



THE  
**Bridge Youth** **th**  
SERVICE

STRATEGIC PLAN

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2024-2027



# Our Story

In 1995, the Bridge Youth Service (TBYS) opened its doors to provide better health and wellbeing opportunities for young people in the regional community of Greater Shepparton.

A grassroots legacy as an access point to refer young people into programs and services, has provided TBYS with the foundational knowledge to continue to grow and respond to local need. TBYS is now a leader in providing wrap-around, holistic and tailored supports to young people when and where they need it, extending its reach to include Mitchell, Murrundindi, Moira and Strathbogie shires.

In 2024, TBYS offers programs to support young people with housing, education, employment, parenting, family unification and mental health and wellbeing.

Through the years, TBYS has fostered a culture of determined advocacy to introduce funding and programs aligned to the unique challenges that face young people in their catchment areas. This dynamic approach remains at the heart of the organisation's identity: passion, determination and a deep desire to improve the lives of the young people it works alongside.



# Foreward

**The Bridge Youth Service is known for its long history of service excellence in walking alongside young people and providing them with access to the support they need. TBYS is now ready to strengthen, elevate and promote its innovative practice as a leader in youth services.**

Our previous strategic plans directed a strong growth period for TBYS and pulled us through the COVID pandemic. Focusing on 'Expanding our Reach' we did in fact expand our programs, introducing federally funded Mental Health and AOD programs, Targeted Care Packages (TCPs), and Flood Recovery amongst others.

We ensured we took our services to where our young people live, especially through the pandemic, introducing 'door stop check-ins'. New partnerships realised new opportunities, with plans in place to construct three, two-bedroom units for young mothers in 2024.

The 'Strengthening our team' strategic priority saw the expertise of our staff expand and deepen, demonstrated through the invitation to take on Case Contracting working alongside DFFH/CP, and adapting to reforms in Family Services through Family Preservation and Reunification program delivery.

Our confidence to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people increased through our Respect RAP, and Rainbow Tick accreditation preparation through focus groups with young people from the LGBTQIA+ community.

This period saw us add two new offices to accommodate our growth and to ensure we are closer to young people across our catchment. Our ability to keep delivering services through the pandemic demonstrated our strategic priority of 'Improving our operations' was realised. We hardly missed a beat, due to innovative solutions and the forward thinking of our Executive Team.

Well done to all the staff who have helped us achieve these strategic priorities. To do this through a pandemic, local floods and staff shortage is a testament to the dedication and skills our staff possess.

Through our new strategic priorities, we will use our wisdom and build on our achievements to formalise our targeted approaches which address barriers that lead to inequity and vulnerability in young people.

Young people demonstrate great resilience and desire to change the situations they find themselves in. We want to elevate this expertise, and share and promote what we know, so that our wonderful regional communities can flourish and thrive.

**Melinda Lawley, CEO**



## Our Context/ **Our Challenge**

At TBYS, we understand that the physical and social conditions in which young people live, learn, work and play have a profound impact on their health and wellbeing, and inform the trajectory of their adult lives. Over the next three years, young people in the regional communities that TBYS service will face unprecedented challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and rapid changes in the use of technology alongside a cost-of-living and housing crisis.

Employment and educational attainment in our service areas are well below the Victorian state average and many young people are falling through the cracks with no engagement in education, training or employment. Poverty, family violence and mental-ill health are significant concerns for young people in TBYS' catchment area and require systemic and co-ordinated interventions.



# Mission & Vision



## Mission

**We nurture safety and wellbeing through a responsive model of care so that young people can look towards the future with optimism.**

We do this by creating tailored, youth focused pathways towards stable, healthy, productive and self-determined lives. We improve outcomes for young people through strong partnerships, connecting them with the services, programs and people they need to achieve their goals.

We focus on five key areas, helping young people to:

- 1. Attain or maintain stable housing**
- 2. Build and maintain healthy relationships**
- 3. Develop key parenting and nurturing skills for children's safety, growth and well-being**
- 4. Stay connected to education and employment**
- 5. Develop skills to improve mental health and increase emotional wellbeing**

## 2027 Vision

**Young people in our local community are resilient, connected and celebrated.**

### **Resilient:**

Young people tap into the unique strengths and skills that support them to recognise, manage and recover from challenging experiences in their lives.

### **Connected:**

Bonds between young people and their families, friends, education and health institutions are a flourishing and interdependent network of positive resources.

### **Celebrated:**

Young people in our community are seen as the experts of their own lives who make positive contributions to the places they live and the people they interact with.

# Our Values

**Diversity:** *In diversity there is beauty and there is strength.*

We welcome, value, treat with respect, listen to, seek out and acknowledge everybody's contribution.

**Collaboration + Collegiality:** *Alone we can do a little; together we can do so much*

We challenge ourselves to create new opportunities in all situations.

**Curiosity + New Ideas:** *Be curious always. For knowledge will not acquire you; you must acquire it. The value of an idea lies in the using of it.*

We question and seek innovative solutions.

**Connection + Reach:** *Stronger connections provide new opportunities and create healthy people, organisations and communities.*

We always look for ways to take our services to young people or assist them to come to us.

**Flexibility:** *Adaptability requires an open mind and a welcoming of new alternatives.*

We focus on strengths and provide an environment for change. Support for young people is tailored to their needs.



# Our Strategic Pillars



## **Pillar One: Enhance service delivery by formalising evidence-based models of practice**

*We will bring together our deep organisational wisdom and the practice experience of our staff and partners, to formalise trauma-informed ways of working that are fit for purpose, place-based and address the underlying needs of the young people we work with. We will create, implement, iterate and reflect on these models to continuously improve our service offering.*

### **Key Initiatives and Success Indicators**

#### **1.1 Formalise trauma-responsive, developmental model of practice**

- Consult key stakeholders to visualise and formalise our wrap-around model of practice
- Seek expertise to support incorporating a trauma-informed lens
- Publish our practice model so that key stakeholders and funders clearly understand how we do our work

#### **By 2027**

- Our unique model of practice is documented
- Our staff will confidently be able to speak its components
- The model is utilised in internal induction and supervision practices
- Stakeholders and funders show interest in our model





## **1.2 Develop evidence-based youth housing model**

- Work with key partners to develop and formalise trauma-informed program design for the NEST model
- Develop an impact paper on why the NEST model was established and its benefits, based on client feedback and relevant literature.

### **By 2027**

- The NEST is up and running and our clients will provide positive feedback on the initial program design.
- The impact paper findings are incorporated into the NEST model and socialised with staff and key stakeholders.

## **1.3 Undertake research to inform best practice**

- Researching place-based, early intervention solutions to address poor school attendance
- Understanding trauma responsive practice for adolescent boys who are victims of violence in the home
- Develop a plan to undertake longitudinal participatory research with TBYS clients

### **By 2027**

- We have insights to share on how to support better education outcomes for young people in our catchment area
- We have embedded our understanding of trauma responsive practice for adolescent boys into our broader developmental practice model
- Our staff have gained broader expertise and skills through our research

## **Pillar Two: Strengthen avenues to understand young people's feedback, expertise and outcomes**

*We will be guided by the young people we work with to continuously improve our practice and ensure that we are meeting their needs. We will introduce and strengthen mechanisms to capture important data and include youth voice, because young people are the heart of what we do.*

### **Key Initiatives and Success Indicators**

#### **2.1 Capture, synthesise and utilise client feedback and outcomes data**

- Clarify key metrics required to enhance practice and support evidence
- Introduce mechanisms and systems to measure outcomes and feedback from clients
- Develop methods to incorporate data into continuous service improvement and evidence for funders

#### **By 2027**

- We have critical insights that support us to make decisions about programs, funding and service enhancements.

#### **2.1 Share stories of positive youth outcomes**

- Formalise the structure of our Youth Ambassador Program including staff support, role and responsibilities
- Share and celebrate program outcomes and stories

#### **By 2027**

- The Youth Ambassadors and their stories are celebrated internally at TBYS and publicly with the broader community
- The benefits of the program are well understood by staff and ambassadors alike

#### **2.3 Utilise youth voice to guide practice**

- Develop partnership with Mitchell Shire Youth Council to provide feedback on relevant programs and documentation, as well as to monitor youth issues in the area
- Continuing to invite feedback from young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and young people with a disability to enhance our service offering

#### **By 2027**

- The Mitchell Shire Youth Council understands what TBYS does and become advocates for its work.
- TBYS gains important information that will support it to make decisions about program delivery in area with significant forecasted population growth
- TBYS has enhanced its existing service offering to young people with disabilities and CALD communities

## **Pillar Three: Promote The Bridge Youth Service as an innovative leader in youth services**

*We will elevate our organisational brand so that we are recognised as a leader in delivering innovative, place-based, best practice services. We will be the go-to experts in developmental psychosocial supports that are tailored for young people and their families in our catchment area.*

### **Key Initiatives and Success Indicators**

#### **3.1 Share and promote innovative practice**

- Develop presentations, case studies, and papers to share TBYS' innovative practice and client outcomes, including our trauma-informed developmental model
- Seek out opportunities to share practice at 3-4 key networks, forums and events annually
- Demonstrate understanding of impacts of climate change on young people

#### **By 2027**

- TBYS is seen as a leader in youth services by a broader range of organisations, stakeholders and funders
- TBYS' reputation is a key component in attracting sustainable funding opportunities and key service partnerships

#### **3.2 Implement community engagement model**

- Socialise and implement finalised community engagement model with staff
- Regularly attend and host events and communities of practice that promote TBYS' expertise
- Support staff to use community engagement planning tool

#### **By 2027**

- Stakeholders and clients have positive interactions with TBYS staff at external events, leading to increased partnership and funding opportunities

#### **3.3 Implement strategic communications plan**

- Employ Communications Lead role
- Implement targeted communications via social media, newsletters and website to align with TBYS' reputation as an innovative leader in youth services
- Consider whether branding and name change would strengthen TBYS' strategic messaging

#### **By 2027**

- TBYS has increased social media presence, increased website traffic and increased channels to share practice and innovation leading to an increase in brand recognition



# Our Strategic Enablers



## 1. Our staff and their careers

*Our staff are our most valuable assets and vital to our excellence and innovation in client service delivery. At TBYS we nurture staff talent to support meaningful learning and career development. We strive to be an employer of choice continue and invest in a capable, creative and passionate workforce through:*

- a positive and supportive work environment, with continued compelling benefits offered to staff
- peer mentoring
- investing in staff growth through extensive upskilling, training, and a career development program
- mechanisms for staff to input into continuous organisational improvement
- regular supervision
- recognition and feedback

## 2. An inclusive culture

*Our culture of inclusiveness is the glue that supports us to work with impact. The success of this strategic plan is contingent on continuing the vital work of supporting a diverse and inclusive culture through:*

- Continuing to embed the actions of our Reconciliation Action Plan
- Celebrating our Rainbow Tick Accreditation
- Recruiting staff from diverse backgrounds
- Recognition that we work with the wisdom and lived experience inherent in our workforce
- Opportunities to participate in cultural safety, diversity and inclusion training
- Promoting communications that support diversity, inclusion and equity

### 3. Continued financial stability

*TBYS is fortunate to be in a state of financial stability to deliver our programs that support the community we serve. Our continued financial sustainability is fundamental to continuing to meet the needs of our clients and grow TBYS' innovative practice. This strategic plan was created with this in mind. Our bold strategic pillars which seek to increase our foothold as a leader in youth services. They will support us to grow our reputation, sustain existing pathways and pursue new opportunities with confidence. In the next three years we will capitalise on our state of financial stability through:*

- Protecting our current funding base
- Strengthening stewardship through our connections, leadership and advocacy in the community
- Partnering strategically to responding to priority Government initiatives, programs and recommendations
- Sharing our expertise and raising brand awareness to support successful grant and philanthropy opportunities
- Allocating resourcing appropriately to support our strategic pillars
- Improving internal business systems to meet increasing reporting obligations



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