

Gilgandra Shire Council

Towards 5000: Youth Strategy and Action Plan

Draft 7 – May 6, 2025



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

**INSTITUTE
FOR
REGIONAL
FUTURES**

DRAFT

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	4
Executive Summary	2
About this strategy.....	2
1 The Youth Strategy and Action Plan - Overview.....	3
1.1 Our vision for the youth of Gilgandra.....	3
1.2 The purpose, role and principles of Gilgandra's Towards 5000 Youth Strategy	3
1.3 How the Gilgandra Youth Strategy and Action Plan is structured.....	5
1.4 Our Key Focus Areas and goals.....	6
2 The Strategic Context	8
2.1 Geography and history	8
2.2 Demography	9
2.3 The strategic context	12
2.4 What we currently do.....	14
2.5 How we consulted with children, young people and carers in the community.....	23
2.6 What the community told us and what this means for our Strategy and Action Plan	26
3 Our Strategy.....	30
3.1 Key Focus Area 1: Voice.....	30
3.2 Key Focus Area 2: Places to Belong	31
3.3 Key Focus Area 3: Connection and Identity.....	34

3.4	Key Focus Area 4: Opportunity - Life Ready, Work Ready	37
3.5	Key Focus Area 5: Wellbeing – Thriving, Safe and Secure, Sustainable	39
4	Measuring our outcomes	41
4.1	Our evaluation framework	41

Acknowledgement of Country

Gilgandra is known as a “meeting place” between three Aboriginal nations - Wiradjuri, Gamilaroi and Wailwan - and we proudly continue to be a meeting place for family, friends, locals and visitors alike.

Gilgandra Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, work and play. We pay our respects to our Elders past, present and emerging, and thank them for the contribution they have made, and continue to make, in the cultural identity of our nation.

ARTWORK?

Executive Summary

ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Gilgandra Shire Council ('Council') has designed a Youth Strategy and four-year Action Plan ('the Strategy') for the region.

The Strategy reflects the priorities of the local community and provides a framework to guide service planning and delivery, infrastructure development and advocacy across the Gilgandra Local Government Area (LGA).

This is Gilgandra's first Youth Strategy. It has been prepared by the University of Newcastle's Institute for Regional Futures, in collaboration with staff members and managers of Gilgandra Shire Council and with people of all ages who call Gilgandra home.

The Strategy is based on background research, documented in a *Discovery Report*, and on extensive community consultation during late 2024 and early 2025. The Strategy contributes to achieving the outcomes of the *Gilgandra Community Strategic Plan* and adds to Gilgandra's suite of *Towards 5000* strategic initiatives. It reflects the value that Council places on planning strategically, in partnership with the local community, as well as its commitment to the Shire's future generations.

1 The Youth Strategy and Action Plan - Overview

1.1 OUR VISION FOR THE YOUTH OF GILGANDRA

Gilgandra will be the place that children and young people want to call home – a place where they live and thrive today and tomorrow, where they feel valued and connected and where they actively contribute to a shared, sustainable future.

1.2 THE PURPOSE, ROLE AND PRINCIPLES OF GILGANDRA'S TOWARDS 5000 YOUTH STRATEGY

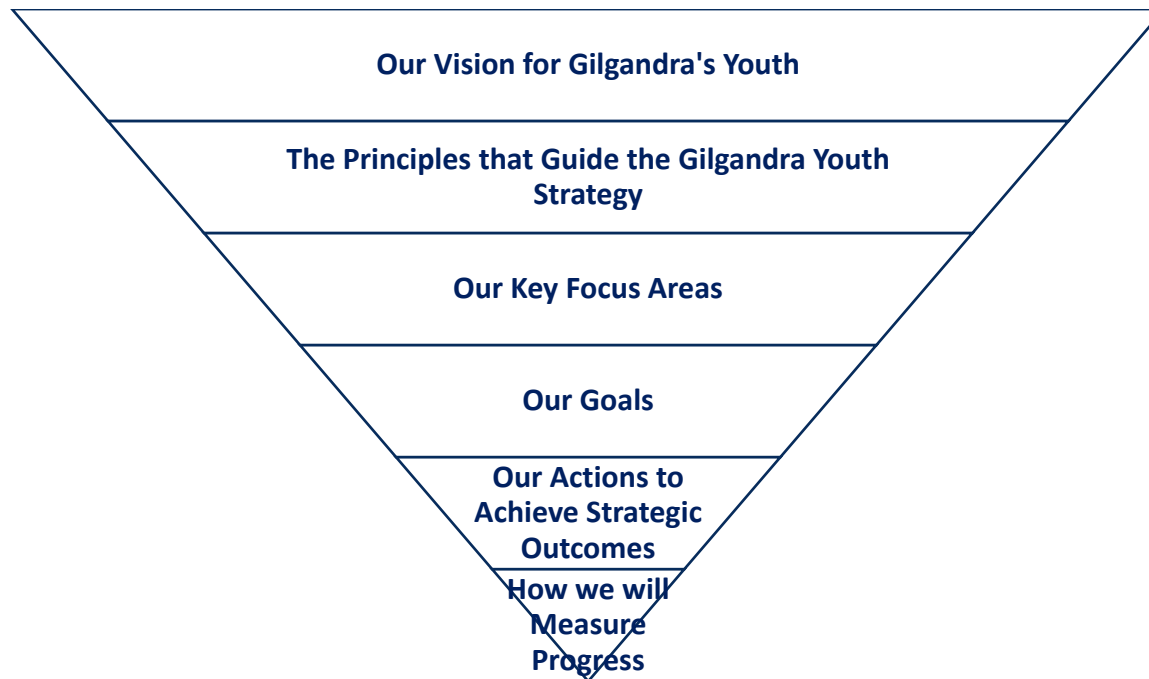
The Purpose of the Youth Strategy	<i>This strategy captures Gilgandra's aspirations for its future generations and the community's commitment to action to achieve them.</i>
Council's Role <i>Providing infrastructure and services that make Gilgandra a great place for children, young people and families to live and thrive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leader: plan, deliver, commission and evaluate innovative services, activities, facilities and programs that address the needs and aspirations of children, young people and their families• Enabler: provide in-fact and in-kind support, encouragement and scaffolding for the work of government, non-government and business organisations that are taking action to make Gilgandra a great place for children and young people to live• Custodian: acknowledge accountabilities to create and sustain local infrastructure, physical and social assets and the natural environment, for future generations• Collaborator: facilitate connections and partner with local stakeholders to plan, deliver and evaluate diverse events, programs, services and projects• Advocate: represent community needs, interests and concerns to local, regional and national stakeholders (including business and other levels of government) to generate awareness, political consideration, funding and resources for the Gilgandra community

Principles The information, values and beliefs that provide the foundation for the Youth Strategy and Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people are our future - we work together as a community to support their development, resilience and participation, and to foster community wellbeing, today and tomorrow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social, emotional and physical development is a long-term, individual process, which starts at birth and continues through to the mid-twenties. Each person achieves developmental milestones in their own way and time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people have diverse strengths, needs, aspirations and challenges that are different to those of adults. As such, diverse services, policy, and programs are required, that build on strengths; are developmentally / age appropriate; and that are flexible in design to accommodate difference (<i>difference means differing characteristics of gender, cultural difference, Aboriginality, family circumstances, health, mental health, disability and social needs, sexuality and gender identity</i>)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strengths and experiences of children, young people and the Gilgandra community in general, are recognised, respected and valued. We seek to build on these assets and to ensure people of all ages in the community are involved and engaged in designing and enacting the solutions and services they require.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our framework for planning and practice is founded on the principles of community capacity building: reviewing and removing barriers to participation; forging relationships based in respect, integrity and trust; understanding that individuals and communities are at different stages of 'readiness' for change. We aim to build empowerment, agency and ownership of issues and responses; we appreciate the value of active citizenship; we work at individual, group and community level, for health and social wellbeing for all
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We invest in services, programs and policy that will support children and young people to achieve developmental milestones, educational and work outcomes, quality relationships and to become engaged as our community's future leaders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are adventurous, agile and responsive to new ideas and new ways of consulting about, designing and building the services, programs and facilities needed by and for Gilgandra's children and young people

1.3 HOW THE GILGANDRA YOUTH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN IS STRUCTURED

The Youth Strategy and Action Plan has been designed on a foundation of supporting, background data and evidence. The ‘Discovery’ research, engagement and consultation that were undertaken during preparation of the Strategy ensure that it reflects the strengths, aspirations, challenges and needs of the people of Gilgandra Shire. They provide a rationale for the focus, direction and priorities of the Strategy.

The YSAP is structured as follows:



1.4 OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS

KFA 1: Voice

GOALS:

- Encourage, develop and support civic participation and leadership of young people
- Provide opportunities for young people to co-design and deliver community activities, programs, and events - both youth and 'all ages' events

KFA 2: Places to Belong

GOALS:

- Provide Council places and spaces that are accessible, and 'child and youth-friendly'
- Enhance the impact of the Gilgandra Youth Centre
- Achieve goals and actions of Gilgandra Towards 5000 Community Child Care Strategy
- Create opportunities to celebrate the talent of Gilgandra's young creatives, in local spaces and places
- Recognise and represent First Nations culture to encourage connection and belonging of First Nations young people
- Promote participation of young people in key community events

KFA 3: Connection and Identity

GOALS:

- Enable young people and families to learn about diverse cultures, abilities and experiences
- Represent the diversity of the population, including children and young people on Council's website, social media platforms and promotional material
- Improve internet connectivity to foster digital / online connection and participation
- Improve transport connections between Gilgandra and Dubbo and neighbouring communities

- Grow collaboration and partnerships between local services – including with local schools
- Promote opportunities for intergenerational connection
- Encourage families and young people to remain in and return to Gilgandra

KFA 4: Opportunity - Life Ready, Work Ready

GOALS:

- Contribute to the creation of employment and career development opportunities for young people within the Shire
- Facilitate opportunities for ‘whole person’ and ‘whole of life’ skills development by children and young people
- Enhance post-secondary education opportunities to enable local study and work opportunities and assist young adults to continue to live in Gilgandra post-high school
- Advocate with other levels of government and educational institutions to uplift the post-secondary education offer
- Promote and support learning for secondary and tertiary students

KFA 5: Wellbeing – Thriving, Safe and Secure, Sustainable

GOALS:

- Promote wellbeing by improving affordability and accessibility of fitness, sport and recreational opportunities for young people
- Increase access of children and young people to health services in Gilgandra
- Promote access of children and young people to information to enhance health and wellbeing
- Integrate planning for and promotion of well-being of children and young people with disabilities, into Council’s strategic processes

2 The Strategic Context

2.1 GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Geography

Located on the Castlereagh River in the Orana region of New South Wales, Gilgandra sits at the junction of the Newell, Oxley and Castlereagh Highways, 65kms north of Dubbo and about halfway between Brisbane and Melbourne. The Gilgandra Shire has a land area of 4,836 kms² and includes the township of Gilgandra itself, as well as the two villages of Tooraweenah and Armatree. A map of Gilgandra Local Government Area (LGA), within the context of surrounding LGAs and geographic location, is shown at Figure 1 below.

Map of Gilgandra Shire – Geographic Context



Source: Gilgandra Shire Housing Strategy 2022

Characterised by a largely flat landscape, the Gilgandra Region is highly suited to broad acre farming, with agriculture serving as a major contributor to the local economy. In recent years, however, health, disability services, and aged care have emerged as large employers in the community and, along with a growing ‘in-country’ tourism sector, contribute to a diversified economy.

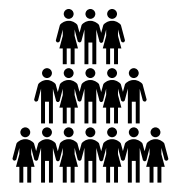
Gilgandra is the meeting point of the Countries of three First Nations peoples, the Gamilaraay/Kamilaroi to the northeast, the Wiradjuri to the south, and the Wailwan to the west. The name Gilgandra itself is taken from a First Nations language and means “long water hole”.

History

European settlement within what is now known as the Gilgandra area dates to the 1820s when pastoralists first sought to establish land holdings across the flat, fertile landscape. Their conflicts with the First Nations peoples of the area throughout the 19th century are well documented. Gilgandra was officially declared a town in 1888 with the Shire established a couple of decades later in 1906. Less than a decade later, Gilgandra was the starting point of the 1915 ‘Coo-ee March’ in which a group of 35 men initiated a World War I recruitment drive that gathered strength as they marched to Sydney.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHY

Population indicators (ABS: 2021 Census)



4,295 people (2021)
4,309 (2023)



84.2% born in Australia
14.5% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
86.8% of households speak English at home
Overseas born: 1% England; 0.5% Philippines; 0.3% New Zealand; 0.3% India



45.5% couples-only households
33% ‘families with children’
18.8% one parent families



25.5% with vocational qualifications - most at Certificate III level
10.8% with university qualifications



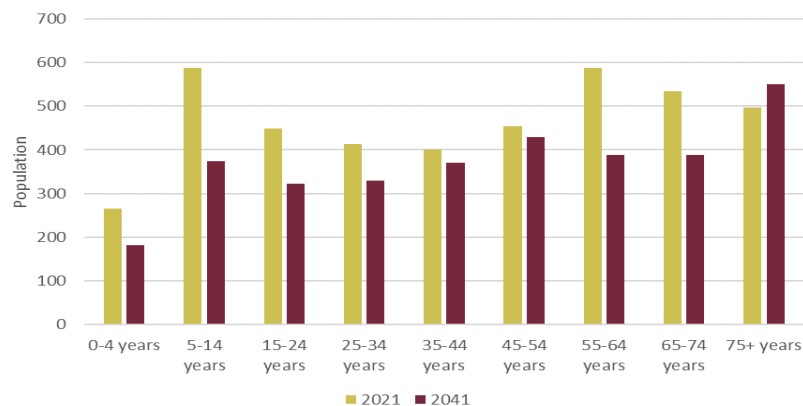
1,524 jobs in local economy
33.2% employed in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
Annual economic output \$571.83M
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing generates 79.6% of exports



- Socio Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) score of 930 and ranked in bottom 20th percentile NSW LGAs - 'relatively disadvantaged'
- Australian Early Development Census - 16.7% of children developmentally vulnerable across 2+ domains - 'vulnerable' classification

Population change

Population Projections - Gilgandra - 2021-2041



Source: NSW Department of Planning and Environment 2022



Ageing population - median age = 46 years -
Dubbo = 36 year; New South Wales = 39
years old
38% aged over 55 years

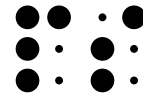
Fertility rate = 3.56 births per woman in 2022 - 1.5 births
above replacement rate



The 'Youth' population (2021 Census)



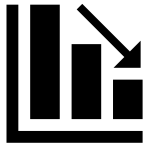
Young people 0-25 = 28.78% of Gilgandra population
Young people 0-25 = 31.35% of NSW population



Data on representation of young people with a disability in Gilgandra population not available
Estimated that between 7-8% of people 0-25 live with a disability in NSW



54.6% of 15 to 25 year olds employed
37.1% of 15 to 25 year olds not in the labour force
8.3% of 15 to 25 year olds unemployed vs NSW = 11%
Of those employed: 23.1% work in Retail Trades; 14.9% Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; 11.8% Health Care and Social Assistance; 10.3% Accommodation and Food Services



Decline in the percentage of young people aged 13-25 years – consistent with NSW and Australian data
Proportion of 15-19 year olds declined by 1.5% between 2011-2021
Pattern of youth 'out-migration', beginning during the high school years and then intensifying post-schooling
13.35% of 0-25 year olds in 2016 Census had moved to Dubbo by 2021 Census
15% of 15-25 year olds work in Dubbo – increases to 27% of those in full-time employment



Data on sexual preference and gender identity of young people in Gilgandra not available
However, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data suggests 6.1% of 15-24 year olds identify as gay, lesbian or having an 'other' sexual orientation

Other Community indicators

The Youth Strategy and Action Plan are underpinned by further demographic and community data:

- Crime and safety
- Online safety
- Employment and training opportunities future economic development programs

- Early childhood development and social determinants of life chance
- Health and wellbeing
- Attachment to place – connection and belonging
- Civic and community participation – engagement and voice for young people

2.3 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Like many communities across rural and regional Australia, approaches to dealing with the challenges Gilgandra is facing are identified within local, regional, state and national level strategic planning documents. The Towards 5000 Youth Strategy and Action Plan will be understood – an implemented – within the context of these ‘bigger picture’ strategic commitments.

STRATEGIC AND POLICY CONTEXT – NSW AND COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

The NSW and Commonwealth governments share Council’s vision for Gilgandra – and other townships – to thrive, grow and offer a sustainable future to young people and their communities. These ambitions are outlined in a number of strategic and policy documents, that include:

The Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041 (NSW government) establishes a strategic framework, vision and direction for land use, addressing future needs for housing, jobs, infrastructure, a healthy environment, access to green spaces and connected communities across the 19 local government areas that comprise the Central West and Orana regions, including Gilgandra LGA. This strategy notes the opportunities for Gilgandra that will emerge from major, future infrastructure projects: both the Central–West Orana Renewable Energy Zone and Inland Rail.

The Castlereagh Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update (NSW government) aligns closely with the *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041*, particularly on the importance of deriving long-term benefits from the Renewable Energy Zone and maximising new supply chain opportunities for local businesses. Existing strengths of Gilgandra were identified as the cultural and environmental assets of the area, as well as TAFE’s provision of courses in aged care and social assistance.

The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024 identified key issues and needs articulated by children and young people and consulted them about solutions. The Plan recognised and sought to address some of the unique challenges faced by the one-third of young people in New South Wales who live in regional areas.

Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make (Commonwealth government) provides a blueprint for government consultation and co-design with young people across the country. Building government capacity to include young people in policies.

Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–2031 is Australia’s framework to reduce child abuse and neglect and their intergenerational impacts. It sets out a ten year strategy to improve the lives of children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. It includes a separate plan to progress measures towards Closing the Gap for First Nations children.

STRATEGIC AND POLICY CONTEXT – GILGANDRA SHIRE COUNCIL

Gilgandra Council has also developed a suite of strategies and policies that are complementary to, state and national plans. Those relevant to children and young people are outlined in the table below:

Gilgandra Region Community Strategic Plan 2035 (currently in Draft) – will capture the community’s collective vision and build on the existing vision for <i>a vibrant region to live, enjoy and grow that is inclusive, resilient and progressive</i>
Gilgandra Region Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2024/25
Towards 5000 Community Health Vision
Towards 5000 Childcare Strategy
Gilgandra Region Community Engagement Strategy
Gilgandra Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020
Gilgandra Community Participation Plan
Gilgandra Township Activation Blueprint and Place Plan
Gilgandra Housing Strategy
Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2020
Regional Drought Resilience Plan for Castlereagh Country 2024

Relevant Council Policies

- Gilgandra Fitness Centre – Youth Access
- Youth Services Bus
- Disability Service Standards

2.4 WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

Council delivers a regular profile of activities for young people through its daily Youth Club and Library programs and provides an excellent program of School Holiday activities. Council's offer is, however, constrained by the limitations of the Youth Centre's aged, physical infrastructure, staffing and resourcing.

At the same time, children and young people are enthusiastic participants in 'whole of community' events such as the annual 'Under the Gums' festival and regular users of Council's community infrastructure, such as the local swimming pool, sports fields and the Fitness Centre. The Coo-ee Heritage Centre and the Gilgandra Art Gallery, including the Joy Trudgett Gallery, are significant Council assets that could be leveraged to increase the range and level of engagement of Gilgandra's young people in cultural life.

Our Social Infrastructure

Gilgandra Community Services	Overview
Gilgandra Youth Services Gilgandra Shire Council	Caters to local youth aged up to 18 years through programs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakfast Club: School Children (K-12)• Walk to school safely program• Family and individual youth support• Targeted Early Intervention Programs• School holiday programs• Bus hire
Gilgandra Specialist Homelessness Service Gilgandra Shire Council	Support to young people, adults and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
Gilgandra Shire Library Gilgandra Shire Council	Provides collections, early literacy and recreational programs for children and young people
Barnardos Gilgandra	Family Assistance and Youth Support services

Benevolent Society - Rural Youth Mental Health Service	Early intervention services to young people (ages 12-25) with, or at risk of, mental illness
Gilgandra High School NSW Department of Education	Secondary school education
Country Education Foundation of Gilgandra & District	Financial assistance to help achieve post high school education, training and careers
Culturally Nourishing Schooling at Gilgandra High School	Partnership with local schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to help teachers' understanding and professional practice with First Nations young people
TAFE NSW – Gilgandra NSW Department of Education	Foundation programs in vocational and general education, trade and industry specific courses – in person and online programs
Gilgandra Public School NSW Department of Education	Primary school education
Tooraweenah Public School NSW Department of Education	Primary school education
St Joseph's Primary School Bathurst Catholic Education Office	Catholic primary school education
Gilgandra Community Health Centre – Child and Family Health Service Western NSW Local Health District	Early childhood health, immunisations, health promotion and support
Gilgandra Community Health Centre – Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service (AMIHS) Western NSW Local Health District	Culturally sensitive antenatal and post-natal care in the community provided by midwives and Aboriginal Health Workers
Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Medical Service Outreach from Coonamble Aboriginal Health Service	Culturally sensitive primary and secondary health care
Three Rivers Regional Assembly	Aboriginal governance body representing Wiradjuri Nation peoples whose lands are bordered by the Wambuul (Macquarie River), the Kalari (Lachlan River) and the Murrumbidgee (Murrumbidgee River)
Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Lands Council / Aboriginal Corporation	Aboriginal governance body representing Gamilaraay/Kamilaroi, Wiradjuri and Wailwan peoples. Also provides a range of community services and support to local First Nations people

Gilgandra Preschool	Early childhood development and care – 3-5 years - 60 places
Aussie Kindies Early Learning Gilgandra	Early childhood development and care – 0-5 years – 49 long day care places
Gilgandra Boori's Playgroup Gilgandra Aboriginal Corporation	Playgroup for First Nations children

Our Physical Infrastructure

Council is the custodian of a small portfolio of 'youth-focused' venues across the Gilgandra LGA . Most of this community infrastructure, for example the Library Hub and skate ramp, is intended for shared use by people of all ages, although these assets are frequented by children and young people. One of these assets, the Youth Centre, is Gilgandra's only designated space for young people, sharing the site with Council's Fitness Centre and Homelessness Service.

Council's provision of physical infrastructure for Gilgandra's children and young people is complemented by a range of facilities that are owned by the state government, not for profit and commercial firms. The research identified 4 local schools (St Joseph's Primary School, Gilgandra Public School, Gilgandra High School and Tooraweenah Public School) and 8 places of worship within the LGA, as well as 2 early education and care ('child care') facilities, that have the potential to contribute to achieving Council's vision for children and young people.

Gilgandra has a supermarket, that is a popular place for young people to 'hang out', and several local cafes, which, along with local shops were identified in the Youth Strategy survey as the most frequently visited facilities in the township. There was also both anecdotal and survey feedback indicating a desire for a more diverse retail experience in Gilgandra; and regret (among younger age groups) at the absence of fast food chain outlets and (among older aged youth) at the lack of bars and nightspots.

The physical infrastructure, relevant to children and young people, that is owned and managed by Council, is shown below.

Gilgandra Swimming Pool



Opening Hours

October-March:

Monday to Friday

5.30am - 9.00am AND 3.00pm - 6.00pm

Saturday and Sunday

12.00pm - 6.00pm

December School Holidays:

Monday to Friday

5.30am - 9.00am AND 12.00pm - 6.00pm

Saturday and Sunday

12.00pm - 6.00pm

Gilgandra Youth Centre



Opening Hours

Monday to Friday:

9.00am – 5.00pm

Breakfast Club

7.30am Monday-Friday during School Terms



Gilgandra Fitness Centre (co-located with Youth Centre)

Opening Hours

Monday to Thursday: 1.00pm – 7.00pm

Friday: Toggle Users Only - 4.30am – 11.00pm



Gilgandra Library Hub (opened March 2025)



Opening Hours

Monday - Friday:

9.00am - 5.00pm

Saturday – 9.00am – 12.00pm

Gilgandra Skate Park



Hunter Park Playground



Tooraweenah Memorial Park and Playground /Tennis Courts



McGrane Oval and Sports fields



Ernie Knight Oval



Proposed Hunter Park Sports and Recreational Precinct

Gilgandra Shire Council recognises the importance of offering high quality, contemporary community spaces for people of all ages and, in particular, the value of fit-for-purpose facilities for sport, recreation and youth activities. Council has a vision *to create a Multipurpose Indoor Sports Centre which provides for a modern youth centre, gymnasium and outdoor public swimming pool which supports the growth and development of sports and recreation in Gilgandra*. To this end, it has developed plans for a sports and recreational precinct in Hunter Park. Planning for the new facility has reached the stage of concept design, however support from state and commonwealth governments will be required to achieve Council's vision. An image of the concept and link to the plan are provided below.



<https://www.gilgandra.nsw.gov.au/Live/Works-Projects/Hunter-Park-Sports-and-Recreational-Precinct>

Our Natural Environment

Gilgandra is located in a rich and scenic region of NSW, that includes natural assets such as the Castlereagh River, the Warrumbungle National Park, farmlands and bushland, as well as 'human'-made outdoor assets such as the Windmill Walk and the Gilgandra Floral Reserve. The township is also within easy-driving distance of the Western Plains Zoo. The 'Real Country' tourism initiative, a collaboration between Gilgandra, Coonamble and Warrumbungle Shire Councils offers an excellent example of leveraging these natural resources.

The importance of Gilgandra's rural, scenic and tranquil environment was reported through community consultation and the opportunities for fishing, biking, hiking and camping available in the shire were valued by the young people who contributed to the design of this Strategy. They suggested that there are opportunities for Gilgandra to leverage its location on the Castlereagh River by developing a 'town beach' or by providing designated places and infrastructure to support safe fishing (for example a jetty on the river) and swimming (for example a splash park) for young people.

2.5 HOW WE CONSULTED WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND CARERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Community Consultation

The consultation program for the Gilgandra Towards 5000 Youth Strategy and Action Plan gathered information from internal stakeholders, external stakeholder groups and the broader, Gilgandra community. The consultation approach:

- Enabled young people, as well as a cross-section of community members, to have their say and to contribute to the development of the Strategy
- Raised awareness of Gilgandra Council's aspirations for children and young people generally and of Council's commitment to creating a community where young people thrive
- Supported development of a Youth Strategy that is reflective of the strengths of the community, the resilience of young people and the opportunities for Council, other levels of government, non-government organisations and community to work together to enhance outcomes for young people.

Consultation took place over an extended period, between October 2024 and March 2025 to allow for seasonal factors, such as the December/January vacation period and Gilgandra's harvest season in October/November.

Information about the project and the opportunity for the community to engage was provided via flyers distributed at key Council and community outlets, messages on Council's website and Facebook page and a 'Tik Tok' message targeted at young people. Invitations to specific engagement sessions were issued via emails to key community leaders and community networks, with the support of the Gilgandra Council community services team.

The inclusion of two, ‘youth researchers’, who were students from the University of Newcastle, was a key element of the consultation methodology. These two young people designed promotional activities and visited Gilgandra in October 2024 to conduct consultation sessions (interviews and focus groups) with children and young people. The report they authored to capture their findings was incorporated into the two Engagement (Consultation) Reports that have informed Strategy development.

A total of 317 people provided input to the Strategy during the consultation process that included:

- a two-stage engagement phase, where children, young people, their carers and members of the broader community were involved in focus group discussions, and one on one interviews and workshops
- an engagement workshop with First Nations’ community representatives
- ‘word clouding’ activities, over three days, at the Youth Centre and Library to gather comments , ideas and drawings from children and young people in response to two questions: “What do you like to do after school?” *and* “Draw your perfect town”
- focus group discussions with year 5 and 6 students at St. Joseph’s primary school
- focus group discussion with teachers at St Joesph’s primary school
- a questionnaire sent to the presidents of the four Gilgandra schools’ Parents and Citizens committees
- an online ‘Youth Survey’ – with printed copies also available at the Youth Centre and Library, which were subsequently entered online
- the inclusion of two questions specific to young people and their life experiences, within the broader, bi-annual Gilgandra Community Insights Survey
- engaging with representatives of local stakeholder organisations, the general community and young people at a ‘Youth Summit’ workshop
- consulting local community sector organisations at a meeting of Gilgandra Council’s Interagency committee

The table below provides a summary of the consultation methods and number of participants in each.

Consultation Method	Number of People
2 Questions in Community Survey	134 responses
Youth Survey	42 responses
Word clouds - Library and Youth Centre	30 responses
Focus Group Consultations	34

Youth Summit	27
Interagency Committee Meeting	19
First Nations Community Organisations Workshop	10
St Joseph's Primary School - students	12
St Joseph's Primary School - staff	7
Parents and Citizens Questionnaire	2 responses

Engagement with First Nations Peoples

Aboriginal people who call Gilgandra home participated in a number of the community consultation sessions, including the Youth Summit and in a workshop held with representatives of local First Nations organisations. Many of Gilgandra's strengths and challenges that were identified by the Aboriginal community members who participated in consultation sessions mirrored those that were identified in consultation with the broader community. However, some of the specific issues identified included:

- challenges faced by Aboriginal young people in transitioning to, and achieving their potential in, secondary and post-secondary education, when they have been successful and well-supported during primary school years
- limited representation of Aboriginal culture and people in community life and in 'front of house' employment roles with Council – for example NAIDOC week not marked in recent years; few public art works that reflect local peoples
- the importance of young people showing respect for others, including their families, teachers, police, etc
- lack of entry level employment opportunities, due to limited fast-food and retail businesses in Gilgandra
- housing affordability and homelessness
- the need for more early intervention services

2.6 WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US AND WHAT THIS MEANS FOR OUR STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

A key finding of consultation with the community was the strength and resilience of the local community, that Gilgandra is a place with: strong community spirit; a beautiful rural environment and relaxed lifestyle; and a sense that children and young people are safe and secure. Council assets such as parks, sports fields and the Youth Centre, as well as festivals such as 'Under the Gums' and the annual Gilgandra Show were very well regarded.

At the same time, consultation indicated that Council faces challenges of distance, resourcing, population size (hence demand) and proximity to the regional centre of Dubbo (which is both an advantage and a disadvantage simultaneously) in positioning itself to provide the physical and social infrastructure and services required for children and young people to thrive.

The table below focuses on the issues and challenges – which are also opportunities for intervention through the Youth Strategy and Action Plan. The table outlines the issues and challenges that emerged during consultation and the response proposed in the Youth Strategy.

Issue / Challenge / Opportunity	Youth Strategy Directions / Scope
Limited engagement of the community generally and young people in particular, in civic decision-making and policy-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage, develop and support civic participation and leadership of young people – eg: Youth Council, youth representation on Council Committees• Convene annual 'Youth Forum' to review outcomes of the Youth Strategy, discuss newly identified needs and responses• Integrate planning for and promotion of well-being of children and young people with disabilities, into Council's strategic processes
Limited variety of things to do for children and young people, beyond sports – lack of opportunities to engage in cultural activities (music, art, craft, dance, theatre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liaise between Youth Centre, Library and schools to develop and/or promote an annual program of local youth-friendly events on Council website• Involve young people to plan, deliver and/or participate in key community events• Identify places and spaces that could be used as temporary / 'pop up' exhibition spaces for young creatives• Curate temporary / 'pop up' exhibitions for young creatives• Explore opportunities to involve children and young people in Connection to Country – cultural walks and talks programs delivered by local First Nations organisations

Need to travel to Dubbo for some sports for training and competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for more frequent and timely bus service between Gilgandra and Dubbo • Continue to deliver and maintain skate parks, pools, sports fields and other fitness infrastructure • Develop relationships with peak sports, recreation, fitness bodies and associations & institutions to enhance local delivery and promote sports, recreation
Limited social and recreational offer for young adults – 19-25 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for young people to co-design and deliver community activities, programs, and events - both youth and 'all ages' events • Provide imagery on Council website, social media platforms and collateral that represents the diversity of the population, including children and young people
Aged infrastructure at the local swimming pool – calls for pool upgrade and the introduction of a splash park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress planning and development of the proposed Hunter Park Sports and Recreation Precinct, including the design and development of a splash park • Review opening hours for the Gilgandra Pool and timing of Gilgandra Leisure Centre fitness programs
Aged and crowded Youth Centre – calls for upgrade to purpose-designed/built facility that will cater to demand and contemporary programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress planning and development of new Youth Centre as part of the proposed Hunter Park Sports and Recreation Precinct, including detailed design and identification / pursuit of funding opportunities from NSW and Commonwealth
Calls for extension of Youth Centre capacity - size, opening hours, staffing and range of programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Youth Centre opening hours – eg: pilot weekend programs • Design/deliver programs and strategies to include children/ young people who are currently under-represented as participants in Youth Centre programs • Plan and deliver occasional 'outreach' programs to outlying townships from Gilgandra youth services • Review staffing levels and capacity required to enhance Youth Centre outcomes, including creation and recruitment of a designated position for a young person on the Youth Centre team (eg: traineeship)
Calls for extension of Library Hub capacity – enhance diversity of programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Council places and spaces that are accessible, and 'child and youth-friendly'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a dedicated 'youth space' and youth focused programs in the Gilgandra Library that are inclusive of children /young people with diverse needs
Poor public transport between township and villages and between Gilgandra and Dubbo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for more frequent and timely bus service between Gilgandra and Dubbo • Investigate options for youth-specific community transport – including use of Council's existing 'Youth Bus' to transport children from Tooraweenah to activities at Gilgandra Youth Centre
Limited educational provision – concerns with public high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Gilgandra High School to identify issues and opportunities for Council to support student participation, retention and success • Establish a 'Study Hub' at Gilgandra Library • Provide opportunities for young people and families to learn about diverse cultures, abilities and experiences through a 'Living Library' program
Limited educational provision – limited TAFE NSW offer at local campus, need to travel to Dubbo and beyond to access TAFE / University qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate with other levels of government and educational institutions to uplift the post-secondary education offer to facilitate study and work opportunities in Gilgandra and assist with post high school retention in the shire
Limited employment or career development opportunities locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and work with local businesses to promote employment and career development opportunities for young people within the Shire • Review and diversify Council's traineeship and apprenticeship program • Develop opportunities for 'whole person' and 'whole of life' skills development by young people – eg: volunteering programs
Lack of childhood care and education places – both early childhood and out of school hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage goals and actions of Gilgandra Towards 5000 Community Child Care Strategy
Poor internet connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate with telecommunication networks for better internet services in Gilgandra
Limited health and well-being resources and services for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Towards 5000: Health Vision strategy actions that relate to children and young people • Advocate for allied health services (speech therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, paediatrics, optometry) to deliver fortnightly/monthly clinical outreach in Gilgandra

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local health services, including the Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Medical Service, to link vulnerable young parents with services • Work with local health services to convene an annual Community Mental Health forum to provide information to young people and families about mental health and wellbeing
Limited support for families raising children and young people – financial support and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote affordable housing options, such as the ‘Aeropark Estate’ housing development, as key options for families to remain or return to Gilgandra • Implement the Gilgandra Housing Strategy 2022 • Design a program in consultation with local child care providers and Cooee Lodge to bring children and older members of the community together

3 Our Strategy

3.1 KEY FOCUS AREA 1: VOICE

Goal 1.1: Encourage, develop and support civic participation and leadership of young people				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
1.1.1 In consultation with young people, develop inclusive engagement guidelines, to be adopted for Council planning and strategy development, so that young people are actively engaged and considered in Council's decision-making processes	Year 1			
1.1.2 Include a 'young person's' position on Gilgandra Council community committee/s – to be mentored by a Councillor-member of each of the committee/s		Year 2-4		

Goal 1.2: Provide opportunities for young people to co-design and deliver community activities, programs, and events - both youth and 'all ages' events				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
1.2.1 Facilitate a committee of young people to plan, design and deliver, one annual youth event or project associated with National Youth Week		Year 2-4		
1.2.2 Involve young people to plan, deliver and/or participate in key community events: Harmony Day, International Women's Day, International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD), IDAHOBIT, NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, etc		Year 2-4		

3.2 KEY FOCUS AREA 2: PLACES TO BELONG

Goal 2.1: Provide Council places and spaces that are accessible, and 'child and youth-friendly'				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
2.1.1 Include a dedicated 'youth space' and youth focused programs in the Gilgandra Library	Year 1-10			
2.1.2 Consider opportunities to embrace the Castlereagh River and encourage recreational activities such as fishing and swimming at a riverside 'beach'			Year 5-10	

Goal 2.2: Enhance the impact of the Gilgandra Youth Centre				
Action	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
2.2.1 Review Youth Centre opening hours – eg: pilot weekend programs		Year 2-4		
2.2.2 Design/deliver programs and strategies to include children/ young people who are currently under-represented as participants in Youth Centre programs – eg: younger aged (up to 12 years old) and older aged (16-18 years old) children		Year 2-4		
2.2.3 Plan and deliver occasional 'outreach' programs to outlying townships from Gilgandra youth services or provide transport on an occasional basis, to bring children from outlying townships to activities at the Youth Centre			Year 5-10	

2.2.4 Progress planning and development of new Youth Centre as part of the proposed Hunter Park Sports and Recreation Precinct, including detailed design and identification / pursuit of funding opportunities from NSW and Commonwealth governments		Year 2-10		
2.2.5 Create and recruit a designated position for a young person on the Youth Centre team (eg: traineeship)		Year 2-4		

Goal 2.3: Achieve goals and actions of Gilgandra Towards 5000 Community Child Care Strategy

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
2.3.1 Progress existing work with local partners to establish Out of School Hours and Vacation Care services		Year 2-4		

Goal 2.4: Create opportunities to celebrate the talent of Gilgandra's young creatives, in local spaces and places

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
2.4.1 Identify places and spaces that could be used as temporary / 'pop up' exhibition spaces for young creatives (eg: Cooee Heritage Centre Art Gallery)	Year 1			
2.4.2 Curate temporary / 'pop up' exhibitions for young creatives		Year 2-4		

Goal 2.5: Recognise and represent First Nations culture to encourage connection and belonging of First Nations young people

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
2.5.1 Explore opportunities to involve children and young people in Connection to Country – cultural walks and talks programs delivered by local First Nations organisations			Year 5-10	
2.5.2 Work with local First Nations community groups to plan and deliver (annual) event/s to mark NAIDOC Week and/or Reconciliation Week in the Shire		Year 2-10		
2.5.3 Develop and deliver a Local Studies oral histories project at Gilgandra Library to promote truth-telling and reconciliation		Year 2-4		

Goal 2.6: Promote participation of young people in key community events

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
2.6.1 Liaise between Youth Centre, Library and local schools to develop and/or promote an annual program of local youth-friendly events on Council website	Year 1-10			
2.6.2 Involve young people to plan, deliver and/or participate in key community Events		Year 2-4		
2.6.3 Increase awareness and use of existing community transport programs (eg: TfNSW CTP) to provide transport for young people to community events		Year 2-4		

3.3 KEY FOCUS AREA 3: CONNECTION AND IDENTITY

Goal 3.1: Enable young people and families to learn about diverse cultures, abilities and experiences				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.1.1 Develop and deliver an annual program of 3-4 'living library' talks/forums		Year 2-4		

Goal 3.2: Represent the diversity of the population, including children and young people on Council's website, social media platforms and promotional material				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.2.1 Review and (where necessary) update existing imagery for diversity, positive portrayal, relatability, in consultation with young people	Year 1			

Goal 3.3: Improve internet connectivity to foster digital / online connection and participation				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.3.1 Advocate with telecommunication networks to improve internet services in Gilgandra			Year 5-10	
3.3.2 Provide free, publicly available, 24/7 Wifi in the perimeter of the new Library Hub, Gilgandra Youth Centre and in the planned Hunter Park Sports and Recreation Precinct	Year 1			

Goal 3.4: Improve transport connections between Gilgandra and Dubbo and neighbouring communities

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.4.1 Advocate for more frequent and timely bus service between Gilgandra and Dubbo that would increase access for young people to work, sport, arts/culture and/or post-school education in Dubbo.		Year 2-4		
3.4.2 Investigate options for youth-specific community transport – including use of Council’s existing ‘Youth Bus’ to transport children from Tooraweenah to afterschool/holidays activities at Gilgandra Youth Centre		Year 2-4		
3.4.3 Support young people to successfully complete testing and logbook requirements for drivers licensing - options include: - promote access to the Safer Drivers Course program - establish a ‘mentor driver’ program with local volunteers - work with providers, such as the NRMA, to deliver information sessions	Year 1			

Goal 3.5: Grow collaboration and partnerships between local services – including with local schools

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.5.1 Continue to facilitate local ‘interagency’ and network meetings – including continued participation of local schools	Year 1			
3.5.2 Convene annual ‘Youth Forum’ with Gilgandra HS students, to review outcomes of the Youth Strategy, discuss newly identified needs and responses		Year 2-4		

Goal 3.6: Promote opportunities for intergenerational connection

Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.6.1 In consultation with local child care providers, schools and Cooee Lodge, enhance existing programs, to regularly bring children and older members of the community together in a variety of ways		Year 2-4		

Goal 3.7: Encourage families and young people to remain in and return to Gilgandra				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
3.7.1 Promote affordable housing options, such as the 'Aeropark Estate' housing development, as key options for families to remain or return to Gilgandra	Year 1			
3.7.2 Implement the Affordable Housing Strategy	Year 1			
3.7.3 Explore opportunities to initiate a Rent to Buy scheme, in partnership with values-aligned financial institution/s, to encourage young people and families to remain in / move to Gilgandra		Year 2-10		

3.4 KEY FOCUS AREA 4: OPPORTUNITY - LIFE READY, WORK READY

Goal 4.1: Contribute to the creation of employment and career development opportunities for young people within the Shire				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
4.1.1 Work with stakeholders to identify, advocate for and promote employment opportunities for young people afforded by emerging local industries (examples: 'Real Country' tourism strategy; Renewable Energy Zone)		Year 2-4		
4.1.2 Maintain and review Gilgandra Council's traineeship and cadetship programs, including the establishment of a traineeship for a young person at the Youth Centre, as per Action 2.2.5	Year 1			

Goal 4.2: Facilitate opportunities for 'whole person' and 'whole of life' skills development by children and young people				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
4.2.1 Establish an annual awards program that recognises the achievements of young people – as part of the Youth Week program		Year 2-4		
4.2.2 Facilitate and promote volunteering opportunities for young people to increase community participation, skills and work experience	Year 1			

Goal 4.3: Enhance post-secondary education opportunities to facilitate local study and work opportunities and assist young adults to continue to live in Gilgandra post-high school				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
4.3.1 Enhance post-secondary education options to enable local study and work opportunities and assist young adults to continue to live in Gilgandra post-high school			Year 5-10	
4.3.2 Work with Gilgandra High School to identify issues and opportunities for Council to support student participation, retention and success		Year 2-4		
4.3.3 Advocate with other levels of government and educational institutions to uplift the post-secondary education offer		Year 2-4		
4.3.4 Engage with the University to explore opportunities for preparatory programs / entry level subjects to be delivered in Gilgandra on an outreach basis from the Dubbo Campus of Charles Sturt University			Year 5-10	
4.3.5 Engage with TAFE NSW to advocate for a review of the course/qualifications offered at Gilgandra TAFE to extend the range and ASQF level of local, face to face, training opportunities		Year 2-4		

Goal 4.4: Promote and support learning for secondary and tertiary students				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
4.4.1 Establish a Study Hub in Gilgandra Library one day per week for young people enrolled in secondary and post-secondary study. This could include an on-site tutor or peer learning model, a quiet place to study, mental health support, access to 'Linked-in Learning' and to free/subsidised printing, public computers and Wi-Fi	Year 1			

3.5 KEY FOCUS AREA 5: WELLBEING – THRIVING, SAFE AND SECURE, SUSTAINABLE

Goal 5.1: Promote wellbeing by improving affordability and accessibility of fitness, sport and recreational opportunities for young people				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
5.1.1 Review opening hours for the Gilgandra Pool and timing of Gilgandra Leisure Centre fitness programs		Year 2-4		
5.1.2 Continue to deliver and maintain Skate parks, pools and other fitness infrastructure	Year 1			
5.1.3 Develop relationships with peak sports, recreation, fitness bodies and associations & institutions		Year 2-4		

Goal 5.2: Increase access of children and young people to health services in Gilgandra				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
5.2.1 Advocate for allied health services (speech therapy, psychology, physiotherapy, paediatrics, optometry) to deliver fortnightly/monthly clinical outreach in Gilgandra	Year 1			
5.2.2 Collaborate with local health services, including the Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Medical Service to link vulnerable young parents with services	Year 1			
5.2.3 Implement the strategic actions of the Towards 5000: Health Vision that relate to children and young people	Year 1			

Goal 5.3: Promote access of children and young people to information to enhance health and wellbeing				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
5.3.1 Work with local health services to convene an annual Community Mental Health forum to provide information to young people and families about mental health and wellbeing		Year 2-4		
5.3.2 Gilgandra Library provides information and resources, including points of local contact, for children and young people living with family violence	Year 1			

Goal 5.4: Integrate planning for and promotion of well-being of children and young people with disabilities into Council's strategic processes				
Actions	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
5.4.1 Deliver workshop to consult with children, young people, carers and service providers about the needs of young people with disabilities in the Gilgandra Shire and design programs and projects to respond to those needs		Year 2-4		

4 Measuring our outcomes

4.1 OUR EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation plays an important role in supporting implementation of the *Towards 5000 Gilgandra Youth Strategy and Action Plan*. It ensures that those implementing the plan have clear sight of the targets they are working towards and that the impact Council's implementation of key actions is measured and reported, contributing to Council's broader policy, decision-making and strategy for our community.

Our approach to evaluation seeks to measure the 'inputs', 'outputs' (short-term, often based on quantitative data) and 'outcomes' (longer-term, more complex to measure and based on qualitative and quantitative data) of the Strategy. Examples of methods that could be adopted to evaluate the impact of the Strategy are provided in the table below.

Evaluation Element	Potential Performance Measures
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council allocation to children's and youth services as % of operational budget• Grant funding applications lodged• Staff hours allocated to children's and youth services as % of total staffing hours• Inclusion of 'youth friendly' information and resources on Council sites (including web)• Investment in facilities for children and young people as % of capital budget
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milestones for delivery of the Strategy are met and reported on to Council• Demographic measures:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ people aged under 25 years – increased representation in community profile○ birth rates remain at current level○ local employment participation rates for young people increase• Website 'hits' on youth services page• Participation in youth services and programs• Visitation / utilisation of youth facilities• Membership of libraries of people under 25 years of age• Increased enrolments at Gilgandra High School• Grant funding success• Grant funded programs are delivered and acquitted• Hunter Park Precinct is constructed

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community surveys show increased satisfaction with services for children and young people • Fewer children and young people travel out of town for education • Cultural programs are more visible and accessible • First Nations culture is evident in public spaces and within Gilgandra's narratives of place • Measures of performance in related areas ('proxies') – eg: health and wellbeing data - improves • Gilgandra is seen as a place for children and young people to grow and thrive
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