

City of Port Phillip

Happy, Healthy and Heard:

**Middle Years Commitment
2014-19**



About this document

This document has been prepared based on the *Happy, Healthy and Heard: Youth and Middle Years Commitments 2014-19 Background Report*. It provides Council's commitments to young people aged 8-11 years who live, work, study or visit the City of Port Phillip. The policy sits within the broader context of the Council Plan, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and other key Council policies.

Our vision for Port Phillip is an engaged, healthy, resilient and vibrant city. For young people in particular, our vision is for all young people to be *happy, healthy and heard*.

The *Youth and Middle Years Commitments 2014-19* package includes:

Happy, Healthy and Heard Background Report 2014

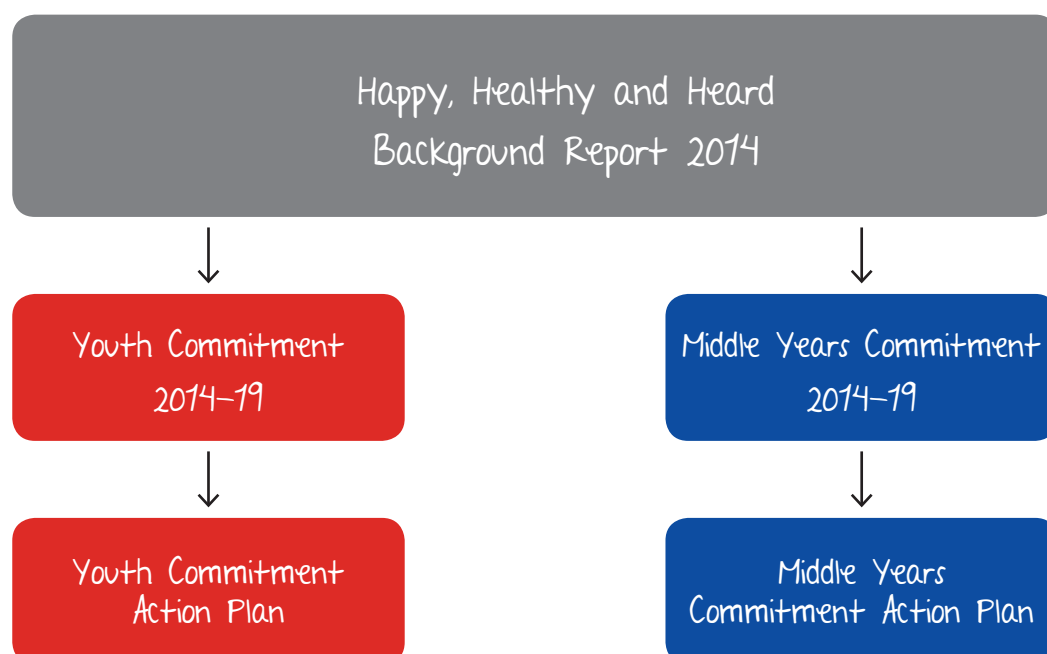
The Background Report provides the information required to implement a local policy for young people, including those in the middle years, in the City of Port Phillip. It provides the political and social contexts, developmental needs and youth development frameworks that have informed the *Youth Commitment* and *Middle Years Commitment*.

Happy, Healthy and Heard: Youth Commitment 2014-19

The *Youth Commitment 2014-19* is a summary of the conclusions from the Background Report, based on the *Your Top 3: Youth Consultation Report (2014)* and in context to the needs and demographics of young people aged 12–25 years. This document outlines the priority areas for Council, called our "Commitments". These are the basis of our decision-making and investment for the life of the policy. The *Youth Commitment Action Plan 2014-19* outlines key initiatives.

Healthy Happy and Heard: Middle Years Commitment 2014-19

The *Middle Years Commitment 2014-19* is a summary of the conclusions from the Background Report, based on the *Your Top 3: Youth Consultation Report (2014)* and in context to the needs and demographics of young people aged 8-11. This document outlines the priority areas for Council, called our "Commitments". These are the basis of our decision-making and investment for the life of the policy. The *Middle Years Commitment Action Plan 2014-19* outlines key initiatives.



Snapshot

In the City of Port Phillip, young people aged 8-25 years make up 16.1% of the total population. Of this, 2.4% are aged 8-11 years, and form part of the “middle years” youth demographic (Census data, 2011).

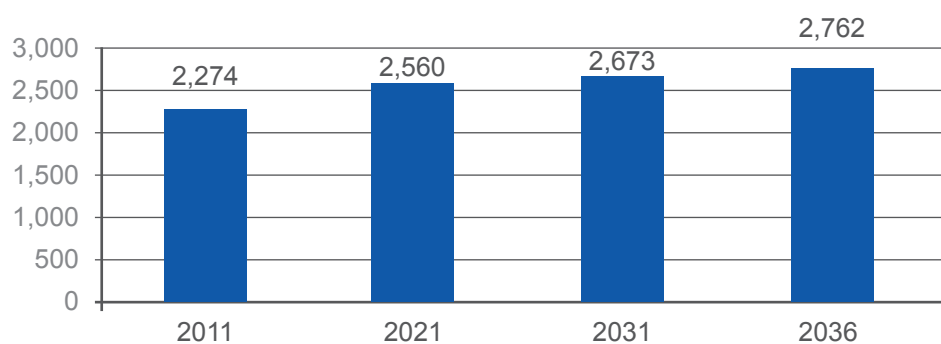
We recognise that the “middle years” are an emerging demographic in Port Phillip. There is an existing service gap that means these young people do not always have access to the services they need. Consequently, interventions do not occur until it is too late, or when negative behaviours emerge and need to be responded to.

Middle Years Young People (aged 8-11 years)

Children in this age group are predominantly at primary school. The middle years are a time of transition, and information about this group is pertinent to youth engagement policies, libraries and school planning, sport and recreation facilities, as well as economic development and employment planning.

Population forecasts for Port Phillip show that it is expected to continue to have a relatively low proportion of school age children. However, numbers will increase in line with the overall population, as more families move to, or remain in the area.

Figure 1. Forecast population of 8-11 year olds (2011–2036)



(Source: Forecast.id)

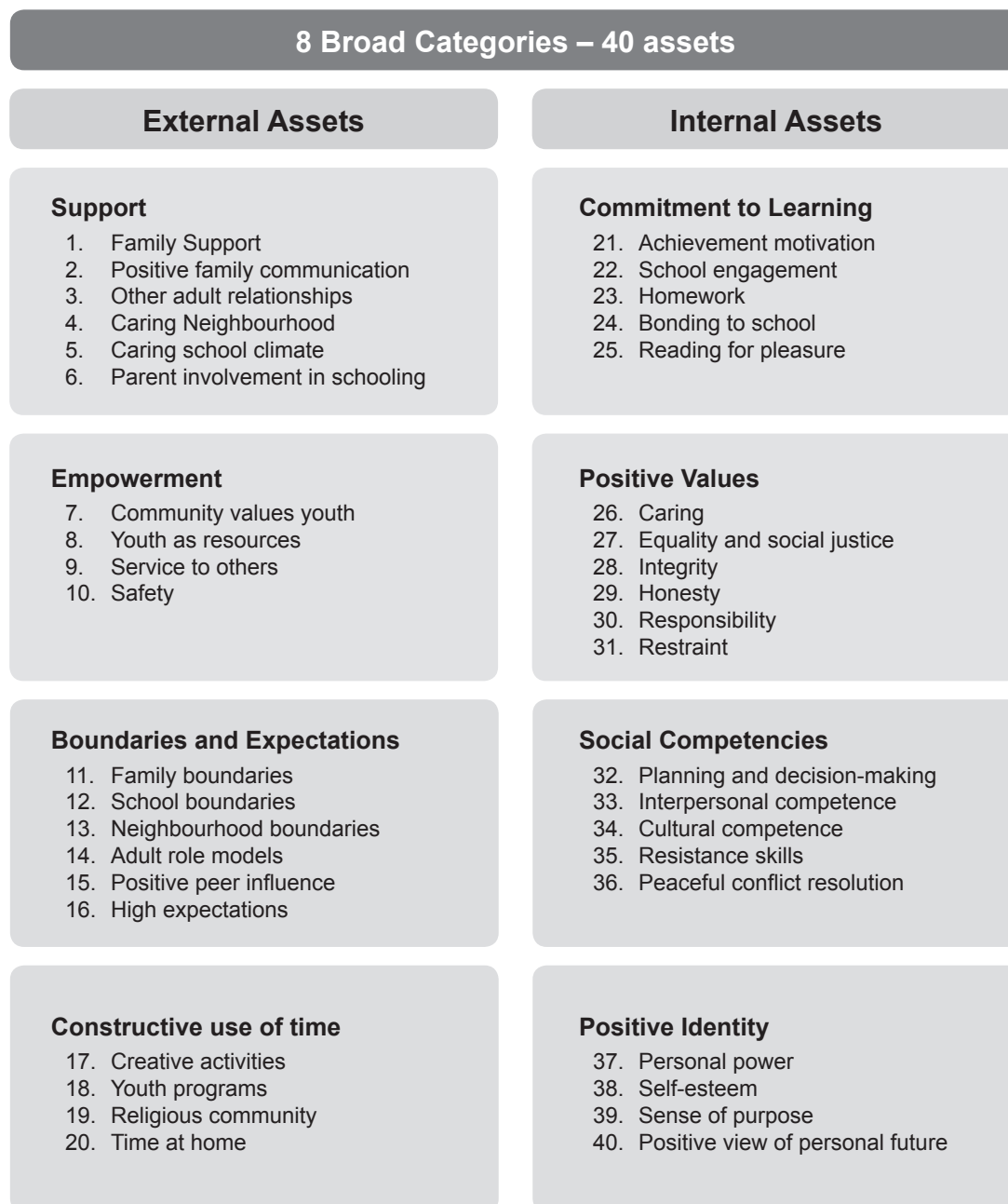
If the current trends continue, by 2036 there could be 488 additional 8 to 11 year olds in Port Phillip. Around half of this estimated growth will occur in the life of the Commitments.

These figures include conservative estimates for the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area. Actual population growth may be larger. The availability of family-friendly housing will be a constraint on the population growth, as will access to schools.

Developmental Assets Framework

The City of Port Phillip uses the Developmental Assets Framework to underpin our work with young people. This approach aligns with our values and principles, and helps us achieve our vision for young people.

Figure 2: Search Institute® 40 Developmental Assets®



*Source: Adapted from Search Institute (2006)

The 40 individual assets, as listed above, are divided into eight broad categories. Those on the left of the table are referred to as “external” assets - that is, assets we provide *to* young people; those on the right side of the table are known as “internal” assets - these are assets we instil *in* a young person through our own actions and behaviours.

We have framed a Commitment to middle years young people under each of the broad category areas.

Council's Vision: Happy, Healthy and Heard

Council's Vision is that all young people in the City of Port Phillip are Happy, Healthy and Heard

Happy

By this we mean all young people:

- have their basic needs met
- are motivated, optimistic and resilient
- have good self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy
- have profound, intimate relationships
- are using their strengths to give back to society
- enjoy the little things in life.

Healthy

By this we mean all young people are healthy:

- physically
- mentally
- socially
- spiritually.

Heard

By this we mean all young people:

- are empowered
- have pathways to have their voices heard
- have opportunities to build on their leadership skills
- are involved in decision-making processes
- are given useful roles in the community
- have their contribution to the community recognised.

To achieve this we have eight Middle Years Commitments that determine our actions and decision-making.

The Role of the City of Port Phillip in Youth Services

Port Phillip City Council generally, and Youth Services specifically, have many and varied roles in relation to young people.

Working in partnership our focus as a local Council is to provide the following:

Leadership

By this we mean:

- innovation through policy and practice
- role modelling
- advocacy; and
- development.

Resourcing

By this we mean:

- support for young people and the Youth Service sector
- information
- capacity building; and
- facilitation.

Engagement

By this we mean:

- creating opportunities for young people's voices to be heard
- empowering young people through purposeful, inclusive engagement practice
- direct support; and
- prevention and early intervention.

Implementing the Middle Years Commitment

Young people require a whole of organisation approach. This Middle Years Commitment applies to the five-year period 2014-19. To deliver on our Commitments to middle years young people, we have an Action Plan that highlights Council's key activities and responsibilities.

A copy of the *Middle Years Commitment Action Plan 2014-19* can be located on our website www.portphillip.vic.gov.au.

City of Port Phillip's Middle Years Commitments 2014-19

(young people aged 8 to 11 years)



We commit to:

#1 Support
Facilitate the connections between family, school and important adults who can help middle years young people through challenges.

#2 Empowerment
Work with middle years young people to promote safety and empowerment within the community through programs and places.



#3 Boundaries and Expectations
Build middle years young people's understanding of the expectations and boundaries relevant to their environment (and community). Promote their value and contributions.

#4 Constructive Use of Time
Facilitate opportunities for middle years young people that engage their passions and abilities, and provide programs and services that enable them to flourish.

#5 Commitment to Learning
Support middle years young people to make successful transitions from primary school to secondary school, and to engage in activities outside the formal learning environment.

#6 Positive Values
Facilitate opportunities for middle years young people to show kindness and care for their families and school environments through supporting community projects and initiatives.

#7 Social Competencies
Provide programs and services that grow friendships and create opportunities for families to get involved.

#8 Positive Identity
Create safe programs and spaces for middle years young people to gain a positive sense of self-worth as they transition into adolescence.

Contact: Youth Services
E: youth@portphillip.vic.gov.au

Commitment 1: Support

What do we mean by 'Support'?

Support refers to being loved and cared for and having access to material basics and positive feedback that strengthens identity.

What does support look like?

Supported young people:

- receive high levels of love and support from their family
- experience positive family communication and feel they can seek advice from their parents/carers
- have three or more other positive adult relationships in their life
- live in a caring neighbourhood
- receive care and encouragement at school
- have parents/carers that are actively involved in their schooling.

What has the research told us?

Young people that are supported have better health and wellbeing outcomes. They are confident, have a strong sense of self identify, high self-esteem and are resilient to life challenges. They have access to positive adult role models or mentors and can form secure attachments and strong connections with their family, peers and other members of their community.

What have young people told us?

44% of all 8-11 year olds consulted identified relationships as being important to them. Almost 90% identified their friends, family or community as important, positive influences in their life.

"All the people in my neighbourhood are really kind and caring."

"I really like just spending time and playing games with my mum and dad."

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #1

Facilitate the connections between family, school and important adults who can help middle years young people through challenges.

This may include:

- facilitating programs and services that link young people to their family and other strong adult role models
- encouraging activities that give young people opportunities to speak out and get involved in their local neighbourhood
- promoting friendships and social interactions in our program and service investments.

Commitment 2: Empowerment

What do we mean by 'Empowerment'?

Empowerment refers to process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

What does Empowerment look like?

Young people who are empowered:

- are valued by their community
- have useful roles in their community
- contribute to their society
- feel free of threats to their safety
- have critical analysis skills
- have opportunities to speak out.

What has the research told us?

Young people who are empowered and given useful roles in their community have better health and wellbeing outcomes. They are also more likely to feel positive about the future, have healthy relationships and positive education and employment outcomes. Young people who are empowered feel valued and safe in their community and are more likely to be active citizens.

What have young people told us?

More than one third of all 8-11 year olds surveyed listed a safety related issue in their Top 3, with many identifying these issues as barriers to empowerment.

Young people in this age group also spoke of other safety issues as being important to them, highlighting young people's desire to feel safe and independent as possible within the City of Port Phillip.

"We need less bullies."

"I want to stop racism."

"There needs to be more ways to join in activities for boys and girls."

"There are not enough crossings, some kids want to walk to school by themselves but can't because it's not safe."

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #2

Work with middle years young people to promote safety and empowerment within the community through programs and places.

This may include:

- facilitating programs and activities that enable young people to contribute their strengths to the community
- involving middle years young people in decision-making and leadership programs
- engaging with schools.

Commitment 3: Boundaries and Expectations

What do we mean by 'Boundaries and Expectations'?

Boundaries and Expectations refer to rules, standards, norms and aspirations relating to behaviour.

What do Boundaries and Expectations look like?

Young people with clear boundaries and expectations have:

- a clear sense of the rules and limits in the setting in which they interact (family, school and neighbourhood)
- a strong sense of what's right and what's not
- access to positive peer and adult role models
- an expectation to do well.

What has the research told us?

Young people who have been provided with clear boundaries and expectations have better relationships, self-esteem and health and well-being outcomes. Clear boundaries and expectations also encourage and help young people develop their autonomy, which enables them to make good decisions and means that they are less likely to engage in risky behaviours.

What have young people told us?

45% of all 8-11 year olds consulted list a service, program or recreational activity in their Top 3.

The majority of responses focused on programs and services that work to build and strengthen positive relationships between young people and family members, peers and other adult role models.

"The youth program I go to... is very fun and I really look up to and respect the staff."

"I'd like to see more family-based holiday programs."

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #3

Build middle years young people's understanding of the expectations and boundaries relevant to their environment (and community). Promote their value and contributions.

This may include:

- collaborating across organisations and agencies to clearly articulate expectations
- promoting the inclusiveness of young people as contributing community members
- investing in programs and services that encourage peer interactions, including inter-generational opportunities
- providing parent and other adult support information and education investment
- facilitating activities that support young people to take risks in a safe and supportive environment.

Commitment 4: Constructive Use of Time

What do we mean by 'Constructive Use of Time'?

Constructive Use of Time refers to how young people are engaged outside the home and traditional learning environments. It also refers to how young people use their personal and recreation time.

What does Constructive Use of Time look like?

Young people who use their time constructively are engaged in:

- creative activities, such as music, dance or art lessons
- youth programs, sports or clubs
- religious or spiritual communities
- unstructured activities during free time at home.

What has the research told us?

When young people use their time constructively they have access to a network of positive influences and activities that stimulate their personal growth. They also have opportunities to develop positive social supports and skills and to gain an informal education.

Young people who are constructively engaged and participating are less likely to use their free time taking risks. They have better health and wellbeing outcomes and do better at school.

What have young people told us?

80% of all 8-11 year olds consulted listed recreation areas and places other than home and school in their Top 3, with more than one third also identifying services and activities that they would like to see expanded so they can increase their access to and participation in them.

"I'd like more after school hours clubs for kids like my Homework Club."

"What about more fun stuff that's free ... because I can't get to one"

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #4

Facilitate opportunities for middle years young people that engage their passions and abilities, and provide programs and services that enable them to flourish.

This may include:

- providing recreation programs and services, and/or increasing access to these
- facilitating generalist youth programs and activities that encourage young people to get involved and appeal to their interests (such as arts and culture)
- facilitating programs that encourage physical activity and interactions with the natural environment.

Commitment 5: Commitment to Learning

What do we mean by 'Commitment to Learning'?

Commitment to Learning looks at how motivated a young person is to learn and how engaged they are with their learning. It is a combination of personal beliefs, values and skills, and a young person's ability to regulate their internal processes, such as goal setting.

What does Commitment to Learning look like?

Young people that are committed to their learning:

- are motivated to do well at school
- are actively engaged with their learning
- feel connected to their school
- often read for pleasure
- do homework every school day.

What has the research told us?

Education (in its many forms and settings) opens up life pathways and helps young people reach their full potential. Young people who are committed to learning have positive mental and physical health and wellbeing outcomes and are less likely to engage in risky behaviours. They are also more likely to do well academically and get a good job that they enjoy.

What have young people told us?

Access to learning environments and the importance of education was highlighted by this age group, with one in three 8-11 year olds surveyed listing education in their Top 3.

"We need another primary school nearby and more alternative education centres so we can all learn."

"The school I go to is great because my teacher really cares about me!"

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #5

Support middle years young people to make successful transitions from primary school to secondary school, and to engage in activities outside the formal learning environment.

This may include:

- engaging with schools - both primary and secondary - to support transitions
- facilitating activities that expand the knowledge of middle years young people and foster their interest in broader learning
- providing innovative programming that enables middle years young people to embrace learning across all settings
- raising awareness of education options and pathways.

Commitment 6: Positive Values

What do we mean by 'Positive Values'?

Positive Values refer to the social principles, goals or standards held by individuals or society. Values become deep, internalised commitments that consistently guide how one thinks and behaves.

What do Positive Values look like?

Young people with positive values:

- care about others
- have integrity
- promote equity and social justice in the community
- are honest and responsible
- are restrained in their behaviours.

What has the research told us?

For pre-adolescents, who are gaining a sense of their emerging identity, exploring and developing values constitute a critical part of their development.

Young people with positive values are more likely to have better health and wellbeing outcomes and to show resilience in times of adversity. They are also likely to have effective problem solving skills, high self-esteem and a sense of optimism about the future. Further, they are more likely to do well academically and subsequently have better employment outcomes.

What have young people told us?

25% of 8-11 year olds surveyed clearly articulated concern for the welfare of others and a strong awareness of social justice issues impacting others in their community.

They indicated that they were keen to take action or see others take action to address issues of homelessness and social inclusion.

"I'd like for you to make more homeless shelters because everyone needs a place to sleep at night."

"I would like to do more to help the poor and see more respect [given] to asylum seekers."

"I like to help Mum out in the garden."

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #6

Facilitate opportunities for middle years young people to show kindness and care for their families and school environments through supporting community projects and initiatives.

This may include:

- recognition of middle years young people
- facilitating activities and opportunities for young people to get involved in and contribute to their community
- providing programs and services that directly address the development of positive values.

Commitment 7: Social Competencies

What do we mean by 'Social Competencies'?

Social Competence refers to how young people make decisions, solve problems, plan for the future and interact with others in a way that is skilful, socially and culturally appropriate and appreciative of the unique qualities of others.

What do Social Competencies look like?

Socially competent young people:

- possess sound judgement, can plan effectively and make good decisions
- are culturally competent, can relate to their peers and make friends easily
- resist engaging in risky behaviours
- can resolve conflict peacefully.

What has the research told us?

Young people learn social competencies through their relationships with their family, peers and other adult role models in the community. Ultimately, research shows that young people with social competencies have healthy relationships, good self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy. They also have better health and wellbeing outcomes.

What have young people told us?

Almost half of 8-11 year olds surveyed listed their friends, family or community in their Top 3, identifying relationships as the second most important issue (after the environment). They also articulated an awareness of the existing sense of support within the local community.

"Nearly everyone knows each other and all the people are kind and caring."

"Great and nice community where I am near all my friends and ... everywhere you look there are smiles."

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #7

Provide programs and services that grow friendships and create opportunities for families to get involved.

This may include:

- creating places and spaces for young people to build friendships, supervised by positive adult role models
- providing services and activities that build relationships within families and neighbourhoods
- facilitating education and awareness programs for middle years young people and their parents on positive interactions in the school yard and online
- facilitating programs that give young people opportunities to celebrate the community's diversity, share their culture and learn about others.

Commitment 8: Positive Identity

What do we mean by 'Positive Identity'?

Positive Identity relates to a person's relationship to where they come from, what they believe in, whom they relate to, their feelings of belonging, their behaviour and their role in society.

What does 'Positive Identity' look like?

Young people with a positive sense of identity have a healthy relationship with their:

- gender and sexuality
- culture and linguistic diversity
- family relationships and situation
- religious and political beliefs
- friends
- economic, employment and community status
- community networks and support
- abilities and experiences of achievement
- physical characteristics
- mental and physical health status
- intellect and learning styles
- geography and natural environment.

What has the research told us?

The process of identity exploration is an essential task that occurs over the course of childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. It enables people to define themselves on a number of fronts and consolidate those definitions into an integrated whole. Young people with a positive sense of identity have better health and wellbeing outcomes and are more resilient. They are also more likely to have a sense of purpose and feel like they belong in society. They have good self-esteem, a positive view of their future and can develop healthy relationships.

What have young people told us?

Over half of 8-11 year olds surveyed listed the environment and health as concerns. There was a strong focus on increasing non-smoking areas.

"I don't like it when people disrespect the environment and I think we should try to be more of an environmentally friendly community."

"People should not smoke outside the school, around playgrounds or kids in general. We need more no smoking areas."

Our Commitment to the Middle Years

Middle Years Commitment #8

Create safe programs and spaces for middle years young people to gain a positive sense of self-worth as they transition into adolescence.

This may include:

- celebrating middle years young people as contributing community members
- providing programs and services to support the developmental needs of middle years young people
- engaging with schools to promote positive outcomes for middle years young people and their families
- facilitating programs with a specific focus on young people that may be experiencing issues related to elements of their identity, such as cultural diversity or gender and sexuality.

For further information or enquiries, please contact:

City of Port Phillip Youth Services

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