



shire of Ashburton
opportunity to community



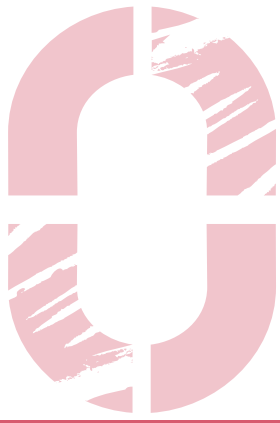
Youth Strategy

2026-2027

An aerial photograph of a rugged, arid landscape. The terrain is a mix of dark brown, reddish-brown, and greyish-brown soil and rocks. Sparse, low-lying vegetation in shades of yellow, green, and brown is scattered across the terrain. The overall appearance is that of a dry, rocky environment.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of Ashburton acknowledges all Native Title holders throughout the Shire. We respect and honour the Traditional Owners, custodians, native land titles, and Elders past and present. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.



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A home with strong foundations.

'Community and Opportunity' are the foundation of 'My Pilbara Home'. They enable the Shire and the many residents, volunteers, organisers, leaders, corporate sponsors, and participants to develop activities, initiatives and events in a way that makes the most of our remote location and dynamic population.

The 'My Pilbara Home' Community Development Strategy 2024 – 2027 includes six informing strategies:



1. Why a Youth Strategy ?



Young people are a vital part of the Shire of Ashburton's social, cultural and economic future. A dedicated Youth Strategy ensures that the needs, aspirations and strengths of young people are intentionally considered and embedded within community development planning.

The Pilbara's unique context – including geographic isolation, population movement, workforce pressures and limited access to services – can present both challenges and opportunities for young people. A clear and coordinated Youth Strategy helps the Shire respond to these factors in a consistent and place-based way.

This strategy provides:

- A shared framework for understanding and responding to youth needs across towns.
- Clear alignment between youth-focused initiatives and the broader My Pilbara Home approach.
- Guidance for partnering with young people, community organisations, schools and service providers.
- A mechanism to ensure youth voice, inclusion and wellbeing are considered in planning and delivery.

By articulating why youth is a priority, this strategy supports sustainable, connected and inclusive communities where young people feel they belong and can see a future for themselves in the Shire of Ashburton.



1.1 Our Commitment to Youth

Through the My Pilbara Home Youth Strategy 2026-2027, the Shire of Ashburton commits to working with and for young people in a way that is respectful, inclusive and responsive to local context.

Our commitment to youth is to:

- **Listen and engage** – valuing young people’s voices, lived experience and ideas in planning, delivery and decision-making.
- **Create inclusive opportunities** – ensuring activities, spaces and initiatives are accessible, welcoming and culturally respectful.
- **Support wellbeing and safety** – prioritising environments that support positive mental health, connection and resilience.
- **Enable participation and leadership** – encouraging young people to contribute, lead and build skills through meaningful involvement.
- **Work in partnership** – collaborating with families, schools, community groups, service providers and young people themselves.
- **Be place-based and flexible** – responding to the different needs, strengths and identities of each town and cohort.

This commitment reflects the Shire’s role as a facilitator, connector and enabler, supporting young people to build strong connections to their community and see a future for themselves within the Shire of Ashburton.

1.2 Our Current Activities with Youth

The Shire of Ashburton currently supports young people through a range of community development activities delivered under the My Pilbara Home framework. These activities are delivered directly by the Shire and in partnership with community organisations, schools, service providers and volunteers.

- Community programs and events that provide safe, inclusive and engaging opportunities for young people to connect with peers and their community.
- Youth participation initiatives that encourage young people to share their views, contribute ideas and take part in local decision-making.
- Creative, cultural and recreational opportunities delivered through arts, sport and place-based activities.

- Skill-building and leadership opportunities that support personal development, confidence and pathways to further learning, training or employment.
- Partnership-based initiatives that strengthen support networks around young people and reduce duplication across towns.

To support consistency, visibility and youth identity across the Shire, the Shire has also developed the **'AY!' (Ashburton Youth) branding**. The AY! brand was developed through youth-informed engagement and reflect a desire for a clear, recognisable and youth-friendly identity for activities, programs and communications designed specifically for young people.



The AY! branding provides a shared platform for:

- Clearly identify youth-specific programs, event and opportunities.
- Build recognition and trust with young people across different towns.
- Support consistent and accessible communication with young people.
- Reinforce a sense of belonging and ownership for young people engaging with Shire supported initiatives.

The Council endorsement of the AY! branding enables a coordinated approach to youth engagement while allowing for flexibility for place based delivery that reflects the unique identity of each town. It complements the broader My Pilbara Home framework by strengthening how youth focused initiatives are presented, communicated and experienced by young people.



These activities vary across towns in response to local needs, capacity and partnerships, while remaining aligned with the shared My Pilbara Home vision of belonging, connection and inclusion.

This strategy does not seek to replace existing activities, but rather to provide a clear framework that strengthens coordination, consistency and intentional youth outcomes across the Shire.



2. Youth and You



2.1 How We Talked with Youth

The Youth Strategy has been informed by ongoing and practical engagement with young people across the Shire of Ashburton. Engagement has been embedded within everyday programs, events and activities, recognising that young people are more likely to share their views in familiar, informal and accessible settings.

Ways we have listened to and engaged with young people include:

- **High school pop-ups and outreach** – informal engagement sessions delivered in school settings to connect with students, share information and invite feedback in a youth-friendly way
- **Listening through programs and events** – conversations, observations and feedback gathered during youth programs, activities and community events
- **Surveys and feedback tools** – short, accessible surveys used to capture ideas, preferences and experiences from a broad range of young people
- **Dotmocracy and interactive boards** – visual and interactive tools used at events and activities to encourage quick, anonymous and inclusive input

- **Informal conversations and relationship-based engagement** – ongoing discussions with young people, families and partners that build trust and understanding over time

Engagement approaches have been adapted to suit different ages, abilities and settings, with a focus on inclusion, cultural respect and accessibility. Feedback gathered through these methods has informed the focus areas and intent of this strategy.

This approach reflects a commitment to meeting young people where they are, valuing their lived experience and ensuring their voices help shape community development planning.



2.2 What We Learned

Engagement with young people through previous strategy work and ongoing consultation has reinforced many of the themes identified in the last Youth Strategy. Young people continue to value connection, inclusion and opportunities to participate meaningfully in their communities.

What has changed is the strength and consistency of feedback around the types of opportunities young people want access to and how they want to engage.

Key learnings include:

- **A strong desire for diverse local pathways** – young people are increasingly seeking education, training, creative and employment opportunities outside of the resource sector that allow them to build a future while remaining in their towns
- **The importance of age-specific opportunities** – young people want activities, programs and spaces designed

specifically for their age group, rather than being grouped with younger children or adults

- **Connection with peers matters** – opportunities to socialise, collaborate and build friendships with others of a similar age are a high priority
- **Place-based delivery remains critical** – young people value activities that reflect the identity, size and character of their town
- **Consistency and visibility** – regular, well-communicated opportunities help build trust, participation and a sense of belonging over time

These learnings have informed the focus areas and direction of the Youth Strategy, ensuring it responds to both long-standing needs and emerging priorities for young people across the Shire of Ashburton.



3. Developing Youth Programs and Events Together



3.1 What We Will Do

Over the life of the My Pilbara Home Youth Strategy 2026–2027, the Shire of Ashburton will focus on a coordinated set of actions that respond directly to what we heard from young people and align with the My Pilbara Home themes.

Capacity Building

We will build the capacity of young people, staff and the broader community to support meaningful youth development and leadership.

At a strategic level, this includes:

- Supporting learning, skill building and leadership opportunities that build young people's confidence, independence and life skills.
- Encouraging opportunities for young people to initiate, co-design and lead activities and programs.
- Supporting capacity building beyond the resource sector, including creative, cultural, community and emerging industries.
- Building internal capability so staff are equipped with current, youth appropriate engagement approaches.
- Strengthening mentoring, supervision and development opportunities for young people through structured programs.



Participation

We will enable young people to actively participate in community life through inclusive, accessible and age appropriate opportunities.

At a strategic level, this includes:

- Creating youth only activities and programs designed specifically for young people of similar age groups.
- Supporting a mix of recreational, creative, cultural and social opportunities that reflect local interests.
- Enabling flexible use of community spaces to support youth participation.
- Delivering place based opportunities that reflect the identity, size and character of each town.
- Ensuring activities are accessible, culturally respectful and welcoming to all young people.
- Facilitating opportunities for underrepresented groups of young people to connect with peers, programs and activities.

Recruitment and Recognition

We will support young people to see a future for themselves in the Shire through clear pathways, meaningful employment exposure and recognition of their contributions.

At a strategic level, this includes:

- Supporting pathways to employment, volunteering and further education.
- Increasing awareness of local career options and diverse pathways available within the Shire.

- Promoting and celebrating positive youth contributions and achievements.
- Supporting structured employment and development initiatives that prioritise local young people.
- Encouraging recognition of youth leadership, participation and achievement within the community.

Coordination and Collaboration

We will strengthen coordination and collaboration to improve youth outcomes and reduce duplication across towns.

At a strategic level, this includes:

- Embedding youth voice in planning, delivery and evaluation through ongoing engagement and feedback.
- Working in partnership with families, schools, service providers, community organisations and young people.
- Strengthening networks that support youth wellbeing, mental health and early intervention.
- Collaborating to advocate for improved access to services, training and skill development opportunities.
- Supporting coordinated planning, information sharing and collective action across the Shire.

Implementation

These focus areas provide the foundation for the annual implementation plan, which will outline specific actions, timeframes, responsibilities and measures of success.

3.2 Action Plan

Theme	Action	What success looks like
1. Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities that support young people to initiate and run youth activities to build capacity. 	Young people independently initiate or co-lead activities; increased youth leadership roles; participants report improved confidence and skills.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media/Communications and Communities teams are trained in relevant and up-to-date engagement strategies and social trends for young people. 	Staff demonstrate improved youth engagement capability; youth-friendly communication improves; engagement methods remain current.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Shire's GAP Year Program to include clear learning objectives, milestones and expected outcomes and investigate whether a stepped salary progression model linked to skill development and milestones. 	A GAP Year Program that is structured, transparent and genuinely developmental, where young people clearly understand what they are learning, how they are progressing, and what opportunities may follow completion of the program. A program that is equitable to existing employees.
2. Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work collaboratively to co-develop and co-design youth programs inclusive of arts, culture and life skills development through a quarterly planning process. 	Youth-informed programs planned quarterly; increased participation and repeat attendance; programs reflect arts, culture and life skills.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an awareness campaign to increase parents'/caregivers' understanding of supporting youth participation and information sharing. 	Increased parent/caregiver awareness; improved youth attendance; positive feedback from parents and young people.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and implement new ways to communicate with young people that align with the Social Media Ban. 	Youth-friendly communication channels established; young people know where to find information; increased engagement via alternative platforms.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate opportunities for under-represented groups of young people to connect with peers, activities and programs within the Shire. 	Increased participation from under-represented groups; improved accessibility; positive feedback on belonging.



Theme	Action	What success looks like
3. Recruitment and recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote and support youth achievements within the Shire.	Youth achievements regularly celebrated; increased visibility of positive youth contributions; young people feel recognised.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a business case for the implementation of a paid work experience program for Year 11 and 12 students during a school holiday period.	Business case completed and endorsed; partners identified; readiness for pilot implementation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support young people to learn about local career options.	Increased awareness of local careers; career information sessions delivered; stronger connections with local employers.
4. Coordination and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate quarterly Youth Activation Network meetings with relevant stakeholders and young people.	Meetings held quarterly; strong participation; shared actions and collaborative outcomes identified.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with existing networks to advocate for accessible youth mental health services (including culturally appropriate services) in each town.	Strong advocacy partnerships; improved visibility of services; clearer referral pathways.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with existing networks to support initiatives that build youth mental health awareness, knowledge and skills.	Increased delivery of campaigns/workshops/resources; improved community awareness; young people know where to seek support.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with existing networks to advocate for a broader range of skill development and RTO programs for young people.	Advocacy actions documented; improved awareness of training options; expanded or trial programs available.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with funded organisations delivering culturally appropriate mentoring for Aboriginal young people to explore career and education pathways.	Partnerships strengthened; Aboriginal young people access mentoring; culturally safe pathways supported.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through existing networks, support advocacy for local apprenticeships within the resource sector.	Ongoing advocacy evidenced; improved awareness of apprenticeship pathways; stronger industry relationships.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review feedback from young people on Youth Strategy progress, including youth-targeted activities.	Feedback reviewed and reported; actions adjusted in response; young people see outcomes from their input.







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