development Officer is also responsible for supporting and working in partnership with local youth services, community groups and young people from the Lithgow LGA.

In addition, the Community Development Officer plans youth events and activities in partnership with local services, community groups and young people from the Lithgow LGA.

Below is a list of current Council actions and achievements delivered in the priority areas of youth.

Priority Area 1: Education and employment

Young people in the Lithgow LGA are actively supported in transition from school to work through a variety of options and support mechanisms, including:

- Providing traineeships, apprenticeships, internships and work experience to young people.
- Providing free internet access to members at all library branches across the Lithgow LGA.
- Providing and maintaining resources for youth at all the library branches, including study guides and a number of databases to assist students with assignments.
- Providing free homework help Monday to Thursdays from 3.30pm-5.30pm and access to use the library computers for free.
- Providing a designated youth space in the library with relaxed, colourful and modular furniture where young people can meet.
- Providing funding and support for the Indigenous Garden concept, an outdoor learning space for students at Lithgow High School.
- Providing a university presence in the area which will build on local industry requirements.

Priority Area 2: Health and wellbeing

Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lives through health and wellbeing lifestyle options and programs within the Lithgow LGA, including:

- Providing funding to organisations to deliver programs that enhance the health and wellbeing of young people in the Lithgow LGA.
- Provision of active recreation facilities, such as the indoor swimming centre and the skate park, to enhance health and wellbeing outcomes for young people in the Lithgow LGA.
- Working with Medicare local and Leaving Healthy Footprints Consultative Committee to deliver positive health outcomes for Aboriginal young people in the Lithgow LGA.
- Working with the PCYC to provide passive and active recreation facilities and activities for young people, such as the 'Youth Hub'.
- Providing professional exhibition space at Eskbank House & Museum for young people's art and an opportunity for creativity and self-expression.
- Working in partnership with the Child Protection Interagency to deliver training seminars for professionals who work with children and young people.

Priority Area 3: Crime and safety

In order to create a community where young people feel safe and independent Council has:

- Provided road safety programs such as the Road Safety for Learner Drivers program.
- Worked with organisations to implement early intervention programs targeting 'at risk' and disengaged young people.
- Facilitated meetings and work with the Crime Prevention Committee to address crime and safety issues in the community.
- Supported initiatives of the Lithgow Partnerships Against Domestic and Family Violence Committee.

Priority Area 4: Family and relationships

In order to nurture and enhance the relationships young people have with friends, family and other people in the community Council is:

- Developing a family friendly strategy for the Lithgow LGA
- Providing funding to organisations to deliver programs that enhance the relationship between young people and their parents, friends and peers.

Priority Area 5: Recreation and leisure

Young people have access to a range of accessible and affordable activities that encourage social connection and a sense of belonging. This has been achieved through the:

- Coordination of annual programs at the skate park.
- Provision of “Battle of the Bands” evening events at the local theatre.
- Provision of support to the PCYC to deliver a range of programs and activities.
- Coordination of annual community festivals and celebrations, such as Youth Week and Halloween.
- Coordination of annual visual and creative arts-based activities and workshop programs.
- Provision of funding to organisations who provide annual community events such as Ironfest and the Lithgow Show.

Priority Area 6: Participation and engagement

A wide range of opportunities are available for young people to ensure they are connected with their local community through:

- Resourcing of the Lithgow Youth Council consisting of young people from across the LGA who plan and organise youth events and address youth issues in our community.
- Acknowledgement of the positive contributions that young people make to the community.
- Continuing encouragement and support of young people in the local area to participate in Council events and activities including youth forums.
- Acknowledging young people’s volunteer contribution to the community of Lithgow through events such as Thank a Volunteer Day and the Australia Day Awards Ceremony.



ACTION PLAN

Education and Employment

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
Support and facilitate training and employment opportunities for young people	Identify opportunities to host, train and employ young people at Council through traineeships, apprenticeships, internships and work experience.	2016/17-2017/18	Organisational Development	As identified in annual budgets	One traineeship offered each year.
	Promote training and career expos in Lithgow which include a focus on tourism and hospitality sectors.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Tourism	As identified in annual budgets	Annual expo held.
Encourage and support learning opportunities in the LGA.	Work with tertiary education providers to raise community awareness and take up of tertiary learning opportunities.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	Tertiary education providers assisted in the promotion of enrolments and courses available in Lithgow.
	Advocate for increased funding to deliver a broader range of tertiary courses in Lithgow.	2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	Meet with tertiary education providers to identify gaps in courses delivered at the local level.

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
	Continue to provide the Homework tutoring and other learning programs at the library.	2016/17-2017/18	Library	\$10,000 per year	Homework tutoring service offered.

Health and Wellbeing

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
Support projects for Aboriginal young people	Work with MINGAAN Aboriginal Corporation, local schools and Leaving Healthy Footprints to develop health and wellbeing programs for Aboriginal young people.	2016/17-2017/18	Community Development in partnership with MINGAAN, local schools, Leaving Healthy Footprints and other relevant community organisations	Existing staff resources	Local Aboriginal group meetings attended on a monthly basis.
Support a range of health and wellbeing programs and services which meet the needs of young people	Work with local health and community agencies to: Provide drug and alcohol education to equip young people with the skills to make responsible decisions about drugs	2016/17-2017/18	Community Development in partnership with MINGAAN, local schools, Leaving Healthy Footprints and other relevant community	Existing staff resources	Community agency meetings attended on a monthly basis.

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/ TARGET
	<p>and alcohol.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop healthy lifestyle initiatives. • Address the issues of bullying and mental health in young people. • Lobby government for access to safe and affordable accommodation options for youth experiencing homelessness or insecure housing. 		organisations		

Crime and Safety

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
Facilitate a safe community	<p>Continue to participate in the Crime Prevention Committee and Liquor Accord.</p> <p>Continue to participate in the Child Protection Interagency and the Lithgow Partnerships Against Domestic Violence & Family Abuse.</p> <p>Maintain and upgrade as necessary, Council's CCTV network.</p>	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources plus CCTV budget as allocated in the annual budget process	Crime Prevention and Domestic Violence meetings attended on a quarterly basis.

Family and Relationships

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
Young people develop and maintain healthy & positive relationships with family, friends and the broader community.	<p>Support family programs that enhance the relationship between young people and their parents. For eg, Circle of Security, Brighter Futures, Lithgow Cares Campaign, counselling and education, and other relevant programs targeted at teenagers.</p> <p>Support programs and services that provide parenting skills for teen parents.</p> <p>Continue to provide the Youth Space at the library.</p>	2016/17-2017/18	Community and Culture in partnership with relevant community organisations	Existing staff resources	A minimum of 3 programs supported each year.

Recreation and Leisure

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
Provide accessible and affordable recreational & leisure opportunities for young people.	Work with Youth Council to develop annual events and activities for young people including creative workshops, competitions, skate park clinics, etc.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources plus program costs as allocated in the annual budget process.	A minimum of two events held each year.
	Host a program of Youth Week activities and events annually.	Annual	Community and Culture	\$4,000 per annum	Youth Week celebrated each year.
	Identify funding opportunities for recreational infrastructure relevant to young people.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	Grants identified and applied for on an annual basis.
	Give consideration to the needs of young people in the Adventure Playground design.	2016/17	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	Young people consulted.
	Review the Lithgow Bike Plan.	2016/17	Operations	Funds allocated in 2016/17 budget, RMS application submitted	Bike Plan reviewed.

Participation and engagement

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/ TARGET
Support and facilitate Youth Council	Support young people to have a voice on issues that matter to them through regular Youth Council meetings and youth forums.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	Annual visits to schools for recruitment and promote Youth Council positions throughout community to attract a diverse range of young people.
	Consult with Youth Council on Council policies and programs that affect young people.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	A total of 8 Youth Council meetings held per year.
	Consult Youth Council in the development of the Lithgow Main Street Revitalisation Program.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Economic Development	Existing staff resources	Young people consulted.

STRATEGY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL DEPARTMENT	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT/TARGET
Increase youth engagement and aspiration by providing greater opportunities to participate	Promote and showcase the positive work and achievements of young people across the region through local and regional youth forums and media opportunities.	2016/17 - 2017/18	Community and Culture	Existing staff resources	Host an annual event to recognise the achievements of young people in Lithgow.
	Encourage younger people to volunteer by creating a volunteering network and promoting volunteering opportunities for young people.				Volunteering network established and Council volunteering webpage developed.

References

Community Strategic Plan 2026, Lithgow City Council

Destination Management Plan – A Tourism Strategy for Lithgow, Lithgow City Council

Economic Development Strategy 2010-2014, Lithgow City Council

National Strategy for Young Australians, Government of Australia

NSW 2021, NSW Government

Youth Issues Paper 2015, Lithgow City Council

Appendix

Youth Issues Paper

Youth Survey

Sector Questionnaire

Lithgow City Council Youth Issues Paper 2015

**Prepared by
Community & Culture
Lithgow City Council.**

Introduction

In April 2014 Lithgow City Council (Council) conducted its first ever large scale survey of young people living in the Lithgow local government area. The primary purpose of the survey was to identify both the values and issues of concern to young people. A total of 581 young people aged between 11-24 years participated in the survey. Five hundred and sixty four completed the survey online, with the remainder being completed in hard copy.

The survey was kept brief (16 questions) in order to encourage a large response from a diversity of young people. Eight questions sought respondent's views on a variety of issues, such as what they value, their issues of concern, who they turn to for advice and support, what activities they're involved in, and how they envisage their future in Lithgow. The remaining questions collected demographic information including age, gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification, education and employment participation and living arrangements.

The survey was distributed to three high schools in Lithgow, including Lithgow High School, La Salle Academy, and Portland Central School. It was also made available on the Council website and hard copies were given out at Council's customer service desk, as well as the Lithgow Library and Learning Centre. A media release was sent out to advise the broader community regarding the survey to encourage young people who are not a part of the high school system to participate. In May 2014 an additional questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the youth services sector in Lithgow. The questionnaire was based around current youth issues and gaps in service delivery.

This report contains detailed information relating to young people living in the Lithgow local government area. Included are sections which analyses the data collected from the survey to provide readers with greater insight into the current status of young people. Also included are discussions and insights gained from the sector questionnaire. The findings in this report will be used to inform the development of Council's Youth Strategy, and it is hoped that it will act as a stimulus for discussion for organisations and other institutions interested in the wellbeing of young people.

Youth Survey Report

Demographic Profile

Age Breakdown

Responses to the survey were received from 581 young people living in the Lithgow local government area. The largest proportion of responses came from respondents aged between 11-15 years (362 surveys), followed by respondents aged between 16-19 years (197 surveys), and finally, 22 surveys were received by respondents aged between 20-24 years. Two hundred fifty two (252) surveys were answered by females, and 322 were answered by males. As Table 1 shows, the largest group was aged 11 to 15 years, while the smallest group of responses came from young adults aged 20 to 24 years.

Table 1: Age Profile of Respondents

Age in years	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
11-15	362	62.31%
16-19	197	33.91%
20-24	22	3.79%
Total	581	100%

Gender Breakdown

A little over half (55.42%) of the respondents were male and 43.37% were female.

Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Ninety six (96) or 17% of the respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Education & Employment

The survey included questions about the study and employment status of respondents. Table 3 shows that 76% of respondents were studying full time. Given the vast majority of respondents were in the 11-15 and 16-19 years age groups, they were much more likely than the young adult group to be studying full time.

Table 3: Participation in education

Frequency of Study	Female	Male
Studying full time	207	232
Studying part time	27	46
Not studying	18	42

Table 4: Type of study

Similarly, the type of study undertaken by the majority of respondents was at the high school level. Table 4 shows the breakdown of the type of study undertaken by young people in Lithgow.

Type of Study	Female	Male
High School	234	286
Primary	2	6
TAFE	3	1
UNI	2	4
Other	3	4

The employment question asked respondents to indicate whether they had full time or part time work, as well as whether or not they were looking for work. Table 5 shows respondents' participation in employment in Lithgow. As might be expected, a minority of respondents (15) were employed on a full time basis, while 128 respondents stated that they were employed on a part time basis. These figures reflect the fact that the majority of respondents are in high school and therefore are not able to participate in full time work.

Table 5: Type of employment

Type of Employment	Female	Male
Full time	6	9
Part time	65	63
Looking	74	117
Not looking	100	121
Total	245	310

Note: Part time is considered to be less than 35 hours a week and full time is 35 hours or more.

Where respondents were living

The vast majority of respondents lived with family. Table 2 shows the other type of living arrangements experienced by young people living in the Lithgow area by gender. The youth survey indicated that 5 males were living in insecure housing or were homeless. Given that at the time of the 2011 Census the population of young people aged between 12-24 years was 3116 in Lithgow, this figure represents 0.16% youth homelessness in Lithgow. This is a fraction higher than the national average for youth homelessness, which is currently at 0.11%.¹

Table 2: Where respondents were living

Living arrangements	Females	Males
With Family	230	298
Boarding school	2	1
Share House	3	5
Foster Care	3	2
Alone	1	0
Homeless/ Insecure Housing	0	5
Other	4	8

What activities are young people involved in?

¹ <http://yfoundations.org.au/explore-and-learn/publications/fact-sheets/>

Young people were asked to identify the activities they are involved in from the list shown in Table 6. The top 3 activities for young people were sports (as a participant), sports (as a spectator) and arts/cultural activities. Significant proportions also participated in youth groups and clubs, volunteer work, and religious groups or activities. Table 6 below shows the type of activities and the number of males and females engaged with the corresponding activity.

Table 6: Activities young people are involved in

Activity	Female	Male
Sports (as a participant)	140	191
Sports (as a spectator)	31	45
Arts/ cultural activities	35	28
Youth group activities	14	41
Volunteer work	18	20
Religious group activities	10	26
Environmental groups and activities	4	5
Political groups or organisations	5	4

Other activities that young people are involved in include:

1. BMX riding
2. Downhill mountain biking
3. Gaming
4. Horse riding

What youth issues do young people think are most important in Lithgow?

Young people were asked to rank the top three youth issues in Lithgow from a list of options set out in Table 7. The top three issues were drugs and alcohol, crime and employment, followed by education and social and recreational opportunities.

Table 7: Youth Issues in Lithgow

Rank	Youth Issues	Number of respondents
1	Drugs and alcohol	222
2	Crime	71
3	Employment	52
4	Education	47
5	Social and recreational opportunities	36
6	Health and welfare	26
7	Transport	24
8	Housing	18
9	Economy	18

Respondents were asked to comment on the youth issues raised, and below are some of their observations:

- *Drugs and alcohol are subsequently the biggest issue, but this is only because of crime and unemployment.*
- *The lack of social and recreational activities promotes a drinking culture. Boredom and curiosity have a lot to do with it.*
- *Alcohol is a major part of country town culture and it is taught through families that live in Lithgow generation after generation where it's okay to start drinking at a young age and carry this out their whole lives, then begin to teach their kids the same thing.*
- *Living in a town dominated by the mining industry limits employment opportunities for those interested in other career avenues.*
- *Employment is a big issue in our town. Many people are currently out of work.*
- *We need to expand the profile of Lithgow. Yes, it's sporty and it has coal mines, but it has such an untapped environmental and Indigenous market to offer. For one, locals will appreciate their environment more, and it will also attract more tourists and create more jobs. I just think we are as good as those around us, Katoomba, Bathurst, Orange, Mudgee have created healthy profiles and marketed interest in their towns, can we?*
- *Our schools need more resources. Children and teens need a better educational life. Many are dropping out at year 10 and even at year 9.*
- *I value my education but i don't believe that is taken seriously by many of Lithgow's young people. I think many find it particularly tedious and boring and*

resent attending school, let alone furthering their education. While it is good that universities have been coming to the town, there is a lack of apprenticeship opportunities in town.

Issues of personal concern

Furthermore, young people were asked to comment on issues that were of personal concern, and rate their level of importance from 'extremely important' to 'not at all important'. The issues listed included, coping with stress, school or study problems, body image, family conflicts, depression, health, personal safety, bullying, suicide, discrimination, drugs, alcohol and gambling. The top five issues rated 'extremely important' included, health, safety, suicide, bullying, and study. Table 8 below shows other issues of personal concern to young people that were also rated as 'extremely important'.

Table 8: Issues of personal concern

Issues of personal concern	Extremely important
Health	292
Personal safety	287
Suicide	277
Bullying/emotional abuse	244
School or study problems	233
Drugs	217
Depression	203
Discrimination	188
Alcohol	184
Family conflicts	167
Coping with stress	138
Gambling	130
Body image	108

Where do young people turn for advice and support?

Young people were asked whether they had somewhere to go for advice and support and the top 5 responses were friends, parents, internet, relatives and teachers. Table 9

below shows other sources of advice and support among respondents as well as the corresponding percentage.

Table 9: Where do young people turn for advice and support

Source of Support	Percentage of respondents
Friends	16.4%
Parents	16.2%
Internet	13.8%
Relatives	13.6%
Teachers	11.4%
Magazines	9.0%
School Councillor	7.6%
Community Agency	6.5%
Hotline	5.5%

What do young people in Lithgow value?

Young people were asked to indicate the top five items they valued from the list of options set out in Table 6. Family relationships and friendships were highly valued by a large proportion of respondents and were clearly the top two values. School or study satisfaction and physical and mental health were also considered by many young people to be very important. Table 6 below shows the breakdown of what young people value in further detail.

Table 6: What young people value

Value	Number	Percentage
Family relationships	144	36%

Friendships (other than family)	98	25%
School or study satisfaction	48	12%
Physical and mental health	43	11%
Getting a job	40	10%
Financial Security	27	6%

Note: The data used to determine the percentage was taken from 400 respondents due to the remainder omitting their response and/or responding incorrectly. Furthermore, this data represents the number one ranking noted by young people.

What are the top 5 events young people would like to see as part of Youth Week celebrations in Lithgow?

Young people were asked to comment on the type of events they would like to see happen in Lithgow during National Youth Week celebrations. The top 6 responses were carnivals/festivals, music concerts/ bands, dance, art installations, workshops/ information, and theatre. Table 11 below shows the number of young people interested in the above-mentioned events and activities.

Table 11: Youth Week activities

Event	Number
Carnivals/ festivals	300
Music concerts/ bands	289
Dance	149
Art installations	147
Workshops/ information	126
Theatre	108

Other activities mentioned by young people include:

1. Gaming/ Game Expos
2. Film festivals
3. Photography competitions
4. Circus

5. Monster trucks
6. Laser tag
7. Sporting events
8. BMX events
9. Movie nights
10. Downhill motor bike racing
11. Skating events

What do you think the future of Lithgow should be in terms of business and employment opportunities?

Young people were asked to comment on what they thought the future of Lithgow should be in terms of business and employment opportunities. Approximately 30% of young people said that there are not enough employment opportunities for school leavers and that this issue was compounded by the lack of traineeships and apprenticeships available in the area.

A greater range of employment opportunities was another issue raised by young people. While young people in Lithgow understand that mining and electricity are major employers in the area, they would like to see Lithgow expand and diversify through the retail, entertainment, tourism, creative arts and hospitality industries.

Below are some of the comments from young people regarding priority areas for business development and employment opportunities in Lithgow:

- *Less dependence on mining and greater diversification.*
- *Something more than just mining and energy.*
- *I think there should be more places that young people can work at, instead of just fast food places. Kids should also have a job that they enjoy and there's not much to enjoy at a fast food place. Kids don't want to get a job if they don't think they're going to enjoy it.*
- *There needs to be more retail and things like movies etc so young people have places to work at other than fast food.*
- *I believe the Lithgow businesses should put more apprenticeships on.*
- *More youth employment, traineeships, apprenticeships and educational opportunities are needed.*
- *Workshops for youth on alternatives to get skills, which employers are looking for.*
- *Adventure tourism, including mountain biking, climbing, orienteering, abseiling, canyoning to develop a resilient and confident skill set.*
- *More opportunities for younger people and for people wanting to leave school, especially girls.*
- *I think that Lithgow needs to create more jobs because it will be giving more Lithgow citizens the opportunity to get work in their local community, rather than having to travel elsewhere.*
- *The town needs to find a way to create more jobs and attract new citizens.*

- *Focus on what Lithgow is known for, but try to create new institutions that cater for new interests and advancing technologies.*

What do you see your future like in Lithgow?

Young people were asked what they saw their future like in Lithgow from a list of options set out in Table 12. Two hundred and fourteen said they intend to leave Lithgow and work elsewhere, while only 86 said they intend to stay and work in Lithgow. This sentiment may be reflective of the current lack of business and employment opportunities for young people in Lithgow.

Table 12: What do you see your future like in Lithgow

Future Options	Number
Intend to stay and work in Lithgow	86
Intend to leave Lithgow and work elsewhere	214
Intend to go to University	134
Intend to access further education & training (e.g. TAFE, community college, RTOs)	84

Feedback from Local Service Providers

The service provider's questionnaire contained seven (7) questions to identify the follow:

- Service type
- Programs offered
- Challenges faced
- Gaps in service provision
- Council's role
- Youth issues

Twenty questionnaires were distributed via email to organisations that deliver programs and/or services to young people in Lithgow. A total of six (6) organisations from the education, health and social sector completed the questionnaire. The following report highlights the issues faced by these services. The organisations that completed the service provider's questionnaire came from the education, health and social sectors.

The programs offered by these organisations includes:

- English as a second language
- Numeracy and literacy
- Counselling
- Mentoring
- Referral
- Respite
- Social support
- Recreational opportunities

Some of the challenges these services face, include:

- Limited staff and resources
- Limited provision of vocational courses
- Limited qualified staff
- Time and staff burnout
- Lack of a coordinated approach in Lithgow
- Insufficient funding from both state and federal government

Gaps in service delivery

It seems the gaps in service delivery stem from organisations not working together and the lack of a coordinated approach. Furthermore, young people often need support in their personal life to allow them to be successful in education, work and their social life. There is a lack of support services for many young people in regard to access to youth support workers, mental health agencies and housing support.

Council's Role

When asked what is Council's role in supporting young people in Lithgow, service providers responded that Council could provide more art, music, gym, and other recreational opportunities that are accessible and affordable for all young people. In addition, organisations stated that Council could adopt a greater advocacy role and lobby for more youth services from state and federal governments, particularly in the area of education, health and housing.

Youth Issues

According to the service providers some of the issues facing young people in Lithgow include:

- Limited support in the area of alcohol and drugs
- Not many 'hands-on' and vocational courses available
- Limited job opportunities
- Young people experience housing stress due to high rental rates

- Not enough accessible services in the area of health and welfare
- Limited social and recreational opportunities available
- Economy and financial issues
- Crime

The youth issues raised by the service providers reflect the issues and concerns raised by young people in the youth survey. While these issues are not unique to Lithgow, they highlight the current needs of young people in Lithgow, and provide a solid base from which Council, together with local services, can work towards addressing these issues.

Final Summary

A number of priority issues emerged from the youth survey.

Drugs and alcohol

The survey showed that a great number of young people are concerned about drugs and alcohol and the impact it has on them, their peers and the broader community. Areas for action could include providing drug education programs based on the evidence of what works and equip young people with the skills to effectively deal with this issue, if and when they come across drugs. While young people appear to identify drugs as a “youth issue”, their concern about alcohol appears to be broader and takes into account societal norms around its usage. Therefore, alcohol education campaigns need to engage not only young people but other key people in their lives as well as the wider community. In addition, the level of concern about crime and safety reported by young people was linked to alcohol.

Health and safety

Health and personal safety were ranked the top two issues of personal concern to young people. This highlights the need for equipping young people with practical strategies to deal with these issues of concern. However, given the breadth of the “health” category, it is not clear whether the health issue/s of young people are mental, emotional, or physical, or a combination of all three. Therefore, there may be merit in having a community discussion about the nature and source of the health issues experienced by young people in Lithgow.

In addition, young people indicated that when in need of advice and support they turn to their friends, parents and the internet. This highlights the importance of services engaging young people via their websites and other online platforms and providing appropriate information and support through these mediums.

Employment and education

Young people highlighted that there is a lack of education and employment opportunities in Lithgow. More specifically, the lack of apprenticeships and traineeships available locally makes it difficult for young people to get ahead. Young people indicated that they

would like to gain work experience in an industry they find meaningful and relevant, such as the entertainment, tourism, and hospitality industry. The lack of employment opportunities for young people is a common issue in small rural towns and is not unique to Lithgow. Lithgow Council is currently working to diversify its industry base and attract more developers into the area.

Family and relationships

The survey showed the crucial role that the family environment plays on young people's lives. *Family relationships* and *friendships* were highly valued and also were major sources of advice and support for issues of concern. Family conflict was an issue of personal concern for about a third of young people who participated in the survey. These findings support the need for evidence-based integrated programs and services that promote loving and nurturing home environments and support parents and carers, vulnerable families in particular, to develop high quality parenting and nurturing relationships with children.

Housing

While the majority of young people that filled out the survey live with family, a total of five males stated that they were living in insecure housing and/or were homeless. It is not clear from the survey whether these young people were in crisis accommodation or whether they were couch-surfing. A significant aspect to consider is that many young people do not identify as “homeless” when couch-surfing, therefore, potentially the number of young people living in insecure housing in Lithgow could be greater. Currently there is only one service in Lithgow that provides medium term housing for young people, or helps them find other temporary and safe accommodation. The properties owned by the service are constantly filled and at capacity. This highlights the need for greater alternative accommodation options and/or more properties at an affordable rate.

The Future

Almost fifty percent of the young people surveyed said that they intend to leave Lithgow and work elsewhere once they complete their full-time study. Currently there are approximately 2.6 workers aged 45 years and over for every worker that is younger than 25 years². However, as Baby Boomers retire from the workforce, they will take with them, in the medium-term, irreplaceable levels of experience. The impact of this shift in demographic forces could create pressures for employers in terms of workforce and skill shortages. In light of these predicated changes it is important for Council to consider implementing strategies to attract and retain young people in the area, provide training opportunities, and encourage them to build careers in the region. Similarly, to ensure that

² Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations, Australian Government, 2013.

the intellectual capital of Council is not lost, it is important to implement strategies to retain the knowledge and experience of its older workers looking to retire or leave Council in the near future.

References

‘Australian Jobs 2013’, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government.

Census 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, Lithgow.

‘Youth Homelessness Matters’, Fact Sheet prepared by YFoundations. Retrieved online <<http://yfoundations.org.au/explore-and-learn/publications/fact-sheets/>> [5 January 2015].

Community Strategic Plan 2026, Lithgow City Council.

Lithgow Council Youth Survey 2014

1. Please indicate your age range:

11-15 yrs

16-19 yrs

20-24 yrs

2. Please indicate your gender:

Female

Male

3. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes
No

4. Are you currently studying?

Full-time
Part-time
Not studying

5. If studying, what level of study are you currently undertaking?

Primary school
High school
Tafe
University
Other (specify) _____

6. Are you currently employed?

Full-time
Part-time
Not in paid employment, looking for work
Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work

*Part-time is considered to be less than 35 hours per week, and full-time is 35 hours or more.

7. Where do you currently live?

With Family
Boarding school
Shared house
Alone
Homeless/ insecure housing
Foster care
Other (specify) _____

8. What activities are you currently involved in?

Sports (as a participant)
Sports (as a spectator)
Volunteer work

Arts and Cultural activities
 Youth group activities
 Religious group activities
 Environmental groups and activities
 Political groups or organisations
 Other (specify)_____

9. What youth issues do you think are most important in Lithgow and why?
Please indicate your top 3 issues and elaborate in the space below.

Economy and financial issues
 Alcohol and drugs
 Crime
 Housing
 Transport
 Social and recreational opportunities
 Education
 Employment
 Health & Welfare

Why?

10. How important are these issues to you? Please rate your level of importance by using the 5 point scale ranging from *extremely important* to *not at all important*.

Issue	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Slightly Important	Not at all important
Coping with stress					
School or study problems					
Body Image					
Family					

conflicts					
Depression					
Health					
Personal safety					
Bullying/ emotional abuse					
Suicide					
Discrimination					
Drugs					
Alcohol					
Gambling					

11. Where do you turn for information, support and advice?

(Please indicate your top 5 by numbering 1 to 5)

Community agency ☐

Friends ☐

Internet ☐

Magazines ☐

Parent/s ☐

Relative/ Family friend ☐

School counsellor ☐

Teacher ☐

Telephone hotline

12. What do you value?

(Please indicate your top 5 by numbering 1 to 5)

Friendships ☐

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Family relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Physical and mental health | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School or study satisfaction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Financial security | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Getting a job | <input type="checkbox"/> |

13. Each year, National Youth Week events are held in Lithgow. What events and/or activities would you like to see as part of the Youth Week celebrations in Lithgow?

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Music concerts/ bands | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Theatre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Art Installations | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carnivals/ Festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Workshops/ Information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. What do you think the future of Lithgow should be in terms of business and employment opportunities?

15. What do you see your future like in Lithgow?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Intend to stay and work in Lithgow | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|

- Intend to leave Lithgow and work elsewhere ☐
- Intend to go to University ☐
- Intend to access further education and training ☐ (e.g. TAFE, Community College, other training centres).

16. Please supply your email address if you wish to receive the final results of this survey.

Email

Thank you for taking this survey.

The data extracted from this survey will inform Lithgow Council's Youth Strategy and the future directions for young people in Lithgow LGA.

Sector Questionnaire

1. What is the name of your service?

2. What age group does your service target?

3. What type of programs and services does your organisation provide for young people? (e.g. case management, accommodation, education etc)

4. What are the top 5 challenges your organisation faces in providing this service to the community?

5. Do you feel that there is a gap between service provision and the current needs of young people? Please explain.

6. What do you see as the role of Council in supporting young people in Lithgow?

7. What youth issues do you think are most important in Lithgow and why?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Economy and financial issues | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Alcohol and drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Crime | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transport | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social and recreational opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Health and welfare



Why? _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill this questionnaire out.