



*“Deeply listening through the 1000 Conversations is foundational to the Lighthouse way of working, to empower and advocate for our community”*

Amy Robinson, Executive Officer Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project



**GREATER SHEPPARTON Lighthouse Project**

**1000**  
CONVERSATIONS **8.0**

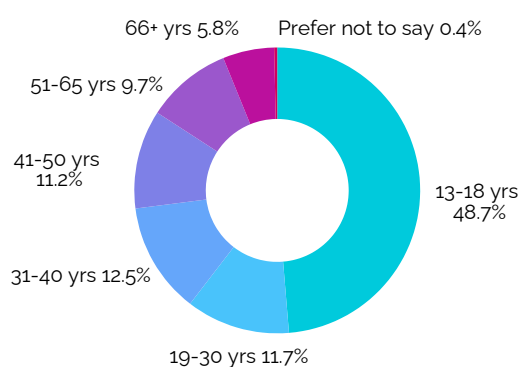
# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Who did we speak to?

As part of the 1000 Conversations, we asked a series of questions about each person. These questions focus on characteristics that make all of us different. The purpose of asking each participant these questions was to capture the diverse range of community members that collectively represent the views of Greater Shepparton. Altogether, we spoke with **1016** people.

## Age

Q: How old are you?



## Identity

Q: Do you identify with any of the following?

- 13.8%** I am Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 9.8%** I am a member of the LGBTQIA+ community
- 10.2%** I am from a culturally or linguistically diverse background
- 8.4%** I have a disability or am a carer for someone with a disability

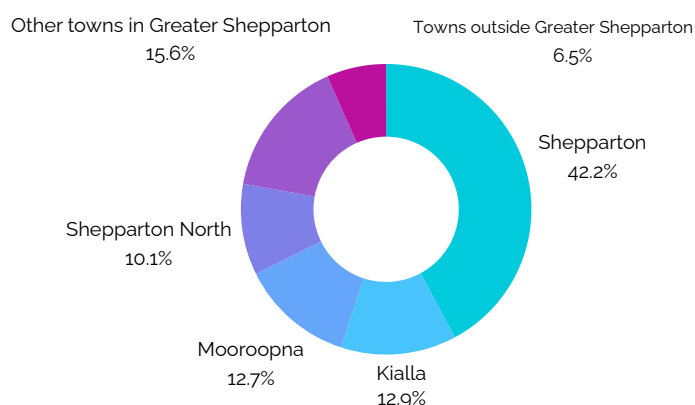
## Gender

Q: What is your gender?

- 58%** Female
- 39.2%** Male
- 1.6%** Gender diverse
- 1.4%** Prefer not to say

## Location

Q: Where do you live?



Q: I have access to...



The internet



My own or family transport



Safe and secure housing



A trusted person who can help when needed

### Maintaining privacy

Responses to any of the demographic questions are anonymous. In fact there is no possible way to connect a response back to the person who shared it!

### What is the 1000 Conversations project?

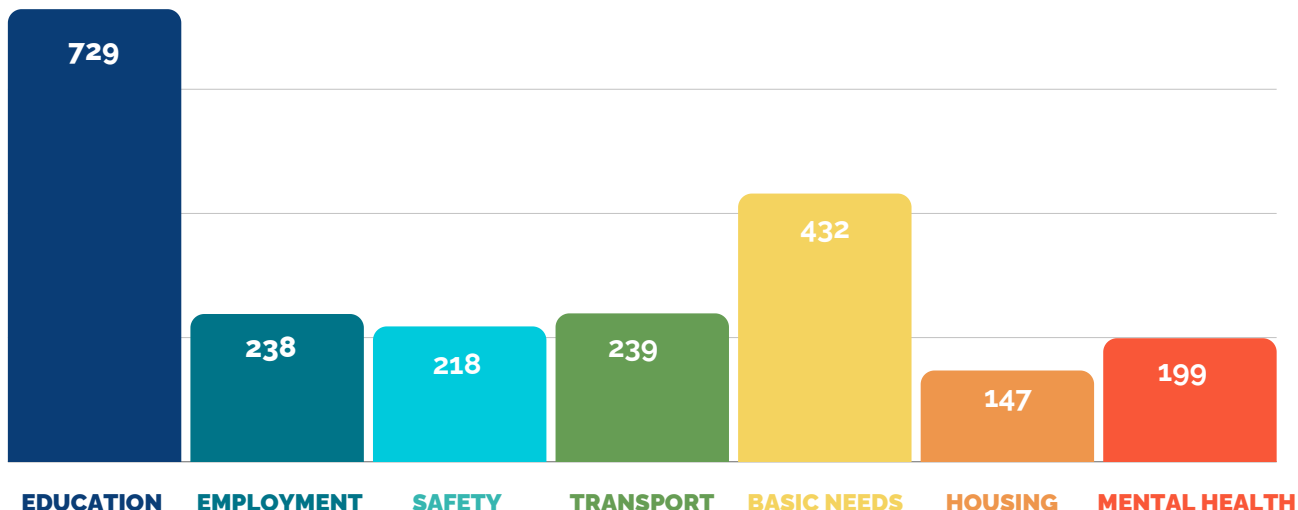
The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project believes in the importance of ongoing consultation with our community through deep listening. To achieve this, we initiated the 1000 Conversations initiative in 2015, followed by subsequent sessions in 2018, and a focused 100 Conversations check-in in 2020.

The 1000 Conversations process identifies the issues, needs, and priorities that are of the greatest concern to our community. The information, data, and feedback received inform Lighthouse’s whole-of-community strategy and identify the priorities needed to drive better outcomes for children and young people across Greater Shepparton.

The 1000 Conversations 3.0 has once again been conducted over 2023/24. The following key themes were identified along with the number of times they were raised.

### Key themes

Through undertaking the 1000 Conversations initiative Lighthouse is able to identify key topics, issues, positives and opportunities shared by our community. The table below indicates the frequency of each topic discussed. The topics raised the most are categorised in to key themes and informs the focus of Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project’s strategic plan.



*“...skill building/life skills is an essential part of schooling and each and every child [needs] the opportunity to access these services”*

Service Provider



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**1000  
CONVERSATIONS 3.0**

# EDUCATION

KEY THEME

Education is one of the key themes identified in 1000 Conversations 3.0. The topic was **discussed 729 times** across all groups and demographics and was raised in relation to alternative education, university, TAFE, attendance, hands-on learning, life skills, and teachers/educators. Education was raised as a significant influence on young people's ability to thrive.

## “ Community voice

*“Our teachers change too frequently”*

Young Person

*“I tried to get into Berry Street and ACE and couldn't get in – there are not enough options like this for kids like me in our area”*

Young Person

*“I have 4 children studying at University in Melbourne. We have no choice due to no local courses [available in their study areas].”*

Parent/Carer

*“Introduction of a tech school and [trade] options [to help young people thrive]”*

Community/Businesses

*“Community Kindergartens like Rodney Neighbourhood Kindergarten really welcomes families where you are feeling lost, and are very supportive in those early years.”*

Parent/Carer

## ! The Issues

Education concerns discussed that are impacting young people's ability to thrive were:

- Teacher consistency impacts student engagement and attendance.
- Lack of access to life skills training and hands-on learning options for all young people.
- A lack in cultural inclusion.
- Variety of secondary education settings, difficult for some families with only one public option.
- Some parents do not value education.
- Lack of designated pathways for further education available locally.
- Difficulty in transitioning from Primary School to Secondary School.

## ✓ The Positives

Schools that provide access to mental health and healthcare support were raised as having a positive impact on a student's ability to learn. Greater Shepparton Secondary College was commended for its 'Hub' of mental health and healthcare support offerings.

Our region is well served by a variety of primary education offerings.

Schools with Kindergartens attached, along with free kinder was seen as a positive.

Breakfast programs in schools were commended.

### ? Key Findings

- Accessing education is vital to young people thriving.
- Links to mental health and health services are valued by students and community members.
- The community desires a wider variety of local University and TAFE courses.
- More cultural support is desired by students.
- Further emphasis could be placed on career pathways into trades through hands-on-learning and access to technical skill building.
- Difficulty in attraction and retention of teachers.
- Greater Shepparton has limited local variety for public secondary education options and increased demand for alternative education options.
- Parents valuing education is key to student school engagement.

### 💡 Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: The Community, The Services Sector, and The Family Unit / Individual.

#### The Community

- To share findings of 1000 Conversations 3.0 with Local Members of Parliament and wider community.
- To advocate and support quality teacher attraction and retention in Greater Shepparton.
- Highlight career pathways into areas of skills shortages and growth areas.
- Provide greater aspiration and access to trade and technical skills through hands-on-learning opportunities.
- To advocate for local tertiary education providers to offer a wider variety of courses.

#### The Services Sector

- Increase professional development/training days for teachers to further embed trauma informed practice and alleviate pressures on alternative education.
- Offer better support for students transitioning from primary to secondary school.

#### The Family Unit/Individual

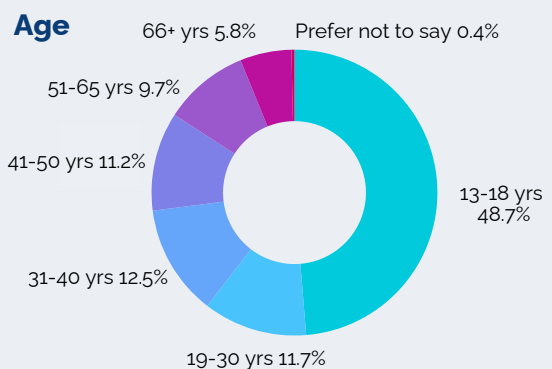
- Offer more opportunities for families to engage in young people's educational journeys.

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In 2023/24 Lighthouse conducted 1000 Conversations 3.0. The following demographics reflects who contributed:



#### Gender

<b>58%</b> Female	<b>1.6%</b> Gender diverse
<b>39%</b> Male	<b>1.4%</b> Prefer not to say

#### Culture and identity

- **9.8%** identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community
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- **8.4%** indicated they are living with a disability

The key themes summaries reflect community voice. Further insights and broader findings form part of the 1000 Conversations Report to be released in September 2024.



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*“To have a better life and be ready to leave high school we need a well paid job so we need to get a good resume and have quality education and get experience [working]”*

Young Person



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# EMPLOYMENT

KEY THEME

Employment is one of the key themes identified in 1000 Conversations 3.0. The topic was discussed in relation to work experience, jobs, and careers. It was raised as a major factor influencing young people's ability to thrive and was **discussed 238 times** across all groups and demographics.



## Community voice

*“[Need] more businesses prepared to take on young people, train with patience and care and support them in work environments.”*

Teacher/Service Provider

*“Careers Day Out is great – connects the students to the actual business and the staff. They can hear about what the job actually is”*

Community/Businesses

*“More programs [needed] to help students learn about trade career opportunities”*

Community/Businesses

*“[More] employers to give young people an opportunity, a stepping stone, to amazing careers”*

Teacher/Service Provider



## The Issues

Employment focusing on access to work experience and learning opportunities, was raised as a significant factor in supporting young people to thrive. The issues consistently raised were:

- Schools don't provide students with enough exposure, support or access to work experience options.
- Young people are not aware of the trade pathways on offer in our region.
- Local employers don't promote the work experience options, apprenticeships and career pathways they offer.
- Schools and local businesses don't communicate regarding transitioning from school to work.
- Our region lacks technical or trade school education offerings at a secondary level.



## The Positives

The following services, organisations and events are providing excellent links to employment and work experience within schools:

- School career teams
- GMLLEN
- Geared 4 Careers
- Gambina
- Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project
- Careers Day Out
- Industry incursions/excursions.

### ? Key Findings

- Current employment services available in schools provide great links to students' work experience and career pathways.
- Employers are not providing enough work experience or apprenticeship options for young people.
- Community members wanted to see more hands-on-learning and access to technical skill building opportunities.
- Community members wanted to see more access to learn technical skills at a secondary level.
- Better business connections within schools would improve young people's understanding of what is available locally.

### 💡 Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: the community, the service sector, and the family unit/individual.

#### The Community

- Highlight career pathways into areas of skills shortages and growth areas.
- Provide greater aspiration and access to trade and technical skills through hands-on-learning opportunities.
- Systematic approach into existing career pathway models for key industries.
- Local businesses to take on more young people in their workplaces for work experience or in casual/part-time roles.
- Share findings of 1000 Conversations 3.0 with local Member of Parliament and the wider community.

#### The Services Sector

- Services to continue to provide career pathway support in schools.
- Schools to provide more opportunities for local businesses to directly connect with students.

#### The Family Unit/Individual

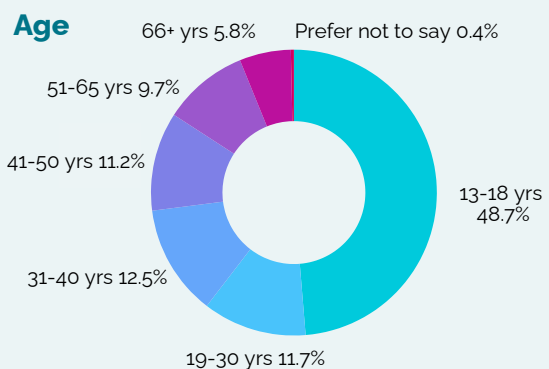
- Further support to be provided to gain employment and work experience and actively learn about local options and opportunities.

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*“Many attend school not for education but because home is not a safe space.”*

Teacher



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# SAFETY

KEY THEME

Safety was one of the key themes identified in 1000 Conversations 3.0. The topic of safety was consistently raised as an issue getting in the way of young people accessing opportunities, services and experiences. Safety concerns were **discussed 218 times** across the conversations.

## “ Community voice

***“Where can I go if all these places are dangerous”***

Young person

***“Our safe spaces are not created for people of different cultures, they need to (be able) to create them themselves”***

Teacher/Service Provider

***“Justice should be just and fair (but its actually crushing)”***

Service provider/Community member

***“Shepparton can be very judgemental and a narrower mindset compared to other communities”***

Parent/Carer

***“More work to be done around what family violence looks like -it's not just physical”***

Service provider/Community Member

## ! The Issues

The issue of safety was predominately discussed by parents and young people. Safety was defined as physical and emotional safety and providing opportunities for young people to access places and opportunities that felt safe. Safety Key issues identified were:

- Students state they feel unsafe on school buses.
- Public transport hubs are being avoided due to feeling unsafe.
- Young people describe feeling unsafe in the community; this was related to threats of physical violence and personal safety.
- Family violence is a crucial issue impacting people's sense of safety.
- People felt unsafe and unsupported when accessing family violence-related services through the legal system.
- Racism was a key aspect of people feeling unsafe.
- Multicultural groups reported experiencing systematic and individual racism.
- First Nation groups reported experiencing systematic and individual racism.
- Parents raised concerns about online safety.

## ✓ The Positives

Despite safety being a key theme, many conversations noted the strength of the Greater Shepparton community. Our community was seen as a highly motivated and supportive. Many expressed a sense of proud around our communities ability to come together and tackle issues around safety and vulnerability.



### Key Findings

- Community is seeking additional spaces that are culturally appropriate and safe.
- Young people describe feeling unsafe when travelling on school transport.
- Family violence is being experienced throughout the community, and legal supports available are not addressing people's safety concerns.
- The lens of intersectionality to be applied in safety recommendations and available services.
- Multicultural and First Nations people in our community are experiencing racism.
- Increased support is needed for young people involved with youth justice to prevent ongoing involvement within the justice system.



### Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: the community, the service sector, and the family unit/individual.

#### The Community

- Support to elevate the voices of people in the community experiencing family violence within the legal system. Increase youth voice about safety for the region. (Council Safety Committee & Empowering Communities)

#### The Service Sector

- Create a community hub at local secondary schools to support multicultural and First Nation students and their families.
- Community support and awareness for youth justice processes.
- Promotion of safe and inclusive activities that are available within the region.

#### The Family Unit/Individual

- Further education and support for young people and families about online safety.

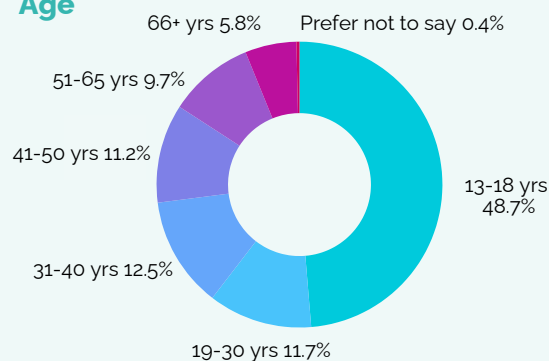
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#### Age



#### Gender

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*“Accessing services is a big problem, some families don't have transport and can't afford to get around town let alone to go to Melbourne [for appointments]”*

Teacher/Service Provider



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**1000  
CONVERSATIONS 3.0**

# TRANSPORT

KEY THEME

Transport is one of the key themes identified in 1000 Conversations 3.0. The topic was discussed in relation to public transport, cars/driving, and community transport options. It was raised as a major issue preventing young people from accessing opportunities, services, and experiences and was **discussed 239 times** across all groups and demographics.

## “ Community voice

*“School buses and public [buses] are good although only go to 6:30. Cannot rely on [them] to get home from my part time job.”*

Young Person

*“Those in the outer areas find it really hard to get around and into Shepparton [with] huge wait times to go anywhere. Especially if they are coming here for schooling – so hard to get around if out of the area [Shepparton].”* Young Person

*‘Living outside of Shepparton [it is] hard to stay behind for extra curricular [activities] such as band and then try and get back to Tatura.’*

Young Person

*“[We] need proper transport, [the] bus comes an hour or two later if I miss the bus”*

Young Person

## ! The Issues

The public transport system was described as infrequent, unreliable, costly, slow and Shepparton-centric, impacting on young people's ability to:

- Gain/sustain employment as transport schedules do not align with the start or end times of shifts;
- Attend social/community events or participate in sports and/or extracurricular activities;
- Attend medical or mental health appointments
- Travel to and from smaller towns

Alternative options such as taxi's were reported as too expensive and driving is not always an option due to families not having access to a car or young people not having access to driving mentors to gain their licence. This leads to an overreliance on services offering transport solutions such as vouchers, community buses, and driving/licence support.

## ✓ The Positives

Greater Shepparton has excellent services that offer transport solutions for young people and their families; these include:

- TAC L2P run through Berry Street, linking young people with driving mentors to gain their license;
- Community Interlink and Community Access supporting people through NDIS to travel to and from appointments; and
- Particular youth services that offer taxi vouchers and/or direct transport options.

### Key Findings

- Public transport is costly.
- Alternative transport options such as taxi's and upkeep of motor vehicles is also costly.
- Public transport within Greater Shepparton is infrequent and unreliable, community is calling for increased hours of operation.
- Public Transport services to and from small towns are slow and infrequent. Respondents are seeking increased services in particular linking Shepparton to Mooroopna and the smaller towns.
- Driving and accessing a car is not possible for all young people, particularly those requiring driving mentors to gain the 120 hours needed to obtain their licence.
- Services offering transport solutions required further community support, such as TAC's L2P program run through Berry Street.
- The improved train services will help families access appointments in Melbourne.

### Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: the community, the service sector, and the family unit/individual.

#### The Community

- Share findings of 1000 Conversations 3.0 with local Members of Parliament to advocate for change.
- Highlight transport as part of the cost of living crisis.

#### The Service Sector

- Further support for current services providing community transport options, for example running a mentor drive for the L2P program.
- Better collaboration across the sector to allow for more services to offer interim and long term transport solutions.

#### The Family Unit/Individual

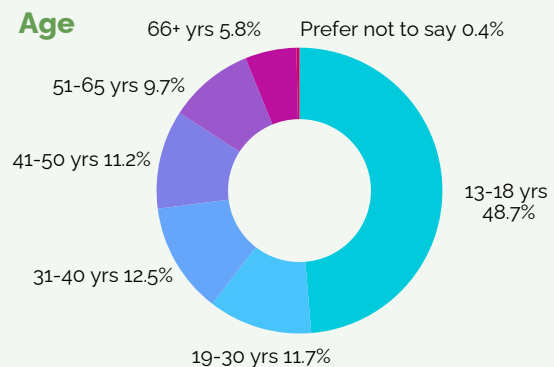
- Empower individual's voices to be included in advocacy around transport concerns and potential solutions.

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*"Cost of living crisis - many children and young people's families cannot afford basic needs such as food and housing"*

Service Provider



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**1000  
CONVERSATIONS 3.0**

# BASIC NEEDS

KEY THEME

Basic needs was one of the key themes identified in 1000 Conversations 3.0. The topic was **discussed 432 times** across all groups and demographics and was discussed in relation to cost of living, food security. Not having access to basic needs was raised as a major contributor to children and young people's ability to thrive.

## Community voice

***"Housing is a joke now days, taken me from May until now to find a house. I have been on the housing list since June for priority housing. Nothing moves forward."***

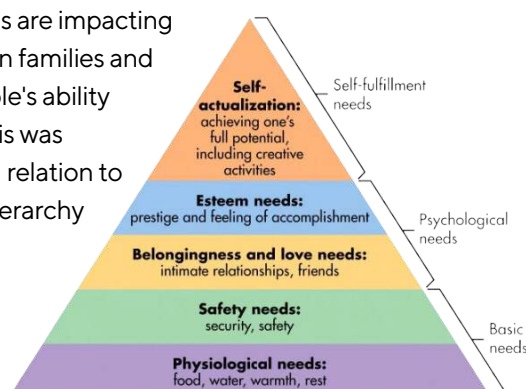
Parent/Carer

***"If we had more money maybe I could get my own room and it wouldn't be crowded"***

Young Person

## The Issues

The inability to access basic needs and the cost of living crisis are impacting heavily on families and young people's ability to thrive. This was discussed in relation to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.



Suggesting many families and young people are unable to fulfil their basic needs and until done so will find it difficult to progress up the hierarchy.

Particular basic needs not being met are:

- Safe, secure and affordable housing and transport
- Food and water;
- Affordable healthcare (bulk billing), in particular, mental health services;
- Financial support or budgeting services;
- Sport or sporting opportunities due to associated expenses;
- Activities other than sports, such as community events, music, arts and youth-focused; and
- Some activities are not accessible due to costs to participate.

Lack of access to these basic needs places pressure and stress on families impacting the family unit's cohesion, and young people's sense of belonging and safety.

## The Positives

Mooroopna Park Primary School's breakfast program and daily bus pick up were commended for removing basic barriers for families, and it was suggested that more schools provide this type of support.

Client facing local services offering access to basic needs including Shepparton Family and Financial Services, Headspace, The Bridge, Family Haven were also commended on their work.



### Key Findings

- The increase in the cost of living is impacting families and young people's ability to access basic needs, with many families unable to afford fuel and/or food after paying rent and bills.
- Difficult to access affordable, safe and secure housing in Greater Shepparton.
- The cost of sporting and community/arts activities is too high, impacting young people's ability to participate.
- Not enough doctor clinics provide bulk billing options, impacting access to affordable healthcare (GPs, specialists, etc.).
- Community called for more services, such as Foodshare, required to access low-cost/free food options.
- Feeling loved, safe, and secure is integral to thriving, but it can be unattainable for families experiencing financial pressures related to basic needs such as housing, food, and transport.



### Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: The Community, The Services Sector, and The Family Unit / Individual.

#### The Community

- To share findings of 1000 Conversations 3.0 with Local Member of Parliament and the wider community.
- To advocate for increased bulk billing medical services in Greater Shepparton.
- To support recommendations arising from Greater Shepparton City Council's Affordable Housing Strategy.

#### The Services Sector

- To provide more free/low-cost events.
- Improve communication between services/organisations and community/individuals/young people.
- Continue to explore solutions enabling scale to provide food support and basic needs support in order to respond to growing regional demand.

#### The Family Unit/Individual

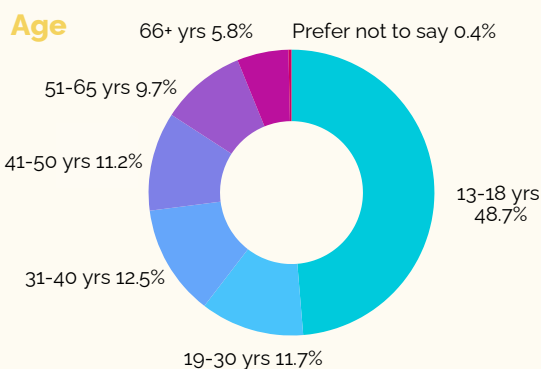
- Empower families and young people to access and create long-term sustainable food solutions.

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**“Our kids need a safe and secure home with structure”.**

Service Provider/Community Member



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# HOUSING

KEY THEME

Safe, secure and affordable housing was discussed **147 times** during the conversations. Improving access to housing was seen as a key solution to improving outcomes for young people in Shepparton.

## “ Community voice

**“More affordable accommodation for students not able to live at home – More [Education First Youth] Foyer style options [with] more variety for those with diverse mental health”.**

Young person

**“More programs that support people that need help with housing but also with other stuff like drugs, violence and money”.**

Young person

**“Something to help us get a rental history because no one is taking renters without the rental history”.**

Young person

**“It all stems back to mental health and safe and affordable house”**

Service Provider

**“Affordable housing or better residential housing for youth including staffed and better locations across the whole of shepp”**

Service Provider

## ! The Issues

The community of Shepparton is feeling the impact of increasing housing costs, limited social housing and the highly competitive rental market. Key housing concerns raised were:

- Cost of rental properties
- Availability and affordability of rental properties
- Access to housing support and services
- Availability and access to youth housing options both emergency and long term housing
- Increasing number of people experiencing homelessness
- Public housing access
- The need for safe housing, ensuring personal safety as well as housing stability.
- Additional supports required for those living in unsafe housing environments due to family violence.

## ✓ The positives

Models such as the Education First Youth Foyer were presented as a successful example of housing that support young people. This model provides wholistic supports which was seen as a fundamental element to support long term housing and life outcomes.

Many people understood that housing organisations were trying hard to find housing, however supply versus demand is the critical issue.

## Key findings

- Waitlists for public housing are excessively long, resulting in individuals and families living in unsafe/unsuitable living arrangements.
- Additional youth housing options deemed as urgently needed in the region.
- The increase in the cost of living has resulted in housing prices being unaffordable for many.
- The highly competitive rental market is leaving families and individuals in compromised housing positions.
- Increase demand and limited supply of houses in Greater Shepparton has meant that individuals and families who are already experiencing vulnerability are being disproportionately effected by the current state of housing.

## Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: the community, the service sector, and the family unit/individual.

### The Community

- Increase public support for centrally located public housing developments.
- Inquiry into the public housing register, including the priority housing list.

### The Service Sector

- Expansion of the youth foyer housing model for young people, with a reduction to entry criteria to improve access.
- Increase promotion of social housing models successfully working within community.
- Pathways for individuals and families without rental histories to enter the housing market.
- Increase housing options for those fleeing family violence and unsafe environments.

### The Family Unit/Individual

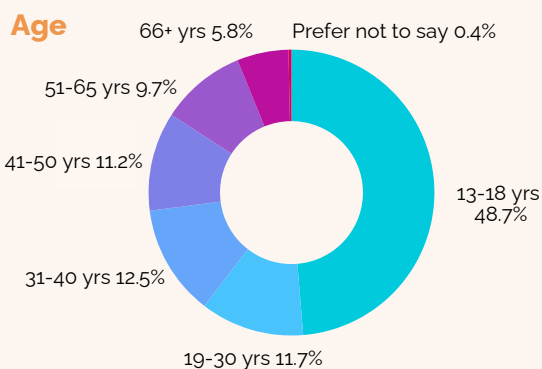
- Increase support for individuals with complex health and well-being issues, which may impact housing stability and safety.

## What is the 1000 Conversations project?

The 1000 Conversations project is a Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Projects process that enables deep listening and reflects our commitment to ongoing consultation with our community. Lighthouse has conducted 1000 Conversations in 2015, 2018, and a 100 Conversations check-in, in 2020.

The process identifies the issues, needs, opportunities and priorities that are of the greatest concern to our community. The information, data and feedback gathered, informs Lighthouse's whole-of-community strategy and determines the priorities needed to drive better outcomes for children and young people in our region.

In 2023/24 Lighthouse conducted 1000 Conversations 3.0. The following demographics reflects who contributed:



### Gender

<b>58%</b> Female	<b>1.6%</b> Gender diverse
<b>39%</b> Male	<b>1.4%</b> Prefer not to say

### Culture and identity

- **9.8%** identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community
- **13.8%** identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- **10.2%** identified as culturally diverse
- **8.4%** indicated they are living with a disability

The key themes summaries reflect community voice. Further insights and broader findings form part of the 1000 Conversations Report to be released in September 2024.



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*“Lack of connection in mental health services – and young person [are] being refused support even though they needed it, and then is far too late when they get the support”*

Service provider/Community Member



**GREATER SHEPPARTON Lighthouse Project**



# MENTAL HEALTH

KEY THEME

Mental health was a key theme identified during the conversations. Improving mental health was considered an important factor in helping our young people thrive. Mental health concerns were **discussed 199 times** across all groups and demographics.

## “ Community voice

*“I have just given up trying to find a psychologist.”*

Service provider/community member

*“Mental health supports are incredibly lacking in the wake of covid.”*

Parent

*“[poor] Mental health can stop them [young people] from accessing or putting themselves out in the community.”*

Service provider/community member

*“Social anxiety – prevents others from participating, lack of confidence to participate in community.”*

Parent

*“This generation have had their mental health impacted more than any other generation.”*

Service provider/community member

*“I would not know where to start to find a psychologist, but I [also] wouldn't have that money.”*

Young person

## ! The Issues

The importance of mental health was reiterated by all groups. It was discussed that the mental health needs of our community are increasing and services have been unable to meet the demand. Key mental health concerns raised were;

- Excessively long waitlists for public mental health services
- Ongoing stigma relating to mental health and the impact of this on seeking help
- Need for increase support for people experiencing addiction issues, with greater collaboration of services supporting AOD and mental health needs
- The limited accessibility of private mental health services due to high cost and insufficient appointment availability
- Increase demand for trained mental health professionals
- Individuals describe feeling “hopeless” when trying to find mental health support
- Social media was seen to be both negatively impacting mental health as well as providing an avenue for accessing supports

## ✓ The Positives

There is shared understanding of the importance to foster good mental health in our community. Despite stigma still being present, there has been a reduction in those experiencing it. The community understanding provides a unique opportunity to create a Greater Shepparton specific solutions to address shortages in mental health services.

### ? Key findings

- Positive mental health is vital for young people to thrive.
- Poor mental health is being experienced by more people in the region than previously.
- Factors impacting upon poor mental health are; increase cost of living, trauma, social isolation, and the impact of natural disasters.
- Appropriate mental health support hard to access, leaving people feeling hopeless.
- Cost and availability of private mental health services are limit who can access them.
- Additional supports are needed for Alcohol and other drug services.
- There is a need for complementary preventative services that promote and support positive mental health.

### 💡 Recommendations

Recommendations are based on three overarching systems that impact children and young people: the community, the service sector, and the family unit/individual.

#### The Community

- Campaign for an inquiry into the Better Access Initiative and the subsequent changes to mental health rebates
- Promotion and collaboration of shared resources that support improving mental health, i.e. increase access to workshops and education between schools.

#### The Service Sector

- Increase access to mental health support for early intervention and prevention
- Increase supports and education for people to self manage their mental health
- Access to supportive factors for mental health such as outdoor areas and free exercise

#### The Family Unit/Individual

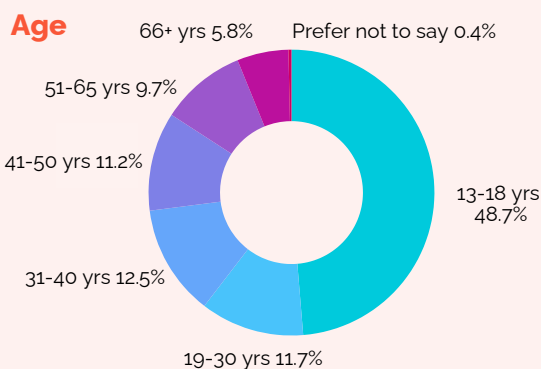
- Improved access to family and community education to support improving mental health in the region.

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