



SOUTHERN MALLEE
SUB-REGIONAL

Youth Strategic Plan

SWAN HILL, GANNAWARRA
& BULOKE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

2016-2020



“They [youth] are the miners’ canaries of our society, acutely vulnerable to the peculiar hazards of our times. The health and wellbeing of young people is a critical measure of a society for two reasons: in moral terms, how well a society cares for its weak and vulnerable is a measure of how civilised it is; in more pragmatic terms, a society that fails to cherish its youth, fails. It’s as simple as that.” (Eckersley 2004)

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Executive Summary

The Southern Mallee Sub-Regional Youth Strategic Plan is an initiative of the Southern Mallee Children & Youth Partnership, supported by the School Focussed Youth Service. Partnership members identified the need for a joined up approach to improve outcomes for young people aged 10-24 years and their families living in the Southern Mallee (Swan Hill, Gannawarra & Buloke Shires).

The Southern Mallee Sub-Regional Youth Strategic Plan is built upon a mutual understanding that young people are highly valued citizens of the communities that they live in.

A combined Sub-Regional Plan for the local government areas of Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke seemed timely as all three Shires had resourced the development of a Youth Strategy in 2015. Adding to this rationale, the 'Southern Mallee' sub-region has a shared children and youth service system that primarily supports all three rural Local Government Areas which is optimal for collective action.

It is hoped that planning together to provide thoughtful responses and resources for young people and their families during adolescence and at key times of transition will assist with addressing current challenges (especially for those who are vulnerable).

Desktop research drawn from the recently developed Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke Youth Strategies together with a key stakeholder workshop strongly informed the development of this shared plan. The Southern Mallee Sub-Regional Youth Strategic Plan concentrates primarily on advocacy and opportunities for joined up sub-regional collective action that centres on improving outcomes for rural young people.

Young people who were surveyed across Buloke, Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shires shared similar concerns, needs and aspirations:

- ▶ Boredom/having nothing to do was the top concern for young people across all three shires
- ▶ Keeping up with school work and belonging at school was important for young people
- ▶ Young people aspired to have good physical and mental health
- ▶ Having a variety of work and career options was important for young people;
- ▶ Having a say on things that they care about; and
- ▶ Feeling connected and involved in their communities.

In addition, research with key stakeholders and community members confirmed a range of shared concerns and priorities across the three shires:

"..... young people are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long term development and wellbeing is limited"

Victorian Government Vulnerable Children our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013–2022

Shared Concerns

- ▶ Decreased resources
- ▶ Service system confusion - many visiting services-no clear targets for rural areas
- ▶ Identifying & addressing service gaps
- ▶ Lack of collaboration for vulnerable youth
- ▶ Limited job opportunities
- ▶ Limited education opportunities
- ▶ Overall effectiveness of the youth service sector

Shared Priorities

- ▶ Shared sub-regional planning
- ▶ Broader local offerings of tertiary education
- ▶ Broader diversity of youth employment/training opportunities
- ▶ Improved advocacy and support for 'vulnerable' young people & their families
- ▶ Improved support and planning for 'missing middle' (ages 9-11 years)
- ▶ Improved school/community connections/belonging/involvement
- ▶ Strengthened partnerships with schools
- ▶ Continued commitment to the Southern Mallee Children & Youth Partnership and the Mallee Children & Youth Area Partnership

The Sub-Regional Plan has three key priority areas which frame nineteen corresponding actions which have all been shaped by recent consultation with young people, parents, service providers and the wider community:



This collective approach aims to ensure that young people of all backgrounds (especially vulnerable young people) and their families are able to access a range of opportunities, resources and supports to assist them to meet their goals and aspirations in life.

Vision & Purpose

VISION

Young people in the Southern Mallee are healthy, safe and valued and have a strong sense of belonging with access to work and learning opportunities, services, resources and supports that will help them to be their very best.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Sub-Regional Strategy is to:

- ▶ Share information and data to provide both a local and sub-region wide picture
- ▶ Address shared gaps in service provision and resources
- ▶ Advocate together for the needs of young people and their families
- ▶ Identify and create opportunities for young people
- ▶ Focus collective approaches and resources wherever possible

Why Focus on Planning for Young People?



WHY FOCUS ON PLANNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Research confirms that adolescence and early adulthood is a time of substantial change and development that often requires considered focus: "In addition to the general trials of growing up, the current generation of young people face unique challenges related to an uncertain and changing world: globalisation and its impact on local labour and financial markets; climate change and loss of hope; the impacts of social media on relationships; changing family and relationship structures; and delayed transitions to independent living". (Eckersley, R. (2004); and Robinson, L. & Lamb, S.)

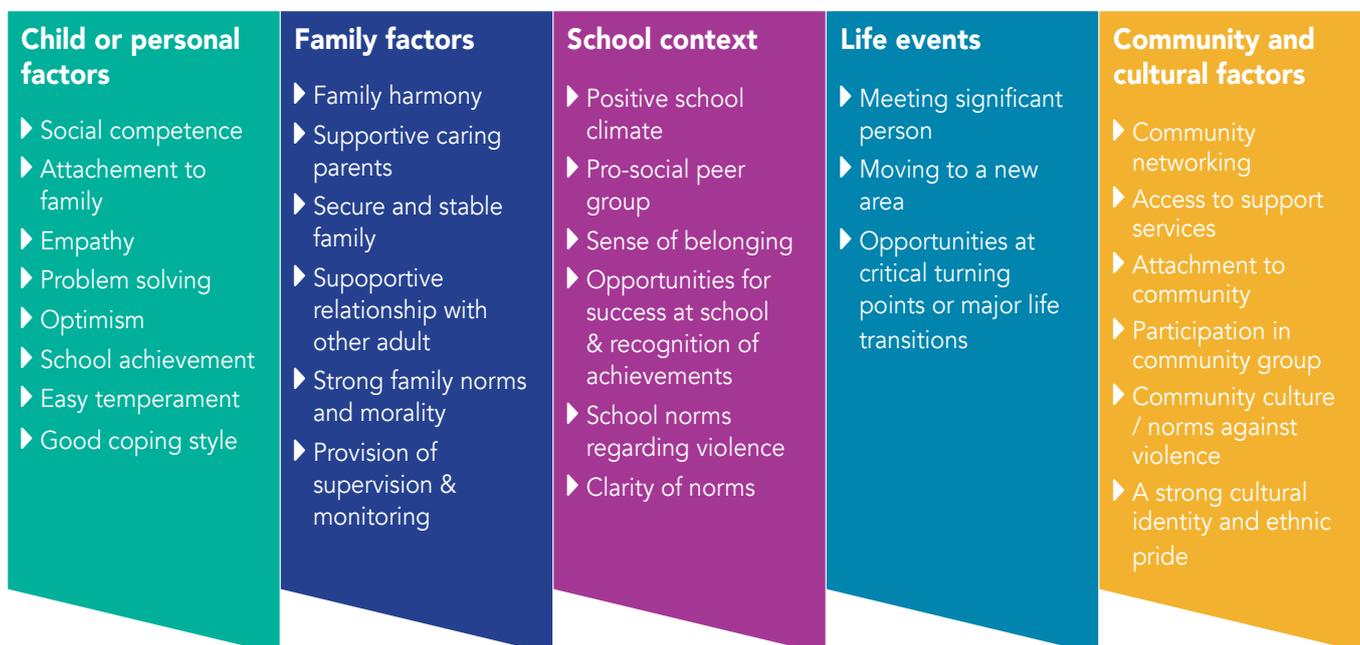
According to Hampshire and Borer (see figure below) **help during time of transitions, support for issues of concern, connections to school and community and supportive and caring family relationships are key protective factors for children and young people.**

There is extensive evidence available that highlights the benefits of young people being actively engaged in their communities.

Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities will be less depressed, have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities and will more likely reach full and healthy development. (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).

An Australian report by Access Economics on the benefits of early intervention to prevent youth disengagement found that interventions that reduce youth disengagement could potentially return 23.6 times the initial government investment to society and 7.6 times directly to the government through increased taxation revenues (under a scenario assuming a 50% potential return) (ASIB, 2010).

Protective Factors



Our Sub-Region

SWAN HILL

Swan Hill is primarily an agricultural and horticultural region deriving its main income from these industries and the businesses that service them. The municipality is bordered by the Murray River, for over 300 kilometres and is highly dependent on it for irrigation, domestic and industrial water supplies as well as active and passive recreational pursuits.

Swan Hill and Robinvale are the two largest service centres in the municipality with a number of smaller towns such as Lake Boga, Manangatang, Nyah, Nyah West, Piangil, Ultima, Wemen, Boundary Bend, Beverford and Woorinen making up the remainder of the Shire.

GANNAWARRA

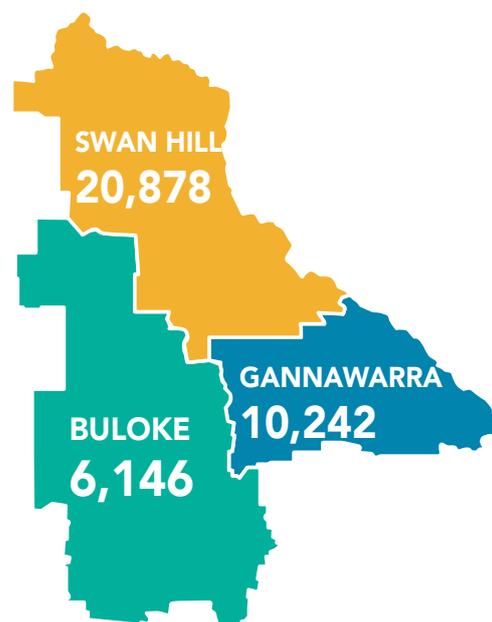
The Gannawarra Shire covers an area of 3,470 square kilometers and has a population of 10,366. The main industries within the Shire are agriculture, wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing and community services.

Kerang is seen as the main service centre for the Shire with retail trade, public administration, finance and community services being 65.5% of industry. Other major towns within the Gannawarra Shire are Cohuna, Koondrook, Leitchville and Quambatook. The remaining population is dispersed across the rural areas of the Shire.

BULOKE

Buloke Shire covers an area of 8,004 square kilometres (3,090 sq mi) and, at the 2011 Census, had a population of 6,384. The Shire is a predominantly rural area. The main townships are Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof. Smaller townships include Berrwilllock, Culgoa, Nandaly, Nullawil and Watchem.

The main industries in the Buloke Shire are agriculture, community services, retail and manufacturing.



Our Youth

Key Stats & Facts

POPULATION

Young People Aged
10-24 Years Old:

SWAN HILL 4,139
GANNAWARRA 1,770
BULOKE 1,059

According to the 2011 ABS Census there is a combined total of 6,968 young people aged 10-24 years old living in Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke Shires.

Family Composition

AREA	COUPLE FAMILY WITHOUT CHILDREN % (NUMBER)	COUPLE FAMILY WITH CHILDREN % (NUMBER)	ONE PARENT FAMILY % (NUMBER)	OTHER FAMILY % (NUMBER)
AUSTRALIA	37.8%	44.6%	15.9%	1.7%
VICTORIA	36.7%	46.0%	15.5%	1.8%
SWAN HILL LGA	42.3% (2,238)	41.3% (2,181)	14.7% (775)	1.7% (91)
GANNAWARRA LGA	49.3% (13,73)	36.8% (1,024)	12.8% (356)	1.1% (30)
BULOKE LGA	49.2% (833)	39.2% (664)	10.3% (175)	1.2% (20)

All three local government areas have higher numbers of couples without children, lower numbers of couple families with children and slightly lower numbers of one parent families when compared to state and national figures.

Country of Birth and Language

AREA	COUNTRY OF BIRTH AUSTRALIA % (NUMBER)	ENGLISH ONLY SPOKEN AT HOME % (NUMBER)	HOUSEHOLDS WERE TWO OR MORE LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN
AUSTRALIA	69.8%	76.8%	20.4%
VICTORIA	68.6%	72.4%	25.7%
SWAN HILL LGA	81.9%	83.2%	13.0%
GANNAWARRA LGA	89.5%	94.1%	2.3%
BULOKE LGA	90.3%	94.9%	2.9%

Swan Hill, Buloke and Gannawarra Shires had higher numbers of people born in Australia, higher numbers of English speaking households and significantly lower numbers of households where two or more languages are spoken when compared to state and national figures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Based on the 2011 ABS Census figures there were:

- ▶ 884 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Swan Hill LGA.
- ▶ 36 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Buloke LGA.
- ▶ 166 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Gannawarra LGA.

DISADVANTAGE

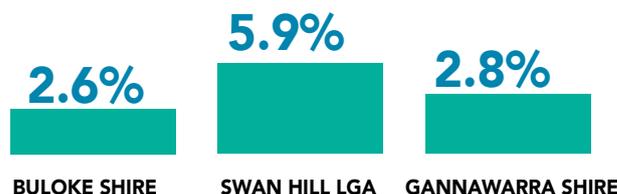
Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) provides measures derived from the Census to gauge different aspects of socio-economic conditions by geographic area. IRSED is one of these measures derived from Census attributes believed to reflect disadvantage, such as:

- ▶ low income
- ▶ low educational attainment
- ▶ high unemployment
- ▶ proportion of work force in relatively unskilled occupations

A rank of 1 was assigned to the most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria.

- ▶ The IRSED score for Swan Hill is 950, **Swan Hill was ranked 10th most disadvantaged** out of 79 LGAs in Victoria.
- ▶ The IRSED score for Gannawarra is 959, **Gannawarra was ranked 18th most disadvantaged** out of 79 LGAs in Victoria
- ▶ The IRSED score for Buloke is 968, **Buloke was ranked 22nd most disadvantaged** out of 79 LGAs in Victoria.

People living in Social Housing (2011 ABS Census):



The Victorian state average for those living in Social Housing was 3.2%

Teenage Pregnancies

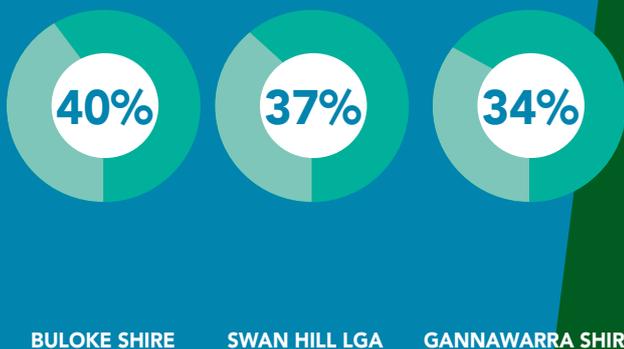
In 2012 the teenage birth rate in Gannawarra was 16.1 per 1000 women aged 15-19 years.

In 2012 the teenage birth rate in Swan Hill was 41.9 per 1000 women aged 15-19 year.

Figures were lower than the rate of collection in Buloke.

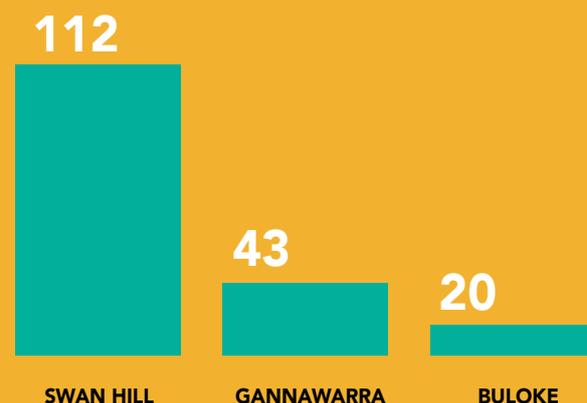
The state average was 10.4 per 1000 teenage women.

Single parent families living on less than \$600 per week:



Young people aged 15-19 years not in employment or education or training in 2011

Disengaged young people:





Key Strategic Linkages

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The **Buloke Shire Draft Council Plan (2015-2019)** articulates Council's focus for the next four years. The Council Plan has six overarching objectives to guide the focus of their work, they are:

Buloke Shire Council's Strategic Objectives for 2015 – 2019

1. Delivering our services in a financially sustainable way
2. Engaging with, and facilitating our community to identify and meet its needs
3. Supporting and enhancing our local economy
4. Working with the community and relevant agencies and groups to enhance and protect our natural environment
5. Influencing governments to improve liveability for rural communities
6. An organisation that is responsibly governed and values and supports the development of its people

Buloke Shire has a Children & Youth Strategy for the period of 2015-2019. Research from this report has been drawn upon and referenced in this plan.

Swan Hill Rural City Council's 2013-2017 Plan is Council's vision for the community and has a vital role in shaping the future of the municipality. The Plan articulates the following Vision, Mission and Values:

The Council Plan provides a broad direction and details Council's priorities and longer-term goals with four key strategic objectives:

- ▶ Governance and Leadership
- ▶ Community Wellbeing
- ▶ Economic Growth
- ▶ Built and Natural Environment

Strategic Objective 2 in the Council Plan – Community services that are efficient and responsive to needs articulates Council's ongoing responsibility to **maintain council's level of support and explore opportunities to strengthen the following services:**

- ▶ Aged care services.
- ▶ Early Childhood education and Maternal and Child Health services.
- ▶ Disability access.
- ▶ **Youth support services.**
- ▶ Performing arts programs.
- ▶ Visual arts programs via the Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery.
- ▶ **Advocating for other services as they arise.**

The Swan Hill municipality has a Youth Strategy for the period of 2015-2019. Research from this report has been drawn upon and referenced in this plan



Gannawarra Shire Council's 2013-2017 Plan articulates four key priorities:

- ▶ Strong & Diverse Economy
- ▶ Sustainable Environments
- ▶ Healthy Liveable Communities
- ▶ Effective Leadership and Management

The plan commits Council to working in partnership with a wide range of community members (including young people) and groups so that people:

- ▶ Have equal access to a range of opportunities that help them to stay active and healthy;
- ▶ Feel supported to make decisions that determine their own health and wellbeing;
- ▶ Feel that they can contribute to community decision making; and
- ▶ People are recognised and valued for their contribution to the community.

Gannawarra Shire has a Children & Youth Strategy for the period of 2016-2020. Research from this report has been drawn upon and referenced in this plan.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy - Our Shared Responsibility 2013-2022

The **Victoria's Vulnerable Children - Our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013-2022** is a whole-of-government strategy designed to drive broad, transformational change across government and the community to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

The strategy outlines collaborative governance arrangements and a performance and accountability framework that provides a set of goals, key outcomes and indicators that aim to reduce the incidence of vulnerability.

The strategy draws together all parts of government that have a responsibility for the health, social and economic factors that can make someone vulnerable and potentially lead to child abuse and neglect. It is designed to drive the broad-based change required across government and in the community over the next decade.

Children and Youth Area Partnerships

Children and Youth Area Partnerships are a new approach, bringing together Victorian Government departments including the Departments of Education and Early Childhood; Health; Human Services; Justice; and Victoria Police to work with local government and the community sector to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

This new approach recognises that improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people is a shared responsibility which requires better coordination across a range of partners and a focus on improving services and practice.

The Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership (MCYAP) which includes four local government areas; Mildura, Swan Hill, Buloke and Gannawarra, was established in September 2014; it is co-chaired by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education.

Membership of the MCYAP Partnership Steering Group includes Australian government, state government, local government and community sector representatives and a community member.

The Area Partnerships have been asked to identify local priorities to address two key areas:

1. Support the learning and development of all children and young people, particularly those who are at risk of disengaging or who have disengaged; and
2. The creation of safe and supportive communities and environments in which children live free of abuse and neglect.

Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016

The Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016 articulates the government's view for the future and sets a clear direction for the next four years.

At the centre of the plan is the framework, which outlines the vision and principles of the plan, the long-term goals, shorter-term outcomes and four-year strategies that guide the two-yearly implementation plans. The plan describes how progress and the results of our actions will be monitored, allowing for adjustments if needed and enabling greater transparency and accountability.

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013–2018, released in 2012, guides and coordinates the efforts of the Victorian Government in partnership with Victoria's Aboriginal communities. The framework focuses long term, strategic and progressive effort to improve the health and quality of life of Aboriginal Victorians, and aligns closely with the targets of the Council of Australian Governments.

Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children – Everyone has a responsibility to act 2012-2015

Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children – Everyone has a responsibility to act 2012-2015 (Action Plan) was launched in 2012. The Action Plan engages a range of Government areas and community sector organisations to enact a range of prevention, early intervention and response measures. Victorian Government initiatives to address violence against women and children fall within three streams:

- ▶ Preventing violence against women and children: changing attitudes and behaviours to promote respectful non-violent relationships and gender equity,
- ▶ Intervening earlier: by identifying and targeting individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour or of being subjected to violence, and
- ▶ Responding through an integrated system: providing consistent, coordinated and timely responses to women and children who experience family violence and to get tougher on perpetrators and prevent reoffending.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

All Australian governments have endorsed the first National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 and are committed to implementing the initial actions it contains. It is an ambitious, national approach to help protect all Australian children.

The National Framework represents an unprecedented level of collaboration between Australian, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations to protect children.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022

The National Plan, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), brings together the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women. This plan shows Australia's commitment to upholding the human rights of Australian women and it is the first plan to coordinate action across jurisdictions.

The National Plan focuses on preventing violence by raising awareness and building respectful relationships in the next generation. The aim is to bring attitudinal and behavioural change at the cultural, institutional and individual levels, with a particular focus on young people. The National Plan sets out a framework for action over the next 12 years and will be driven by a series of four three-year action plans. These Plans will support Australian governments to work together to develop, implement and report progress within a coordinated national framework.

Each Action Plan will address agreed national outcomes, while allowing states and territories to act in locally relevant and responsive ways. The First Action Plan (2010-2013) – Building a Strong Foundation, established the groundwork for the National Plan putting into place the strategic projects and actions that will drive results over the longer term while also implementing high-priority actions in the short term. The Second Action Plan (2013-2016) is an opportunity to take stock, reflect on gaps, develop new actions and strengthen implementation. It will be about building and introducing practical national initiatives to reduce violence against women and their children.

National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions (2009–2013)

The Partnership is a joint initiative of the Australian and State and Territory Governments and aims to increase participation of young people in education and training, increase attainment levels and improve successful transitions from school. It

contains a package of elements, including:

- ▶ Strengthened participation requirements to encourage young people aged 15-20 to be engaged in education or training as a first priority,
- ▶ Lifting qualification levels with the aim of 90 per cent of young people nationally attaining a Year 12 or equivalent qualification by 2015 (Victoria's target is 92.6 per cent) with an accompanying education or training entitlement for young people aged 15-24, and
- ▶ Support for successful transitions through the provision of youth career and transition programs.

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

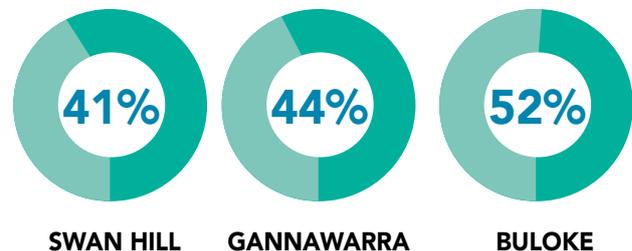
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) sets out the basic human rights that children everywhere have. The convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education, legal, civil and social services. The convention strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. These principles are consistent with the direction and policy frameworks accepted by governments in Australia.

Summary of Research Findings

“The thing I like best about where I live is that there are no people that get annoyed at what I do”.

Community consultation was conducted in 2015 in Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke Shires with children, young people, parents, community members and service providers. The community was invited to share their feedback through surveying, workshops and focus groups.

Survey response rates for the 12-18-year-old age group was very successful in all three municipalities:

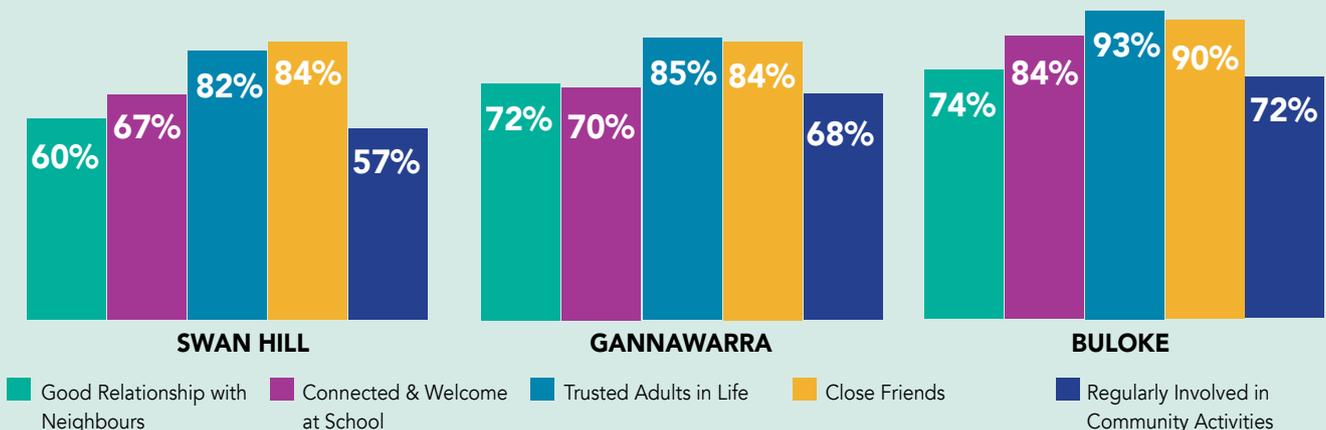


WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

Community Connections

Young people in Buloke Shire reported the highest connections with school, community, friends and adults in their lives. Swan Hill young people had a lower connection with neighbours and school connections were also lower for Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shires when compared to Buloke.

Young people across all three local government areas reported strong connections with friends and adults.



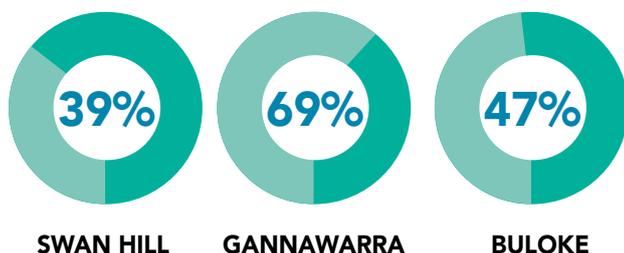
“ We need to encourage young people to be more involved in the community, i.e. lions club, rotary club etc. Not just letting the older generation do the work, if not these communities and its events will slowly die off”.

Employment

In addition to having more job opportunities, young people across Buloke, Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shires highlighted the need for more variety of employment, career and work experience opportunities.

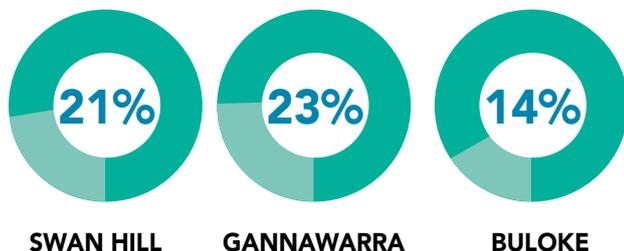
Gannawarra Shire Council had the highest number of young people who reported working part time or casually (69%), followed by Buloke Shire (47%) and Swan Hill (39%).

Employment: Working Part Time / Casually



There were slightly more young people looking for work in Gannawarra (23%), than Swan Hill (21%) and Buloke (14%).

Employment: Looking for Work

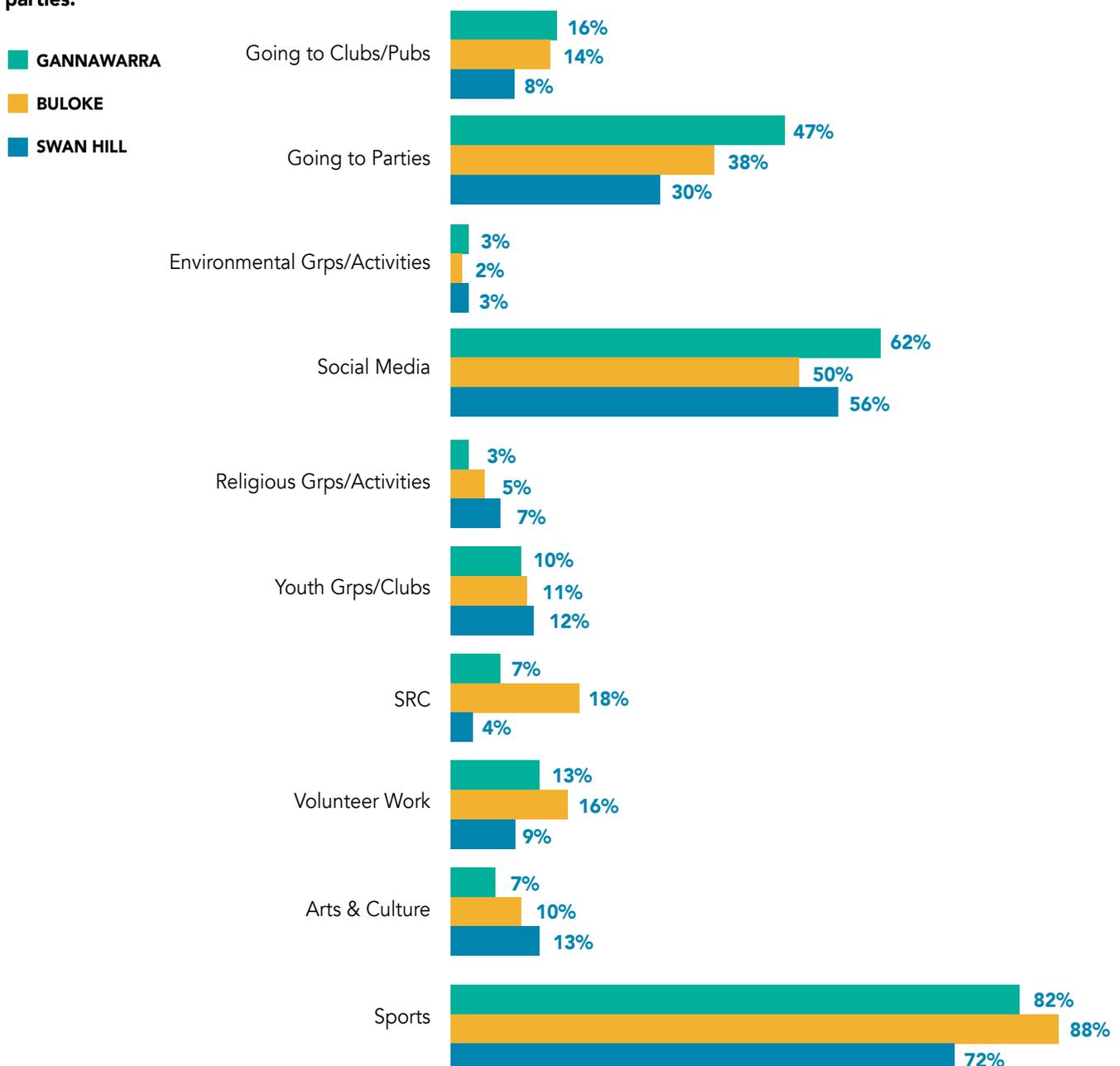


“ The best thing we could do is offer good work experience and jobs, help provide opportunities for young people’s career development”.

"I like the outdoor sports and activities that are available".

Activities in Spare Time

Young people who completed a survey chose a variety of activities that they were participating in during their spare time. **The most popular activities by far across the three local government areas were sports, social media and going to parties.**



Issues of Concern for Young People

The top five overall issues that were of concern for all respondents across the three Shires were:

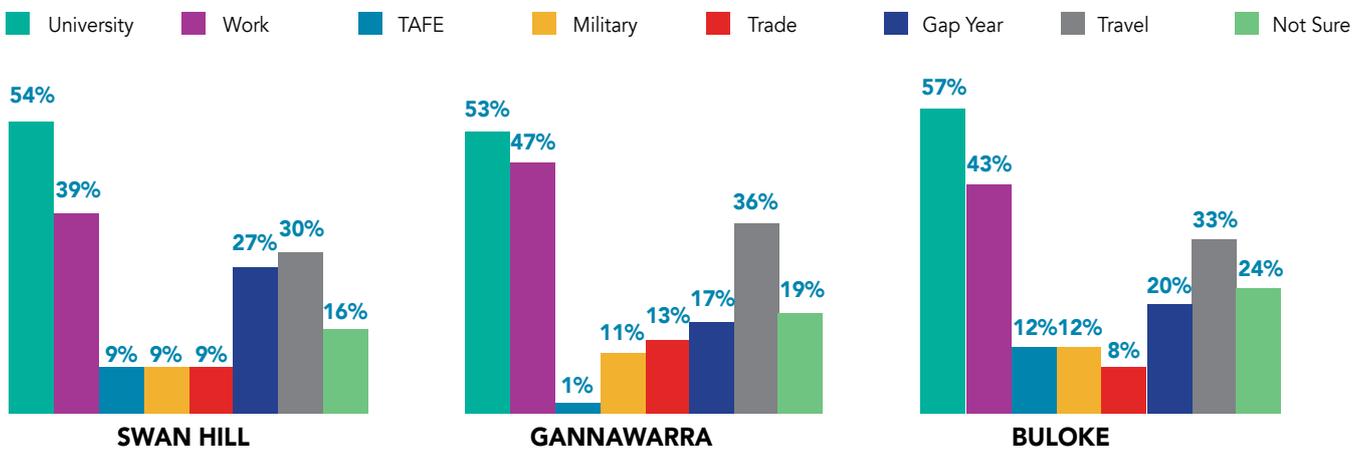
SWAN HILL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boredom/nothing to do (52%) 2. Not keeping up with school work (47%) 3. Body Image (38%) 4. Verbal Bullying (32%) 5. Fitting in (29%)
GANNAWARRA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boredom (51%) 2. Not keeping up with school work (36%) 3. Verbal bullying (36%) 4. Drugs (36%) 5. Fitting in and body image (36%)
BULOKE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boredom/nothing to do (45%) 2. Not keeping up with school work (38%) 3. Body image (31%) 4. Mental health of yourself/others (26%) 5. Verbal bullying, drugs and career/employment opportunities for the future (22%)

Boredom and not keeping up with school work were the top two concerns for all three municipalities. Body image, fitting in and verbal bullying were also commonalities when comparing young people's issues of concern in Swan Hill, Buloke and Gannawarra.



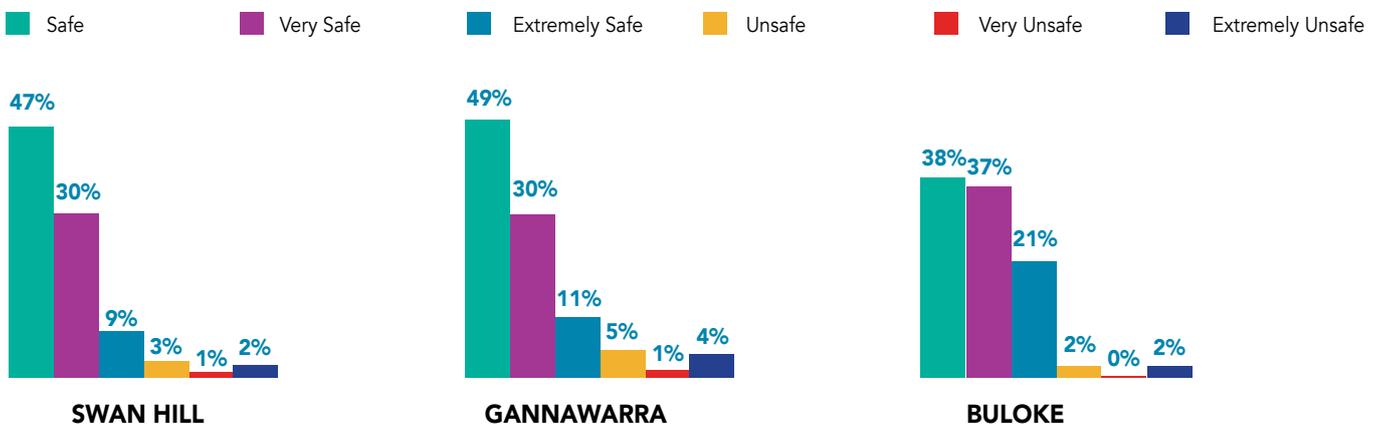
Future Plans

Young people surveyed were asked what they had planned for their future.



Young people's plans for the future were similar across the three LGA's with University, work and travel being the top three aspirations. Swan Hill young people were more interested in taking a gap year and there was slightly more interest in trades in Gannawarra Shire. Buloke Shire had more young people indicate that they were unsure of their future plans.

Safety



Young people were asked to rate how safe they felt in their community. Levels of feeling safe were similar when compared across Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke Shires. There were slightly more young people who felt unsafe-extremely unsafe in Gannawarra (10%) compared to Swan Hill (6%) and Buloke (4%).

Ideas for Improvement

Young people were asked- If you could make your community a better place for young people what would you do?

The majority of young people across all three shires would:

Offer more variety of things for young people to do (particularly during school holidays and weekends)

Improve facilities- e.g. sporting grounds, community spaces, parks etc.

Improved services and supports for young people

Improve offering of shops/eateries

"Build exciting and new attractions that people of my age group would enjoy. FReeZAs are a good idea but not for people of my age group. Summer activities would be a great idea".

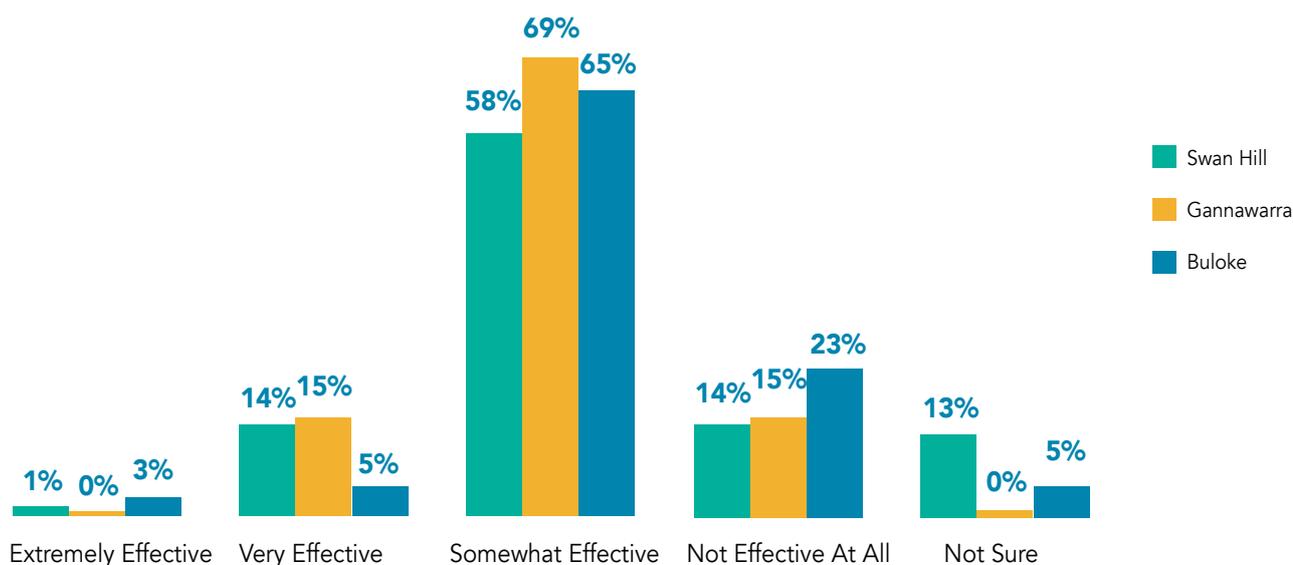
"Have more talks at school about mental health issues, help kids or tell them where to find help in job searching".

"Make activities for people that don't like sport".



WHAT SERVICE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAID

Service providers were asked to rate the effectiveness of the youth service sector:



Service providers across all three shires rated the youth service sector similarly. Just over half rated the sector as somewhat effective, 5-15% said it was very effective and 14-23% said it wasn't effective at all. Some of the reasons shared for lack of effectiveness was: many visiting services, lack of collaboration and lack of resources.

“ Having no generic youth workers is a major concern, especially with the Youth Connections program being terminated at the conclusion of 2014”.

Consultation activities with service providers highlighted a number of concern and priorities:

Shared Concerns

- ▶ Decreased resources for ‘on the ground’ Council ‘generalist youth worker roles’
- ▶ Service system confusion- many visiting services- no clear targets for rural areas
- ▶ Identifying & addressing service gaps
- ▶ Enhanced service collaboration for vulnerable youth
- ▶ Improved effectiveness of the youth service sector

Shared Priorities

- ▶ Shared sub-regional planning
- ▶ Broader local offerings of tertiary education
- ▶ Broaden diversity of youth employment/training opportunities
- ▶ Improved advocacy and support for ‘vulnerable’ young people & their families
- ▶ Improved support and planning for ‘missing middle’ (ages 9-11 years)
- ▶ Improved school/community connections/ belonging/ involvement
- ▶ Strengthened partnerships with schools
- ▶ Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership



Key Priorities

It is the intention of the **Southern Mallee Sub-Regional Youth Strategic Plan** to compliment local level action and energy currently being guided by Youth Strategies in Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke Shires.

The purpose of the plan is to guide shared resourcing and joined up sub-regional work which is focused strongly on:

- ▶ objectives/actions where partnerships across the three municipalities can be advantageous; and
- ▶ collective energy for advocacy which focusses on improving systems, supports and resources for children, young people and their families living in these rural areas.

The **Southern Mallee Sub-Regional Youth Strategic Plan** has three key priority areas which have been strongly shaped by consultation with young people, parents, service providers and the wider community.

1.
Advocacy

2.
Effective
Services,
Systems &
Supports

3.
Collective
Community
Development

ADVOACACY

1. Advocate for greater opportunities for young people to gain access to diverse work experience, traineeships or employment.
2. Advocate for resources to support improved service collaboration/coordination across the youth service sector (particularly when working with vulnerable children, youth & their families).
3. Advocate to the Federal Government for a considered 'rural' funding model for Local Government so that children, young people and their families living in the Southern Mallee can have the level of servicing and supports that are afforded to their regional and metro counterparts.
4. Advocate for transport options that could better support rural young people to access work and training opportunities.

EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS, SERVICES & SUPPORTS

1. Develop agreed data/evidence collection strategies across Buloke, Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shires that can inform sub-regional planning and advocacy efforts.
2. Explore service delivery options with headspace that could assist young people in Gannawarra and Buloke Shires who are experiencing mental health issues.
3. Examine opportunities for targeted services, supports and planning for the 'middle years' (ages 9-11 years).
4. Continue to work with the Mallee Children & Youth Area Partnership to improve supports for vulnerable children, youth and their families.
5. Examine strategies with schools that could increase young people's experience of being welcome at and belonging in their school.
6. Explore ways to strengthen school/community service sector relationships and increase inter-agency collaboration with schools.
7. Explore opportunities to increase access to online learning opportunities.

8. Strengthen connections between local government youth workers so that they can regularly connect and learn from each other.
9. Explore ways to provide greater support to young people during key transitions times: e.g. from school to work and secondary school to post-secondary studies.

COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Explore opportunities for funding that could support youth enterprise projects in Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill municipalities.
2. Examine ways to increase community connections e.g. neighbours knowing one another in Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke Shires.
3. Consider ways to share health & well-being support information with parents and young people so that they can guide their children/peers towards appropriate supports if needed.
4. Explore ways to increase the number of 'youth friendly' spaces and places in Buloke, Swan Hill & Gannawarra Shires.
5. Develop/circulate resources that can support organisations to offer youth friendly volunteering opportunities.



Governance & Implementation



The **Southern Mallee Children & Youth Partnership** group is currently engaging a wide range of key stakeholders who are working with or planning for children and young people across Gannawarra, Swan Hill and Buloke Shires. Membership is comprised of cross-sectoral representation including education, employment, health and welfare, government, and other key relevant organisations and groups who support and plan for young people and their families. This locally based governance group provides information, advice and local intelligence to the state government led Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership.

This strategic partnership, which commenced in 2014, is already focussed on working together to improve outcomes for young people and their families and is a good fit for overseeing the implementation of the **Southern Mallee Sub-Regional Youth Strategic Plan**.

A detailed action plan has been developed to assist with guiding the collective work detailed within the plan. It is intended that this action plan can bend and flex (e.g. adding stakeholders, reprioritising actions etc.) to meet the changing needs of the communities it is intended for.

There are a range of actions within the plan; some would be led by the **Southern Mallee Children & Youth Partnership** and others would be led by designated organisations. Lead organisations will provide progress reports to the partnership so they are aware of the overall progress of the plan. Feedback will be invited at key times to ensure that actions within the plan are continually informed by relevant key stakeholders, community groups and most importantly by young people.

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