

# Town of Victoria Park Youth Plan 2021-2024

## Engagement Report

### Report by the Youth Affairs Council of WA

At the end of 2020, the Town of Victoria Park engaged the Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA) to develop the Town's Youth Plan. The purpose of the Plan is to provide the Town with a best practice framework and coordinated approach to the inclusion and development of young people in the community.

Over the last four months YACWA has been working closely with staff at the Town to:

- Get an understanding of youth service provision within the Town
- Explore the current youth landscape and emerging trends
- Engage with key stakeholder groups to understand the unique needs of young people aged 12 to 25 who live, work, study, volunteer and recreate in the Town

This report provides a snapshot of the consultation process undertaken, what we learned, the draft vision for the Plan and key focus areas.

## Consultation process

YACWA developed and delivered a robust consultation with four key stakeholder groups in the Town. These groups were:

1. Young people aged 12 to 25 who lived, worked, studied, volunteered or recreated in the Town
2. Parents and caregivers of young people
3. Organisations that worked with and/or connected with young people
4. Town staff that connect with or plan for young people in their role

In total we spoke with **518 young people, 56 parents and caregivers, 14 organisations and 15 staff**. Parents and caregivers participated in a survey, organisations were engaged through structured one on one interviews and staff participated in a workshop. The youth engagement approach was multi-dimension and is outlined below.

## Youth engagement

To ensure that we reached a wide demographic of young people and that we asked the right questions, we recruited eight young people aged 16 to 23 who lived in the Town of Victoria Park, and trained them to be **peer researchers**. This group worked with YACWA to co-design the youth survey and they each delivered 30 surveys with young people in their peer group. The peer researchers were recruited for their diversity of connections and experience.

In terms of who we reached through the surveys, young people were from every age group (12 to 25), with a higher proportion of young people aged 18 to 25—which is reflective of

the Town's demographic of a higher-than-average population of young people in this age bracket. We also spoke with:

- 55% female, 43% male and 2% non-binary young people
- 22% who identified as LGBTIQ+
- 18% from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- 15% who identified as living with a mental health difficulty
- 3% who were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 3% who said that they had caring responsibilities
- 1.6% who identified as having a disability

We also engaged in deeper conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people through two workshops with Wirrpanda, young people experiencing homelessness through a workshop with Mission Australia's Youth Accommodation Support Service (YASS), young people at a local Girl Guides group and young people who wanted to make a difference in their local area at a Young Changemaker workshop.

## What we learned

What we heard at the highest level is that young people in the Town want to feel **safe, connected**, live in a community that enables them to **thrive**, or reach their full potential and want **opportunities to contribute**, in some way.

We have grouped what we learned into five key areas outlined below:

### Places, events and activities

- There are some good events in the Town, but young people see many as family oriented and don't feel that they are for them. They want to see more **youth-focused** events and activities.
- Young people really love the cafés and restaurant strip, but **money is an issue**. It was suggested that the Town work with businesses to run **discount nights** or provide discounts to reward young people for community service or engagement with the Town.
- Good formal sport options were identified, but we heard that there was a need for more informal, **casual or drop-in sport activities** or casual sports set up.
- We found there was a strong desire to see more **creative arts and music** opportunities for young people.
- There were many places in the Town that young people hadn't heard of (Arts Centre, Community Centre) or they thought needed a **refresh to be attractive to young people** (Library, Leisurelife).
- Young people really valued some of the **green open spaces and natural places** such as the Swan River and MacMillan Park and want to see these looked after well.

### Health and wellbeing

- We asked young people what **issues were important** to them. We analysed this by age (if they were under or over the age of 18). Across the two age groups, four of the top five

issues were the same. These were **mental health, climate change, body image and school/study stress**. For the young people over 18, environmental sustainability was a top five issue. For those under 18, safety and crime was a top five issue.

- **Youth unemployment** is higher than people over the age of 25—this is a trend across the State, but there were some areas of the Town where this was higher than average. Some young people told us that they found it difficult to find a job. There were suggestions that with the amount of businesses in the Town there could be opportunities to **partner with business, Curtin/TAFEs to match young people with jobs**.
- Young people wanted more opportunities to develop **life skills, job ready skills** and support with things like writing and building a resume, interviews and so on. Many identified wanting more **volunteer opportunities and internships**.
- **Feeling safe was very important** for young people, and many identified not feeling safe in areas of poor lighting or where there was a lot of anti-social behaviour. They wanted to see **more lighting** and in areas where young people want to spend time.
- **Transport** around the Town was seen as good in some areas, and poor in others. Young people said they often didn't feel safe waiting at **bus stops**, and poor transport after hours on weekends was a concern for young people that didn't drive or found it hard to get their licence.
- Young people were concerned about **lack of mental health services**, but many didn't know that the Town has a mental health service called **Youth Focus** located in Burswood, which lends itself to a partnership with the service and assistance with promotion.

## Communication

- Young people told us that they often just didn't know about what was on for young people, and what services, facilities or events were available. They told us that the Town needs to communicate in more **youth friendly ways**. Some ideas for this included:
  - Having a youth specific page on the **website**
  - Promoting more on **platforms** young people use (Instagram, TikTok)
  - Having a **social media take over** by young people
  - **Posters and flyers** in places young people actually go, i.e. shopping centres or bus stops (not places they don't such as the library)
- Young people told us that they thought that it would be helpful and innovative to get young people to help **design campaigns** (i.e. for things at Leisurelife or Aqualife)
- They told us that they often find out about things from family or friends (word of mouth) and that having **youth ambassadors** or influencers on board could help promote things
- Most importantly they said that the Town needed to hold things and **talk to young people in places that they wanted to go** to already. They said it was important to go to them, rather than expect them to come to you.

## Civic participation

- Having opportunities to **contribute to society** was important to a lot of young people. Many expressed interest in and concern for social issues (even ones that didn't impact them) and a desire to help out in some way.

- We heard that there is sometimes a **negative image of young people** (or a small group of young people) that needed to be addressed to help young people feel like a valued part of the community and more able to contribute.
- Many young people expressed an interest in contributing more to how **decisions were made in council**. Some had more interest being part of advocacy and lobbying for big changes. Others thought they only had a few minutes but would like to be asked their opinion more often.
- The Town has lots of plans and strategies and young people had lots of ideas. Giving staff that don't have experience of working with young people a **guide** of simple ways or avenues to talk to young people was suggested, so that their information was included in place planning, crime and safety planning, transport planning, sustainability planning and so on.
- There was interest in getting more **young people on council** and more young people voting.
- Some young people thought they could help plan and **organise events and initiatives**, especially if it related to an area of interest, i.e. something they were studying.

### Partnerships and collaboration

- We found that there are lots of organisations out there supporting young people and that work is needed by the Town to see how everyone can **work together better**.
- There was a need for better **promotion** of what is available for young people.
- It was identified that the Town has a role in helping organisations with accessing **funding** more easily, as most said that they didn't apply for grants and the like as it was too difficult.

### Draft vision and focus areas

An analysis of the themes has led to the suggested **vision** that *all young people who live or visit the Town of Victoria Park feel safe and connected, and that they have opportunities to contribute and thrive*. The **five focus areas** (as outlined above are)

1. Places, events and activities
2. Health and wellbeing
3. Communication
4. Civic participation
5. Partnerships and collaboration

We recommend that the name of the Plan and titles for the focus areas are open for discussion with the potential of a name change. We feel that young people could come up with more exciting, innovative or dynamic titles.