

SHIRE OF
MERREDIN
INNOVATING THE WHEATBELT

Draft Youth Strategy & Engagement Plan 2019-2023

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Introduction

Executive Summary

The Shire of Merredin is committed to ensuring that young people are recognised and heard as equal citizens in the Merredin Region.

The Youth Strategy & Engagement Plan 2019-2023 is a four year strategic document that aims to guide the Shire and stakeholders in working with young people of Merredin aged 0 - 24 years, to ensure active engagement, responsiveness to their needs and aspirations, and delivery of services and programming.

The best way to support and develop young people is to invest in early intervention. This approach contributes to an outcome of healthy children and young people connecting with families, peers and community: to learn and ultimately develop as contributing independent adults.

This Plan has been developed in consultation with almost 90 community members and service providers. Consultation with young people focused on exploring their interests, ideas and concerns.

In responses to community feedback, this Strategy contains the new youth services model for the Shire. The strategy aims to enhance and develop the following:

- Youth Education and Inclusion;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Youth Spaces and Places; and
- Education, training and employment.

This strategic approach aims to start building a process for developing a framework that will build upon other Council activities and those of other service providers. It provides direction in supporting a holistic community response able to adapt to changing requirements and reflects the needs of the community.

Strategic and Policy Context

Shire of Merredin Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028

Zone 1 – Community and Culture

“Merredin is rich in cultural diversity, performing and fine arts and a variety of sports available for both residents and visitors”

Key Priority 1.7

Providing support to local organisations which seek to enhance engagement and opportunities available to early years and youth in the Merredin Region.

The strategic direction of the Shire is provided through the Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028.

The Shire of Merredin Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028, along with the Corporate Business Plan 2018-2022 and the Youth Strategy and Engagement Plan

2019-2023, will provide direction for the activities of the Shire in regards to service provision and support for young people in the district.

At State level, ***“Our Youth, Our Future”*** outlines the WA Government’s commitment to young people through their vision of ‘a bright future where all young Western Australians can participate, contribute, feel connected, be well and be supported to achieve their full potential’.

The Western Australian Government’s commitment to young people is to work in partnership with the community to make a difference in areas that matter most to the young people themselves across four domains:

- their health, happiness and safety;
- their learning, work and future financial independence;
- their opportunity to live life to the full; and
- their desire to make a difference.

The Department of Health outlines in their “WA Youth – Health Policy 2018-2023”, aims for young people in WA to being healthy in holistic terms, encompassing mental, emotional and social optimal health. Creating better educational outcomes, more successful transition to full-time work, fewer challenges parenting their own families and development of healthy adult lifestyles.

Regionally, the Wheatbelt Regional Plan 2013-2018 by Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt WA, identifies five key areas of focus to enable reform in the youth services sector in the region:

- development of innovative service delivery models to improve the range and accessibility of services available within the region;
- the attraction and retention of suitably qualified staff and the upskilling of existing staff to meet workforce development challenges in the sector;
- the provision and maintenance of fit for purpose infrastructure and equipment;
- identification of sustainable governance structures for community managed services;
- formation of a strong leadership structure to provide a coordinated and cohesive approach to improving children’s services in the region.

The Wheatbelt Youth Strategy 2012-2017 by RDA Wheatbelt WA is based on four priorities with an overarching vision to guide the framework *“All Wheatbelt young people matter – to themselves, to the community – now and into the future”*.

The four priority youth focus areas identified were:

- responsible behaviour;
- education, training and employment;
- community, parenting and families; and
- health and wellbeing.

The Shire adopts a mixture of the values underpinning the Government of WA, Department of Health and Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt WA relating to youth needs and aspirations that have identified across our region.

Current Situation

Currently the Shire, local industry and stakeholders provides a range of youth services, infrastructure and support in the table below:

Department/Organisation	Item/s	Outcomes
Engineering Services	Parks, playgrounds, skate park, sporting grounds and clubs.	Social connections, physical well being
Community Development	Grants program Pilot program of events fund Youthfest, NAIDOC Week, workshops and activities Eric Hind Scholarship	Service provision, Connections, skills and workshops, sponsorship
Library	Story time and Rhyme Time, Better beginnings, holiday activities All resources and eLearning Work placement for youth via Merredin College	Literacy, reading habits, speech development Health and wellbeing, educational
Cummins Theatre	Cummins Kids workshops and activities Provides support for traineeship and work placement programs for youth via Merredin College	Social connections, physical well being, service provisions, educational
MRCLC	Development outdoor and indoor youth recreation spaces Local sporting clubs provide a range of sporting opportunities including football, netball, basketball, hockey, tennis, lawn bowls, cricket and badminton.	Service provision, connections, physical skills
Avon Youth	Activates safe space for youth to access through providing after school drop in services and a range of 6 week programs and activities	Service provision Community and personal safety skills Life skills Physical activity
Eweyn Group	An initiative that focuses on the 0-4 age group, whereby various stakeholders work collaboratively on a calendar of events for the year that create a healthy and safe environment that are underpinned by learning various skills	Parenting Better service provision outcomes/skills workshops

Merredin Playgroup	Support early years group network Breastfeeding WA	Physical activity, social interactions, education
Youth Divisionary Projects	Range of youth divisionary projects activated by Merredin Police. Build positive interaction to help assist in decrease in number of youth offending and combat the cycle of behaviour.	Connections, engage, lead, and activate, safety, service provisions.
Merredin Cadets	Social inclusion with “reserve” and cadets programs Providing the community with volunteering services via community events.	Physical activity, personal and safety skills, lead, assist community for volunteer events
Merredin Swimming Pool	Intern & Vacation Swimming Lessons, development outdoor Youth recreation spaces	Connections, physical activity, community and personal safety skills
Merredin Central Regional TAFE	Skill Workshops & programs Flexible courses, apprenticeships and training, career advice	Service provision
Youth Council	Linking youth and various community representatives. Consultation and advisory groups for delivery and engagement of youth programs	Engage, lead, consult and activate
Alcohol and Drug Counselling – Holy Oake	Offers alcohol and drug counselling for individuals and families. Prevention officer for awareness for youth.	Service provision
Interagency Network	Interactive State Government and other agencies groups working collaboratively on range of issues that are associated with youth	Service provisions, engage, lead, consult and activate
Wheatbelt Driving School	Wheatbelt Driving school offers supervised driving instructions and assist youth to attain a drivers licence	Service provisions, traffic and transport skills

Young People in Merredin

Population

The shire has a steady youth population. In Census 2016, young people aged 10 to 24 years made up of 21.4% of the Shire’s population.

Graph 12 to 24 years olds as a % of Merredin Population from a range

MEASURE	Description	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
ERP_6	Persons - 0-14 years (%)	21.4	21.2	21.1	20.9	20.4	20.2
ERP_7	Persons - 15-24 years (%)	14.4	15	15.5	15.3	15.1	15.4
ERP_8	Persons - 25-34 years (%)	11.9	12.2	12.4	12	12.3	11.9
ERP_9	Persons - 35-44 years (%)	13.8	13.2	12.4	12.3	10.8	10.7
ERP_10	Persons - 45-54 years (%)	13.5	13.5	13	13.4	13.2	12.7
ERP_11	Persons - 55-64 years (%)	11.7	11.8	11.9	12.3	12.8	13.2
ERP_12	Persons - 65-74 years (%)	7.4	7.4	7.8	8.1	9.1	8.8
ERP_13	Persons - 75-84 years (%)	4.6	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.6
ERP_14	Persons - 85 years and over (%)	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.1	2.4

Age	Merredin (S)	%	Western Australia	%	Australia	%
Median age	38	--	36	--	38	--
0-4 years	213	6.4	161,727	6.5	1,464,779	6.3
5-9 years	231	6.9	164,153	6.6	1,502,646	6.4
10-14 years	212	6.3	150,806	6.1	1,397,183	6.0
15-19 years	204	6.1	149,997	6.1	1,421,595	6.1
20-24 years	302	9.0	160,332	6.5	1,566,793	6.7
25-29 years	198	5.9	184,908	7.5	1,664,602	7.1
30-34 years	201	6.0	194,267	7.9	1,703,847	7.3
35-39 years	177	5.3	173,041	7.0	1,561,679	6.7
40-44 years	198	5.9	171,996	7.0	1,583,257	6.8
45-49 years	212	6.3	172,520	7.0	1,581,455	6.8
50-54 years	232	6.9	162,438	6.6	1,523,551	6.5
55-59 years	246	7.3	149,899	6.1	1,454,332	6.2
60-64 years	200	6.0	132,145	5.3	1,299,397	5.6
65-69 years	178	5.3	116,755	4.7	1,188,999	5.1
70-74 years	133	4.0	82,911	3.4	887,716	3.8
75-79 years	83	2.5	61,509	2.5	652,657	2.8
80-84 years	60	1.8	42,590	1.7	460,549	2.0
85 years and over	67	2.0	42,420	1.7	486,842	2.1

The median age of people in Merredin (S) (Local Government Areas) was 38 years. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 19.6% of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 15.6% of the population.

The Shire is experiencing steady growth of population with children aged 0-10 years, making up 13.3% of the Merredin population in Census 2016.

Merredin also has a high Indigenous youth population with 7% of young people identifying as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. These figures are significantly higher than the Australian average.

Merredin Population

Merredin Population: 3350

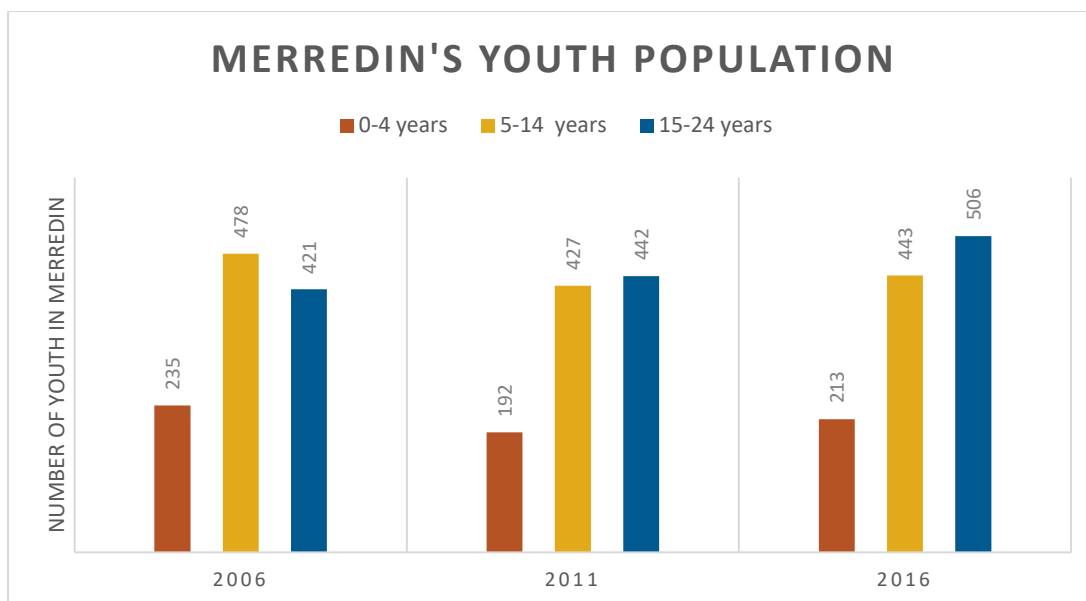
Families: 843

Average Age Male: 52.6

Average Age Female: 47.4

7% of the population identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Young people (ages 0-24 years) represent 34.7% of the population



Youth population in Merredin has stayed relatively stagnant in the last ten years, with no significant growth or decline in the number of young people within the shire. The median weekly household income in Merredin is \$1,332 which is lower than the weekly household income in WA, which is of \$1,595.

Methodology

The consultation engagement process was carried out over a one month period during March and April 2019. A presentation was also presented to elected members in February 2019. Engagement in three key areas with a range of data collection methods were used, these included:

1. Youth Strategy

Contained 12 questions which primarily collected quantitative data. The survey was distributed through Avon Youth, Merredin College and social media via Council's website. Hard copies of the survey was also distributed during the Merredin Youth Fest. The survey collected a total of 43 responses.

2. Youth Survey – Parents

Contained 11 questions and collected a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The survey was made available online to parents of children under 12. The survey collected a total of 26 responses.

3. Stakeholders of Youth Survey

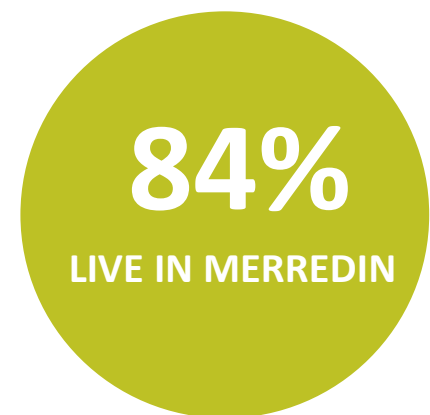
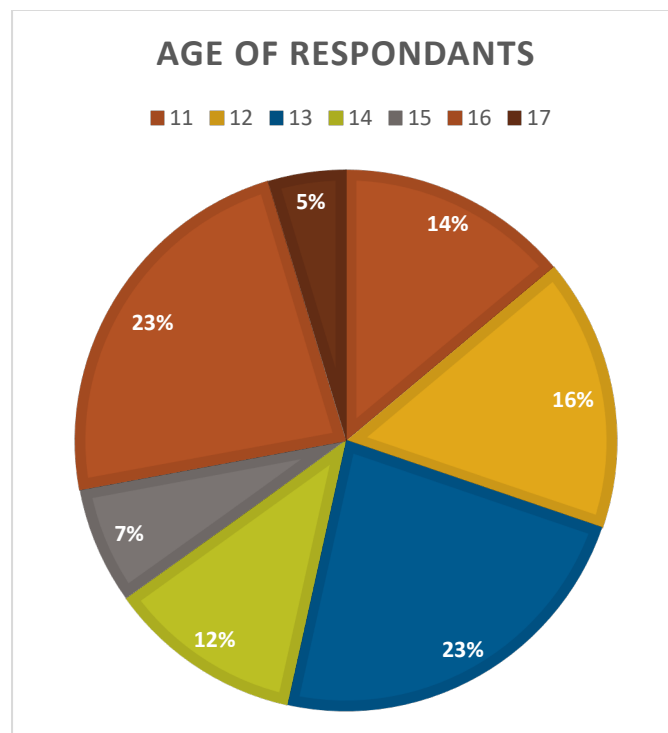
This survey contained 12 open ended questions which collected primarily qualitative data. The survey was directly distributed to specific agencies and stakeholders of youth. Further consultation with some stakeholders was made via phone call or in person when relevant. The survey collected a total of 17 responses.

Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028

Additionally, existing data collected in 2017 through previous consultation for the Strategic Community Plan were considered in the formulation of this strategy.

Profile of Responses

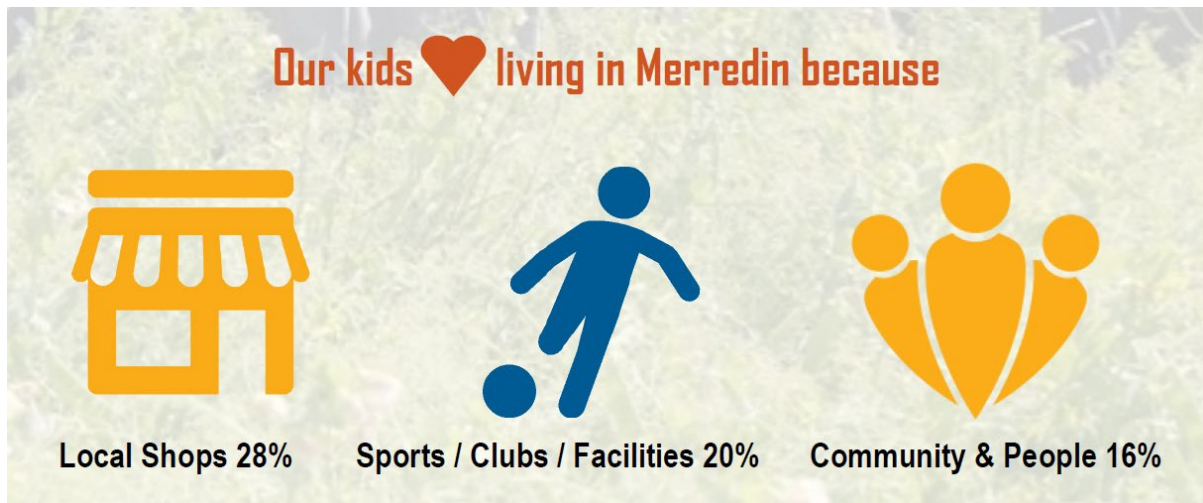
Youth



Parents



Key Findings of Consultation



WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR THEIR FUTURE?

1. Having a house
2. Finishing school
3. Having a good education

WHAT'S LESS IMPORTANT?

1. Being a good role model
2. Having money and savings

WHAT COULD BE BETTER?

1. Programs and workshops
2. Transport
3. Job Opportunities

WHAT DO THEY LIKE ABOUT MERREDIN?

1. The land and open spaces
2. Family and friends
3. Community and events

WHAT DO THEY WANT MORE OF?

Things to do!

In Merredin our Kids most want to IMPROVE



Upgrades to the Leisure Centre -
(Eg: Install Cooling System) 21%



More Events / Youth Activities
& Cultural Services 18%



Upgrades to Sports Facilities in
Public Spaces (Eg: Skate Park) 18%

Our Kids also want to IMPROVE other areas such as having a Cleaner Town / Better Maintained & Upgraded Assets, Upgrades to Parks & Toilets, more Education / Job Opportunities for Youth and improvements to Public Safety including the lessening of Crime & Drug Abuse

In Merredin our Kids most WISH for



Greater Variety of Sport &
Youth Competitions 62%



Entertainment / Cuisine /
Youth Hangouts 18%



Music / Arts 8%

Our Kids LOVE their sport and entertainment but WISH for more variety, eg: Cricket & Volleyball for High Schoolers, more places to eat out with Friends, more niche competitions. Our Kids also WISH for improved resources to allow for job training and OPPORTUNITIES to enjoy Merredin's natural environment.

Gap Analysis of Youth Service Provisions in Merredin

The commonly reported gaps in services for young people in Merredin were:

- Safe places
- Lack of transport
- Education, training and employment
- Activities, programs and workshops

Partners in the Strategy

A number of key partnerships are in place between the Shire and local agencies and industry. Partners include:

- Avon Community Services (Avon Youth)
- Belgravia Leisure
- Amity Health
- Elected Members
- Youth fest
- Holy Oake
- Merredin 510 Army Cadet Unit
- Merredin Regional Community and Leisure Centre
- Wheatbelt Driving School
- Child Protection Family Support
- Merredin Community Resource Centre
- Central Regional TAFE
- Merredin College
- St Mary's Primary School
- WA Police – Merredin

Key Priorities and Youth Strategy Key Actions

Please refer to the current chart for reference.