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**NSW Police Force**

# NSW Police Force Youth Strategy



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DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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For the purposes of this document, the term 'young person' has been used to refer to any person aged 17 or younger.



The NSW Police Force acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of all lands throughout NSW and the continuing connection to Country, land sea and sky. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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# Executive Foreword & Commissioners Priorities



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**Our vision is clear: to reduce youth crime, empower young people, and ensure that every young person in New South Wales can reach their full potential.**

The NSW Police Force (NSWPF) is committed to building a modern, trusted organisation that supports young people and strengthens community safety. The Youth Strategy aligns with NSWPF's corporate priorities (FORCE2030) focusing on crime reduction, prevention, early intervention and strong community partnerships.

NSW Police recognise Aboriginal young people are overrepresented in the justice system and are committed to culturally informed responses aligning with NSWPF Aboriginal Strategic Direction. Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations, schools, and local services will help deliver effective, culturally appropriate support, aligning with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

NSWPF prioritises strong interagency collaboration to achieve positive outcomes for young people and their communities. The NSWPF is dedicated to ensuring serious violent offences attract appropriate consequences, whilst also focusing on underlying drivers of offending. By utilising diversion, early intervention, and referrals to support services, we aim to keep young people out of detention and create genuine opportunities for change.

Together, these priorities create a proactive, accountable, and future-focused police force—one where young people feel safe, supported, and engaged in building a stronger and more connected NSW.



# Introduction

The Youth Strategy sets out how NSWPF will work with young people, and their families to create safer communities and positive outcomes. It is built around four key priorities:

- 1. Addressing Serious Violent & Repeat Offending: applying targeted responses to protect community safety.**
- 2. Prevention & Early Intervention: addressing risk factors before they escalate.**
- 3. Strengthening Community Partnerships: collaborating with agencies, service providers, and local communities.**
- 4. Diversion from the Justice System: keeping young people out of detention where possible.**

The strategy reflects a commitment to a collaborative, evidence-based approach prioritising community safety and young people's wellbeing.

Young people cannot be treated the same as adults, as research shows they are still developing in key areas such as decision-making, impulse control, and understanding consequences. They are also more prone to risk-taking, peer pressure, and vulnerabilities including mental health challenges or intellectual disabilities. For many young people, offending behaviour occurs during a period when they are also highly vulnerable to victimisation and exploitation.

The strategy supports early, integrated interventions and strong cross-agency collaboration to respond to evolving risks. Police are encountering younger serious offenders, and offending shaped by social media influences, including peer pressure, glorification of risky behaviour, and organisation of group incidents. These shifts require contemporary approaches addressing both traditional drivers of youth crime and new digital habits.

The NSW Police force is committed to upholding the rights, safety, participation, and wellbeing of young people in all interactions and decision-making processes.

Aligned with the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework, the Youth Strategy advances key cross-government wellbeing outcomes including safety, social and community connection, education and skills, and empowerment. The NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework is published by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and is designed to help agencies and NGOs adopt an outcomes-focused approach to service delivery. The Framework and its explanation can be found [here](#).

This strategy acts as a roadmap for reducing harm, promoting resilience, and ensuring that responses are tailored to the unique needs of young people.

# Youth Crime Intervention Framework

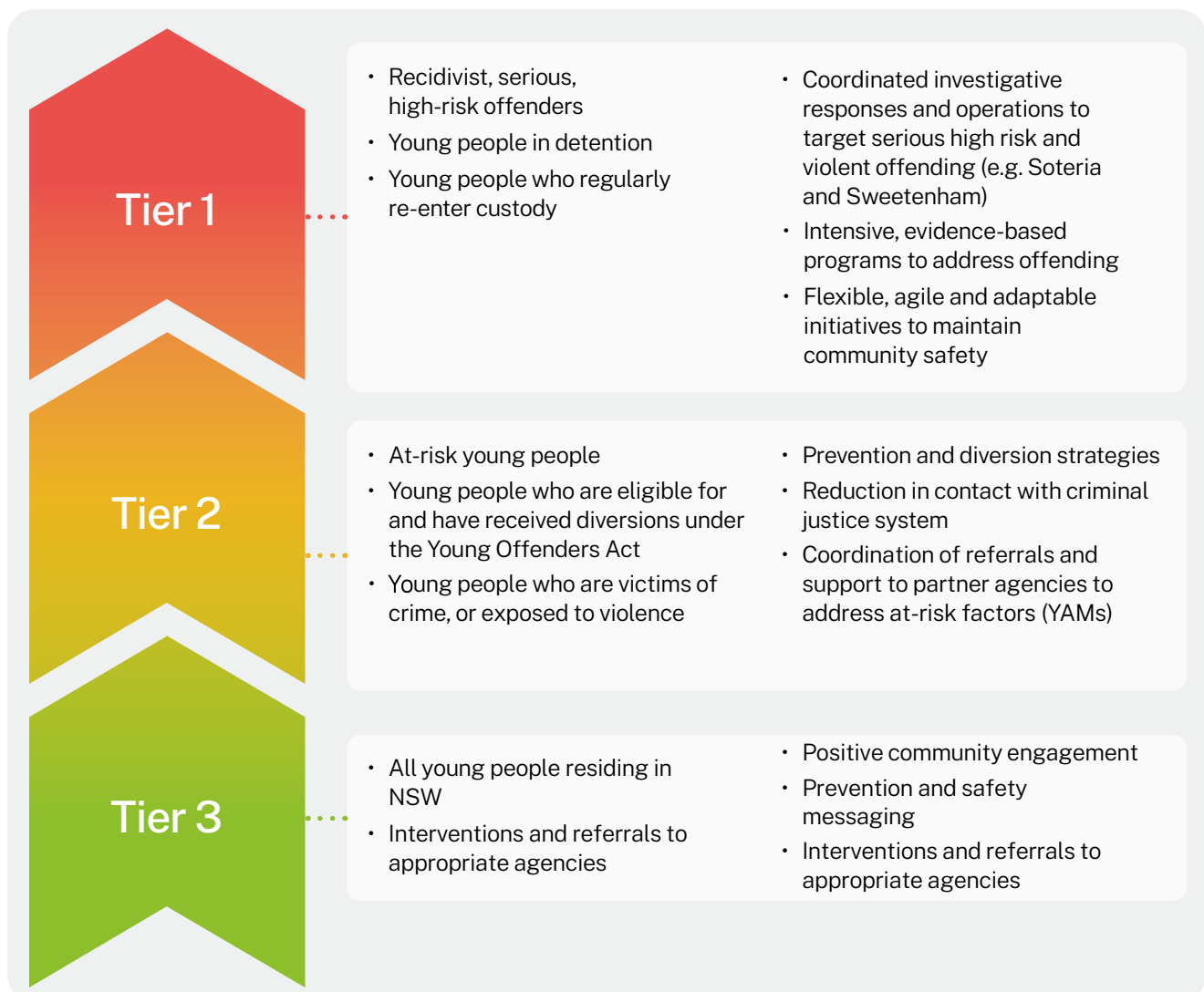
The NSW Police Force employs a three-tiered framework approach to intervention addressing youth crime and increasing community safety. It recognises that young people have diverse needs and risks, and tailored responses that balance enforcement, intervention, and positive engagement are best practice.

This holistic model responds to offending while also recognising the importance of community empowerment. The framework ensures that every young person, whether at-risk, impacted by crime, or residing in NSW, are afforded the opportunity to feel safe, supported, and connected to their community.

This framework serves as the foundation for all crime reduction and safety initiatives. It establishes the key considerations that will guide the development of:

- Programs that address risk factors and provide pathways to positive futures.
- Education pieces that build awareness, resilience, and informed decision-making among young people.
- Operations that integrate enforcement with intervention and engagement to deliver proportionate outcomes.

By embedding these priorities into every aspect of planning and delivery, the framework ensures that efforts to reduce crime and increase safety are consistent, evidence-based, and responsive to the realities faced by young people across NSW. It provides a clear and practical structure for action, enabling the NSW Police Force and its partners to deliver meaningful results that maintain safety, build trust and strengthen communities.



# Priority 1

## Addressing Serious Violent and Repeat Offending

While overall youth offending is declining<sup>1</sup>, serious violent and repeat offending among young people is on the rise. These behaviours are significantly affecting community safety and increasing fear of crime, a concern that is further amplified by media reporting and social media activity. The pathway into serious offending is also shifting, with young people engaging in high-risk behaviours at an earlier age. Influences such as social media and peer dynamics are accelerating this escalation, reducing the more gradual progression that previously characterised the move into serious criminal behaviour.

|                                               | Strategies                                                                                                                                     | Alignment with Commissioners Priority                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Addressing Serious Violent & Repeat Offending | Swift and decisive action will be taken in response to serious violent and repeat offending conducted by young people.                         | Crime Reduction & Public Safety, Our Community                                       |
|                                               | Increase monitoring of social media platforms used to recruit young people into serious and violent crime.                                     | Crime reduction and Public Safety, Innovation and Capability                         |
|                                               | Strengthen community safety and reduce fear through intelligence led and targeted responses to serious violent and repeat offending.           | Crime Reduction & Public Safety, Our Community, Innovation & Capability              |
|                                               | Address persistent and high-risk behaviours by young people through intensive interventions aimed to reduce recidivism and prevent escalation. | Crime reduction and Public Safety, Innovation and Capability, Strategic Partnerships |
|                                               | Use data and analytics to identify high-risk youth and respond quickly to serious or repeat offending.                                         | Crime Reduction & Public Safety, Our Community, Innovation & Capability              |

### What does this look like for a Young Person?

- Serious or repeat violent offending leads to a swift police response focused on community safety.
- Police actively prevent online harm by disrupting attempts to recruit young people into violent crime.
- Young people see visible policing in high-risk areas, alongside approachable outreach and support.
- Those identified as high-risk are offered intensive programs that keep them engaged in school, support their wellbeing, and build positive life pathways.

### Innovative Practice

- Deploy tools to detect and disrupt online recruitment into violent crime.
- Apply intelligence-led policing to target hotspots, supported by community engagement such as pop-up safe spaces and youth outreach.
- Deliver wraparound intervention programs with mental health, education, and family support to reduce reoffending.

### Determining Success

Examples of evaluation measures for this priority include:

- Track serious violent and repeat youth offending, including enforcement actions and changes in reoffending rates.
- Monitor online recruitment by recording platforms monitored, attempts detected, interventions completed, and any reduction in youth involvement.
- Measure the impact of intelligence-led operations through changes in hotspot violence and community safety feedback.
- Track enrolment, completion, and outcomes of intervention and reintegration programs, focusing on reduced reoffending and prevention of escalation.
- Measure the number of alerts, changes in emerging and current trends and respond in a timely manner.

<sup>1</sup> <https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/topic-areas/young-people.html>

# Priority 2

## Prevention & Early Intervention

Prevention and early intervention recognise that young people are shaped by events and experiences from early childhood. By identifying and addressing risks early (such as by creating strong opportunities for healthy development), we can reduce the factors that contribute to offending and strengthen the pathways that support young people to thrive. Youth Action Meetings support this approach by bringing police, government agencies, and community services together to identify at-risk young people early, share insights (including the young person's views), and coordinate timely interventions. By optimising young people's engagement with relevant services and supports, emerging concerns can be addressed early, diverting them from progressing into serious offending.

| Prevention & Early Intervention | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Alignment with Commissioners Priority                                     |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | Initiate early referrals to appropriate service providers for young people identified as being at risk — ideally before any criminal offence is committed (e.g. ROSH/IROSH, involvement as a victim of crime, school disengagement). | Crime Reduction and Public Safety, Strategic Partnerships                 |
|                                 | Develop and promote campaigns to reduce youth engagement in unsafe and/or antisocial behaviours, increase reporting and ensure appropriate action is taken to improve young people and community safety.                             | Crime Reduction & Public Safety, Our Community, Innovation and Capability |
|                                 | Opportunities for positive contact between police, young people and communities are created to increase trust, build confidence and increase identification of at-risk young people.                                                 | Crime reduction and Public Safety, Our Community, Our People              |
|                                 | Intelligence led youth crime prevention initiatives and operations utilised by PAC/PDs and specialist commands to reduce opportunities for offending.                                                                                | Crime Reduction and Public Safety, Innovation and Capability              |
|                                 | Increase availability / accessibility of prosocial activities for young people to build safety and resilience.                                                                                                                       | Crime Reduction and Public Safety, Our Community, Strategic Partnerships  |

### What does this look like for a Young Person?

- They interact with police in respectful, supportive ways and see officers involved in community and cultural events.
- They have opportunities to share their voice through youth advisory groups and are encouraged to report crime and contribute ideas for safety.
- At-risk young people receive early referrals to mentoring, mental health support and wraparound services that build resilience and connection.
- They engage with relatable social media content on cyber safety, healthy relationships, and violence prevention.

### Innovative Practice

- Use interactive formats to spread anti-violence messages.
- Embed crime prevention education in schools.

- Identify at-risk youth early and ensure interventions are appropriate.

### Determining Success

Examples of evaluation measures for this priority include:

- Increased engagement and positive interaction between young people and police, including on social media and in community initiatives.
- Greater confidence among young people to report incidents and contribute to community safety.
- Reduction in youth-related crime, including first-time and repeat offending.
- Higher participation in diversion programs and other support services.

# Priority 3

## Strengthening Community Partnerships

Strategic partnerships are critical to the success of the NSW Police Youth Strategy, as effective youth engagement and crime prevention cannot be achieved by policing alone. Working with government, non-government and community partners strengthens early intervention and diversion opportunities, supports shared learning, and enables more innovative, inclusive, and sustainable responses for young people. Mechanisms such as Youth Action Meetings and Senior Officers Group reinforce shared accountability ensuring all agencies actively contribute to a coordinated response.

|                                      | Strategies                                                                                                                           | Alignment with Commissioners Priority                                  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strengthening Community Partnerships | Promote youth safety and positive choices through education, campaigns, and community investment.                                    | Our Community, Strategic Partnerships, Crime Reduction & Public Safety |
|                                      | Strengthen partnerships with schools, youth services, NGOs, and agencies to deliver coordinated support and early intervention.      | Our Community, Strategic Partnerships                                  |
|                                      | Expand diversionary programs and community initiatives to reduce reoffending and support reintegration.                              | Our Community, Strategic Partnerships, Crime Reduction & Public Safety |
|                                      | Develop specialist youth officers' expertise to lead prevention and engagement efforts.                                              | Strategic Partnerships, Our People                                     |
|                                      | Ensure appropriate, proportionate and coordinated support via escalation pathways, governance structures and interagency committees. | Our Community, Strategic Partnerships, Crime Reduction & Public Safety |

### What does this look like for a Young Person?

- They see police, schools, youth services, and community organisations working together to provide quick, holistic support and referrals.
- Partnerships create safe spaces like youth hubs and drop-ins, and open pathways into sport, arts, education, and employment.
- They see police alongside teachers, youth workers, and community leaders at community events, with strong involvement from Aboriginal, multicultural communities, and other cultural organisations to ensure representation and respect.

### Innovative Practice

- Partner with schools, sporting clubs, and arts organisations to offer structured alternatives to offending for high-risk and victimised young people.
- Deliver joint training where police learn from youth workers, teachers, and health professionals to build shared capability.
- Create joint investment models where police, councils, and NGOs pool resources to support innovative youth projects.

- Work with local businesses to provide employment pathways, mentoring, and sponsorship for diversion programs.

### Determining Success

Examples of evaluation measures for this priority include:

- Number of joint education initiatives delivered and documented reduction in school-related incidents.
- Frequency of collaborative programs and evidence of shared resources with measurable outcomes.
- Number of at-risk young people identified through early intervention and referrals to wraparound services.
- Reduction in reoffending rates among program participants and indicators of successful reintegration (e.g., education, employment, social participation).

# Our Closest Partners



# Priority 4

## Diversion from the Justice System

Contact with the criminal justice system can be a deeply traumatic experience for young people. Interaction with the criminal justice system often stems from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and can predict future involvement or negative life outcomes. By prioritising diversion and early support, NSW Police can improve long-term outcomes for young people.

|                                   | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Alignment with Commissioners Priority                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Diversion from the Justice System | The provisions and principles of the Young Offenders Act (YOA) are applied, and appropriate action is taken in response to the severity of offences conducted by young people.                                                                                                                               | Crime Reduction & Public Safety, Our People, Our Community                            |
|                                   | Victims of crime, including young people, have their rights recognised and promoted in accordance with the <i>Victims Rights and Support Act 2013</i> , are supported through criminal justice processes and beyond through mandatory reporting and referrals to appropriate support services are completed. | Our community, Our people, Strategic Partnerships                                     |
|                                   | Young people identified or suspected to be engaging in antisocial or criminal behaviours are provided opportunities to participate in diversionary programs or referred to appropriate support services.                                                                                                     | Crime Prevention and Public Safety, Strategic Partnerships, Innovation and Capability |
|                                   | Initiatives to increase successful community re-integration and strengthen community safety are supported and implemented.                                                                                                                                                                                   | Crime Prevention and Public Safety, Our community, Strategic Partnerships             |

### What does this look like for a Young Person?

- Instead of continued adverse contact with police, diversions outlined in the Young Offenders Act are applied appropriately.
- If they are a victim of crime, the young person feels safe and supported throughout the process.
- Young people are offered access to programs that build resilience or reconnect them with school or their community.

### Innovative Practice

- Pioneer systems to track YOA compliance and outcomes.
- Enhance trauma-informed policing knowledge for officers responding to at-risk youth.
- Identify at-risk youth early (e.g. via the number of ROSH reports) to induce proactive referrals.
- Develop community-based spaces where police, youth workers and other services collaborate to assist young people.

### Determining Success

Examples of evaluation measures for this priority include:

- Number of matters where YOA diversions were applied, including cautions, warnings and conferences.
- Track the number of victims referred to support services and confirm completion of mandatory reporting obligations. Collect feedback on victim satisfaction where possible.
- Monitor the number of young people referred to diversionary programs or wraparound services, and track participation rates.





**NSW Police Force**

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