

# Council Meeting

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## Agenda

**Tuesday, 8 July 2025**

Civic Centre, 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale  
and via Videoconference

## Information for Councillors and the community

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

### COUNCIL VISION

Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how sustainable balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

### VALUE OF HISTORY

We acknowledge that history shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

### COUNCILLOR COMMITMENT

We'll be truthful, represent the community's needs, be positive and responsive and always strive to do better.

### OUR COUNCILLORS

**Billanook Ward:** Tim Heenan  
**Chandler Ward:** Gareth Ward  
**Chirnside Ward:** Richard Higgins  
**Lyster Ward:** Peter McIlwain  
**Melba Ward:** Mitch Mazzarella

**O'Shannassy Ward:** Jim Child  
**Ryrie Ward:** Fiona McAllister  
**Streeton Ward:** Jeff Marriott  
**Walling Ward:** Len Cox

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & DIRECTORS

**Chief Executive Officer,** Tammi Rose  
**Director Built Environment & Infrastructure,** Hjalmar Philipp  
**Director Communities,** Leanne Hurst

**Director Corporate Services,** Vincenzo Lombardi  
**Director Planning and Sustainable Futures,** Kath McClusky

### GOVERNANCE RULES

All Council and Delegated Committee meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Council's Governance Rules, which can be viewed at: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Corporate-documents/Policies-strategies/Governance-rules>

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

Members of the community can participate in Council meetings in any of the following ways:

- making a verbal submission for up to 5 minutes on matters not listed on the agenda.
- submitting a question.
- speaking for up to 5 minutes to a specific item on the agenda. For planning applications and policy issues, the Chair will invite one person to speak on behalf of any objectors and one person to speak on behalf of the applicant. For other matters on the agenda, only one person will be invited to address Council, unless there are opposing views. At the discretion of the Chair, additional speakers may be invited for items of large interest.
- speaking for up to 5 minutes to a petition to be presented at a meeting.

For further information about how to participate in a Council meeting, please visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Council-meetings/Submissions-questions-petitions-to-Council>

## **LIVE STREAMING AND RECORDING OF MEETINGS**

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Opinions or statements made during the course of a meeting are those of the particular individuals. Council does not necessarily endorse or support the views, opinions, standards or information contained in the live streaming or recording of meetings. While Council will use its best endeavours to ensure the live stream and Council's website are functioning, technical issues may arise which may result in Council temporarily adjourning the meeting or, if the issue cannot be resolved, adjourning the meeting to another date and time to be determined.

A person in attendance at the meeting must not operate film, photographic, tape-recording or other equipment to reproduce sound and/or images at any meeting without first obtaining the consent of the Chair.

The Minutes produced after each Council Meeting form the official record of the decisions made by Yarra Ranges Council.

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## **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

In the case of an emergency during a meeting held at the Civic Centre, 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale, you should follow the directions given by staff and evacuate the building using the nearest available exit. You should congregate at the assembly point at Hardy Street car park.

## **CONTACT US**

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## **YARRA RANGES COUNCIL**

**AGENDA FOR THE 627<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY  
8 JULY 2025 COMMENCING AT 7.00PM IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE,  
ANDERSON STREET, LILYDALE AND VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

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### **1. MEETING OPENED**

## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

### **3. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **OUR COUNCILLORS**

Billanook Ward: Tim Heenan  
Chandler Ward: Gareth Ward  
Chirnside Ward: Richard Higgins  
Lyster Ward: Peter McIlwain  
Melba Ward: Mitch Mazzarella  
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Chief Executive Officer, Tammi Rose  
Director Built Environment & Infrastructure, Hjalmar Philipp  
Director Communities, Leanne Hurst  
Director Corporate Services, Vincenzo Lombardi  
Director Planning & Sustainable Futures, Kath McClusky

**4. APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

An apology for this meeting was received from Cr Len Cox OAM.

## 5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

*In accordance with Chapter 7, Rule 4, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*

*The Local Government Act 2020 defines two categories of conflict of interest:*

- *a general conflict of interest, which is defined as "...a relevant person has a general conflict of interest in a matter if an impartial, fair-minded person would consider that the person's private interests could result in that person acting in a manner that is contrary to their public duty", and*
- *a material conflict of interest, which is defined as "...a relevant person has a material conflict of interest in respect of a matter if an affected person would gain a benefit or suffer a loss depending on the outcome of the matter. The benefit may arise or the loss incurred (a) directly or indirectly; or (b) in a pecuniary or non-pecuniary form."*

*In accordance with section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, a conflict of interest must be disclosed in the manner required by the Governance Rules and the relevant person must exclude themselves from the decision-making process.*

No Conflicts of Interest have been received prior to the Agenda being printed.

**6. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**



**7. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION**

***That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held Tuesday 24 June 2025, as circulated, be confirmed.***

## **8. QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

*In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 57 and 59, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*

A person may make a submission to Council on matters that are not listed on the Agenda. A submission may be on any matter except if it:

- (a) is considered malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance;
- (b) is substantially the same as a submission made to a Council meeting in the preceding 12 months;
- (c) relates to confidential information as defined under the Act;
- (d) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- (e) relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

### **QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL**

There were no Questions to Council received prior to the Agenda being printed.

### **SUBMISSIONS TO COUNCIL**

Ivor Wolstencroft seeks to present a proposal to promote "Warburton 7 Mountains in a Day" with the inclusion of summit signs on each mountain.

## 9. PETITIONS

*In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 60, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*

A person may submit a petition to Council on matters that are not listed on the Agenda. Every petition or joint letter submitted to Council must:

- a) identify a 'Lead Petitioner' who Council can correspond with;
- b) be legible and in permanent writing;
- c) be clear and state on each page the matter and action sought from Council. Every page of a petition or joint letter must be a single page of paper and not be posted, stapled, pinned or otherwise affixed or attached to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition or joint letter;
- d) not be derogatory, defamatory or objectionable in language or nature;
- e) not relate to matters outside the powers of Council; and
- f) clearly state the names and addresses of at least seven (7) people who live, work, study or do business in the Municipal district.

There were no Petitions received prior to the Agenda being printed.

## **DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN, ASSET PLAN, LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

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Report Author: Corporate Planning and Performance Coordinator

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### **SUMMARY**

This report seeks Council to endorse the final community engagement consultation phase on the:

- Draft Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2025-2029 (the Council Plan – Attachment One)
- Draft Yarra Ranges Asset Plan 2025-2025 (Asset Plan – Attachment Two)
- Draft Yarra Ranges Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 (LTFP – Attachment Three).

All councils have obligations under the Local Government Act 2020 to produce a Council Plan, Asset Plan and LTFP every four years.

The Council Plan sets out the medium-term direction for Council and must be aligned to the long-term Community Vision under the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requirements.

The Asset Plan includes information about maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning in relation to each class of infrastructure asset under the control of the Council.

The LTFP demonstrates Council's financial sustainability to fund the aspirations of the Community Vision, the Council Plan and support the Asset Plan. This LTFP has been prepared in compliance with the Act, and the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Financial Plan Better Practice Guide and Model.

These three plans have been developed following an extensive 15-month community engagement process, and collaboration between Councillors, local communities and other relevant stakeholders.

## RECOMMENDATION

***That Council endorse the Draft Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2025-2029 (Attachment One), Draft Yarra Ranges Asset Plan 2025-2035 (Attachment Two) and Draft Yarra Ranges Long Term Financial Plan (Attachment Three) for public exhibition from 9 July 2025 to 10 August 2025.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

The current Council Plan 2021-2025 (including Community Vision 2036) was adopted at the Council Meeting on 26 October 2021.

## DISCUSSION

### ***Council Plan***

The Council Plan is Council's overarching strategic plan. It outlines what Council aims to achieve over the next four years.

The Council Plan represents a vision for the future of Yarra Ranges and how Council can best support local communities over the next four years. It responds directly to the Yarra Ranges Community Vision 2036, shaped by the views of the community. The Council Plan is the result of both broad and deliberative engagement with a cross-section of the community.

### ***Asset Plan***

The Asset Plan includes information about maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning in relation to each class of infrastructure asset under the control of the Council, with a scope of 10 years.

In 2022 Local Government Victoria (LGV) issued a guide for councils to assist with the development of their Asset Plans of which the Yarra Ranges Asset Plan complies with. The guide is intended for foundational asset planning, as opposed to best practice asset planning.

### ***LTFP***

The LTFP provides the context through which the objectives of the Council Plan can be funded to achieve the Community Vision.

The LTFP includes financial statements outlining the financial resources required to give effect to the Council Plan and Asset Plan and contains information about the decisions and assumptions that underpin the forecasts in the statements.

## ***Community Vision 2036***

Yarra Ranges Council's Community Vision 2036 articulates the future aspirations for local communities and the municipality.

*Yarra Ranges Council's Community Vision 2036. Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world*

### ***Strategic Objectives.***

The Council Plan includes updates to the four strategic objectives (diagram one below) which have been developed in response to community feedback, communities' priorities, the big issues facing Council, Councillor feedback and align to the current Community Vision.

Together with the Community Vision and Council's Commitment the strategic objectives deliver on Council's vision. This is further strengthened by Council's Commitment that ensures that the way Council work's underpins all strategic objectives.



**Diagram One. Strategic Objectives**

All activities completed by Council over the coming four years will contribute to one or more of the strategic objectives. Each strategic objective has: Priorities Areas, Lead and Supporting Strategies, Council Services and a list of Indicators to measure how Yarra Ranges is performing in key areas.

The Council Plan also includes a four-year Action Plan which details the high-level initiatives, or projects, that Council will deliver annually against the strategic

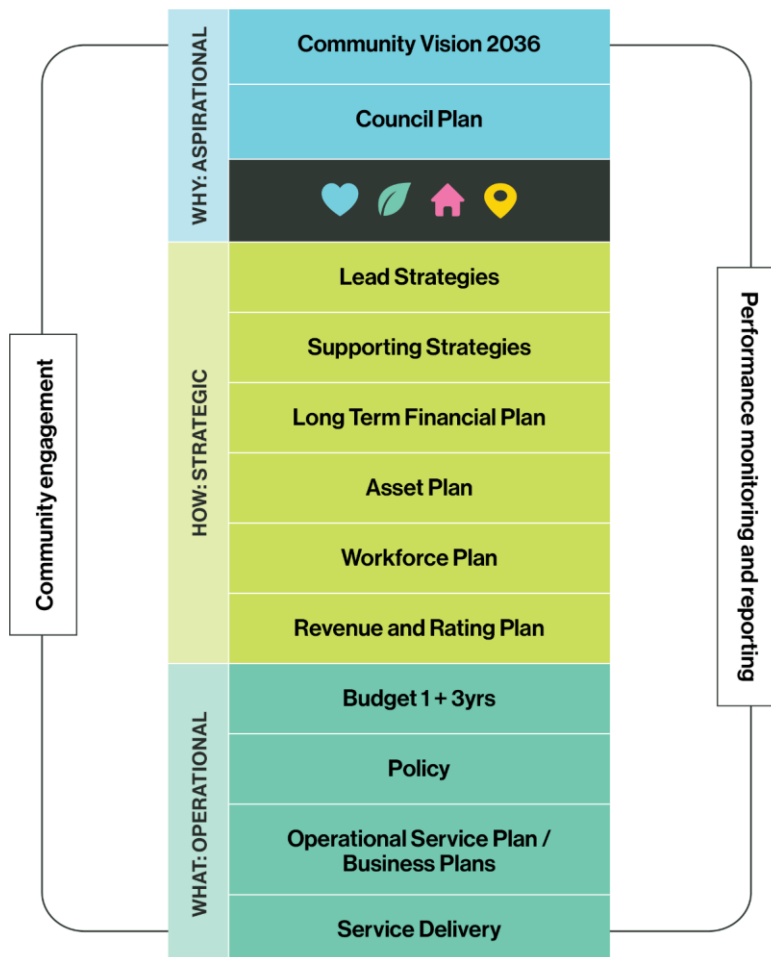
objectives. Council will share regular progress updates against these initiatives with the community, as well as a detailed annual report.

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The costs of preparing and exhibiting all three plans are funded from operating budget allocations.

## APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

Diagram Two, below (also in the Council Plan) shows how the Council Plan, Asset Plan, LTFP and other Council plans fit together. Informed by evidence, State and Federal Government legislation and policy, community engagement and continuous improvement, these plans guide the delivery of all Council strategies, services and actions to help achieve the Community Vision.



**Diagram Two. Planning Framework**

## RELEVANT LAW

The Act mandates that councils develop and maintain several key strategic documents to ensure effective governance and planning, including.

- Section 90 of the Act requires the development of a Council Plan that should align with the community's vision and priorities.
- Section 91 of the Act requires Council's to develop a Long-term Financial Plan, spanning a minimum of 10 years, providing a financial roadmap to support the council's strategic objectives and ensure financial sustainability.
- Section 92 of the Act states that Council must also develop, adopt and keep in force an Asset Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices. It must include information about maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning in relation to each class of infrastructure asset under the control of the Council, with a scope of at least 10 financial years.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Council's financial sustainability is informed by the indicators set by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO). These indicators comprise of both short term and longer-term measures and have been considered in the development of the LTFP and Council Plan.

The Council Plan will have a range of Economic, Social and Environmental implications.

### ***Economic Implications***

The Council Plan identifies the following priority area to focus on supporting Prosperous Communities and Vibrant Economy: Local industry and producers, Local business, Balanced tourism, and Local jobs.

### ***Social Implications***

The Council Plan sets the strategic objectives of Healthy and Connected Communities. In addressing this objective, it identifies the following priorities areas: Community connections and resilience, Access to local services, Inclusive and safe, Healthy through life stages

### ***Environmental Implications***

In relation to the sustainability of the environment, the Council Plan sets the strategic objective to 'Protect and Enhance the Natural Environment'. It identifies the following priorities areas to focus on including Local biodiversity, Energy, climate and disaster resilience, Water management and Circular economy.



## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Over 15 months of community engagement has informed the content and priorities of the Council Plan, Asset Plan and LTFP. These plans have been developed through extensive engagement with our community, and collaboration between Councillors and other relevant stakeholders over an extended period. During this time Council received direct feedback from over 1,250 people and informed over 6000 community members in the development of the plan.

This included in person engagement at roadshows, community summits, and online engagement through the online shaping pages. The feedback received, was used to inform the Deliberative Engagement process where a selected diverse range of participants were able to discuss and respond to key challenges.

Council Officers then returned to community with a summary of these insights and delved deeper with key local groups.

Through these conversations with the community the following priorities were identified which informed the development of the plans:

- Keeping community informed and engaged
- Planning for the future
- Looking after our roads, local area & townships
- Supporting the local economy
- Impact of extreme weather
- Looking after the natural environment
- Include everyone in community life

### **Deliberative Panel**

As stated, Section 90 of the Act 'A Council must develop or review the Council Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices.' In July and August 2024, a panel of 40 local community members deliberated over three weekends on key challenges Council are facing in relation to the development of all three plans.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The success of the community engagement program and development of the three plans has been supported by collaboration across Council's and Council's partner agencies. Council officers, Councillors and Council CEO's from across the Eastern Region have meet to discuss shared community priorities and opportunities for partnership.

The Council Plan identifies the importance of collaboration stating that 'It is important for Council to work together with other levels of government, industry partners and communities to achieve the best outcomes.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The following steps have been taken to mitigate risk associated with the development and implementation of the Council Plan, Asset Plan and LTFP.

- Adequate community engagement and consultation ensures alignment with community needs.
- Developing the Council Plan alongside the annual budget, revenue and rating plan, LTFP, Asset plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan ensures realistic objectives.
- Noting any future changes to operating conditions will require and review of the risk profile particularly with regard to the Asset Plan and LTFP.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Draft Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2025-2029
2. Draft Yarra Ranges Council Asset Plan 2025-2035
3. Draft Yarra Ranges Council Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035



Yarra Ranges Council

# DRAFT Council Plan 2025–2029



## Acknowledgement of Country



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We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

## Value of History

We acknowledge that history shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

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# Introduction

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# Purpose

**The Council Plan 2025-29 (the Plan)** is Council's overarching strategic plan and outlines what Council will achieve over the next four years. It identifies where efforts will be focused and how the progress of priorities and projects will be measured. It has been developed through work of Councillors, as well as broad and deliberative engagement with a cross-section of the community.

The Plan responds directly to the Yarra Ranges Community Vision 2036. It considers the needs and aspirations of communities who live in the townships and suburbs of Yarra Ranges and our interactions with those who visit.

The Plan is presented in five main sections:

1. Introduction
2. About our region
3. Council Plan & The next four years
4. Developing this plan
5. Action Plan

A summary and accessible version are also available on the website.

# Message from the Mayor

Welcome to the Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2025-2029.

We are delighted to present this plan and its positive vision for the future of Yarra Ranges. As we embark on an exciting new chapter for our community, this Plan details how we can best support our community in excess of 165,000 people over the next four years and build on the strong foundations of the previous Council Plan.

Feedback from our community is clear - you want us to demonstrate leadership and focus on getting the basics right. And when you say basics, you mean clear communication and decision making, improving drainage and waste management, being equipped to respond to emergencies, taking care of our unique environment and ensuring townships are well maintained in collaboration with local communities.

Our communities are also looking to Council to ensure we get the balance right between protecting local liveability and our natural environment with welcoming visitation to the region. We know tourism will continue to play a significant role in our future with visitor numbers projected to double to over nine million in the coming decade, bringing with it the potential for over 500 local jobs and an estimated \$80 million boost the local economy annually. Whilst these are promising opportunities for Yarra Ranges, we understand the need to ensure tourism is balanced, sustainable and of benefit to all in our local communities.

The impacts of cost-of-living pressures affecting many households across Yarra Ranges has also been a key consideration in the development of this Council Plan. That's why this Plan has been carefully designed to balance community needs with responsible financial management. We remain focused on ensuring we deliver our services efficiently and are taking a practical approach to managing our infrastructure and community assets, continuing to advocate strongly to State and Federal governments, and working with local communities to make informed decisions.

We look forward to delivering the commitments outlined in this Plan so that together, we can fulfill our community's vision of "whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world".

Cr Jim Child

Mayor,

Yarra Ranges Council



# Message from our CEO

As we embark on an exciting new chapter for our community, I am delighted to share the new Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2025-2029.

This Plan is more than just a roadmap for today - it outlines the vision and commitments to fostering a vibrant, healthy and sustainable Yarra Ranges now and into the future.

The Plan is centred around four key objectives:

- Building healthy and connected communities where everyone is safe, resilient, feels included and connected to others.
- Protecting and enhancing our extraordinary natural environment, ensuring that Country is healthy and can be enjoyed by future generations.
- Designing liveable places and delivering quality infrastructure that support our townships and suburbs to be hubs of activity.
- Fostering a vibrant local economy which creates jobs, attracts sustainable investment and promotes community wellbeing.

Our commitment to excellence drives us to be an organisation dedicated to achieving our community vision. We strive to be future-focused, responsible, fair, transparent, and efficient. Council will track and report on progress each year to ensure accountability.

All local government areas face their own challenges, however for Yarra Ranges, ours are especially unique. As the largest local government area in metropolitan Melbourne, from thriving urban centres and character villages, through to forested ranges and vast agricultural regions, our communities' needs are as diverse as Yarra Ranges itself. Ensuring equitable distribution of our services and support across our municipality has been core to the development of this Council Plan, as has anticipating some of the opportunities and challenges for our communities in the future.

Despite the current challenging financial environment, we are confident this Council Plan will deliver what is most important to our community in an efficient and effective manner. We will continue to engage closely with our community and respond to their needs. By working together, we can preserve the unique qualities that make Yarra Ranges special, while also laying the foundations for a vibrant and healthy future.

Tammi Rose

Chief Executive Officer,

Yarra Ranges

# Your Councillors

The municipality is divided into nine wards, and one Councillor is elected to represent each ward. The nine Councillors, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Yarra Ranges Council will work together to achieve the best outcomes for the whole municipality, including future generations.

O'Shannassy Ward

**Mayor**

**Cr Jim Child**

Chirnside Ward

**Deputy Mayor**

**Cr Richard Higgins**

Walling Ward

**Cr Len Cox OAM**

Billanook Ward

**Cr Tim Heenan**

Streeton Ward

**Cr Jeff Marriott**

Melba Ward

**Cr Mitch Mazzarella**

Ryrie Ward

**Cr Fiona McAllister**

Lyster Ward

**Cr Peter Mcilwain**

Chandler Ward

**Cr Gareth Ward**



**Front row**, Cr Jeff Marriott, Cr Len Cox OAM, Deputy Mayor Richard Higgins, Cr Gareth Ward, **Second row**: Cr Peter Mcilwain, Cr Tim Heenan, Cr Fiona McAllister, **Back row**: Cr Mitch Mazzarella, Mayor Jim Child

Councillor contact details are available at: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au>

# The role of Council

The role of Council is to provide good governance for the benefit of current and future communities. Council provides a range of services and manages community assets that people use every day.

Council undertakes a range of roles and functions to serve local communities. It is important for Council to work together with other levels of government, industry partners and communities to achieve the best outcomes.

The roles Council performs are listed below. These definitions are used within this Plan and other Council documents.

 <b>PROVIDER</b>  Responsible for delivery of services, programs, infrastructure and support to individuals and groups.	 <b>EDUCATOR</b>  Share information, raise awareness, develop knowledge and skills to empower individuals and groups.	 <b>PARTNER</b>  Build relationships and partner with others to enable things to happen and work towards common goals.
 <b>ADVOCATE</b>  Raise awareness and show leadership for the interests of local communities, to other decision makers e.g. State and Federal Government.	 <b>PLANNER</b>  Use evidence, including community views to plan for current and future community needs and priorities.	 <b>REGULATOR</b>  Prioritise safety and regulate compliance of activities through local laws and legislation

# Our commitment

To achieve our Community Vision and best serve our communities, Council is committed to being:

- **Future-focused** – anticipating challenges and opportunities, demonstrating continued leadership to build resilience, climate adaptation and make decisions that benefit us now and generations in the future.
- **Responsive** – meaningfully engaging, listening and addressing community needs in a timely and appropriate manner.
- **Fair** – ensuring equitable access to services, resources and opportunities across our diverse communities.<sup>1</sup>
- **Transparent** – being open, inclusive and accountable in our decision-making processes.
- **Efficient** – making the most impact with our resources, minimising waste and delivering quality cost-effective services.

Our commitment to excellence drives us to be an organisation dedicated to achieving our community vision and serving our communities in the best way possible.

We are focused on ensuring every action and decision we take is responsible, transparent and efficient - maximising impact while delivering strong value for money. With a future-focused mindset, we continuously seek smarter, fairer and more sustainable ways to serve our community, ensuring our resources are positioned to meet both current and future needs.

Council will track and report on progress against these principles each year, using the indicators on page 35 to ensure we remain accountable to our residents.

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<sup>1</sup> This commitment is supported by our obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020, Child Safe Standards, Climate Change 2017, and the Local Government Act 2020.





# About our region



# Snapshot of Yarra Ranges

## Region

Located in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs, our region is a prized place to live and visit. It features urban areas, 55 townships, productive agricultural land and some of the most environmentally important areas in Victoria.

- Land area approx. 2,500 km<sup>2</sup><sup>i</sup>
- Largest local government area in Melbourne
- Two percent is Council land, 30 percent is in private ownership, and 68 percent is Crown land<sup>ii</sup>
- Yarra Ranges Council encompasses over 51 percent of the Birrarung (Yarra River) catchment area<sup>iii</sup>
- Second highest tree canopy in Australia<sup>iv</sup>

### Emerging trends

- Visitors to the region are expected to double to over 9 million per year in the next decade.<sup>v</sup>

## Housing

Households in Yarra Ranges live in a mix of low – medium density housing that is dispersed across the area's rural and urban areas, and townships.

- 70 percent of the population live in the urban areas of Yarra Ranges<sup>xii</sup>
- \$840,000 median house price (Dec 2023)<sup>xiii</sup>
- 61,480 dwellings<sup>xiv</sup>

### Emerging trends

- 10,700 new dwellings and greater housing diversity needed by 2040<sup>xv</sup>

## Community

The residents of Yarra Ranges are highly involved in community life, volunteering and carer roles, enjoy low crime rates and experience good health among mothers, infants, and older residents.

- Over 165,000 residents<sup>vi</sup>
- 1,713 Indigenous residents<sup>vii</sup>
- 16.8 percent born overseas<sup>viii</sup>
- 17.2 percent of the population are aged over 65<sup>ix</sup>

### Emerging trends

- Over 185,000 residents by 2041<sup>x</sup>
- 19.8 percent of the population aged over 65 by 2034<sup>xi</sup>

## Economy

Yarra Ranges has a diverse economy, with manufacturing as the leading sector. Other important sectors include tourism, construction, property and business services, retail trade, and agriculture.

- 13,991 local businesses<sup>xvi</sup>
- 55,544 local jobs<sup>xvii</sup>
- \$7.58 billion Gross Regional Profit (Est)<sup>xviii</sup>
- \$1.2 billion visitor expenditure<sup>xix</sup>

### Emerging trends

- 9.1 billion Gross Regional Profit estimated by 2032<sup>xx</sup>
- 57,323 local jobs estimated by 2032<sup>xxi</sup>

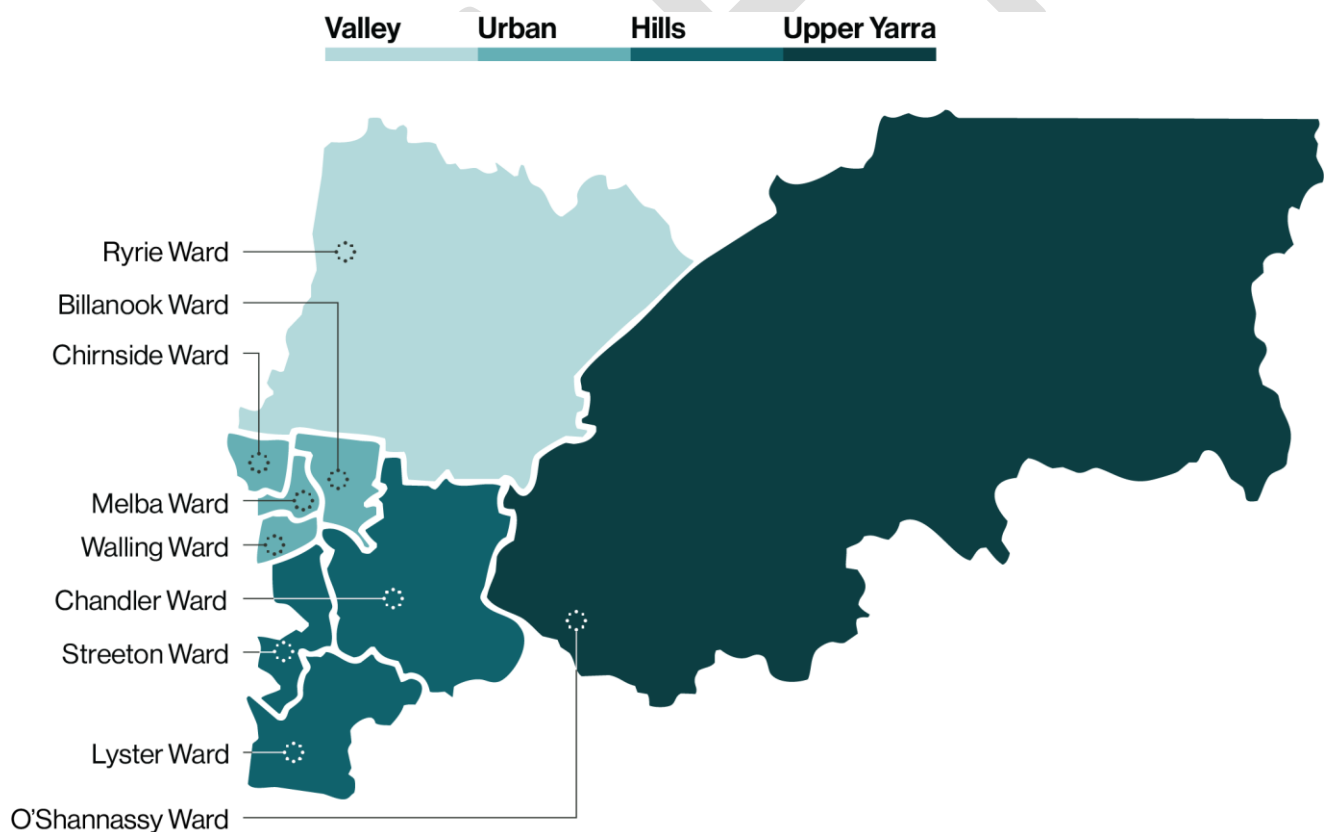
# Our unique places

As the largest local government area in metropolitan Melbourne, Yarra Ranges is unique. Our region features diverse landscapes and communities, spanning from urban areas and commercial centres, townships, agricultural areas, forested valleys, hills and waterways, including the Yarra/Birrarung River.

**Ensuring equitable distribution of our services and support across our municipality has been core to the development of this Council Plan, as has anticipating some of the opportunities and challenges for our communities in the future.**

The map of Yarra Ranges below (Figure 1) shows four regions that highlight the different characteristics of our large and diverse municipality.

**Figure 1. Map of Yarra Ranges**





# Council Plan





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# Overview of Council Plan

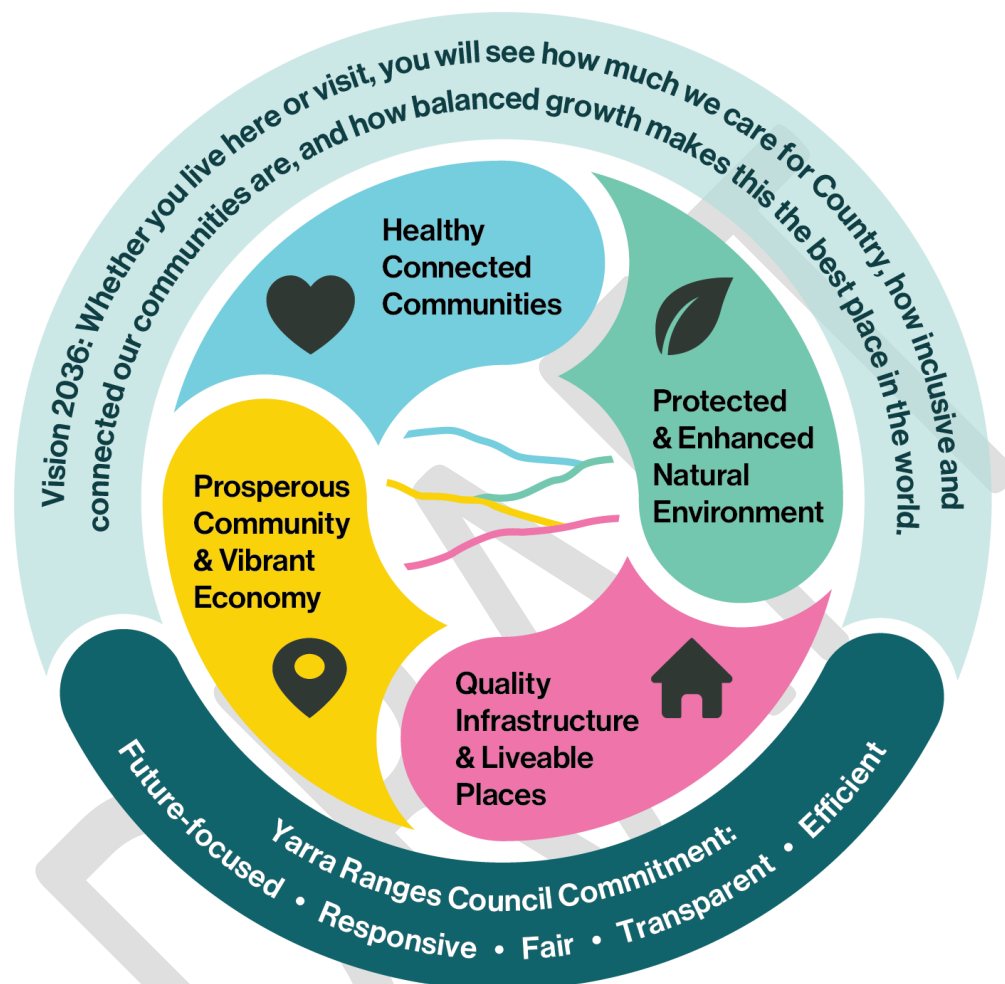
**The Council Plan 2025-29 (the Plan)** is Council's overarching strategic plan and outlines what Council will achieve over the next four years. It identifies where efforts will be focused and how progress will be measured as we work towards our community vision.

The Plan contains the following features:

<b>Community Vision 2036</b>	The Community Vision describes the aspirations for the long-term future of our municipality. It shapes the strategic direction and priorities of this plan. Through this plan, and all strategies, initiatives, and services, Council works diligently to deliver the Community Vision.
<b>Strategic Objectives</b>	<p>The four strategic objectives are aligned to the Community Vision and describe the future Council is working towards.</p> <p>All the activities completed by Council, including those in this Plan, contribute to one or more of these strategic objectives.</p> <p>The Plan and Action Plan are presented under these four Strategic Objectives and detail the priorities, strategies, services and initiatives that Council will deliver to achieve these outcomes.</p> <p>Each strategic objective has the following:</p>
 <b>Healthy Connected Communities</b>	
 <b>Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment</b>	
 <b>Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places</b>	
 <b>Prosperous Community and Vibrant Economy</b>	
<b>Priority Areas</b>	Topics that we will focus on over the next four years
<b>Council Strategies</b>	Lead and Supporting Strategies Council will deliver
<b>Council Services</b>	Services Council will deliver
<b>Initiatives</b>	The high priority projects Council will deliver over the next four years
<b>Indicators</b>	The indicators provide clear targets across the four strategic objectives and our commitment
<b>Action Plan</b>	The annual Action Plan details what Council will do to deliver the 16 initiatives each year. Presented under each of the four Strategic Objectives it provides greater detail on each initiative, including key milestones

# Our Strategic Direction

To support achievement of the Community Vision, this Council Plan is centred on four strategic objectives. These objectives have been developed in response to our communities' priorities and the challenges facing Council. These objectives provide the strategic direction for all Council services, strategies and workplans.



**Figure 2: Council Plan roadmap**

Our commitment to excellence drives us to be an organisation dedicated to achieving our community vision. We are focused on ensuring every action and decision is informed by this commitment and serves our communities in the best way possible.

This plan, delivered over 4 years, will move us toward the Community Vision for Yarra Ranges.

# Yarra Ranges Community Vision 2036

**Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.**

In 2036 Yarra Ranges is a wonderful place to live, and a world-class destination for visitors and investors who make a significant contribution to prosperity within the region.

Community members are proud of where they live. Our values are respected, we feel connected, and our health and wellbeing is a priority.

The municipality's natural beauty, stunning landscapes and reputation for exceptional local produce is enhanced and have a significant influence on decisions made regarding sustainable growth, and development in the region. A focus on responsible eco-tourism projects, access to digital services, networks and infrastructure and balanced economic development has enhanced the region's reputation and improved quality of life for all.

The look and feel of our residential, commercial and industrial areas, and their environmental characteristics, has improved. Our roads, paths, facilities and other infrastructure are well maintained. Our townships are welcoming and designed to improve liveability and support health and wellbeing through improved footpaths, trails, lighting and infrastructure.

Advocacy for innovative and state of the art transport solutions has improved access to important community services, new and upgraded facilities, infrastructure and jobs.

'Gateways' into Yarra Ranges and other areas throughout the municipality now strengthen the identity of our First Nations people, their culture, stories, history and progress towards Reconciliation. This connection strengthens our collective identity, our culture and heritage and creates a sense of belonging for our diverse community.

Educational facilities build the skills of our people and develop our leaders to strengthen all communities and support local employment. Community is passionate about where we live. We contribute our time, volunteering to support people in need and use our voices to provide feedback to Council on issues that affect us.

A local planning approach enhances the strength and sense of place of local communities, recognising their diversity and different needs to support our health, safety and wellbeing while also embracing the commonalities we share in calling Yarra Ranges home.

Yarra Ranges is known for prioritising sustainability, careful land management and the protection of biodiversity and habitat. Regenerative farming practices are used to protect precious agricultural land that offers our community access to healthy, locally grown food. Our community has taken steps to actively mitigate against climate change and to be prepared for natural disasters, including bushfire planning.

Services are accessible, gender equitable and inclusive, catering to all ages, genders cultures, and abilities. Our community is healthy and active, with easy access to recreational facilities and cultural activities and are available to everyone. Residents

experiencing disadvantage are well supported through partnerships between government, business and community organisations.

At the heart of the Community Vision is an authentic desire for Council to engage and listen to all members of our community, including our young people, and respond to their needs and aspirations. Our Council are visible, transparent, accountable and communicate clearly and honestly.

Council resources are managed responsibly, and principles of fairness and consistency are applied to avoid unnecessary burdens for rate payers. Through expertise, insight, technology and creativity, Council is a leader in striving for excellence and delivering best practice services for the community

**We work together to create a better future.**

*This Community Vision was developed with the Yarra Ranges community and describes their aspirations for the future of our municipality in 2036. Originally created in 2016, it is based on the priorities of more than 1000 members of our community. It was checked with community in 2021 and again in 2024. It continues to reflect the community's future aspirations for the municipality.*

# Our challenges

This Plan has been shaped by several complex challenges identified by our local communities and Council. Some of the key issues include:

## **Growth and development**

Both residential population and visitor numbers are predicted to significantly increase. This brings both opportunities and increased pressure on workforce, jobs, housing, infrastructure, resources and services. Balancing growth with township character, liveability, biodiversity and sustainability will be an ongoing challenge.

## **Extreme weather and changing climate**

Extreme weather events, including floods, storms, heatwaves and bushfires, are increasingly impacting our communities. These climate related challenges require Council to continue providing leadership in mitigating climate change and adapting to its effect. Council recognises its role in achieving net zero emissions across the region.

## **Staying healthy and safe**

It is important for Council to proactively plan for different life stages including those of seniors, young people and children. This involves developing inclusive, safe, age friendly places and providing accessible services and support that enable residents to be active, connected, and supported.

## **Political context**

Council will continue to be impacted by the changes in the political and policy context of State and Federal Government. Council must adapt to changes in relevant budgets, legislation and regulations. We will continue to provide opportunities for local civic participation and strive to provide greater transparency, information and meaningful engagement in decision making.

## **Efficient and effective services**

Council recognises our community is facing increasing need to provide maximum value for residents. State government cost shifting, escalated material costs and reduced grants puts pressure on the sustainability of Council services. We continue to explore ways to increase efficiencies through cost reduction and raise revenue. This includes collaboration for share services with the Eastern Regional Group of Councils (ERG).

# Our community told us

This Council Plan was developed through extensive community engagement, Councillor and staff workshops over fifteen months. Our communities' priorities have informed this plan. For detailed information on the community engagement process, please visit: <https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au>

Key priorities include

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## **Keeping community informed and engaged**

Transparency and good governance were emphasised, with the community feedback indicating a need for better communication (including non-digital) about Council activities and decisions, and meaningful community engagement.

The findings show that information should be easily accessible and indicate a need for stronger relationships between Council and the community.

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## **Looking after the natural environment**

Environmental stewardship emerged as another crucial priority, with the community feedback supporting climate action initiatives, energy-efficient facilities, and sustainable tourism practices.

The community feedback indicators highlight strong interest in the value and preservation of local bushland and green spaces, as well as embracing sustainable technologies like micro-grids and solar power.

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## **Looking after our roads, local area & townships**

The community feedback indicates a desire for clean, well-maintained local areas. Roads, drains, housing, and transport accessibility were emphasised as key to improving daily life now and into the future.

There is significant support for preserving local character while addressing development pressures.

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## **Impact of extreme weather**

The community feedback shows a desire to feel prepared for extreme weather events. Building community resilience against extreme weather, changing climate, and emergencies was emphasised.

This included planning, maintaining, and advocating for infrastructure that strengthens the community's ability to handle and recover from severe weather conditions.

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**Supporting  
the local  
economy**

The community feedback highlighted the benefits of local tourism, as well as the challenges of being a popular tourist destination.

The findings show that tourism should benefit the local economy and create job opportunities without straining infrastructure and the environment. Residents are keen to support local traders and access goods from local food producers.

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**Include  
everyone in  
community  
life**

Community inclusion was identified as vital, with calls for support and inclusion across all life stages.

Key community priorities included housing affordability and homelessness, and improving access to safe spaces, health, education, and childcare services.

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**Planning for  
the future**

Financial responsibility was also highlighted, with calls for prudent spending, strategic asset management, and exploring alternative revenue sources.

There is strong interest in Council planning beyond electoral cycles to address challenges and the long-term sustainability of the region.


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# The next four years





This Plan and Action Plan take into account the unique features of our municipality, the people that live here, the challenges we face and what our community have told us.

This section (page 24-34) details how Council is responding under each strategic objective. It details the priorities, initiatives, strategies and services that Council will deliver to respond to these local challenges and opportunities.

The annual Action Plan (page 43) provides detail on each initiative, including key milestones to ensure we achieve the desired outcome.

The indicators (page 35) provide clear targets across the four strategic objectives and our commitment in this Plan and are used to measure progress.

# Strategic Objective:

## Healthy Connected Communities

**This objective focuses on fostering communities that are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially connected with quality services accessible to everyone.**

**To achieve this**, the following four priority areas have been identified: connected and resilient; inclusive and safe; healthy through life stages and access to local services. Council will regularly share how Yarra Ranges is progressing in these priority areas, using the indicators on page 35 to monitor change in our communities over the long term.

### Initiatives

Over the next four years Council will deliver the following big initiatives to support healthy and connected communities. For more detail on each initiative please see the action plan on page 43.

Initiative		Council's role
1	<b>Place-based approach to achieve local priorities</b> Work with local communities to identify and coordinate place planning to create town centre plans for services and infrastructure that address local priorities.	Partner
2	<b>Work with partners to advocate for local priorities</b> Collaborate with partners, including the Eastern Region Council Group, to advocate for and advance shared priorities.	Advocate
3	<b>Deliver and enhance multi-use Community Pavilions across the municipality</b> Deliver the Don Rd Healesville and Seville Community Pavilions and program of upgrades for existing pavilions to be fit-for-purpose, future proof, and designed to meet the needs of people of all genders, ages, abilities, and diverse backgrounds.	Provider
4	<b>Planning for an urban aquatic and leisure facility</b> Progress planning for an aquatic and leisure facility within the urban area.	Planner

## Council Strategies

Over the next four years, Council will implement, lead and support strategies that will support our healthy and connected communities. This includes:

### Lead strategy

#### Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029

that will:

- Create inclusive and accessible local opportunities for children, young people and families to have a say and get involved in shaping their community and Council services.
- Design and maintain parks, play spaces, and outdoor exercise equipment that encourage all ages and abilities to participate.
- Facilitate learn to ride programs to encourage the uptake of cycling as an accessible physical activity.
- Embed equity, safety and accessibility into Council spaces, services and culture.

### Support strategies

- Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026
- Disability Action Plan 2025-2029
- Creative Communities Strategy
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Aquatic and Leisure Strategy 2022-2033
- Domestic Animal Management Plan
- Key Life Stages Plan (in development)

## Council Services

Council delivers a range of services to the community that contribute to healthy and connected communities. This includes:

### Community safety

- Emergency Management
- Local Laws and Regulatory Compliance
- Animal Management
- School Crossings

## **Community wellbeing**

- Social Infrastructure Planning
- Community Strengthening
- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Indigenous Development

## **Community services**

- Early and Middle Years Services
- Maternal and Child Health
- Youth Development
- Healthy Active Ageing

## **Health services**

- Public and Environmental Health
- Immunisation
- Public Health and Wellbeing

# Strategic Objective:

## Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment

**This objective focuses on caring for Country together and ensuring the environment is healthier for future generations.**

**To achieve this**, the following four priority areas have been identified: local biodiversity; energy, climate, disaster and resilience; water management and circular economy. Council will regularly share how Yarra Ranges is progressing in these priority areas using the indicators on page 35 to monitor change in our communities over the long term.

### Initiatives

Over the next four years Council will deliver the following exciting initiatives that will protect and enhance natural environments. For more detail on each initiative please see the action plan on page 43.

Initiative		Council's role
5	<b>Enhance energy and infrastructure resilience for Council and communities before, during and after extreme weather events</b> Enabling Council and community to achieve sustainable infrastructure design by enhancing infrastructure resilience and energy efficiency, thereby reducing climate and weather-related impacts.	Partner
6	<b>Increase and protect biodiversity links and canopy connections</b> Increase and protect connected natural landscapes and healthy waterways for local biodiversity, and cooling affect.	Provider
7	<b>Use nature-based solutions to increase resilience of natural landscape in a changing climate</b> Partner with Traditional Owners and utilise solutions for the changing climate that work with nature, reducing impact of natural hazards (e.g. storms, flooding and fire).	Partner
8	<b>Provide leadership in achieving net zero emissions and developing a resilient local energy supply</b> Deliver climate programs that strengthen community's climate adaptation and resilience to climate impacts. Support the transition to a net zero future, by increasing the use of renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, and promoting sustainable practices in local businesses and homes.	Deliver

## Council Strategies

Over the next four years, Council will implement, lead and support strategies that will protect and enhance natural environments. This includes:

### Lead strategy

**Environment Strategy** will ensure:

- Our water resource is improved and preserved.
- Our native plants and animals are protected, and their habitat is enhanced.
- Our communities are resilient in the face of a changing climate and more extreme events.
- All who live and work in the Yarra Ranges see themselves as stewards of our environment.
- Our local communities are strengthened by environmentally sustainable activities and circular economy.
- Reduce Council's energy consumption in line with Council's Liveable Climate Plan and support the community to reduce theirs.

### Support strategies

- Nature Plan 2024-2034
- Liveable Climate Plan 2030
- Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2023-2030
- Integrated Water Management Plan
- Energy Transition Plan
- Tree Canopy Strategy 2024-2044
- Burndap Birrarung Burndap Umarkoo (Yarra Strategic Plan) 2022-2032

## Council Services

Council delivers a range of services to the community that ensure we protect and enhance natural environments. This includes:

### Nature enhancement

- Land management
- Planting Programs
- Biodiversity

### Liveable climate

- Climate adaptation
- Energy and emission management
- Resource recovery
- Landfill management

### Healthy resilient waterways

- Stormwater Management
- Water management
- Waterway biodiversity

# Strategic Objective:

## Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

**This objective focuses on facilities and infrastructure that meet current and future needs, and places that are well planned hubs of activity that foster wellbeing and innovation.**

**To achieve this**, the following four priority areas have been identified: roads and drainage; paths, trails and green open space; clean and well-planned townships and urban areas and fit-for-purpose assets and facilities. Council will regularly share how Yarra Ranges is progressing in these priority areas using the indicators on page 35 to monitor change in our communities over the long term.

### Initiatives

Over the next four years Council will deliver the following exciting initiatives to ensure quality infrastructure and liveable places. For more detail on each initiative please see the action plan on page 43.

Initiative		Council's role
9	<b>Reduce stormwater and flood risks</b> Proactively manage stormwater to safeguard our community, promote sustainable development practices and preserve natural ecosystems.	Provider
10	<b>Activate Ridges and Rivers</b> Deliver funded stages and operating models of ngurrak-barring/Ridge Walk, Yarra Valley Trail and Warburton Mountain Bike Park while continuing to advocate for future funding.	Provider
11	<b>Facilitate diverse housing options</b> Work with partners and industry to increase opportunities for diverse housing around transport hubs, employment centres and key services.	Partner
12	<b>Improve safety and maintenance of local roads</b> Plan and deliver road maintenance in accordance with local priorities and advocate for further funding opportunities.	Provider



## Council Strategies

Over the next four years, Council will implement, lead and support strategies that ensure quality infrastructure and liveable places. This includes:

### Lead strategy

**Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme** will be amended and updated with the introduction of the following actions:

- Place Plans, Structure Plans, Township Design Frameworks and Masterplans will all result in changes to the Planning Scheme - Initiative 1: Place-based approach to achieve local priorities
- Implementation of the Stormwater Management Plan will result in changes to the planning scheme through new flood mapping (see Initiative 10 Reduce storm water and flooding risk)
- Introducing the Housing Strategy into the Planning Scheme (see Initiative 12 Facilitate diverse housing options)
- New Green Wedge Management Plan – will result in changes to the planning scheme (see Initiative 17)

### Support strategies

- Strategic Asset Plan
- Housing Strategy
- Aquatics Strategy
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Open Space Strategy
- Stormwater Management Plan
- Paths and Trails Plan
- Play Space Plan
- Structure Plans
- Township Design Frameworks

## Council Services

Council delivers a range of services to the community that contribute to quality infrastructure and liveable places. This includes:

### Placemaking

- Building services
- Place planning and design

- Statutory Planning
- Strategic Projects

### **Roads and transport**

- Local roads
- Footpaths
- Carparks
- Public Lighting
- Traffic Management

### **Recreation and sporting**

- Sports fields
- Aquatics
- Trails
- Pavilions and Club Houses
- Recreation facilities

### **Community facilities**

- Cultural venues and Community halls
- Libraries
- Property and leasing

### **Parks and open space**

- Townships
- Play spaces
- Parks
- Buildings
- Open spaces
- Tree management

# Strategic Objective:

## Prosperous Community and Vibrant Economy

**This objective focuses on fostering an economy, tourism sector and industries that actively support our communities, and investment attraction that underpins sustainable economic wellbeing and local job creation.**

**To achieve this**, the following four priority areas have been identified; local industry and producers; local business; balanced tourism and local jobs. Council will regularly share how Yarra Ranges is progressing in these priority areas using the indicators on page 35 to monitor change in our communities over the long term.

### Initiatives

Over the next four years Council will deliver the following exciting initiatives to ensure a prosperous community and vibrant economy. For more detail on each initiative please see the action plan on page 43.

Initiative		Council's role
13	<b>Enhance local amenity and walkability</b> Continue improving and maintaining the look, feel and walkability of townships and local areas in collaboration with communities.	Provider
14	<b>Strengthen tourism destination management across the region</b> Collaborate across the new Visitor Economy Partnership and local communities to cohesively manage the impact of new and existing tourism assets on established communities and infrastructure.	Partner
15	<b>Support local Agri-Food Futures Centre of Excellence and Innovation</b> Work with industry, education, Traditional Owners, community and government partners to establish an industry hub and centre of excellence.	Planner
16	<b>Develop a new Green Wedge Management Plan</b> Develop a new, contemporary Green Wedge Management Plan that addresses emerging agricultural practices and industry needs related to land use.	Planner

## Council Strategies

Over the next four years, Council will implement, lead and support strategies, that will ensure a prosperous community and vibrant economy. This includes:

### Lead strategy

**Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032** will deliver

- Support more local employment opportunities
- Support business development, innovation and resilience
- Attraction and facilitation of appropriate investment into the region
- Tourism destination management

### Support strategies

- Destination Management Plan
- Investment Attraction Plan
- Green Wedge Management Plan

## Council Services

Council delivers a range of services to the community that contribute to a prosperous community and vibrant economy. This includes:

### Economic development

- Business and Industry support
- Investment attraction
- Tourism destination management

# Measuring success

The following table outlines the twenty indicators that Yarra Ranges Council uses to measure progress towards our Community Vision. These indicators provide clear targets across the four strategic objectives and our commitment in this Plan. All of Council's services, strategies and initiatives collectively work towards the community vision and deliver on the strategic objectives, which are monitored through these indicators.

**Table 1: Council Plan Indicators**

Strategic Objective	Indicators	Target
<b>Healthy Connected Communities</b>	a. Access to services and facilities	Residents rate their experience of local high-quality health services at 6.5 or above out of 10.
	b. Sense of community	Maintain the level of residents who volunteer at 15.5 percent or above. Residents rate their experience of a strong sense of community in their local area at 6.5 or above out of 10.
	c. Feeling secure	Residents rate their personal financial circumstances at 6 or above out of 10. Residents rate their experience of feeling safe in their local area at 7 or above out of 10.
	d. Mental Health & Wellbeing	Reduced level of residents (all ages) with at least one long-term health condition. Residents rate their physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing and social wellbeing at 7 or above out of 10.
<b>Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment</b>	e. Biodiversity protection & enhancement	Restoration and revegetation work achieves a 50% increase by 2028. At least 200 land stewards improve the biodiversity on their land each year.
	f. Council greenhouse gas emissions	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% on 2005 levels by 2025 (6,400 tCO <sub>2</sub> e or lower). Net zero emissions by 2040.
	g. Prepared for weather events	Increased confidence of residents in their local area's ability to adapt to the effects of climate change.

		Maintain or increase community satisfaction with Council's emergency preparedness.
	h. Waste diversion	Divert 90% of waste from landfill by 2030.  Cut the volume of organic material going to landfill by 60% by 2030.
<b>Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places</b>	i. Roads and drainage	Reduced levels of Stormwater discharge and gross pollutants.  Maintain average rating of 43.5 or above, for condition of local roads and footpaths.
	j. Diversity of housing supply	Meet the Victorian housing target of an additional 25,000 new homes in Yarra Ranges by 2051.  Increased proportion of medium density and 1–2-bedroom housing as part of the total housing mix.
	k. Community facilities usage and demand	Increase in occupancy rates of facilities by local community.
	l. Access to open space and walkability	One- and five-kilometre walking circuits in all 55 townships, by 2036.  Increased walkability score of townships.
<b>Prosperous Communities and Vibrant Economy</b>	m. Local employment	Number of local jobs increased to 57,323, and 50 percent of local jobs filled by local people, by 2032.
	n. Diversity of local economy	Employment in local industries with comparative competitive advantage increased by 2032.
	o. Overnight stay tourism	Percentage of overnight stays increased in line with the regional target of 18 percent, by 2032.
	p. Business Friendly Council	Increased satisfaction with Council's business concierge program among small businesses by 2029.
<b>Council's Commitment</b>	q. Community decisions	Community satisfaction with Council decision making increased to 50 or above, by 2029.

	r.	Value for money	Community perception of value for money increased to 45 or above, by 2029.
	s.	Customer satisfaction	Increase percentage of customer interactions that customers rate positively in timeliness and helpfulness.
	t.	Consultation and engagement	Increase community satisfaction with Council's consultation and engagement to at least 50 by 2029.

Tracking community outcomes and regularly reporting on these indicators, contributes to responsive, effective and transparent governance<sup>xxii</sup>. This approach ensures Council's actions actively contribute to our community's long-term vision for the future.

We recognise that Council's work generates positive outcomes beyond these twenty indicators, that also all contribute to the Community Vision.

Changes in the indicators are influenced by the actions of the Council, other stakeholders, and environmental factors. While we cannot always attribute specific changes to the individual efforts of a single stakeholder, monitoring and sharing these outcomes

- keeps stakeholders informed about community progress
- guides future planning with evidence-based insights and
- strengthens collaborative efforts to achieve the Community Vision.

In addition to annual indicator reporting, Council publishes a detailed annual report which includes:

- progress updates on the 16 initiatives in this Plan, measured against the action plan milestones
- performance of essential Council services using the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework<sup>xxiii</sup>

Plus, dedicated annual progress reports for each lead strategy are prepared for Council review. and Gender Impact Assessments will be undertaken for all initiatives with direct and significant community impact to support inclusive and equitable outcomes.

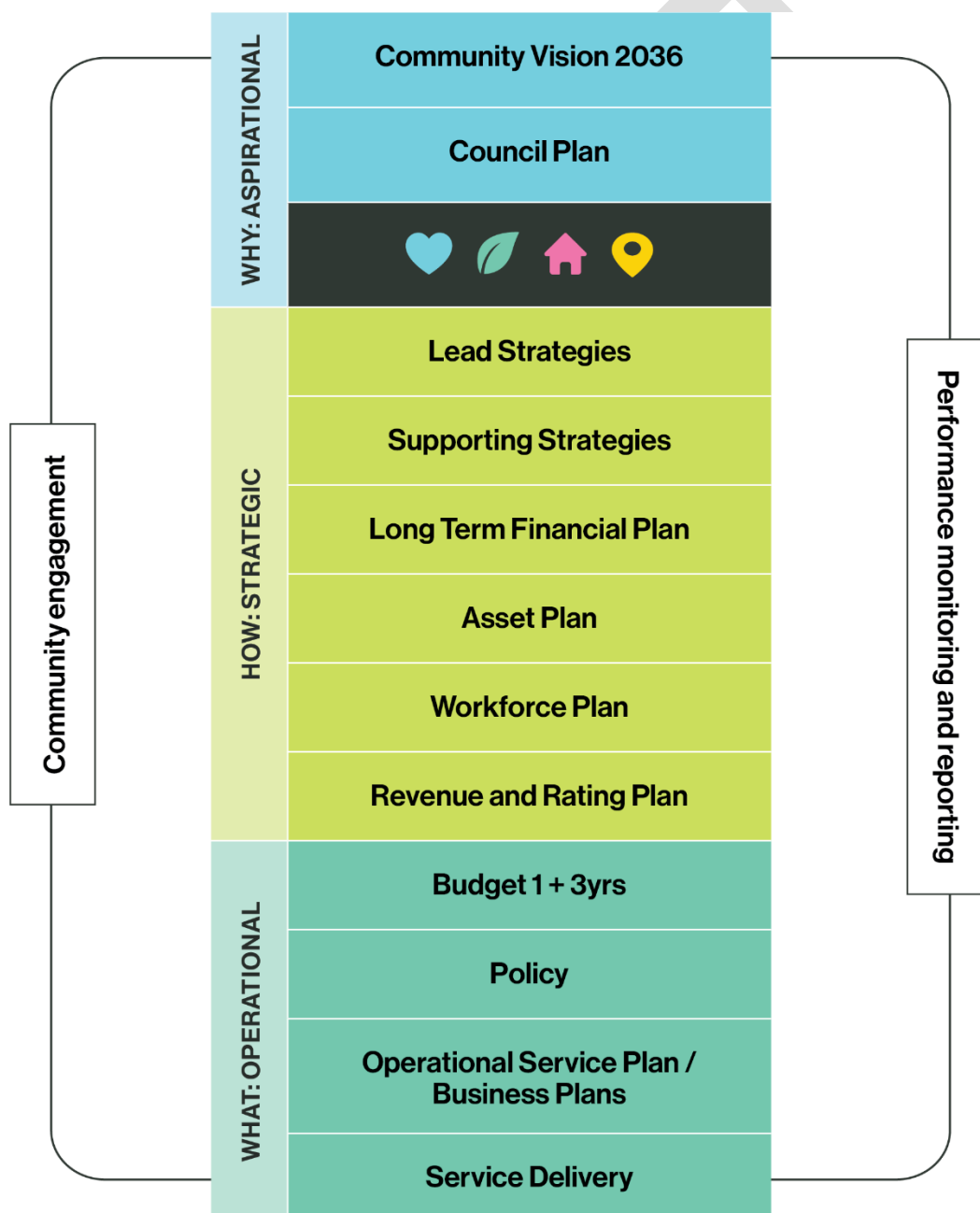
# Planning Framework

The figure below illustrates how Council's various plans and strategies are integrated.

All of Council's planning and decision-making are guided by the community's aspirations for the future. Council's annual, medium, and long-term plans advance the Community Vision and deliver on the strategic directions and indicators outlined in this plan.

They are all informed by evidence, State and Federal legislation and policy, community engagement, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Collectively, they provide clear direction and accountability, reflecting Council's financial and resource capacity.

**Figure 1: Planning Framework**







# Developing this plan



# How this plan was developed

This Council Plan has been developed through a range of data collection techniques and methodologies including broad and deliberative community engagement, input from Councillors, a review of current evidence and grey literature, subject matter insights and learnings from other councils over a 15-month period.

## Community engagement data

A range of community engagement activities gathered diverse perspectives and priorities, including:

- Broad community surveys
- Community summits
- Targeted focus groups
- Deliberative workshops

## Eastern Region Councils and other Councils

- Peer review and collaboration for best practice and regional perspective.

## Evidence and grey literature

A review of current evidence, grey literature, subject matter insights including:

- Yarra Ranges Health Profile <sup>xxiv</sup>
- Profile id<sup>xxv</sup>
- Voice of customer data
- Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey<sup>xxvi</sup>
- Human Services Needs Analysis<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Background papers, reports and strategies •
- Gender Impact Assessment in line with Gender Equality Act 2020

## Councillor insights and feedback

Councillor involvement throughout the development of the plan ensured alignment with community views and expectations.

- Three interactive Councillor workshops
- (Pending: Council meeting for consideration to adopt Council Plan 2025-2029)

# Community Engagement

The Plan was created by actively involving a wide range of community members in thoughtful discussions and consultations. The goal was to gather diverse perspectives and ensure that the plan reflects the community's needs and priorities. Since March 2024 we have received direct feedback from over 1,250 people and reached over 6000 community members in the development of the plan.

This has included:

- 700+ survey responses
- 213 postcards completed
- 9,582 visits to the project's Shaping Page by 4,435 people
- Nine pop-up events, connecting with 800+ community members
- 135 attendees at three Community and Stakeholder Summits
- Over 400 expressions of interest for the Deliberative Community Panel
- 40 panel members representative of the diverse community, selected by an independent consultant, for the Deliberative Community Panel
- Three workshops to discuss and debate Council priorities and challenges
- 10+ Focus Groups with 20 key population groups
- 50 young people from 6 local secondary schools

For more information on the community engagement that has helped shaped this plan and to view the full Community Engagement Reports please visit:

<https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au>

**Stage 1**

March – May 2024

**Broad community engagement**

- Survey and postcards
- Pop-up events
- Community and stakeholder summits

**Stage 2**

July – August 2024

**Deliberative Community Panel**

- Open expressions of interest for community panel
- Panel members selected by an independent consultant
- Workshops discussed and debated Council priorities and challenges
- Panel report presented to Councillors

**Stage 3**

November – March 2025

**Checking in on what we heard**

- Reported back findings and key themes
- Focus Groups – Youth groups, Townships groups, members of the Disability Advisory Group, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee, Indigenous Advisory Committee, Positive Ageing Reference Group, Rural Advisory Committee, Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Group
- Dedicated Youth Summit
- Focused survey on Place and Priorities for budget

**Stage 4**

July 2025

**Draft released for community feedback**

- Pop up events
- Shaping page
- Community group feedback



# Action Plan

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# Strategic Objective: Healthy Connected Communities

Initiative Title and short description		Priority Areas	Thinking ahead 10 years' – what benefits for community and future generations will this bring?	Milestones			
				Year 1 (End 30 June 2026)	Year 2 (End 30 June 2027)	Year 3 (End 30 June 2028)	Year 4 (End 30 June 2029)
1	<b>Place-based approach to achieve local priorities.</b> Work with local communities to identify and coordinate place planning to create town centre plans for services and infrastructure that address local priorities (such as Place Plans, Masterplans, Township Design Frameworks and Structure Plans)	Connection and Resilience	Increased connected communities where local priorities are addressed through tailored solutions. This coordinated and customised design approach recognises each area and community's (Urban, Upper Yarra, Hills, and Valley) unique character and needs, resulting in more effective services, stronger community ownership, and better use of resources.	Q2: Preparation of three scheduled town centre plans  Q4: Living Places Framework finalised to guide all planning for place	Preparation of up to three scheduled town centre plans	Preparation of up to three scheduled town centre plans	Preparation of up to three scheduled town centre plans
Page 66	<b>Work with partners to advocate for local priorities.</b> Work with community and council partners to advocate for and progress shared community advocacy priorities.	Connection and Resilience	A stronger collective voice that achieves tangible results for local communities. By working together with partners and key stakeholders, we will secure greater federal and state funding, better infrastructure, services, and quality of life improvements for future generations.	Q2: Prepare Budget submissions and advocacy plans for the following state and federal government Budget cycles, and for the 2026 Victorian election.  Q4: Delivery of a network action plan for collaborative work with Eastern Region Group of Councils, MAV, and other partners.	Advocacy priorities in 2026-27 target the November 2026 Victorian election and its outcomes.	Review and update advocacy, partnerships, and government relations priorities.	Review and update advocacy, partnerships, and government relations priorities.
3	<b>Deliver and enhance multi-use Community Pavilions across the municipality.</b>	Healthy through Life	Inclusive and accessible spaces that bring people together through sport and community activities and groups. These multipurpose	Q2: Don Rd, Healesville -Schematic Design Complete	Construction Commenced & Building Permit Issued	Construction Completed, (Certificate of practical completion	Contract Finalised (defects liability complete and final certificate issued)



	Deliver the Don Rd Healesville and Seville Community Pavilions and program of upgrades for existing pavilions to be fit-for-purpose, future proof, and designed to meet the needs of people of all genders, ages, abilities, and diverse backgrounds.		facilities will support increased participation, create volunteer opportunities, deliver environmental sustainability as a key design element, and strengthen community connections for generations.	Q4: Permits and Approvals Issued Contract Awarded	Construction Progress Update	and occupancy permit issued).	Contract Finalised (defects liability complete and final certificate issued)
				Q2: Seville - Detailed Design Complete & Project Tendered		Construction Completed, (Certificate of practical completion and occupancy permit issued).	
				Q4: Construction Commenced & Building Permit Issued			
4	<b>Planning for an urban aquatic and leisure facility</b> Progress planning for an aquatic and leisure facility within the urban area	Healthy through Life	<p>An aquatic and leisure facility will offer year-round access to swimming, fitness programs, and water safety education, promoting community wellbeing and active lifestyles.</p> <p>The centre will be a valuable community gathering space that can serve multiple generations, while boosting local economic activity and employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Q2: Shortlist of site locations and facility components established.</p> <p>Pursue funding models including private sector investment.</p> <p>Q4: Test sites with architectural concepts completed. Finalise preferred locations.</p> <p>Develop and implement a targeted advocacy campaign to gain funding for development of aquatics and leisure facility.</p>	Complete business case to confirm best facility mix and complete final investment decision.	Pursue preferred funding arrangements and partnerships	Initiate project delivery - Pending secured funding



Strategic Objective:  
Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment

Initiative Title and short description		Priority Areas	Thinking ahead 10 years' – what benefits for community and future generations will this bring?	Milestones			
				Year 1 (End 30 June 2026)	Year 2 (End 30 June 2027)	Year 3 (End 30 June 2028)	Year 4 (End 30 June 2029)
5	<b>Enhance energy and infrastructure resilience for Council and communities before, during and after extreme weather events.</b> Enable Council and community to achieve sustainable infrastructure design, increasing infrastructure resilience and energy efficiency to reduce the impact of climate change.	Energy, disaster, and climate resilience	Council and community can access energy and climate resilient infrastructure, which is energy efficient, minimises service disruption, protects vulnerable residents and reduces the overall impact of power outages, heatwaves, storms, floods, and other weather-related events on Council and communities.	Q2: Develop a place-based action plan that informs Council's capital works pipeline with recommended energy and resilient building, and improvement works.  Q4: Environmentally Sustainable Design Policy finalised.	Implementation of action plan through capital works pipeline.	Implementation of action plan through capital works pipeline.	Implementation of action plan through capital works pipeline.
6	<b>Increase and protect biodiversity links and canopy connections.</b> Through the development of a Biolinks Plan and the implementation of the Tree Strategy we will restore important corridors for biodiversity protection and enhancement across the municipality in partnership with community and agencies, achieving priority actions within the Nature Plan.	Local Biodiversity	A connected natural landscape where native wildlife can thrive and move safely. Expanded tree canopy and healthy waterways will support local biodiversity, cooler neighbourhoods, and ecosystem health.	Q2: Establish Project Governance and commence data and stakeholder mapping.  Q4: Natural assets baseline data from Council and multiple agencies collected and collated.	Draft Biolinks Plan developed.	Biolinks Plan presented to Council.	Biolinks on-ground project delivered.
7	<b>Use nature-based solutions to increase resilience of natural landscape in a changing climate.</b>  Utilise solutions for the changing climate, which work with nature, reducing the impact of natural hazards and improve restoration and resilience of natural	Energy, disaster, and climate resilience	Sustainable nature-based solutions that provide lasting protection from natural hazards, such as floods, fires, drought and erosion while improving biodiversity and water quality including strategic wetland	Q2: Establishment of cross-organisational working group that will lead a review of current natural assets and identification of new nature-based solution (NBS) opportunities.	Establish a referral pathway through capital pipeline for future NBS. Commence planning of pilot projects to trial NBS approaches, investigating nature	Deliver trial of new NBS and continue to monitor existing. NBS in place. Investigate future funding, and resourcing needs for	Embed use of NBS across Council functions, promoting best practice and highlighting successful examples

	landscapes including the Birrarung (Yarra River). Solutions include strategic wetland restoration for flood mitigation, strategic vegetation management for fire control, utilising fire as a land management tool and riparian buffers for erosion prevention.		restoration for flood mitigation, strategic vegetation management for fire control, fire as a land management tool and riparian buffers for erosion prevention, helping to achieve key outcomes of Councils Nature Plan and the Yarra Strategic Plan.	Q4: Funding and investment opportunities explored and NBS and Nature Fund profile raised.  Provide baseline NBS report.	repair investment opportunities.  Begin assessing natural asset value such as through ecosystem accounting.	expanded NBS initiatives.	to the community and industry.
8	<p><b>Provide leadership in pursuit of net zero emissions and support the transition to a low carbon future.</b></p> <p>Deliver programs that strengthen community's climate adaptation and resilience to climate impacts and support the transition to a low carbon future, by increasing the use of renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, and fostering sustainable practices in local businesses and homes.</p>	Energy, disaster, and climate resilience	<p>Our region is at the forefront of the challenges imposed by climate change, with the social, environmental, and economic impacts already being felt throughout our communities. Local government has an important role to influence change, build community capacity, and demonstrate leadership.</p> <p>By partnering with communities and empowering residents to actively participate in climate solutions, we can develop practical and sustainable adaptation and net zero strategies tailored to unique community needs. This approach also brings co-benefits, such as better prepared and connected communities, improved climate literacy and more climate conscious behaviours.</p>	<p>Q2: Undertake a gap analysis of climate adaptation and net zero initiatives, including development of Energy Transition Plan, continue roll out of 'The Adaptation Game' (TAG), to embed best practice implementation across communities.</p> <p>Q4: Select pilot community to develop a localised climate adaptation and resilience plan. Build capacity of community led facilitation of engagement and education tools.</p>	<p>Deliver pilot Local Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan. Evaluate and use learnings to inform further implementation.</p> <p>Continue implementation of TAG and other engagement and education tools, alongside monitoring of effectiveness.</p>	<p>Implementation in line with Liveable Climate Plan actions, and key actions identified in the Energy Transition Plan.</p> <p>Continue roll out of programs to support community including the use of TAG and other engagement and education tools.</p>	<p>Implementation in line with Liveable Climate Plan actions, and key actions identified in the Energy Transition Plan.</p> <p>Continue roll out of programs to support community including the use of TAG and other engagement and education tools.</p>



Strategic Objective:  
Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

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Initiative Title and short description		Priority Areas	Thinking ahead 10 years' – what benefits for community and future generations will this bring?	Milestones			
				Year 1 (End 30 June 2026)	Year 2 (End 30 June 2027)	Year 3 (End 30 June 2028)	Year 4 (End 30 June 2029)
9	<b>Reduce storm water and flooding risk.</b> Proactively manage stormwater to safeguard our community, promote sustainable development practices and preserve natural ecosystems.	Roads and drainage	Protecting public assets and natural waterways from damage while improving water quality through pollutant filtration.  Well-designed stormwater systems can capture water for reuse, helping communities adapt to changing climate conditions, support healthy ecosystems, and maintain essential infrastructure functionality.  Developing and prioritizing infrastructure upgrades will improve flood protection and the reliability of the stormwater management system.  Ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the stormwater management system, supporting healthy ecosystems and adapting to changing climate conditions.	Q2: Flood mapping in partnership with Melbourne Water and stakeholders commenced	Deliver program of drainage upgrade works focused on reducing risk to properties.  Development of water sensitive urban guidelines  Investigate alternative funding opportunities	Implement developer & engineering technical guidelines.  Complete flood mapping across the municipality in partnership with Melbourne Water	Completion of flood mapping.  Community consultation and investigate Planning scheme amendment.  Review Stormwater Management Plan
				Q4: Disseminate community fact sheets in collaboration with the Stormwater Community Reference panel. Review Integrated Water management strategy			
10	<b>Activate Ridges and Rivers</b> Deliver funded stages and operating models of ngurrak barring   RidgeWalk, Yarra Valley Trail and Warburton Mountain Bike Park, while continuing to advocate for future funding.	Paths, trails, and green open space	Connected trail networks that showcase our beautiful natural landscapes. These trails will encourage active lifestyles, improve physical and mental wellbeing, boost tourism, strengthen environmental connections, and preserve significant landscapes for future generations.	ngurrak barring	ngurrak barring	ngurrak barring	ngurrak barring
				Q2: Website, operating model, and activations development	Operating model and activations.	Operating model and activations	Operating model and activations
				Q4: Advocacy for additional art, installations, activations, and events			
				Warburton Mountain Bike	Warburton Mountain Bike	Warburton Mountain Bike	Warburton Mountain Bike
				Q2: Stage 1A works completion.	Stage 1C 30km's and Stage 1D completion	Full operating model in function	Full operating model in function

				Q4: Stage 1B works completion and Business and operating model commenced.	Full operating model in function Stage 2 funding advocacy, approvals development and design progression	Stage 2 funding advocacy, approvals development and design progression	Stage 2 funding advocacy, approvals development and design progression
				<i>Yarra Valley Trail</i>	<i>Yarra Valley Trail</i>	<i>Yarra Valley Trail</i>	<i>Yarra Valley Trail</i>
				Q2: Stage 1B.1 (Yering to Melba bend) opened.	Stage 2A (Yarra Glen to Tarrawarra) construction completion	Stage 1C (Yarra River to Yarra Glen), 2B (Tarrawarra to Healesville) and Stage 3 (Healesville to Woori Yallock) planning and funding advocacy	Stage 1C (Yarra River to Yarra Glen), 2B (Tarrawarra to Healesville) and Stage 3 (Healesville to Woori Yallock) planning and funding advocacy
				Q4: Stage 1B.2 (Melba bend to Yarra River and Yarra Glen Northern Tourist Loop construction completion.	Stage 1C (Yarra River to Yarra Glen), 2B (Tarrawarra to Healesville) and Stage 3 (Healesville to Woori Yallock) planning and funding advocacy		
11 Page 71	<b>Facilitate diverse housing options.</b> Work with partners and industry to increase opportunities for diverse housing around transport hubs, employment centres and key services.	Clean and well-planned townships and urban areas	Increased housing diversity and a community where people of all ages, genders, abilities and income levels can find suitable housing near transport and services. This will reduce housing insecurity, support workforce retention, help families stay connected to their community, and create a more inclusive society.	Q2: Required Planning Scheme Amendment prepared, and implementation of Housing Strategy key actions commenced	Implementation of key actions from the Housing Strategy  Implementation of key actions arising from Social and Affordable Housing Policy	Continue implementation of actions arising from the adopted Housing Strategy	Continue implementation of actions arising from the adopted Housing Strategy
				Q4: Social and Affordable Housing Policy completed			
12	<b>Improve safety and maintenance of local roads</b>  Plan and deliver maintenance of sealed and unsealed local roads, in accordance with local priorities and advocate for further funding opportunities.	Roads and drainage	Safe, well-maintained roads that connect people to essential services, jobs, and each other. Strategic road maintenance will improve safety, support business activity, and ensure accessibility for everyone, especially vulnerable community members.	Q2: Road management Plan review completed	Advocacy for road infrastructure funding  Local Area Traffic Management Concept Design	Road Condition Audit  Local Area Traffic Management Engagement	Local Area Traffic Management Program Delivery
				Q4: Community engagement program on road maintenance services commenced.			





## Strategic Objective: Prosperous Communities and Vibrant Economy

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Initiative Title and short description		Priority Areas	Thinking ahead 10 years' – what benefits for community and future generations will this bring?	Milestones –what do we promise to achieve and report on?			
				Year 1 (End 30 June 2026)	Year 2 (End 30 June 2027)	Year 3 (End 30 June 2028)	Year 4 (End 30 June 2029)
13	<b>Enhance local amenity and walkability</b>  Continue improving and maintaining the look, feel and walkability of townships and local areas in collaboration with communities.	Balanced Tourism  Local Business  Clean and well-planned townships	Clean, attractive, and functional public spaces that reflect community pride. Well-maintained townships will improve quality of life, increase safety and property values, attract visitors, and create accessible and inclusive spaces where people can gather, strengthening community bonds.	Q2: Deliver two park and township blitz.  Deliver footpath and trail rehabilitation and upgrade program  Q4: Deliver two park and township blitz.  Deliver footpath and trail rehabilitation and upgrade program.	Implement annual audit and develop Park Blitz schedule.  Develop and implement a Township Minor Works Program	Implement annual audit and develop Park Blitz schedule.  Develop and implement a Township Minor Works Program	Implement annual audit and develop Park Blitz schedule.  Develop and implement a Township Minor Works Program
14	<b>Strengthen tourism destination management across the region</b>  Collaborate across the new Visitor Economy Partnership and local communities to manage the impact of new and existing tourism assets on established communities and infrastructure.	Local Business	Balanced tourism that benefits locals while welcoming visitors. This approach will prevent over-tourism problems, distribute economic benefits throughout the community, create sustainable jobs, and protect the natural and cultural assets that make our region special.	Q2: Key priorities from the Destination Management Plan updated.  Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) to support seasonal workforce needs in hospitality and tourism established.  Complete feasibility study of RV/Caravan facilities to encourage stops and overnight stays.  Q4: Develop an action plan to mitigate the impacts of tourism on townships, while providing a quality tourism experience.  Establish partnerships to support implementation of EV chargers across the Shire.	Implement key Council actions from the Destination Management Plan	Implement key Council actions from the Destination Management Plan	Implement key Council actions from the Destination Management Plan



15	<b>Support local Agri-Food Futures Centre of Excellence and Innovation</b>  Work with industry, education, Traditional Owners, community and government partners to establish an industry hub and centre of excellence.	Local Industry and Producers Local jobs	A thriving innovation hub that creates local jobs and economic growth. By connecting businesses, education providers and government, we will develop new skills, attract talent, support business growth, and establish our region as a recognised leader in agriculture and food technology.	Q2: Establish an Agri/Food Sector cross-functional Taskforce with representatives from across industry, education, community, and government.	Implement key Council actions from the Economic Development Strategy.  Complete feasibility study for a Centre of Excellence.	Implement key Council actions from the Economic Development Strategy.  Centre of Excellence Business Case developed.	Implement key Council actions from the Economic Development Strategy.  Continue the process from Year 3.
				Q4: Commence Centre of Excellence feasibility study.	Develop new Agri-Food Futures Plan	Deliver and evaluate pilot program to support local producers through micro-leasing spaces	
16	<b>Develop new Green Wedge Management Plan.</b>  Develop new contemporary Green Wedge Management Plan that responds to (land use) emerging agricultural practice and industry needs	Local industry and Producers	Protected green spaces and productive agricultural land for future generations. This plan will prevent land use conflicts, protect biodiversity, support local economic opportunities, and maintain the distinctive character that makes our region unique.	Q2: Engage with industry partners and develop draft green wedge management plan.	Update Green Wedge Management plan finalises	Commence implementation of action plan	Implementation of action plan
				Q4: Draft plan for community and industry consultation			

## **Council Plan Copies**

Copies of the Council Plan are available as hard copies or online.

All strategic documents to support the delivery of the strategic objectives are available in hardcopy and in electronic format on Council's website at [www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au) or by contacting 1300 368 333.

# Contact Information

## Community Links

### Lilydale

15 Anderson Street

### Healesville

110 River Street

### Monbulk

21 Main Road

### Yarra Junction

2442-2444 Warburton Highway

### Upwey

40 Main Street

## National Relay Service

133 677 - for callers who have a hearing, speech or communication impairment and for Text Telephone or modem callers

1300 555 727 - for callers using Speech to Speech relay

9658 9461 – TTY

## Translation and Interpreting Service

131 450 Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) National. An interpreting service is available if required.

## Yarra Ranges Council

PO Box 105  
Lilydale VIC 3140

1300 368 333 | [mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)  
[yarraranges.vic.gov.au](http://yarraranges.vic.gov.au)

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Yarra Ranges Council

# DRAFT Asset Plan

## 2025–2035

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



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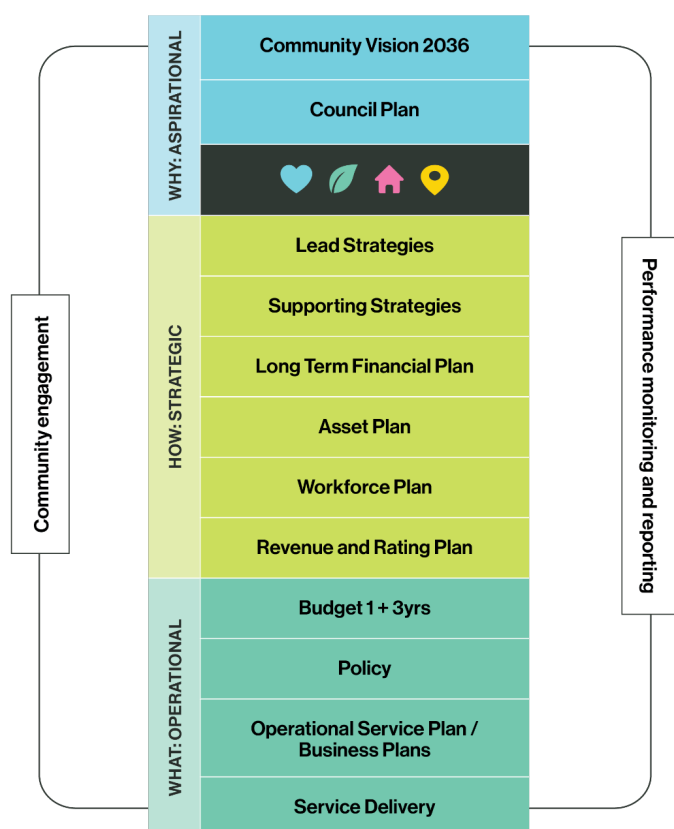
# Introduction

# Introduction

Providing effective and efficient assets for the community is an integral part of Council's operations. As the steward of these assets, Council is committed to managing them in the most cost-effective and responsible way. From planning, design and creation to maintenance, renewal, repair and operation, and ultimately to replacement or disposal, Council undertakes all these activities with the goal of providing safe, reliable, and efficient services for both the current community and future generations.

## Integrated planning

This Asset Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It provides an overview of Yarra Ranges Council's approach to maintain, renew, acquire, expand, upgrade, dispose and/or decommission its infrastructure assets. This Asset Plan is not a stand-alone document; it is integrated with other key documents. The following diagram shows how Council's different plans and strategies fit together. Informed by evidence, state and federal legislation and policy, community engagement and continuous improvement, these plans guide the delivery of all Council services to help achieve our Community Vision.



## The purpose of this Asset Plan

This Asset Plan provides an overview of all the assets Council owns and outlines how Council will manage these assets efficiently and responsibly. By minimising risks,



maximising benefits and managing investments, Council aim to provide quality, well-maintained and reliable assets for the community to enjoy now and into the future.

Council works to address the diverse needs of our community, including gender, intersectionality and accessibility. This Asset Plan:

- lists the assets Council owns, including how many there are and total replacement cost.
- outlines the money needed to operate and invest in these assets.
- explains how Council calculates risks related to infrastructure.
- details how Council decides on the amount of money to invest and which assets to focus on. Ensures that decisions about managing assets align with Council's overall vision and strategic objectives.
- ensures there is alignment between asset management planning and the Long-Term Financial Plan.
- incorporates community feedback and considers the changing needs of the local community.

Council prepares Asset Management Plans for each major asset category including buildings, drainage, roads infrastructure, pathways, and open space. These technical plans are reviewed regularly and cover a 10-20-year planning period and ensure legislative compliance.

The development of this version of the Asset Plan is based on Council's understanding of the performance and condition of Council's assets, feedback from community and other key assumptions included in strategies, implementation plans and urban design frameworks, amongst others, at its time of preparation.

Council acquires, renews, expands, upgrades and disposes of assets based on community needs and required service levels. Changes in technology, political and financial environments can affect the original assumptions and forecasts in the Asset Plan, therefore it is essential to actively monitor, review and update this document to reflect significant changes.

## What is an asset?

The most basic definition is - **something that is of value.**

Assets are all the things that enable Council to deliver services for our community, and help residents to stay connected, healthy and active.

Many of the things our community see as they step outside their home are assets that Council manages: the footpaths leading to shops, schools or sports centres; most of the roads (75%); buildings for community activities such as halls and libraries; parks and open spaces that keep community healthy and active, and playgrounds that provide endless fun for children. This Asset Plan focuses on these tangible assets that community can touch and feel.

# Why do we have assets?

Council's infrastructure assets help support many service outcomes and benefits:

Service outcome	Description and examples
<b>Social Connection</b>	Strongly affiliated with volunteer-run organisations, i.e. Friends of groups. Any activities that support groups coming together and building social capital.
<b>Preparedness for emergencies and severe weather events</b>	Strengthens community resilience in the emergencies through its community emergency networks and community planning groups.
<b>Active Living</b>	Promotes recreation, sport, movement for all ages, genders and ability
<b>Food Security</b>	Includes community gardens and food systems such as community supported agriculture, food relief support
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Enhances physical and mental health and wellbeing, providing access to a range of health services.
<b>Education and Training</b>	Facilitates skills development and supports to access education or training opportunities.
<b>Employment</b>	Assisting people in job seeking and job readiness.
<b>Culture</b>	Celebrates arts, heritage, indigenous history, creativity, performance, and our collective history.
<b>Community Participation</b>	Encourages community involvement in decision making (place-based or issue based) and self-determination for all communities.
<b>Transport</b>	Connects people to essential services and amenities, supporting a range of transport available for the needs of our community.
<b>Social inclusion and non-discrimination</b>	Supports gender equity and programs to reduce gender-based violence against women and children. Also addresses the needs of the aging population, culturally and linguistically diverse considerations and accessibility.

## How does Council measure assets?

The characteristics or specifications that underpin these service outcomes are defined as Levels of Service characteristics. This is the way of measuring how those assets support the different services Council delivers for the community. To provide these services, Council needs different infrastructure assets. Sometimes infrastructure like buildings and car parks support many different services. Others, like pipes, pits and roads, support a smaller



number of them. All, however, are important for the local community. Therefore, to ensure assets are helping to provide the best service they can, Council measures:

- Condition: How does the asset look, feel and sound? Are there cracks, damage or wear and tear? Is it safe and durable?
- Utilisation: How many people are using the infrastructure? How many people are visiting this building?
- Capacity: How much can it carry, move or support? How much water can flow through this pipe in a storm?
- Function: Is it fit for purpose? Is it accessible and available to everyone in our community?

The graphic below demonstrates the complexity and link between:

Levels of Service Characteristics - the outcomes of all the benefits the Yarra Ranges region offers.

The Service Types – all the different services and actions Council delivers with, and for, the community.

The Assets – all the physical things Council must have to provide these services.

The Measures – how Council measures and improves services and outcomes.

<b>Levels of Service Characteristics</b> <i>What are the service <b>outcomes</b></i>	Social Connection	Preparedness and resilience to emergency and weather events	Active Living	Food Security	Health and Wellbeing	Education and Training	Employment	Culture	Civic Participation	Transport	Social inclusion and non-discrimination
	Community Strengthening	Animal Management	Public Health and Wellbeing	Community Strengthening	Maternal and Child Health  Healthy Active Ageing  Immunisation  Public Health and Wellbeing  Employee Relations	Local Laws and Regulatory Compliance  Community Strengthening  Early and Middle Years  Economy, Tourism and Investment Support	Economy, Tourism and Investment Support	Arts, Culture and Heritage  Culture Venues and Community Halls  Libraries	Emergency Management  Community Strengthening  Indigenous Development  Youth Development  Economy, Tourism and Investment Support  Communications  Community Engagement  Executive Governance	Local Roads, Bridges, Footpaths, and Carparks  Traffic Management	Community Strengthening  Indigenous Development  Youth Development  Healthy Active Ageing  Public Health and Wellbeing  Libraries  Communications
	Arts, Culture and Heritage	Emergency Management	Local Roads, Bridges, Footpaths, and Carparks								
	Early and Middle Years	Public and Environmental Health	Sports Fields								
	Maternal and Child Health	Building Service	Aquatics								
<b>Services Types</b> <i>What we <b>deliver</b> to help achieve this</i>	Youth Development	Strategic Projects	Trails								
	Healthy Active Ageing	Tree Management	Pavilions and Club Houses								
	Pavilions and Club Houses	Land Management	Recreation Facilities								
	Cultural Venues and Community Halls	Climate Adaptation	Play Spaces								
<b>Assets</b> <i>What <b>infrastructure</b> we need to provide these objectives</i>	Libraries	Enery Transition and Emission Management	Parks								
			Open Spaces								
<b>Strategic Service Indicators</b> <b>Measuring</b> change in what matters, over the long term	Buildings Car Parks Playspaces Footpaths Land Art	Buildings Land Car Parks Plant, Fleet and Equipment Pipes Pits Kerb and Channel	Buildings Car Parks Playspaces Trails Parks Land Pools Roads Sportsfields Sports Courts	Buildings Land	Buildings Car Parks Plant, Fleet and Equipment Playspaces Land	Buildings Car Parks Plant, Fleet and Equipment Playspaces Land	Buildings Car Parks Land	Buildings Car Parks Art Land	Buildings Land	Bridges Car Parks Roads Footpaths and Trails Signs	Buildings Land
	Feeling secure	Prepared for weather events					Diversity of local economy				
	Sense of community	Council Carbon Emissions	Access to Open Space	Biodiversity protection	Mental Health	Local employment	Overnight stay tourism	Access to services and facilities	Community facilities usage and demand	Transport options	Diversity of housing supply
		Water Diversion									



# Assets in our Region



# Assets in our Region

Council manages a vast network of assets that support the delivery of services for the Yarra Ranges community. These assets, combined, have a total replacement value of over \$2 billion.

The management of Council's assets is strongly supported by community in many ways. The need for improvement and maintenance of assets is often raised through engagement with the community and by receiving customer requests.

Council also works in partnership with the community in managing assets. Community groups such as Township Groups, Environmental Volunteers, Committees of Management, Sporting Clubs, users of facilities who have lease, licence, tenancy or hire agreements and committees such as Preschool Committees, play an active role in shaping and maintaining these assets. The ongoing support of local community and community groups is essential to managing the wide range of facilities across the municipality.



The asset quantities and values for all Yarra Ranges Council are outlined in the table below.

Asset Class	Asset Quantities	Asset Descriptions	Current Replacement Cost (\$ million)
Buildings, Aquatics and Minor Structures	53	Halls, Community Hub/Link and Scout/Guide Halls	\$ 821.2
	35	Community Centre's (Neighbourhood House and Senior Citizens)	
	44	Community Sports Pavilions	
	74	Toilet Blocks	
	9	Aquatic Facility and Water Play Parks	
	159	Recreational and utility shelter structures larger than 10 m <sup>2</sup>	
Drainage	844 km	of Pipes	\$ 217.7
	33,321	Pits	
	44	Stormwater related assets	
Parks, Bushland and Recreation	197	Sports Courts and Fields	\$ 70.5
	14	BMX/Skate Parks	
	126	Playspaces	
	211	Reserves and Parks	
Pathways	766 km	Footpaths	\$ 85.9
	145 km	Trails	
Roads, Kerbs, Car parks and Bridges	1,050 km	Sealed Roads	\$ 550
	700 km	Unsealed Roads	
	1000 km	Kerb and channel	
	301	Bridges, major culverts and associated structures (including boardwalks)	
	392	Off-Street Car Parks	
Land	599	Council owned land sites	\$ 454.7
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 2,200</b>

Yarra Ranges is quite different from other municipalities. Covering approximately 2,500 square kilometres, it is 22 times larger than Manningham (114 km<sup>2</sup>), five times larger than Nillumbik (432 km<sup>2</sup>) and 40 times larger than Banyule (63 km<sup>2</sup>).

Yarra Ranges Council uses the .id Community Profile to provide a comprehensive socio-demographic analysis of the area, including suburbs and localities. This profile is updated regularly with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Council have categorised infrastructure based on the Profile. Id planning regions to provide a detailed insight into where Council's assets are located. This vast area has been split into four separate regions: Urban, Hills, Healesville-Yarra Glen and Yarra Valley.

By utilising demographic data at a regional level, Council can move beyond a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to provide more efficient resource allocation, better-targeted services and more liveable and sustainable assets for the community, ensuring e the right infrastructure is built in the right place at the right time.



The following table shows the population, land area and density of population (person/km<sup>2</sup>) of each region.

	Urban Area	Hills	Healesville-Yarra Glen	Yarra Valley
<b>Population (ABS ERP 2024)</b>	85,013	35,465	14,051	25,309
<b>Land Area (square km)</b>	181.6	219.0	369.3	1,697
<b>Population Density (persons per square km)</b>	468	161.9	38.05	14.92



## Estimated replacement cost of Council assets for Healesville-Yarra Glen region

Asset Class	Asset Quantities	Asset Descriptions	Current Replacement Cost (\$ million)
Buildings, Aquatics and Minor Structures	5	Halls, Community Hub/Link and Scout/Guide Halls	\$ 99.4
	15	Community Centre's (Neighbourhood House and Senior Citizens)	
	5	Community Sports Pavilions	
	10	Toilet Blocks	
	1	Outdoor Pool	
	28	Recreational and utility shelter structures larger than 10 m <sup>2</sup>	
Drainage	76 km	of Pipes	\$ 21.8
	2,753	Pits	
	4	Stormwater related assets	
Parks, Bushland and Recreation	24	Sports Courts and Fields	\$ 9.8
	3	BMX/Skate Parks	
	11	Playspaces	
	18	Reserves and Parks	
Pathways	60 km	Footpaths	\$ 6.6
	10 km	Trails	
Roads, Kerbs, Car parks and Bridges	123 km	Sealed Roads	\$ 67.5
	142 km	Unsealed Roads	
	57 km	Kerb and channel	
	51	Bridges, major culverts and associated structures (including boardwalks)	
	48	Off-Street Car Parks	
Land	56	Council owned land sites	\$ 32.2
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 237.3</b>

## Estimated replacement cost for Council assets in the Yarra Valley region

Asset Class	Asset Quantities	Asset Descriptions	Current Replacement Cost (\$ million)
Buildings, Aquatics and Minor Structures	12	Halls, Community Centres, Senior Citizens and Scout Halls	\$ 177.7
	4	Community Houses	
	13	Community Sports Pavilions	
	27	Toilet Blocks	
	1	Indoor Aquatic Facility	
	2	Water Play Parks	
	45	Recreational and utility shelter structures larger than 10 m <sup>2</sup>	
Drainage	86 km	of Pipes	\$ 24.2
	3,460	pits	
	3	Stormwater related assets	
Parks, Bushland and Recreation	46	Sports Courts and Fields	\$ 17.1
	3	BMX/Skate Parks	
	25	Playspaces	
	42	Reserves and Parks	
Pathways	56 km	Footpaths	\$ 9.2
	37 km	Trails	
Roads, Kerbs, Car parks and Bridges	235 km	Sealed Roads	\$ 143.5
	263 km	Unsealed Roads	
	86 km	Kerb and channel	
	119	Bridges, major culverts and associated structures (including boardwalks)	
	72	Off-Street Car Parks	
Land	121	Council owned land sites	\$ 44.9
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 416.6</b>

## Estimated replacement cost for Council assets in the Urban Area region

Asset Class	Asset Quantities	Asset Descriptions	Current Replacement Cost (\$ million)
Buildings, Aquatics and Minor Structures	17	Halls, Community Centres, Senior Citizens and Scout Halls	\$ 316.1
	9	Community Houses	
	17	Community Sports Pavilions	
	16	Toilets Blocks	
	1	Outdoor Pool	
	1	Water Play Park	
	65	Recreational and utility shelter structures larger than 10 m <sup>2</sup>	
Drainage	528 km	of Pipes	\$ 131.2
	20,040	pits	
	27	Stormwater related assets	
Parks, Bushland and Recreation	81	Sports Courts and Fields	\$ 33.6
	5	BMX/Skate Parks	
	69	Playspaces	
	105	Reserves and Parks	
Pathways	532 km	Footpaths	\$ 52.5
	85 km	Trails	
Roads, Kerbs, Car parks and Bridges	446 km	Sealed Roads	\$ 231.5
	55 km	Unsealed Roads	
	653 km	Kerb and channel	
	91	Bridges, major culverts and associated structures (including boardwalks)	
	172	Off-Street Car Parks	
Land	274	Council owned land sites	\$ 307.8
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 1,072.7</b>

## Estimated replacement cost for Council assets in the Hills region

Asset Class	Asset Quantities	Asset Descriptions	Current Replacement Cost (\$ million)
Buildings, Aquatics and Minor Structures	19	Halls, Community Centre's, Senior Citizens and Scout Halls	\$ 228.0
	7	Community Houses	
	9	Community Sports Pavilions	
	21	Public Toilets	
	1	Indoor Aquatic Facility	
	2	Outdoor Aquatic Facilities	
Drainage	21	Recreational and utility shelter structures larger than 10 m <sup>2</sup>	\$ 40.5
	154 km	of Pipes	
	7,068	pits	
	10	Stormwater related assets	
Parks, Bushland and Recreation	46	Sports Courts and Fields	\$ 10.0
	3	BMX/Skate Parks	
	21	Playspaces	
	46	Reserves and Parks	
Pathways	118 km	Footpaths	\$ 17.6
	13 km	Trails	
Roads, Kerbs, Car parks and Bridges	246 km	Sealed Roads	\$ 107.5
	243 km	Unsealed Roads	
	203 km	Kerb and channel	
	40	Bridges, major culverts and associated structures (including boardwalks)	
	100	Off-Street Car Parks	
Land	148	Council owned land sites	\$ 69.8
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 473.4</b>





# Community Engagement



# How this plan was developed

Since March 2024 Council have received direct feedback from over 1,250 people and informed over 6,000 community members in the development of the Council Plan, Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Plan. This included:

- 700+ survey responses
- 213 postcards completed
- Nine pop-up events, connecting with 800+ community members
- 135 attendees at three community and stakeholder summits
- Over 400 expressions of interest for Deliberative Community Panel
- 40 panel members representative of the diverse community, selected by an independent consultant
- Three workshops to discuss and debate Council priorities and challenges
- 10+ Focus Groups with key population groups

For further information read the full Community Engagement Reports available via Council's website. In these conversations the community spoke strongly about the following priorities, which have formed the strategic intent for Asset Management at Council, and thus the development of this Asset Plan.



Planning to provide services to current and future generations within the community



Encouraging and supporting the economic, environmental, social and cultural development of the municipality



Providing quality community infrastructure as an integral factor in providing liveable places that support community connection



Developing assets that are responsive to the changing environment in which community live

The strategic intent is supported by the guiding principles outlined below. These principles were developed by the community in 2022 and re-tested by a community panel in 2024. These principles guide asset-related decision-making at Council.

### **Evidence Based**

- Informed decision making
- Asset planning will incorporate population projection and demand forecasts for Council services
- The reliability of asset data will be regularly reviewed, and any necessary improvements identified and documented

### **Sustainability**

- The impact on environmental, financial, social and cultural sustainability will be considered when evaluating asset projects and processes
- Asset planning and service levels are developed in consideration of available resources identified in Council's Long Term Financial Plan

### **Appropriate Quality**

- Assets are planned and managed in a structured and coordinated way to be functional, efficient and sustainable for current and future generations

### **Community Vision**

- Asset management objectives align and are consistent with our community vision and key strategic objectives noted in the Council Plan
- The views of the community are valued and play an important role in determining appropriate levels of services for assets through engagement activities that are consistent with the Council's Engagement Policy

### **Fairness**

- Asset provisions will consider fairness in population distribution and geographic location

### **Health and Wellbeing**

- Council plans for, and manages, infrastructure that supports active living, mental wellbeing and social connections
- Council optimises the utilisation of public spaces and facilities to meet service demands and support community connections

### **Safety and Resilience**

- Asset related risks are identified and managed
- Critical assets are identified and managed to maximise their availability, including times of emergency response and recovery

### **Continuous Improvement**

- Adequate resources are provided to ensure Council realises its asset management objectives
- The implementation and performance of the Asset Management System will be overseen by an internal steering committee that has cross organisational representation



# Challenges for Assets in our Region



# Challenges for assets in the region

As the community changes over time, so do their needs and wishes. As a result, Council needs to provide new, different or bigger assets to meet changing needs for the future. This also involves replacing those assets that are no longer useful, fit for purpose or offer poor value for money in supporting services to the community.

There are several complex issues facing local communities and Council. These have been identified by community and Councillors as ongoing challenges. Some of the key issues that Council is facing in the Asset Management space are:

Challenge	Impact
<b>Growth and development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yarra Ranges' population is expected to grow by 13,000 over the next 10 years. This will carry with it an associated growth in demand for Council services. The changes in population across Council is used to help understand the changing needs of the community and what impact this might have on investment.</li><li>• Regions within Yarra Ranges are popular tourist destinations with visitation projected to double to nine million. This increase of visitors contributes to wear and tear on infrastructure.</li></ul>
<b>Staying healthy and safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over the next 10 to 20 years the region is forecast to experience significant growth in the number of residents that are of retirement age or older. This will impact the way Council provides and delivers services which can influence the type of infrastructure community needs.</li><li>• Closing the gender gap by applying a gender lens to asset planning and considering the needs and priorities of different gender groups when making decisions about community assets.</li></ul>
<b>Extreme weather</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council faces significant challenges in the construction of climate resilient assets including rising costs, replacement of ageing assets and navigating the unique topography of Yarra Ranges.</li></ul>



# Asset Investment Strategy



# Asset Investment Strategy

## Type of Asset Investment

The money that Council invests on assets can be broken down into capital investment and operational investment.

Investment Type	Activity	Description	Buildings Example
Operational Investment	Maintenance	Ongoing work required to keep an asset performing at the required level of service	Gutter cleaning
	Operations	Recurrent investment that is required to provide a service	Utility costs
Capital Investment	Renewal	Extending the life of an existing asset	Replacing the Roof
	Upgrade, Expansion and New	Delivery of new services or increasing existing service levels	Building extension or new building

The funds that drive this investment at Council come from several sources such as rates, borrowings, grants and proceeds from asset disposal. Renewal, Maintenance and Operations investment is primarily supported by rates and borrowings. This type of investment is prioritised over Upgrade, Expansion and New. Upgrade, Expansion and New investment is often leveraged from grants and proceeds from asset disposals. The decision-making process related to this investment is outlined below.

## Asset Investment Decision

Assets cost money to maintain and operate and, as assets age and deteriorate, Council must decide whether to renew, upgrade or dispose them. Decisions regarding when, where, and how much to invest in specific assets are primarily driven by risk considerations.

Council has an approach to consider risk associated with both new and existing infrastructure.

Risks associated with investment on new infrastructure considers Social, Environmental, Economic, and Cultural factors, and incorporates governance considerations like Risk, Strategic Alignment and Financial Implications.

Risk factors considered in assessing investment in existing infrastructure are Consequence of Failure (COF), Likelihood of Failure (LOF) and Criticality.

This approach ensures that assets with high consequences, high likelihoods and high criticality are prioritised for investment. It's not just about if something bad will happen, but also how bad it could be.

For example:

- **Likelihood:** How likely is it that something bad will occur? Is it probably going to happen, maybe, or is it very unlikely?
- **Consequence:** If something bad does happen, how bad will it be? Will it be a little problem, a medium problem, or a big problem?
- **Criticality:** Is the impact to the community easily fixed? Or is this the only asset around that can do this thing?

When investing based on risk, Council considers lowering the likelihood of something bad happening. Often the Consequence is fixed and unlikely to change. For example, a brand-new building that is in excellent condition and provides maternal and child health services, may be riskier than a small car park that is in poor condition. Council has defined the criteria for consequence, likelihood and criticality in the tables below.

During the life of this Asset Plan, Council will continue to collect and collate data, test assumptions and refine this approach to risk-based investment.

Consequence of Asset Failure	Description	Example
Asset Consequence	If this asset fails, how impactful is it to the service that it provides or supports?	A major bridge collapse severely disrupts road transport, impacting commuters, emergency services, and commerce.
Business Interruption	How valuable are the outcomes of this service?	The closure of a maternal and child health centre leads to significant disruptions in essential healthcare services for vulnerable populations.
Natural Environment	How much damage to the natural environment could this asset cause?	A leaking septic tank contaminates a waterway with serious environmental consequences compared to sports light collapse which can have a minimal impact on the environment.
Health and Safety	What are the risks to people when this asset fails?	A poorly maintained playground structure poses a risk for injury to children.

Reputation and Stakeholder Relationship	How will stakeholders view the organisation if this asset or facility is not managed properly? What would be the impact on Council's reputation?	The closure of a community library leads to public outcry and damages trust in local government.
Financials	How much does this asset cost to replace?	Replacing a sporting pavilion requires significant capital investment due to its size, complexity and varied use.
Regulation and Compliance	Is there legislation that relates specifically to this type of asset?	A bridge must comply with strict regulations, making its failure legally complex.

Likelihood of Asset Failure	Description	Example
Condition	What is the physical state of the asset? Does it have damage that might cause failure?	A bridge with visible cracks and corrosion is at a high risk of structural failure.
Age	How old is this asset?	A drainage pipe network built in the 1970s has deteriorated over time.
Climate	Is this asset prepared for future climate events? What impact will fire, wind, rain and temperature have on it?	A road located in a flood-prone area is vulnerable to damage from increased rainfall and flooding.
Utilisation	How many people use this asset? Is this causing it to deteriorate quicker than usual?	A popular urban park trail experiences heavy foot traffic, leading to accelerated wear and tear.
Capacity	How much demand can this asset manage before it fails?	A stormwater pipe (part of the network) struggles to manage peak load during heavy rainfall events.
Function	Is it designed in a way that makes it fit for purpose?	A community hall with poor accessibility features is not fully functional for all members of the community.
Criticality	Description	Example
Criticality	Can you get a similar asset or service in nearby proximity and how does it	A remote rural bridge has no easily accessible alternatives, making its failure critical for local access.

compare in terms of cost  
and access to those similar  
assets?

Council manages these risks by increasing preventative maintenance, investing capital and/or decommissioning an asset. Often Council uses a mix of these three options to obtain acceptable levels of risk, maintain quality services whilst achieving financial sustainability.

## How much money will Council be spending?

Over the next ten years, Council has forecast it will spend a total of \$520 million in capital expenditure (renewal, upgrading and creating new assets) and \$621 million in operational expenditure (maintenance and operations of existing and new assets). This investment is aligned with Council's Long-Term Financial Plan. The below table summarises the capital and operational funding planned for our assets over the next ten years.

Financial Year	Renewal Funding (\$'000)	Upgrade, Expansion and New Funding (\$'000)	Maintenance and Operations Funding (\$'000)
2025/26	26,044	32,254	59,397
2026/27	25,490	24,572	59,991
2027/28	22,813	20,116	60,591
2028/29	24,354	19,980	61,197
2029/30	27,589	16,507	61,809
2030/31	29,274	18,713	62,427
2031/32	27,918	22,586	63,051
2032/33	31,633	26,533	63,682
2033/34	32,370	26,707	64,318
2034/35	32,746	32,697	64,962

*Note: The figures in the table above exclude any Project Management allocation. It also only includes operational investment related directly to managing and operating assets.*

While the Asset Plan covers a ten-year horizon, the life of this plan is only four years. This Plan is due to be published again in 2029. Below is a detailed breakdown of the asset investment allocation by asset class over the life of this Asset Plan (four years):

Asset Class	Renewal Funding (\$'000)	Upgrade, Expansion and New Funding (\$'000)	Total Funding (\$'000)
Roads	41,611	14,497	56,108
Buildings	12,774	18,840	31,614
Footpaths and Trails	7,367	17,159	24,527
IT, Plant and Equipment	13,200	-	13,200
Drainage	1,450	10,819	12,269
Aquatics	6,174	-	6,174
Playspaces	3,165	-	3,165
Carparks	1,400	-	1,400
Bridges	1,124	-	1,124

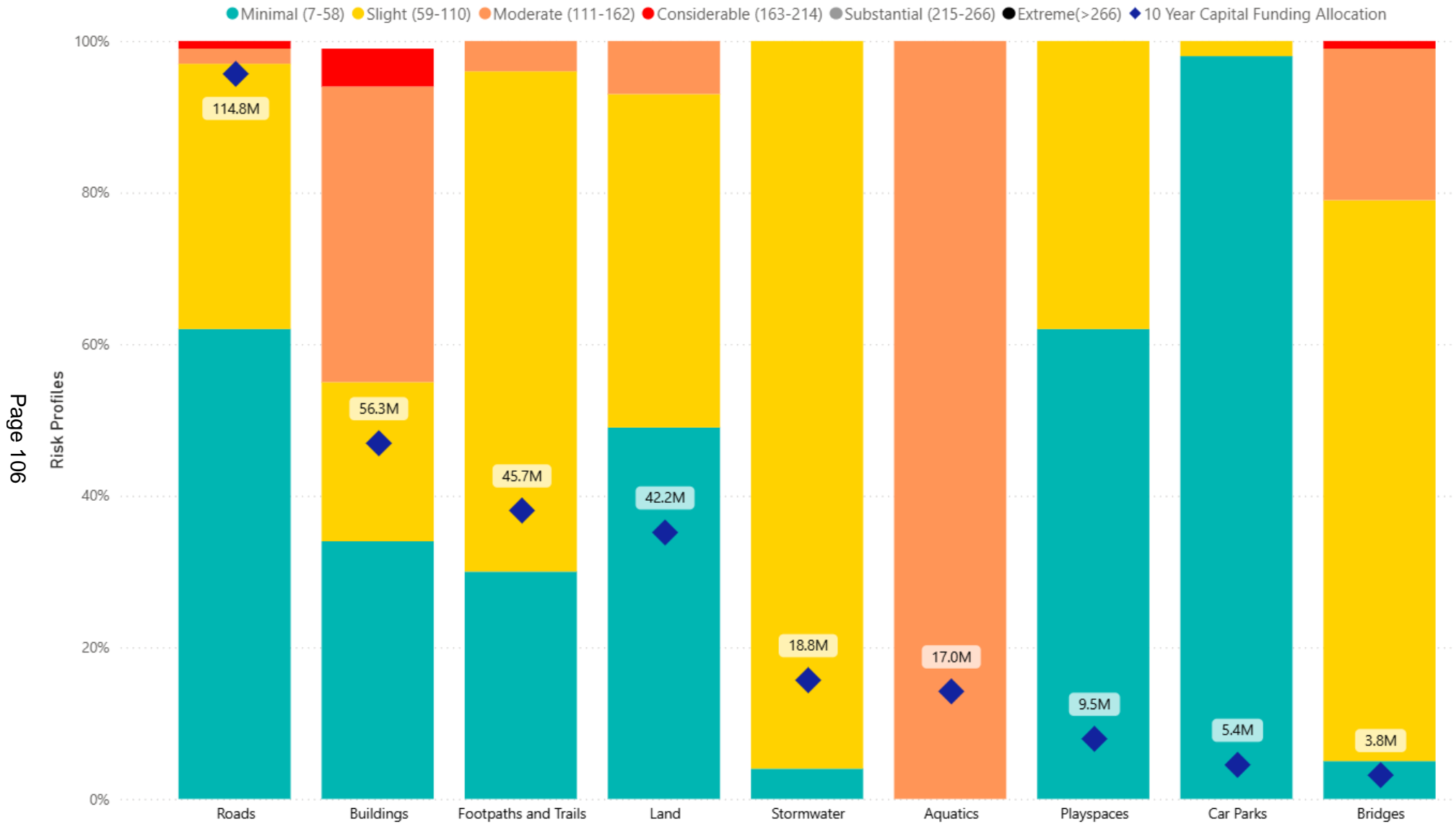
*Note: The figures in the table above exclude \$9.8 million allocated to the Asset Improvement Fund, and \$20 million allocated to Project Management. These amounts are yet to be allocated to specific projects and will depend on the priorities of our community at the time.*

Council engages with community in the development of strategic and planning documents. This information is collated and considered to inform Council and support decision making on investment priorities. Council then allocates the capital budgets for each asset classes with the intention of prioritising assets that present the highest risk to Council. This allocation of funding aligns with the risk management approach outlined above.

The graph below shows the distribution of asset risk within each asset class. The colour gradient (minimal to extreme) provides a clear visual hierarchy of risk severity, allowing for quick identification of assets that hold the most risk to Council. The blue diamonds on the graph indicate the ten-year capital funding allocation for each asset class.



# Asset Risk Profile and Capital Investment Program Allocation



Asset Class	Percentage of Current Replacement Cost by Risk						10 Year Capital Funding Allocation** (\$ million)	Total Current Replacement Cost** (\$ million)
	Minimal (7-58)	Slight (59-110)	Moderate (111-162)	Considerable (163-214)	Substantial (215-266)	Extreme (>266)		
Buildings	34%	21%	40%	5%	0%	0%	56	815
Roads	62%	35%	2%	1%	0%	0%	115	420
Footpaths and Trails	30%	66%	4%	0%	0%	0%	46	57
Bridges	5%	74%	20%	1%	0%	0%	4	106
Aquatics	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	17	25
Stormwater	4%	96%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19	216
Car Parks	98%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5	25
Land*	49%	44%	7%	0%	0%	0%	42	452
Playspaces	62%	38%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10	60

\*10 Year asset funding allocation for Land includes Open Space, Townships and Sports field investment.

\*\* Figures rounded

\*\*\*Aquatics only includes pools, pumps and filtration and does not include the building

Council's investment strategy focuses on prioritising assets with moderate and considerable risk to prevent them from deteriorating into higher-risk categories. This approach doesn't aim to eliminate all risk but rather to maintain a comfortable level of residual risk for the organisation. It is important to note that many assets that have a minimal to slight risk profile will deteriorate over the next ten years, and thus their likelihood of failure will increase. Council has factored this risk transition into the prioritisation process.

Investment decisions are communicated through internal processes where the strategic intent of asset management is balanced against organisational strategic direction to provide the best outcome for the community.





# Performance, Reporting and Success Measurement



# Performance, Reporting and Success Measurement

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 contains key initiatives and/or projects that Council will commit to deliver over the next four years.

The actions listed within the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 will be reported to Council over the four-year period and this **Asset Plan** will be measured against the performance of four initiatives that support Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places.

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#	Initiative
10	<b>Manage storm water and drainage</b> Proactively manage stormwater to safeguard our community, promote sustainable development practices and preserve natural ecosystems
11	<b>Activate Ridges and Rivers</b> Deliver funded stages and operating models of ngurrak-barring-RidgeWalk, Yarra Valley Trail and Warburton Bike Park, while continuing to advocate for future funding.
12	<b>Facilitate diverse housing options</b> Work with partners and industry to increase opportunities for diverse housing around transport hubs, employment centres and key services
13	<b>Continue to address the safety and maintenance of local roads</b> Advocate, plan and deliver road maintenance in accordance with local priorities

While the Asset Plan covers a ten-year horizon, it is reviewed every **four** years by 31 October in the year following a Council Election as required by the Local Government Act 2020.

This Asset Plan supersedes any previous versions and is due to be published again in 2029.

## Asset Plan Copies

Copies of the Asset Plan are available as hard copies or online.

All strategic documents to support the delivery of the strategic objectives are available in hardcopy and in electronic format on Council's website at [www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au) or by contacting 1300 368 333.

## Contact Information

### Community Links

#### Lilydale

15 Anderson Street

#### Healesville

110 River Street

#### Monbulk

21 Main Road

#### Yarra Junction

2442-2444 Warburton Highway

#### Upwey

40 Main Street

### National Relay Service

133 677 - for callers who have a hearing, speech or communication impairment and for Text Telephone or modem callers

1300 555 727 - for callers using Speech to Speech relay

9658 9461 – TTY

### Translation and Interpreting Service

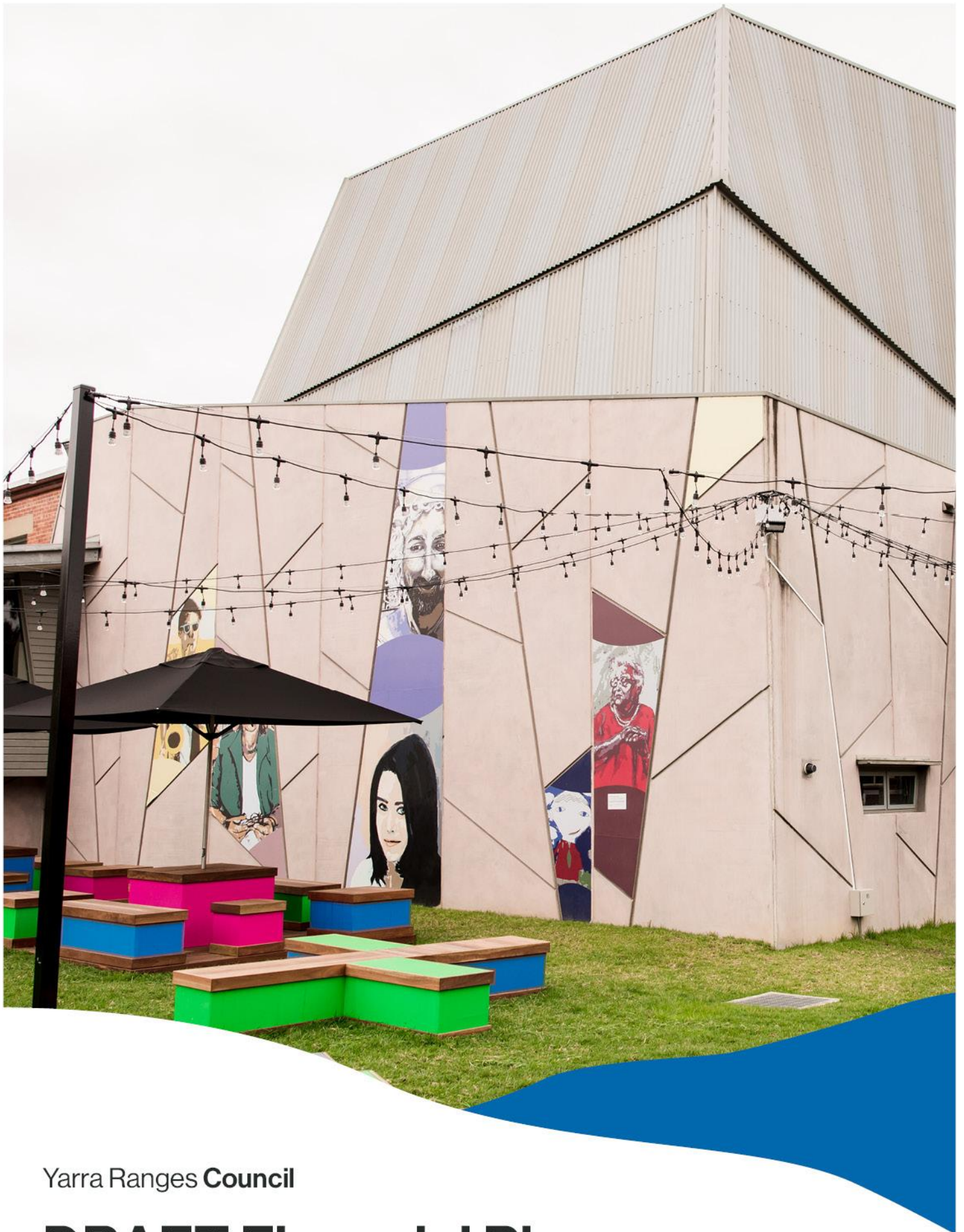
131 450 Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) National. An interpreting service is available if required.

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Yarra Ranges Council

# DRAFT Financial Plan 2025–26 to 2034–35

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## Acknowledgement of Country



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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## Executive summary

The Long Term Financial Plan is a key financial document shaped by a set of financial principles and performance indicators. It offers a Long Term financial forecast aimed at insuring Council's financial sustainability over the period.

While the economic climate shows signs of stability, market forecasts indicate volatility, which impacts the cost of living pressures in our community both currently and in the short term. Community affordability, financial responsibility and maintaining overall financial sustainability remain our focus in this constrained environment. This Plan has been prepared in the context of managing these short-term influences while considering the longer-term challenges

Council continues to invest in core services of high value to community, such as improving drainage, maintaining and enhancing existing assets, continuing significant multi-year projects and the delivery of essential community services and support. Council face significant strains on resources to maintain services and infrastructure at current levels as delivery costs continue to outpace funding. This makes it challenging to balance community expectations and continue to deliver at past levels.

Yarra Ranges is a large municipality, covering over 2500sqm, and has been impacted by repeated natural disaster events, including flooding, wind and fire events. Council supports local communities during these responses, but also must remedy the impacts and damage, including trees, roads, drainage, trails and parks. Many of the costs are not covered by emergency funding and are a significant cost to Council. Over the last two years these costs have totalled \$16m of which \$9m has been funded by Council.

With limited revenue streams, Council relies primarily on rates as the main source of income. Under the Fair Go Rates system, the State Government sets the limit for annual rates increase. Historically, the rate cap issued by State Government has been linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This approach is challenging given the cost-of-service delivery is outpacing the CPI, meaning expenses exceed the income generated. Council is continually exploring ways to be efficient and effective at providing services to community without reducing the service levels. A key element of this approach is Council's ongoing advocacy to other levels of government for funding support as well as exploring collaborative opportunities with other local governments.

Regarding the financial projections in this document, Council relies on advice from the Department of Treasury and Finance to inform the data. Council will continue to adapt and change as needed to ensure the best outcomes for community and the Long Term financial sustainability of Council.

Consultation with the Yarra Ranges community over the past year, alongside the Council Plan and 2025-26 Budget, has helped inform the development of the Long Term Financial Plan. In response to this feedback, this Plan considers operational efficiencies to ensure that Council is keeping costs as low as possible whilst delivering value-for-money services.

Council believes this Long Term Financial Plan strikes the right balance, ensuring the continuation of the provision of services, assets and infrastructure valued by the Yarra Ranges community while helping to keep the region as one of the best places in Australia to live, work, and visit.

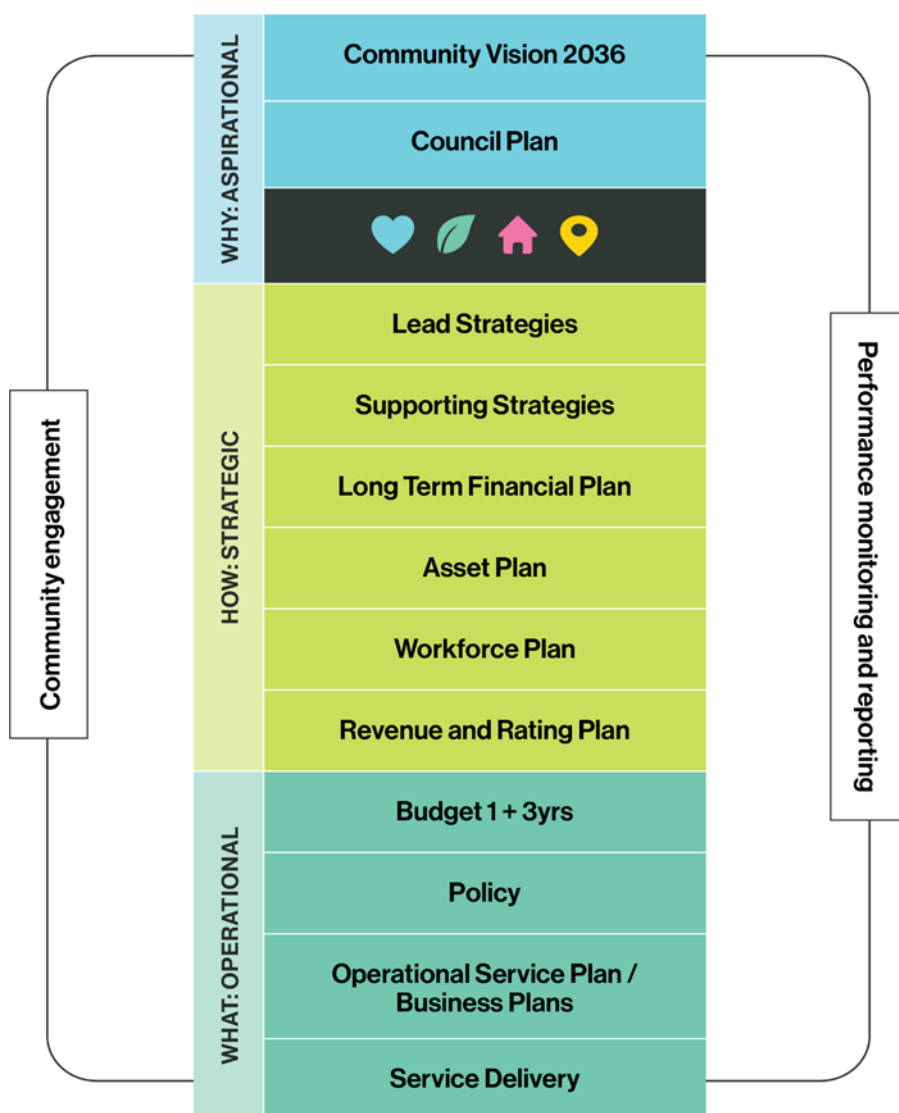


## 1. Legislative requirements

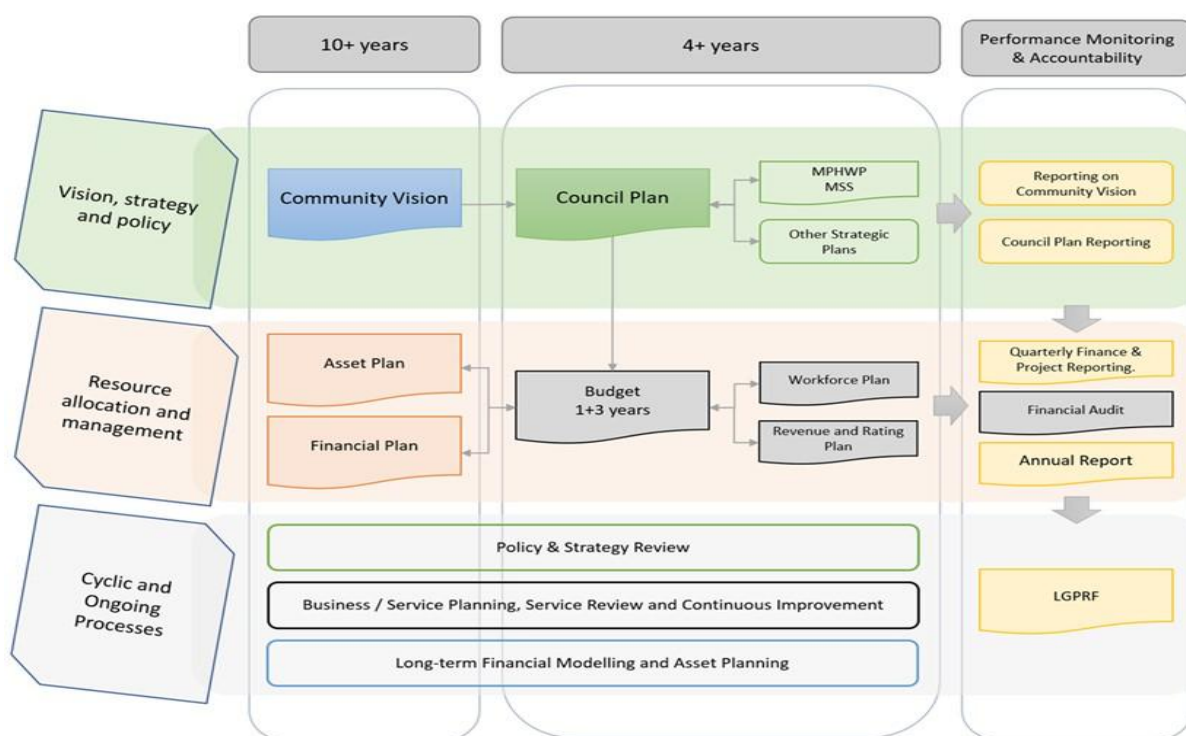
The Long Term Financial Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act). The Act determines the planning and financial requirements for Council, including the development of strategic planning, budgeting and annual reporting documents.

The Long Term Financial Plan is not a standalone document; it is linked to the achievement of the Community Vision and the Council Plan within the Integrated Strategic Planning & Reporting Framework. This framework guides the Council in identifying community needs and aspirations over the long term (Community Vision), medium term (Council Plan) and short term (Annual Budget) and then holding itself accountable (Annual Report).

The following diagram provides an overview of the core legislated elements of an integrated strategic planning and reporting framework and outcomes.



The following figure demonstrates how each element might inform or be informed by other parts of the integrated framework:



## 1.1 Strategic planning principles

The Long Term Financial Plan provides a 10-year projection which is based on assumptions and developed in the context of the following strategic planning principles:

- Council has an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting.
- Council's Financial Plan supports the Community Vision by funding the aspirations outlined in the Council Plan. These aspirations and actions are formulated in the context of the Community Vision.
- The Financial Plan's financial statements outline the 10-year financial resources and associated assumptions necessary to implement the goals and aspirations of the Council Plan.
- Council's strategic planning principles identify and address the risks to effective implementation of the Financial Plan. The financial risks are included in section 1.2 below.
- The Financial Plan incorporates strategic planning principles, including progress monitoring and reviews to identify and adapt to changing circumstances.

## 1.2 Financial management principles

The Long Term Financial Plan is based on the following financial management principles:

- Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions are managed in accordance with Council's financial policies and statutory obligations.
- Management of the following financial risks:
  - the financial viability of the Council (refer to section 2.1 Financial Policy Statements)
  - the management of current and future liabilities of Council. The estimated 10-year liabilities are disclosed in section 0 Balance Sheet Projections.
  - the beneficial enterprises of Council (where appropriate).
- Financial policies and strategic plans are designed to provide financial sustainability and predictability to the community.
- Council maintains accounts and records that explain its financial operations and financial position (refer section 3 Financial Statements).

## 1.3 Engagement principles

Council engaged a series of community panels and undertook online engagement activities to inform the integrated development of the following strategic documents:

- Council Plan 2025-2029
- Community Vision 2036
- Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35
- Council Budget 2025-26 to 2028-29
- Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.

These community engagement activities gathered feedback and insights from a diverse cross-section of the community including various locations, ages and backgrounds across the municipality. This approach ensured the community's voice was central to Council's strategic planning and is a crucial part of Council's deliberative engagement requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## 1.4 Service performance principles

Council services are designed to be targeted to meeting community needs and delivering value for money. Council's service performance principles are:

- Services are provided in an equitable manner and are responsive to the diverse needs of the community. The Council Plan is designed to identify the key services and projects to be delivered to the community. The Long Term Financial Plan provides the mechanism to demonstrate how the service aspirations within the Council Plan may be funded.
- Services are accessible to the relevant users within the community.

- Council provides quality services that provide value for money to the community. The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework is designed to communicate council's performance regarding the provision of quality and efficient services.
- Council is developing a performance monitoring framework to continuously improve service delivery standards. This includes ensuring that Gender Impact Assessments are undertaken for all initiatives that have a direct and significant impact on the community.

### **1.5 Asset Plan integration**

Integration to the Asset Plan is a key principle of Council's strategic financial planning principles. The purpose of this integration is designed to ensure that future funding is allocated in a manner that supports service delivery in terms of the Plan and the effective management of Council's assets into the future.

The Asset Plan identifies the operational and strategic practices which will ensure that Council manages assets across their life cycle in a financially sustainable manner. The Asset Plan and associated asset management policies provide Council with a sound base to understand the risk associated with managing assets for the community's benefit.

The Asset Plan is designed to inform the Long Term Financial Plan by identifying the amount of capital renewal, backlog and maintenance funding that is required over the life of each asset category. The level of funding will incorporate knowledge of the asset's condition and the risk assessment issues as well as the impact of reviewing and setting intervention and service levels for each asset class.

Together, the Financial Plan and Asset Plan seek to balance projected investment requirements against projected budgets.

## 2. Financial plan context setting

This section describes the context and external/internal environment and consideration in determining the 10-year financial projections and assumptions.

The Long Term Financial Plan is based on several key assumptions and financial principles about what might happen in the future. While every care has been taken in assessing these, the information is sensitive to changes that are often outside the control of Council.

### 2.1 Financial policy statements

This section defines the policy statements, and associated measures, that demonstrates Council's financial sustainability to fund the aspirations of the Community Vision and the Council Plan.

Policy Statement	Measure	Target	Forecast										
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
Achieve positive adjusted underlying result over the medium to long term	Adjusted underlying result greater than 0%	> 0%	(3.5%)	(1.0%)	(0.2%)	1.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	2.6%	2.9%	2.8%	3.0%
Ensure Council maintains sufficient working capital to meet its debt obligations as they fall due.	Current Assets / Current Liabilities greater than 1.10	> 1.10	1.23	1.05	1.02	0.97	0.98	1.04	1.10	1.14	1.16	1.15	1.17
Allocate adequate funds towards renewal capital in order to replace assets and infrastructure as they reach the end of their service life.	Asset renewal and upgrade expenditure / Depreciation above 1	> 1	1.97	1.76	1.47	1.22	1.23	1.16	1.23	1.26	1.41	1.39	1.49
Council applies loan funding to new capital and maintains total borrowings in line with rate income and growth of the municipality.	Total borrowings / Rate revenue to remain below 65%	< 65%	20.9%	21.0%	16.6%	12.6%	8.7%	6.9%	5.4%	3.9%	2.5%	1.1%	0.1%
Council maintains sufficient unrestricted cash (per LGPRF definition) to ensure ongoing liquidity as well as to address unforeseen cash imposts if required.	Unrestricted cash / current liabilities to be maintained above 15% (LGPRF indicator)	> 15%	16.3%	11.7%	10.3%	8.0%	5.4%	11.3%	16.8%	21.0%	20.9%	20.7%	20.2%
Council generates revenue from a range of sources	Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue < 80%	< 80%	74.7%	78.0%	77.4%	76.9%	76.8%	76.9%	77.1%	77.2%	77.3%	77.4%	77.6%



## 2.2 Strategic financial objectives

Council has identified the following financial strategic objectives that will support the aspirations of the Council Plan.

Council's key strategic objectives include:

- Set rate increases being mindful of community affordability and in accordance with the Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) and Council's Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.
- Differential rates will be applied to ensure appropriate allocation of rates considering the use of land.
- Seek alternative revenue streams and external funding opportunities to diversify revenue streams.
- Continue to strongly advocate for a more equitable distribution of Commonwealth and State Government funding.
- Identify efficiency gains in the operating budget forecast to promote achievement of a financially sustainable operating surplus.
- Ensure service users make a reasonable contribution to the cost of services through appropriate fees and charges consistent with adopted principles within the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.
- Apply new debt funding to grow infrastructure where necessary based on a sound business case with clear demonstrated community benefit.
- Continue to deliver better value for our community through exploring opportunities for innovation, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Asset renewal risk will be managed over the forecast period through allocation of sufficient resources.

## 2.3 Assumptions to the financial plan statements

This section presents information regarding the assumptions to the Comprehensive Income Statement for the ten years 2025-26 to 2034-35. The assumptions comprise the annual escalations/movement for each line item of the Comprehensive Income Statement.

The annual escalations are based on information from various sources including Australian Bureau of Statistics , Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance and other economic updates across the sector.

Escalation Factors % movement	Note	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
CPI	2.3.1	2.75%	2.75%	2.75%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Rate cap increase	2.3.2	2.75%	2.75%	2.75%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Rates and charges	2.3.2	4.75%	3.60%	3.10%	3.06%	3.06%	3.06%	2.82%	2.82%	2.82%
Statutory fees and fines	2.3.3	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
User fees	2.3.4	43.02%	23.61%	5.83%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Grants - Operating	2.3.5	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Contributions - monetary	2.3.7	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Contributions - non-monetary	2.3.7	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other income	2.3.8	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Employee costs	2.3.9	2.75%	2.75%	2.75%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
Materials and services	2.3.10	7.38%	3.84%	2.91%	2.75%	2.75%	2.75%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Depreciation & Amortisation	2.3.11	3.46%	2.84%	2.98%	2.07%	2.59%	2.91%	2.70%	4.00%	2.64%
Other expenses	2.3.13	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%

### **2.3.1 Consumer price index (CPI)**

Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the first four years is consistent with the Victorian State Government's CPI outlook as the economic forecasts. A conservative approach has been adopted for the remainder of the forecast period.

### **2.3.2 Rates and charges**

Planning for future rate increases has been a key component of the Financial Plan development process. The State Government introduced the Fair Go Rates System on 1 July 2016, which sets out the maximum amount councils may increase rates in any one year.

More information on Council's rating principles can be found in the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.

Waste management charges are levied on a full cost recovery basis in compliance with the principles set out under the *Local Government Act 2020*. Projections reflect both increases in waste and recycling charges as well as increased contractor expenses.

Yarra Ranges Council does not apply a municipal charge.

### **2.3.3 Statutory fees and fines**

The Financial Plan indexes statutory fees, set by legislation, according to the estimated annual CPI.

### **2.3.4 User fees**

User fees mainly relate to the recovery of service delivery costs through the charging of fees to use Council's services.

Fees and charges will be reviewed annually for appropriateness as part of Council's budget process.

Revenue increases for the forecast years are based on annual increases in line with the State Government rate cap.

Details of user fees for the 2025-26 budget year can be found in Council's schedule of Fees and Charges that is adopted in conjunction with the annual budget.

### **2.3.5 Grants – operating**

Council currently receives grants for tied (specific purpose grants) and untied grant funding received via the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission.

Recurrent operating grants are expected to increase on an annual basis by approximately the estimated rate of CPI for future years.

### **2.3.6 Grants – capital**

Council has assumed that grant revenue will come from funding sources for identified specific projects currently included in Council's Capital Expenditure Program.

### **2.3.7 Contributions**

Council receives contributions from developers which represent funds to enable Council to provide the necessary infrastructure and infrastructure improvements to accommodate development growth in the municipality.

These contributions are statutory contributions and are transferred to a restricted reserve until utilised for a specific purpose through the capital works program or delivered as works in kind by developers.

User group contributions include monies received from community sources or other non-government bodies towards the delivery of Council's services to ratepayers (operating) and capital works program.

#### **2.3.8 Other income**

Revenue from other income mainly comprises investment income plus recovery income from a variety of sources and rental income received from the hire of Council buildings and facilities.

#### **2.3.9 Employee costs**

Employee costs constitute a combination of direct wages and salaries, including on-costs such as superannuation, WorkCover, leave entitlements, training and temporary staff arrangements.

Increases for employee costs mainly reflect the salary increases for all staff pursuant to Council's Enterprise Agreement.

The changes to the superannuation guarantee levy to move the rate from 1 July 2021 to 10 per cent and progressively increasing the rate to 12 per cent by 2025-26 have also been included.

#### **2.3.10 Materials and services**

Materials and services costs include items required for the maintenance and repairs of Council buildings, roads, drains and footpaths which are largely subject to market forces based on availability rather than CPI.

Other associated costs included under this category are utilities, materials for the supply of meals on wheels and consumable items for a range of services. Council also utilises external expertise on a range of matters, including legal services and audit.

#### **2.3.11 Depreciation and amortisation**

Depreciation estimates have been based on the projected capital spending contained within the Financial Plan. Depreciation has been further increased by the indexing of the replacement costs of Council's fixed assets.

#### **2.3.12 Borrowing costs**

Borrowing costs comprise the interest expense to service Council's loan portfolio that is described in Section 5.1 Borrowing Plan.

#### **2.3.13 Other expenses**

Other expenses include administration costs such as Councillor allowances, sponsorships, partnerships, community grants, lease expenditure, state levies and other costs associated with the day to day running of Council.

### 3. Financial plan statements

This section presents information regarding the Financial Plan statements for the 10 years from 2025-26 to 2034-35.

- Comprehensive Income Statement
- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Changes in Equity
- Statement of Cash Flows
- Statement of Capital Works
- Statement of Human Resource.



### 3.1 Comprehensive income statement

	Forecast 2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Income</b>											
Rates and charges	182,408	189,951	198,965	206,119	212,517	219,017	225,722	232,638	239,190	245,933	252,871
Statutory fees and fines	3,724	5,232	5,389	5,551	5,717	5,860	6,007	6,157	6,295	6,437	6,582
User fees	6,463	7,669	10,968	13,558	14,349	14,708	15,075	15,452	15,800	16,155	16,519
Grants - Operating	39,832	28,704	29,565	30,452	31,366	32,150	32,954	33,777	34,537	35,314	36,109
Grants - Capital	20,580	17,716	18,137	7,044	5,140	7,167	7,782	8,250	8,696	9,156	9,948
Contributions - monetary	3,104	2,377	2,448	2,522	2,597	2,662	2,729	2,797	2,860	2,924	2,990
Contributions - non-monetary	2,991	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(954)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other income	3,042	3,851	3,967	4,086	4,208	4,313	4,421	4,532	4,634	4,738	4,844
<b>Total income</b>	<b>261,190</b>	<b>258,000</b>	<b>271,939</b>	<b>271,831</b>	<b>278,394</b>	<b>288,378</b>	<b>297,190</b>	<b>306,103</b>	<b>314,512</b>	<b>323,158</b>	<b>332,363</b>
<b>Expenses</b>											
Employee costs	80,450	82,761	85,037	87,375	89,778	92,023	94,323	96,681	98,857	101,081	103,355
Materials and services	116,834	107,021	114,916	119,333	122,806	126,183	129,653	133,219	136,549	139,963	143,462
Depreciation	35,933	36,166	37,251	38,369	39,520	40,706	41,927	43,185	44,480	45,815	47,189
Amortisation - intangible assets	1,305	1,313	1,353	1,393	1,435	1,435	1,435	1,435	1,435	1,435	1,435
Amortisation - right of use assets	2,644	2,650	2,915	2,938	3,018	2,741	2,682	2,765	2,749	3,363	3,327
Bad and doubtful debts	66	64	66	68	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
Borrowing costs	824	1,922	1,724	1,411	1,084	809	669	526	377	219	63
Finance Costs - leases	874	846	776	715	584	467	406	349	212	1,058	1,119
Other expenses	9,797	10,032	10,333	10,643	10,962	11,236	11,518	11,806	12,072	12,344	12,622
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>248,727</b>	<b>242,775</b>	<b>254,371</b>	<b>262,246</b>	<b>269,257</b>	<b>275,670</b>	<b>282,683</b>	<b>290,036</b>	<b>296,800</b>	<b>305,347</b>	<b>312,641</b>
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for the year</b>	<b>12,463</b>	<b>15,225</b>	<b>17,568</b>	<b>9,585</b>	<b>9,137</b>	<b>12,708</b>	<b>14,507</b>	<b>16,067</b>	<b>17,712</b>	<b>17,811</b>	<b>19,722</b>
<b>Total comprehensive result</b>	<b>12,463</b>	<b>15,225</b>	<b>17,568</b>	<b>9,585</b>	<b>9,137</b>	<b>12,708</b>	<b>14,507</b>	<b>16,067</b>	<b>17,712</b>	<b>17,811</b>	<b>19,722</b>

### 3.2 Balance sheet

	Forecast 2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Assets</b>											
<b>Current assets</b>											
Cash and cash equivalents	29,434	27,610	28,198	27,805	26,832	32,942	38,902	44,013	45,038	46,317	46,489
Trade and other receivables	40,457	40,023	40,822	40,368	40,426	41,117	42,365	43,530	44,884	46,116	47,430
Prepayments	2,018	2,079	2,141	2,205	2,271	2,339	2,410	2,482	2,556	2,633	2,712
Contract assets	10,754	9,141	9,187	9,233	9,279	9,325	9,372	9,419	9,466	9,513	9,561
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>82,663</b>	<b>78,852</b>	<b>80,347</b>	<b>79,610</b>	<b>78,807</b>	<b>85,724</b>	<b>93,048</b>	<b>99,443</b>	<b>101,944</b>	<b>104,580</b>	<b>106,192</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>											
Trade and other receivables	5,003	4,628	4,281	3,960	3,663	3,388	3,134	2,899	2,681	2,480	2,294
Investments in associates, joint arrangements and subsidiaries	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924
Property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	1,649,956	1,674,088	1,687,899	1,694,459	1,700,273	1,704,728	1,710,865	1,719,249	1,732,999	1,747,325	1,765,443
Right-of-use assets	15,911	15,897	13,176	11,959	8,941	6,949	7,024	5,054	2,571	22,844	19,799
Intangible assets	4,320	3,507	2,654	1,761	826	826	826	826	826	826	826
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>1,678,114</b>	<b>1,701,044</b>	<b>1,710,934</b>	<b>1,715,063</b>	<b>1,716,627</b>	<b>1,718,815</b>	<b>1,724,773</b>	<b>1,730,952</b>	<b>1,742,001</b>	<b>1,776,400</b>	<b>1,791,287</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>1,760,777</b>	<b>1,779,896</b>	<b>1,791,281</b>	<b>1,794,673</b>	<b>1,795,434</b>	<b>1,804,540</b>	<b>1,817,821</b>	<b>1,830,395</b>	<b>1,843,945</b>	<b>1,880,979</b>	<b>1,897,479</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>											
<b>Current liabilities</b>											
Trade and other payables	22,388	23,795	25,544	26,729	27,942	29,069	29,848	30,563	31,390	32,152	32,932
Trust funds and deposits	3,369	3,470	3,574	3,681	3,792	3,906	4,023	4,143	4,268	4,396	4,528
Contract and other liabilities	22,623	23,980	25,059	25,811	26,586	27,383	28,205	29,051	29,922	30,820	31,745
Provisions	14,352	14,640	15,054	15,480	15,917	16,366	16,826	17,297	17,780	18,277	18,486
Interest-bearing liabilities	2,350	6,663	6,976	7,303	3,502	2,826	2,969	3,119	3,276	2,400	252
Lease liabilities	1,921	2,499	2,332	2,704	2,451	2,586	2,681	3,094	1,287	2,959	2,465
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>67,003</b>	<b>75,048</b>	<b>78,540</b>	<b>81,709</b>	<b>80,189</b>	<b>82,137</b>	<b>84,551</b>	<b>87,267</b>	<b>87,924</b>	<b>91,004</b>	<b>90,408</b>

	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>											
Provisions	8,346	7,805	7,271	6,744	6,226	5,715	5,212	4,717	4,229	3,746	3,566
Interest-bearing liabilities	35,148	32,624	25,648	18,344	14,843	12,016	9,047	5,928	2,652	252	-
Lease liabilities	15,235	14,149	11,984	10,452	7,616	5,403	5,235	2,640	1,585	20,611	18,416
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>58,729</b>	<b>54,578</b>	<b>44,903</b>	<b>35,541</b>	<b>28,685</b>	<b>23,134</b>	<b>19,494</b>	<b>13,285</b>	<b>8,467</b>	<b>24,609</b>	<b>21,982</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>125,732</b>	<b>129,626</b>	<b>123,443</b>	<b>117,250</b>	<b>108,873</b>	<b>105,271</b>	<b>104,045</b>	<b>100,552</b>	<b>96,390</b>	<b>115,613</b>	<b>112,390</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>1,635,045</b>	<b>1,650,270</b>	<b>1,667,838</b>	<b>1,677,424</b>	<b>1,686,561</b>	<b>1,699,268</b>	<b>1,713,776</b>	<b>1,729,843</b>	<b>1,747,555</b>	<b>1,765,366</b>	<b>1,785,088</b>
<b>Equity</b>											
Accumulated surplus	656,804	671,840	688,251	696,716	704,776	716,459	730,004	745,183	762,093	779,202	798,337
Reserves	978,241	978,430	979,587	980,708	981,785	982,810	983,772	984,660	985,462	986,164	986,751
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>1,635,045</b>	<b>1,650,270</b>	<b>1,667,838</b>	<b>1,677,424</b>	<b>1,686,561</b>	<b>1,699,268</b>	<b>1,713,776</b>	<b>1,729,843</b>	<b>1,747,555</b>	<b>1,765,366</b>	<b>1,785,088</b>

### 3.3 Statement of changes in equity

	Total \$'000	Accumulated Surplus \$'000	Revaluation Reserve \$'000	Other Reserves \$'000
<b>2025 Forecast Actual</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,622,582	645,628	963,087	13,867
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	12,463	12,463	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(1,287)	-	1,287
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,635,045</b>	<b>656,804</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>15,154</b>
<b>2026 Budget</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,635,045	656,804	963,087	15,154
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	15,225	15,225	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(189)	-	189
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,650,270</b>	<b>671,840</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>15,343</b>
<b>2027</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,650,270	671,840	963,087	15,343
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	17,568	17,568	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(1,157)	-	1,157
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,667,838</b>	<b>688,251</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>16,500</b>
<b>2028</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,667,838	688,251	963,087	16,500
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	9,585	9,585	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(1,121)	-	1,121
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,677,424</b>	<b>696,716</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>17,621</b>
<b>2029</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,677,424	696,716	963,087	17,621
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	9,137	9,137	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(1,077)	-	1,077
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,686,561</b>	<b>704,776</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>18,698</b>
<b>2030</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,686,561	704,776	963,087	18,698
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	12,708	12,708	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(1,025)	-	1,025
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,699,268</b>	<b>716,459</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>19,723</b>
<b>2031</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,699,268	716,459	963,087	19,723
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	14,507	14,507	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(962)	-	962
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,713,776</b>	<b>730,004</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>20,685</b>

	Total \$'000	Accumulated Surplus \$'000	Revaluation Reserve \$'000	Other Reserves \$'000
<b>2032</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,713,776	730,004	963,087	20,685
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	16,067	16,067	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(888)	-	888
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,729,843</b>	<b>745,183</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>21,573</b>
<b>2033</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,729,843	745,183	963,087	21,573
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	17,712	17,712	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(802)	-	802
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,747,555</b>	<b>762,093</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>22,375</b>
<b>2034</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,747,555	762,093	963,087	22,375
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	17,811	17,811	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(702)	-	702
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,765,366</b>	<b>779,202</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>23,077</b>
<b>2035</b>				
Balance at beginning of the financial year	1,765,366	779,202	963,087	23,077
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	19,722	19,722	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	-	-	-	-
Transfers to/(from) other reserves	-	(587)	-	587
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,785,088</b>	<b>798,337</b>	<b>963,087</b>	<b>23,664</b>



### 3.4 Statement of cash flows

	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows
	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>											
Rates and charges	191,101	192,853	200,202	207,650	214,082	220,152	226,268	233,280	239,710	246,554	253,492
Statutory fees and fines	4,266	5,827	5,947	6,118	6,299	6,459	6,620	6,786	6,937	7,094	7,253
User fees	6,705	8,541	11,906	14,799	15,785	16,211	16,615	17,031	17,410	17,804	18,203
Grants - operating	35,630	29,060	29,661	30,516	31,418	32,214	33,016	33,844	34,597	35,380	36,174
Grants - capital	5,840	17,936	18,202	7,741	5,272	7,069	7,771	8,250	8,696	9,157	9,931
Contributions - monetary	3,104	2,377	2,448	2,522	2,597	2,662	2,729	2,797	2,860	2,924	2,990
Interest received	1,192	501	516	532	547	561	575	590	603	616	630
Trust funds and deposits	(5,220)	101	104	107	110	114	117	121	124	128	132
Other receipts	1,796	3,136	3,178	3,267	3,362	3,448	3,534	3,623	3,703	3,787	3,872
Net GST refund / payment	17,425	16,718	15,521	15,087	15,333	15,619	16,193	16,856	17,795	18,331	19,133
Employee costs	(81,935)	(81,930)	(84,408)	(86,749)	(89,095)	(91,360)	(93,644)	(96,007)	(98,143)	(100,373)	(102,632)
Materials and services	(125,794)	(116,803)	(124,907)	(130,315)	(134,159)	(137,921)	(142,094)	(146,061)	(149,646)	(153,448)	(157,284)
Other payments	(13,478)	(11,688)	(11,926)	(12,262)	(12,601)	(12,902)	(13,204)	(13,517)	(13,799)	(14,094)	(14,396)
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities</b>	<b>40,632</b>	<b>66,627</b>	<b>66,445</b>	<b>59,012</b>	<b>58,954</b>	<b>62,327</b>	<b>64,495</b>	<b>67,593</b>	<b>70,848</b>	<b>73,860</b>	<b>77,498</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>											
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(70,610)	(64,328)	(55,268)	(47,422)	(48,967)	(48,612)	(52,904)	(55,661)	(64,088)	(65,090)	(71,873)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	1,483	-	1,100	-	1,100	-	1,100	-	1,100	-	1,100
Proceeds from sale of investments	7,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>(61,627)</b>	<b>(64,328)</b>	<b>(54,168)</b>	<b>(47,422)</b>	<b>(47,867)</b>	<b>(48,612)</b>	<b>(51,804)</b>	<b>(55,661)</b>	<b>(62,988)</b>	<b>(65,090)</b>	<b>(70,773)</b>

	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows
	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>											
Finance costs	(400)	(1,922)	(1,724)	(1,411)	(1,084)	(809)	(669)	(526)	(377)	(219)	(63)
Proceeds from borrowings	39,348	8,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Repayment of borrowings	(2,490)	(6,211)	(6,663)	(6,976)	(7,303)	(3,502)	(2,826)	(2,969)	(3,119)	(3,276)	(2,400)
Interest paid - lease liability	(874)	(846)	(776)	(715)	(584)	(467)	(406)	(349)	(212)	(1,058)	(1,119)
Repayment of lease liabilities	(2,397)	(3,144)	(2,526)	(2,881)	(3,089)	(2,827)	(2,830)	(2,977)	(3,128)	(2,938)	(2,971)
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities</b>	<b>33,187</b>	<b>(4,123)</b>	<b>(11,689)</b>	<b>(11,983)</b>	<b>(12,060)</b>	<b>(7,605)</b>	<b>(6,731)</b>	<b>(6,821)</b>	<b>(6,835)</b>	<b>(7,491)</b>	<b>(6,553)</b>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash &amp; cash equivalents</b>	<b>12,192</b>	<b>(1,824)</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>(393)</b>	<b>(974)</b>	<b>6,111</b>	<b>5,960</b>	<b>5,111</b>	<b>1,025</b>	<b>1,279</b>	<b>172</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	17,242	29,434	27,610	28,198	27,805	26,832	32,942	38,902	44,013	45,038	46,317
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year</b>	<b>29,434</b>	<b>27,610</b>	<b>28,198</b>	<b>27,805</b>	<b>26,832</b>	<b>32,942</b>	<b>38,902</b>	<b>44,013</b>	<b>45,038</b>	<b>46,317</b>	<b>46,489</b>

### 3.5 Statement of capital works

	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Property</b>											
Land	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total land</b>	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buildings	5,871	8,833	13,114	8,396	7,445	5,266	5,571	5,865	6,160	6,285	6,413
Building improvements	8,381	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total buildings</b>	14,252	8,833	13,114	8,396	7,445	5,266	5,571	5,865	6,160	6,285	6,413
<b>Total property</b>	14,262	8,833	13,114	8,396	7,445	5,266	5,571	5,865	6,160	6,285	6,413
<b>Plant and equipment</b>											
Plant, machinery and equipment	2,220	2,600	2,500	3,100	3,400	3,468	3,537	3,608	3,680	3,754	3,829
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Computers and telecommunications	3,046	700	300	300	300	250	250	250	250	250	250
<b>Total plant and equipment</b>	5,283	3,300	2,800	3,400	3,700	3,718	3,787	3,858	3,930	4,004	4,079
<b>Infrastructure</b>											
Roads	18,552	17,857	12,760	12,042	13,449	9,345	9,495	9,643	9,838	10,128	10,238
Bridges	824	262	262	300	300	400	420	440	460	480	450
Footpaths and cycleways	1,994	2,647	2,235	3,383	3,075	3,158	2,912	2,966	3,033	3,126	3,210
Drainage	3,915	3,920	2,665	2,593	3,091	1,784	750	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	3,668	1,582	672	655	668	689	709	724	739	764	780
Parks, open space and streetscapes	14,903	14,326	7,771	3,549	3,973	4,524	4,714	4,904	5,118	5,404	6,075
Off street car parks	378	-	400	400	400	500	500	750	750	750	750
Other infrastructure	5,453	5,571	7,383	8,211	8,233	14,711	19,130	20,354	27,138	27,135	32,448
<b>Total infrastructure</b>	49,687	46,165	34,148	31,133	33,189	35,112	38,630	40,781	48,076	48,787	54,950
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	69,232	58,298	50,062	42,929	44,334	44,096	47,988	50,504	58,166	59,076	65,442
<b>Represented by:</b>											
New asset expenditure	22,773	17,010	12,409	10,629	9,713	8,584	9,731	11,745	13,798	13,888	17,003
Asset renewal expenditure	29,577	26,044	25,490	22,813	24,354	27,589	29,274	27,918	31,633	32,370	32,746
Asset expansion expenditure	1,177	5,115	3,664	2,457	3,109	2,641	2,994	3,614	4,245	4,273	5,231
Asset upgrade expenditure	15,705	10,129	8,499	7,030	7,158	5,282	5,988	7,227	8,490	8,546	10,463

	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	69,232	58,298	50,062	42,929	44,334	44,096	47,988	50,504	58,166	59,076	65,442
<b>Funding sources represented by:</b>											
Grants	20,580	17,716	18,137	7,044	5,140	7,167	7,782	8,250	8,696	9,156	9,948
Contributions	500	1,723	1,000	1,100	1,210	1,331	1,464	1,611	1,772	1,949	2,144
Council cash	8,804	30,859	30,925	34,785	37,984	38,298	38,742	40,643	47,698	47,971	53,350
Borrowings	39,348	8,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	69,232	58,298	50,062	42,929	44,334	44,096	47,988	50,504	58,166	59,076	65,442

### 3.6 Statement of human resources

Staff expenditure	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Staff expenditure</b>											
Employee costs - operating	80,450	82,761	85,037	87,375	89,778	92,023	94,323	96,681	98,857	101,081	103,355
Employee costs - capital	6,231	6,468	6,658	6,853	7,054	7,231	7,411	7,597	7,768	7,942	8,121
<b>Total staff expenditure</b>	<b>86,681</b>	<b>89,229</b>	<b>91,694</b>	<b>94,228</b>	<b>96,832</b>	<b>99,253</b>	<b>101,735</b>	<b>104,278</b>	<b>106,624</b>	<b>109,023</b>	<b>111,476</b>

Staff numbers	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
<b>Staff numbers</b>											
Employees	743	754	750	746	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
<b>Total staff numbers</b>	<b>743</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>



A summary of human resources expenditure categorised according to the organisational structure of Council is included below:

Department	Budget	Comprises			
		Permanent		Casual	Temporary
	2025/26	Full Time	Part Time		
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Built Environment and Infrastructure	18,914	16,563	468	91	1,793
Communities	23,605	14,612	5,751	444	2,798
Corporate Services	20,214	14,700	2,271	-	3,243
Planning and Sustainable Futures	16,500	14,211	1,247	-	1,042
Office of the CEO	1,912	1,680	110	-	122
Natural Disaster Recovery & Response	706	390	-	-	316
Total permanent staff expenditure	81,851	62,156	9,847	534	9,314
Other employee related expenditure	910				
Capitalised labour costs	6,468				
<b>Total staff expenditure</b>	<b>89,229</b>	<b>62,156</b>	<b>9,847</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>9,314</b>

A summary of the number of full time equivalent (FTE) Council staff in relation to the above expenditure is included below:

Department	Total	Comprises			
		Permanent		Casual	Temporary
		Full Time	Part Time		
Built Environment and Infrastructure	222	189	5	1	27
Communities	208	122	58	4	24
Corporate Services	168	118	23	-	27
Planning and Sustainable Futures	138	118	11	-	9
Office of the CEO	12	10	1	-	1
Natural Disaster Recovery & Response	6	3	-	-	3
<b>Total staff</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>91</b>

### 3.7 Planned human resource expenditure

	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000	2030/31 \$'000	2031/32 \$'000	2032/33 \$'000	2033/34 \$'000	2034/35 \$'000
<b>Built Environment and Infrastructure</b>										
Permanent - Full time	16,563	17,019	17,487	17,968	18,417	18,878	19,350	19,785	20,230	20,685
Women	5,372	5,884	6,420	6,982	7,157	7,335	7,519	7,688	7,861	8,038
Men	11,191	11,135	11,067	10,986	11,261	11,542	11,831	12,097	12,369	12,647
Permanent - Part time	468	480	494	508	521	534	547	559	572	585
Women	252	259	267	274	281	288	295	302	308	315
Men	176	180	185	190	195	200	205	209	214	219
Persons of self-described gender	40	41	42	44	45	46	47	48	50	51
<b>Total Built Environment and Infrastructure</b>	<b>17,031</b>	<b>17,499</b>	<b>17,981</b>	<b>18,476</b>	<b>18,938</b>	<b>19,411</b>	<b>19,897</b>	<b>20,344</b>	<b>20,802</b>	<b>21,270</b>
<b>Communities</b>										
Permanent - Full time	14,612	15,013	15,426	15,851	16,247	16,653	17,070	17,454	17,847	18,248
Women	11,676	11,997	12,327	12,666	12,983	13,307	13,640	13,947	14,261	14,581
Men	2,699	2,773	2,849	2,928	3,001	3,076	3,153	3,224	3,297	3,371
Persons of self-described gender	237	243	250	257	263	270	277	283	289	296
Permanent - Part time	5,751	5,909	6,071	6,238	6,394	6,554	6,718	6,869	7,023	7,181
Women	5,023	5,161	5,303	5,449	5,585	5,725	5,868	6,000	6,135	6,273
Men	728	748	768	789	809	829	850	869	888	908
<b>Total Communities</b>	<b>20,363</b>	<b>20,922</b>	<b>21,497</b>	<b>22,089</b>	<b>22,641</b>	<b>23,207</b>	<b>23,787</b>	<b>24,323</b>	<b>24,870</b>	<b>25,429</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>										
Permanent - Full time	14,700	15,105	15,521	15,947	16,346	16,754	17,173	17,560	17,955	18,359
Women	9,898	10,170	10,450	10,737	11,005	11,281	11,563	11,823	12,089	12,361
Men	4,666	4,795	4,927	5,062	5,189	5,318	5,451	5,574	5,699	5,828
Persons of self-described gender	136	140	144	148	152	155	159	163	167	170
Permanent - Part time	2,271	2,334	2,398	2,464	2,526	2,589	2,653	2,713	2,774	2,837
Women	2,065	2,122	2,180	2,240	2,296	2,353	2,412	2,467	2,522	2,579
Men	206	212	218	224	230	235	241	247	252	258
<b>Total Corporate Services</b>	<b>16,971</b>	<b>17,439</b>	<b>17,919</b>	<b>18,411</b>	<b>18,871</b>	<b>19,343</b>	<b>19,827</b>	<b>20,273</b>	<b>20,729</b>	<b>21,195</b>

**Planning and Sustainable Futures**

Permanent - Full time	14,211	14,602	15,004	15,416	15,801	16,196	16,601	16,975	17,357	17,747
Women	8,571	8,806	9,049	9,297	9,529	9,768	10,012	10,237	10,467	10,703
Men	5,640	5,796	5,955	6,119	6,272	6,429	6,589	6,738	6,889	7,044
Permanent - Part time	1,247	1,282	1,317	1,353	1,387	1,421	1,457	1,490	1,523	1,558
Women	1,051	1,080	1,110	1,140	1,169	1,198	1,228	1,255	1,284	1,312
Men	196	202	207	213	218	224	229	235	240	245
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Planning and Sustainable Futures</b>	<b>15,458</b>	<b>15,884</b>	<b>16,321</b>	<b>16,769</b>	<b>17,188</b>	<b>17,618</b>	<b>18,058</b>	<b>18,465</b>	<b>18,880</b>	<b>19,305</b>

**Office of the CEO**

Permanent - Full time	1,680	1,726	1,774	1,822	1,868	1,914	1,962	2,006	2,051	2,098
Women	1,412	1,451	1,491	1,532	1,570	1,610	1,650	1,687	1,725	1,764
Men	268	275	283	290	297	305	312	319	327	334
Permanent - Part time	110	113	116	120	123	126	129	132	135	138
Women	110	113	116	120	123	126	129	132	135	138
<b>Total Office of the CEO</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>1,839</b>	<b>1,890</b>	<b>1,942</b>	<b>1,991</b>	<b>2,040</b>	<b>2,091</b>	<b>2,138</b>	<b>2,186</b>	<b>2,236</b>

**Natural Disaster Recovery & Response**

Permanent - Full time	390	401	413	424	435	445	457	467	477	488
Women	60	62	64	66	68	69	71	73	74	76
Men	330	339	349	358	367	376	386	394	403	412
<b>Total Natural Disaster Recovery &amp; Response</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>488</b>
<b>Casuals, temporary and other expenditure</b>	<b>10,994</b>	<b>11,243</b>	<b>11,550</b>	<b>11,868</b>	<b>12,135</b>	<b>12,439</b>	<b>12,750</b>	<b>13,018</b>	<b>13,311</b>	<b>13,610</b>
<b>Capitalised labour costs</b>	<b>6,231</b>	<b>6,468</b>	<b>6,658</b>	<b>6,853</b>	<b>7,054</b>	<b>7,231</b>	<b>7,411</b>	<b>7,597</b>	<b>7,768</b>	<b>7,942</b>
<b>Total staff expenditure</b>	<b>89,229</b>	<b>91,694</b>	<b>94,228</b>	<b>96,832</b>	<b>99,253</b>	<b>101,735</b>	<b>104,278</b>	<b>106,624</b>	<b>109,023</b>	<b>111,476</b>

	2025/26 FTE	2026/27 FTE	2027/28 FTE	2028/29 FTE	2029/30 FTE	2030/31 FTE	2031/32 FTE	2032/33 FTE	2033/34 FTE	2034/35 FTE
<b>Built Environment and Infrastructure</b>										
Permanent - Full time	166	164	164	163	163	163	163	163	163	163
Women	53	55	58	61	61	61	61	61	61	61
Men	113	109	106	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
Permanent - Part time	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Women	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Men	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Persons of self-described gender	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total Built Environment and Infrastructure</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Communities</b>										
Permanent - Full time	121	120	120	119	119	119	119	119	119	119
Women	97	96	96	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
Men	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
Persons of self-described gender	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Permanent - Part time	58	58	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57
Women	49	49	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
Men	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
<b>Total Communities</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>										
Permanent - Full time	117	117	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Women	84	84	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83
Men	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Persons of self-described gender	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Permanent - Part time	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Women	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Men	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total Corporate Services</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>139</b>

**Planning and Sustainable Futures**

Permanent - Full time	114	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
Women	71	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
Men	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43
Permanent - Part time	12	11	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Women	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Men	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total Planning and Sustainable Futures</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>123</b>

**Office of the CEO**

Permanent - Full time	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Women	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Men	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Permanent - Part time	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Women	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total Office of the CEO</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**Natural Disaster Recovery & Response**

Permanent - Full time	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Women	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Men	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total Natural Disaster Recovery &amp; Response</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Casuals and temporary staff</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Capitalised labour</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Total staff numbers</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>742</b>

Council is committed to closing the gender pay gap. Between 2021 and 2023, the mean pay gap decreased from 4.1% to 3.2%. The Gender Equality Action Plan 2026–2030 will drive further progress by identifying inequities and implementing targeted solutions. Gender pay equity is essential for workforce retention, financial stability, and Long Term organisational success. This includes policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible working hours and parental leave, helping women remain in the workforce.



## 4. Financial performance indicators

The following table highlights Council's projected performance across a range of key financial performance indicators. These indicators provide an analysis of Council's 10-year financial projections and should be interpreted in the context of the organisation's objectives and financial management principles.

Indicator	Measure	Notes	Forecast										
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
<b>Operating position</b>													
Adjusted underlying result	Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / Adjusted underlying revenue	1	-3.5%	-1.0%	-0.2%	1.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	2.6%	2.9%	2.8%	3.0%
<b>Liquidity</b>													
Working Capital	Current assets / current liabilities	2	123.4%	105.1%	102.3%	97.4%	98.3%	104.4%	110.0%	114.0%	115.9%	114.9%	117.5%
Unrestricted cash	Unrestricted cash / current liabilities	3	16.3%	11.7%	10.3%	8.0%	5.4%	11.3%	16.8%	21.0%	20.9%	20.7%	20.2%
<b>Obligations</b>													
Loans and borrowings	Interest bearing loans and borrowings / rate revenue	4	20.9%	21.0%	16.6%	12.6%	8.7%	6.9%	5.4%	3.9%	2.5%	1.1%	0.1%
Loans and borrowings	Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / rate revenue		1.6%	4.3%	4.3%	4.1%	4.0%	2.0%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.0%
Indebtedness	Non-current liabilities / own source revenue		29.3%	25.8%	20.0%	15.2%	11.9%	9.3%	7.6%	5.0%	3.1%	8.8%	7.7%
Asset renewal	Asset renewal and upgrade expense / Asset depreciation	5	126.0%	106.1%	97.6%	84.6%	86.9%	80.8%	84.1%	81.4%	90.2%	89.3%	91.6%
<b>Stability</b>													
Rates concentration	Rate revenue / adjusted underlying revenue	6	74.7%	78.0%	77.4%	76.9%	76.8%	76.9%	77.1%	77.2%	77.3%	77.4%	77.6%
Rates effort	Rate revenue / CIV of rateable properties in the municipality		0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
<b>Efficiency</b>													
Expenditure level	Total expenses/ no. of property assessments		\$3,669	\$3,513	\$3,610	\$3,650	\$3,675	\$3,690	\$3,711	\$3,734	\$3,747	\$3,780	\$3,796
Revenue level	Total rate revenue / no. of property assessments		\$2,786	\$2,859	\$2,979	\$3,057	\$3,096	\$3,128	\$3,161	\$3,194	\$3,219	\$3,245	\$3,271

## Notes to indicators

### 1. Adjusted underlying result

An indicator of the sustainable operating result required to enable Council to continue to provide core services and meet its objectives. A key goal of the Long Term Financial Plan is to return an adjusted underlying surplus. The adjusted underlying result is expected to improve from its current deficit position and steadily move back into an underlying surplus in the medium-term future.

### 2. Working capital

The proportion of current liabilities represented by current assets. This measures the ability to pay existing liabilities in the next 12 months. A percentage greater than 100 per cent means there are more short-term assets than short term liabilities. Council needs to ensure working capital is maintained such that sufficient cash reserves are available to meet normal cash flow requirements.

Council will continue to invest in its capital works program by utilising cash reserves and borrowings prudently.

### 3. Unrestricted cash

Unrestricted cash relates to funds that are readily available and is not tied to any particular purpose and is primarily used for meeting liquidity needs and to fund unanticipated items. This ratio will continue to be monitored with the underlying approach to improve the position which will continue to be a challenge.

### 4. Loans and borrowings

Council's current plan includes borrowings for capital expenditure. Council's indebtedness ratio will increase over the forecast period, with the trend indicating Council's reliance on debt against its annual rate revenue. This will be refined each year as borrowings requirements become clearer and are utilised to deliver infrastructure to the community.

### 5. Asset renewal

This percentage indicates the extent of Council's investment in renewal and upgrade capital works against its depreciation (an indication of the decline in value of its existing assets). A percentage greater than 100 indicates Council is maintaining its existing assets, while a percentage less than 100 means its assets are deteriorating faster than they are being renewed or upgraded, with considerable future capital investment required to retain these assets in working condition.

Yarra Ranges has previously identified its intention to work towards closing the asset renewal gap, mitigating risk where appropriate. Council will continue to balance the risk and need for new, renewal and upgrade works, and ensure renewal projects are prioritised to ensure funds are directed where needed the most.

### 6. Rates concentration

This ratio reflects the reliance on rate revenue to fund all of Council's ongoing services. The trend indicates Council will continue to be heavily reliant on rate revenue compared to all other revenue sources.

## **7. Cash and Borrowing Strategy**

Council will continue to review its debt position and drawdown additional borrowings as required based on Council's capital works program needs. Council will also continue to monitor the levels of cash held and look to replenish cash when possible, to ensure liquidity and overall financial sustainability is maintained

## **5. Strategies and plans**

This section describes the strategies and plans that support the ten -year financial projections included with the Long Term Financial Plan.

### **5.1 Borrowing strategy**

Borrowings will be considered as an option to fund the acquisition of assets and capital projects where a detailed business case analysis factoring in actual and opportunity costs indicates that borrowing is the most economical funding method and that recurrent operating and maintenance costs can be met in the operating budget.

Borrowings will not be utilised as an option to fund ongoing operational expenditure.

#### **5.1.1 Current debt position**

Council currently has a low level of indebtedness; however, this is expected to change due to Council continuing to deliver on its capital works program despite the restrictions on the growth of rate revenue due to the rate cap.

Council will review the debt position on an ongoing basis and drawdown additional borrowings as required based on Council's cash position and capital works program needs.

Borrowings can be accommodated within the financial model without compromising the overall financial sustainability of the organisation. At forecast levels, Council's borrowing profile remains low-to-medium risk over the ten-year period.

### 5.1.2 Future borrowing requirements

The following table highlights Council's projected loan balance, including new loans and loan repayments for the 10 years of the Financial Plan.

	Forecast										
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Opening balance</b>	640	37,498	39,287	32,624	25,648	18,344	14,843	12,016	9,047	5,928	2,652
Plus New loans	39,348	8,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Less Principal repayment	(2,490)	(6,211)	(6,663)	(6,976)	(7,303)	(3,502)	(2,826)	(2,969)	(3,119)	(3,276)	(2,400)
<b>Closing balance</b>	37,498	39,287	32,624	25,648	18,344	14,843	12,016	9,047	5,928	2,652	252
Interest payment	824	1,922	1,724	1,411	1,084	809	669	526	377	219	63

### 5.1.3 Performance indicators

The following table highlights Council's projected performance across a range of debt management performance indicators.

Performance Indicator	Target	Forecast										
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total borrowings / Rate revenue	Below 65%	19.9%	19.9%	15.5%	11.7%	8.1%	6.4%	5.0%	3.6%	2.3%	1.0%	0.1%
Debt servicing / Rate revenue	Below 5%	0.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Debt commitment / Rate revenue	Below 10%	1.5%	4.1%	4.0%	3.8%	3.7%	1.8%	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	0.9%
Indebtedness / Own source revenue	Below 60%	18.7%	18.6%	14.5%	10.9%	7.6%	6.0%	4.7%	3.4%	2.2%	1.0%	0.1%

## 5.2 Reserves strategy

Council maintains a mix of statutory, cash backed reserves and specific purpose discretionary reserves.

### 5.2.1 Current reserves

#### Public Open Space Reserve

The Public Open Space Reserve holds funds contributed by developers for works associated with developing and improved public open space and recreational facilities within Council. Funds are contributed in according with Section 18 of the *Subdivision Act* and transfers are restricted to the purpose of creating open space such as parks, playgrounds, and other such items where it is deemed that these works should occur at a later point than the initial development.

Transfers to the reserve (inflows) compromise contribution income from subdividers in lieu of the Public Open Space requirement. Transfers from the reserve (outflows) are applied to Open Space capital projects on an annual basis.

#### Emergency & Disaster Response Reserve

The Emergency & Disaster Response Reserve was established following natural disaster events that occurred in the current and prior years. This reserve sets aside funding to support and fund future recovery related activities.

#### Biodiversity Offset Program Reserve

The Biodiversity Offset Program Reserve has been established to compensate for losses as a result of the removal of native vegetation. The program has been established to manage and protect native vegetation to counteract native vegetation removal.



## 5.2.2 Reserve usage projections

The table below discloses the balance and annual movement for each reserve over the 10-year life of the Financial Plan.

Reserves	2024/25 \$000's	2025/26 \$000's	2026/27 \$000's	2027/28 \$000's	2028/29 \$000's	2029/30 \$000's	2030/31 \$000's	2031/32 \$000's	2032/33 \$000's	2033/34 \$000's	2034/35 \$000's
<b>Public Open Space Reserve</b>											
Opening balance	11,665	13,300	13,639	14,796	15,917	16,994	18,019	18,981	19,869	20,671	21,373
Transfer to reserve	2,135	2,062	2,157	2,221	2,287	2,356	2,426	2,499	2,574	2,651	2,731
Transfer from reserve	(500)	(1,723)	(1,000)	(1,100)	(1,210)	(1,331)	(1,464)	(1,611)	(1,772)	(1,949)	(2,144)
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>13,300</b>	<b>13,639</b>	<b>14,796</b>	<b>15,917</b>	<b>16,994</b>	<b>18,019</b>	<b>18,981</b>	<b>19,869</b>	<b>20,671</b>	<b>21,373</b>	<b>21,960</b>
<b>Emergency and Disaster Response Reserve</b>											
Opening balance	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
Transfer to reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,100</b>
<b>Digital Transformation Reserve</b>											
Opening balance	300	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer to reserve	(150)	(150)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Waste Reserve</b>											
Opening balance	198	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer to reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserve	(198)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Biodiversity Offset Program</b>											
Opening balance	604	604	604	604	604	604	604	604	604	604	604
Transfer to reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>604</b>

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## AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE BIENNIAL REPORT

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Report Author: Coordinator Risk & Infringements for Stephen Schinck, Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

The Audit and Risk Management Committee (the Committee) has been established by Council under Section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act). It is the responsibility of the Committee to provide Council with independent, objective advice and assurance on the adequacy of Council arrangements as set out in the Committee Charter (the Charter).

The Act requires that the Committee prepare a biennial report for Council that describes its activities and includes findings and recommendations.

This report is the biennial report of the Committee for the six-month period ending 30 June 2025.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That Council note the Yarra Ranges Audit and Risk Management Committee Biennial Report for the six-month period ending 30 June 2025.***

### RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

The Committee previously provided a biennial report for the six months to 31 December 2024, to the Council Meeting on 11 February 2025.

## DISCUSSION

The Committee's Biannual Report provides Council with information of the progress of the Committee's Annual Work Plan, which outlines the activities it monitors and reviews to ensure it complies with its requirements under the Committee Charter.

Pursuant to section 54(2) of the Act, the Committee assists Council and management by providing advice and guidance on the adequacy of:

- Compliance management.
- Governance structure.
- Risk management and fraud prevention.
- Internal control framework.
- Oversight of the internal audit activity, external auditors, and other providers of assurance.
- Financial statements, performance, and public accountability reporting.

The Charter requires that the Committee has up to five members, including both Councillors (two members) and external independent representatives (three members), with the majority being independent members.

## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MEETINGS

In line with the Charter, membership of the Committee during the reporting period has been as follows:

- Mr Stephen Schinck - Independent Member and Chair
- Ms Katie Baldwin - Independent Member.
- Mr David Ashmore - Independent Member.
- Cr Fiona McAllister - Councillor Member.
- Cr Jim Child - Councillor Member.

The Committee has met twice in this reporting period on 17 February and 2 June 2025, with all members attending both meetings.

### ***Council Officers***

The Committee has been supported by Council Officers with Tammi Rose, CEO being an apology at the 17 February 2025 meeting.

### ***External Service Providers***

Both the Internal Audit team (HLB Mann Judd) and the External Audit team as agent of the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) (Crowe Howarth) have attended meetings as required during the reporting period, with Crowe Howarth an apology for the February 2025 meeting.

The Committee enjoys strong and professional working relationships with the entire support team, which is a critical element in ensuring the Committee delivers positive and insightful support and advice to Council.

## **BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Key activities and reviews undertaken by the Committee during the reporting period include.

- Consideration of CEO and Councillors updates.
- Monitoring progress of Committee Annual Work Plan.
- Review of Quarterly Financial Reports.
- Considered updates on budget and significant changes in accounting and reporting.
- Considered updates on External Audit including planned scope and approach.
- Review of Fraud Control Policy and Framework.
- Reviewed analysis, self-assessments and proposed actions against various integrity agency reports.
- Reviewed activities associated with internal audits conducted by Council's Internal Auditors, HLB Mann Judd, including:
  - Management of Outsourced Facilities; and
  - Compliance with the Road Management Plan.
- Development of Strategic and Annual Internal Audit Plan.
- Monitored implementation of actions outstanding from Internal Audits, including the previous Licences and Leases Internal Audit.
- Review of Internal Audit Charter.
- Considered updates on risk management progresses and maturity, including updates relating to Council's Risk Education and Training program.
- Review of Council's Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.
- Considered updates on Information Technology and Cyber Security maturity program, including implementation of the Cyber Security Improvement Plan.
- Reviewed Health & Safety report, including analysis of trends and data, as well as WorkSafe Incidents and Emergency Response programs.
- Review of Policy Governance program
- Considering updates and a 'deep dive' on the risks associated with Council's paid parking program.
- Consideration of proposed plan for annual Committee performance assessment.

Further reviews and oversight included noting Councillor Expenses, Gifts Benefits & Hospitality as well as identifying areas for improvement in the meetings and agendas.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

An independent Committee is a fundamental component of a strong corporate governance culture. Council's Committee is independent of Council and is not involved in any operational decisions. Committee members do not have any executive powers, management functions or delegated financial responsibilities.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Over the reporting period the Committee have noted key achievements in numerous areas under the Charter, including maturity in key areas such as risk management and cyber security, as well as a concerted effort by Council Officers to implement actions in a timely manner.

The approach for the annual Committee assessment of performance was approved at the June Committee Meeting. Outcomes from this assessment will be considered and improvement opportunities identified.

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

There are no financial implications identified because of this report. All costs associated with the Committee are included within the approved operating budget.

## APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective in the Council Plan: High Performing Organisation.

The oversight mechanism provided by the Committee supports Council's commitment to good governance, public transparency, and accountability to the community.

## RELEVANT LAW

It is a requirement of the Act that Council establish a Committee, appoint Independent Committee Members, adopt, and maintain a Committee Charter and provide a bi-annual report to Council.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

### ***Environmental Implications***

There are no foreseeable environmental impacts arising from this report.

### ***Social Implications***

The oversight mechanism provided by the Committee serves to provide confidence in Council's practices and supports Council's commitment to good governance, public transparency, and accountability to the community.

### ***Economic Implications***

The Committee assists Council by providing advice and guidance on the adequacy of initiatives including financial statements, performance, and public accountability reporting.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable to this report.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Whilst no collaboration with other Councils, Governments or statutory bodies was sought in respect of this item, the Committee members have reviewed and support the content provided in this report. The independent Committee members provide insights and advice gathered from their vast experiences, as well as from sitting on Advisory and Audit and Risk Committees for other Councils and Government agencies.

Areas for improvement, including innovation in processes are considered as part of each report presented to the Committee. The Committee evaluates its performance annually and the outcomes from the assessment will be considered and improvement opportunities identified and implemented.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Council has in place a fully functioning Committee. The establishment of the Committee, the appointment of Independent Committee members and the adoption of the Charter enables Council to meet its obligations under the Act and provides oversight and monitoring that Council has appropriate mechanisms in place to manage its risk.

The oversight mechanism provided by the Committee and as evidenced in the meeting minutes delivered to Councillors after each meeting, serves to provide confidence in Council's practices and supports Council's commitment to good governance, public transparency, and accountability to the community.

The biannual report to Council is an important risk management tool that provides Council with an understanding of the valuable insights and effectiveness and efficiency of the Committee's operations. This report gives Council comfort that the Committee is contributing to Council's good governance by remaining effective, efficient, and aligned with best practices in governance and risk management.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the Local Government Act 2020.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Nil

## CONCLUSION

The Committee's overall assessment is that Council is continuing to manage its responsibilities regarding risk, financial control and compliance well, and that the governance culture of the Council remains robust.

The Committee is satisfied that it has fully discharged its responsibilities as set out in its Charter. It has given advice to Council Officers to reduce its risk exposure and is confident that Council has a solid control environment that continues to mature and has well-established prudent financial management practices.

This is my final report to Council. I would like to thank Council for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this important Committee as an Independent Member and as Chair. I thank the management team for their dedication and support, and also my colleagues - both the independent members and the Councillors - for their contribution to a strong Committee.

*Stephen Schinck*  
*Chair, Audit and Risk Management Committee*

## DRAFT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2025-2029 FOR ENDORSEMENT

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Report Author: Executive Officer Health and Wellbeing

Responsible Officer: Director Communities

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (the Act)*, councils must prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) every 4 years, within 12 months of a general council election. The Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 meets these requirements; a Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 Final Evaluation Report is provided as Attachment One.

Council must now prepare a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (the Strategy), due to the Department of Health in October 2025. This report is intended to present the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029- Draft; included in this report as Attachment Two. The Strategy is informed by the Yarra Ranges Health and Wellbeing Data Profile (Attachment Three) and four weeks of community engagement; Community Engagement Summary Report as Attachment Four.

Following Council endorsement of the Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029, a further four-week community engagement period will run over July and August 2025. Council will then review and finalise the Strategy, ready for submission in October 2025.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That Council endorse the Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (Attachment 2) and support a further four weeks of community engagement.***

### RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council endorsed Draft Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 in July 2020 (Item 7.2, 27/07/21)

Council endorsed Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 in October 2021 (Item 7.5, 12/10/21)

Council endorsed Appointment of Health & Wellbeing Committee 2022-2026 in January 2023 (Item 10.2, 31/01/23)

Council endorsed Health & Wellbeing Plan YR 2 Progress Report in October 2023 (Item 10.4, 10/10/23)

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Purpose and Background***

*The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires councils to prepare a MPHWP every four years, within 12 months of a general council election. The MPHWP provides a strategic framework to guide council's role in promoting community health and wellbeing, based on where council has responsibility, influence, and resources.

Yarra Ranges Council's current Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 meets this legislative requirement. The next iteration of this plan is referred to as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (the Strategy). It is Council's lead strategy to achieve the key strategic operation of a Healthy and Connected Community as part of the Council Plan 2025-2029 (in development). The Strategy is due to the Department of Health in October 2025.

*The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires that the MPHWP:

- Uses local health data to inform priorities;
- Involves the community in its development, delivery and review;
- Sets evidence-based goals and strategies to improve community health;
- Specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community; and
- Have regard to climate change, as required under the *Climate Change Act 2017*.

The Strategy ensures that Council meet these legislative requirements and are able to monitor and report on the progress of the Strategy annually.

### ***Options considered***

Only one option was considered.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

It is recommended that Council endorse the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029- Draft and support a further four weeks community engagement.

Council has a stand alone MPHWP as it is the lead strategy for achieving Healthy and Connected Communities as identified as a key strategic objective of the Council Plan 2025-2029 (in development). The Strategy has been deliberately prepared in alignment with other developing strategies and plans for Council and is on track to ensure that Council meet all legislative requirements and deadlines under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

The total budget for developing the MPHWP is \$47,000. This has come from the Health and Wellbeing operational budget FY 24-25, with minor costs carrying into FY 25-26 as the Strategy is finalised.

Implementation of the Strategy will occur through partnerships with key stakeholders both internally and externally and be funded through operational budget lines with respective Council departments. Grant opportunities will be sought where feasible.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

*Council Plan (2021-2025) Healthy and Connected Communities Vision:*

- We want to make sure communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well-connected. Quality services should be accessible to everyone. We'll be implementing priority actions from strategies, like our upcoming Health and Wellbeing Plan and our Healthy and Active Ageing Plan, to ensure that our spaces are age-friendly and help promote good health. We'll update our Aquatics Strategy to plan the provision of our aquatic facilities, and we'll advocate for better public transport connections.

*Yarra Ranges Council Community Vision 2036:*

- Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Climate Change Act 2017*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Municipal Strategic Statement/Municipal Planning Scheme.



- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Victorian Disability Act 2006*

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

When developing the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029, consideration must be given to the State Budget and pending legislative impacts e.g.; the independent review of the *Mental Health Act 2022*, which reinforces the need for councils to embed mental health and wellbeing considerations across all their work—planning, infrastructure, community programs, and partnerships. Council must have strategic foresight and agility in the Strategy to both position Council to obtain funding and to support the delivery of the priorities and actions included in the strategy. Where appropriate, Council must partner with government, services and community to undertake a collective impact approach, working towards a common agenda for sustainable health and wellbeing outcomes as outlined in the Strategy.

### ***Social Implications***

The social determinants of health can influence health equity in both positive and negative ways. These include; income, housing, education, employment, food security, social inclusion, early childhood development, access to health services, life conditions and structural conflict. These need to be considered in the development and implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029, where Council has a role to make a positive difference. The Strategy identifies a set of Principles that ensure health equity and a place based lens is applied across all priority areas of the Strategy.

### ***Environmental Implications***

Climate change presents a range of significant risks for Council to respond to as it delivers on its vision for the community. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 must have regard to the *Climate Change Act 2017* and should have close alignment and the Liveable Climate Plan 2020-2030 recognising Councils existing commitment towards taking action on climate change. The link between environmental and extreme weather impacts on health and wellbeing is addressed within the Strategy.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029- Draft has been shaped by rigorous health data analysis, along with stakeholder engagements and four weeks of community engagement. A summary of engagement methods and key stakeholders is included in this report as Health and Wellbeing Strategy Community Engagement Summary Report; Attachment Four.

## COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Council has collaborated with other councils, as well as key stakeholders such as the North Eastern Public Health Unit, Primary Health Network, community health services and other local community organisations. This has been valuable in reflecting back to Council lessons learnt over the previous plan and to identify alignment of key priority areas, and opportunities for collective impact over the next four years. These members form Council's Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee who meet quarterly.

Collaboration has occurred internally for Council to create the Strategy through inter-department engagement, attendance at advisory committees to Council and alignment with other developing strategies and plans for Council such as the inclusion of Health and Wellbeing as a key focus area of the Council Plan Summits in March 2024. Council acknowledge the Indigenous Advisory Committee, Disability Advisory Committee, Youth Ambassadors, Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee who have all helped shape the Strategy to date.

Led internally by the Health and Wellbeing team, a cross-Council project working group has significantly shaped the Draft Strategy. Senior and Executive leaders have contributed via the Executive Leadership Team, Corporate Leadership Team, Integrated Project Control Group and meetings with individual business units.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk	Severity (L,M,H)	Likelihood (L,M,H)	Mitigant
<u>Reputation and stakeholder relationship</u>  Delay in securing formal endorsement to undertake phase 2, community engagement results in project timelines being pushed back, and Council being unable to submit the final endorsed Strategy to the Department of Health by October 2025 deadline.  Publicised community concern, limited media coverage and relationships noticeably strained.	M	L	Strong project management and governance in place to meet required deadlines.  Alignment with other developing plans for Council to avoid duplication and competition.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Yarra Ranges Council Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 Final Evaluation Report
2. Yarra Ranges Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 - Draft
3. Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of Yarra Ranges: Summary Report
4. Health and Wellbeing Strategy Community Engagement Summary Report



Yarra Ranges Council

# Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025

Final Evaluation Report





## Acknowledgement of Country



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



**Artist credit:** Ash Firebrace is an Aboriginal artist who lives and works on Wurundjeri Country.

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## Executive Summary

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires local governments to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years, following general council elections. Councils must annually review and report against the progress of their plans.

In 2021, Yarra Ranges Council (Council) endorsed and began implementing the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 (the Plan). This Evaluation Report highlights key initiatives delivered by Council over the past four years, with a particular focus on those that will continue into the next iteration of the Plan. It serves as the final review and complements the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 Progress Report Year 2, which outlined initiatives delivered in the first two years of the Plan.

This Evaluation Report does not include all actions undertaken by Council over the past four years. Instead, it spotlights examples of significant achievements across the seven health and wellbeing priorities, the Community Grants Program, advocacy priorities, and the Health & Wellbeing Advisory and Steering Committees. Throughout the lifespan of the Plan, Council has played a vital role in fostering collaborative partnerships and advocacy across the region, engaging with other levels of government, services, and community groups. Council also plays an essential role in delivering services, facilities, and infrastructure that support the health and wellbeing of the Yarra Ranges community.

To view Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025, Action Plan, and Mid-term Summary report, visit: [Health and wellbeing plan Yarra Ranges Council](#)



# Priority 1: Respond to public health emergencies

**Goal:** Communities recover from Covid-19 and other emergencies.

## Healing in Our Gardens

Healing in Our Gardens was a Council-led program, supported by Habitat for Humanity and community volunteers, launched in September 2022. It helped residents affected by the June 2021 storms through garden-inspired, trauma-informed events, rebuilding social connection and restoring hope.

More than 50 residents attended the launch, including Mayor Cr Jim Child and award-winning landscape designer Phillip Johnson. Over 160 families participated, receiving support to restore their storm-affected gardens. The program gained national recognition, featuring on Gardening Australia on ABC, highlighting the impact of community generosity in helping residents heal and rebuild.



## Improving Council's Response to Emergency Events

Council plays a key role in responding to emergency events by coordinating relief efforts, deploying staff, and ensuring timely public communication. During an emergency, Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs) provide shelter, food, and support, with Council staff assisting on-site. In power outages, Power and Shower locations are identified and promoted. Council also shares real-time updates from emergency services via social media and website alerts, ensuring residents stay informed and supported.

## Building Local Emergency Preparedness Skills

Immediately following COVID-19 lockdowns and the June 2021 storms, Council hosted a suite of free workshops to help community members build personal capacity to respond when local emergency needs arise. Opportunities included Chainsaw Training, Mental Health First Aid, and Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP). Council also invested in programs such as the 'Dad's Bush Playgroup', run with EcoExplorers and Mountain Men, supporting mental health recovery and community connection.



## Priority 2: Tackle climate change and its impact on health

**Goal:** People and businesses are resilient, prepared, and able to mitigate the potential health impacts of climate change.

### Firestick Program to Heal Country

Council is expanding its planned burning program, supported by the Firesticks Program and Fire as a Land Management Tool Policy. The program recognises fire's vital role in supporting community and environmental health and is backed by Council's Nature Plan 2024–2034, which outlines resourcing for burns on Council-managed reserves.

In June 2024, Council achieved a milestone with its first cultural burn on Council-managed land at Spadonis Reserve. Led by Wurundjeri Custodian and Firesticks Officer Darren Wandin, and supported by the Bushlands Team, the burn was calmly delivered, aiming to reduce weedy grasses and stimulate native growth. Cultural burns help communities adapt to the health impacts of climate change by fostering a deeper connection to land and promoting environmental stewardship.



### My Energy and Water Saver Kit

Yarra Ranges Council, in partnership with Knox and Maroondah councils, has been offering free energy and water saving kits through local libraries. Residents can borrow a kit to assess their home, business, or community space for leaks, high energy use, and design flaws. This initiative supports businesses and households to save money, reduce emissions, and increase the community's adaptation to the health impacts of climate change. The kits have been borrowed 564 times from Your Libraries between their introduction in 2022 and March 2025.

### Preparing Residents for Extreme Weather Events

To help residents and businesses prepare for extreme weather events, Council provides resources on its website, including Auslan videos and preparation advice for fires, floods, storms, heatwaves, and power outages. During emergencies, public spaces like libraries offer refuge for those without adequate heating or cooling. Council also maintains 19 Neighbourhood Safer Places (also known as Bushfire Places of Last Resort) across the municipality.

## Priority 3: Increase healthy eating

**Goal:** People have the capacity to consume healthy food, built on a sustainable system providing access to healthy, affordable food for all.

### Community Gardens Network

Less than two years ago, Council launched the Community Garden Network, bringing together existing community gardens around Yarra Ranges to connect, share resources, and support each other. The network meets monthly for one hour, featuring guest speakers, grant opportunities, and skills development.

In addition to establishing the network, Council has also recently developed guidelines for creating new community gardens and a dedicated webpage on the Council website that shares information and videos to showcase each garden. This network has since inspired new community gardens to be created, such as in the Hills and Urban region.

Another major achievement was Council helping to establish insurance for community gardens, the first of its kind in Australia, setting a national precedent. By fostering connection and sustainability, this initiative strengthens local food resilience and community wellbeing.



### Gardens for Harvest

The Gardens for Harvest Program is offered free to residents of Yarra Ranges. It provides workshops and newsletters from growing, harvesting to preparing food. Many workshops are held in Community Gardens, leveraging the gardens and offering collaboration opportunities. Membership has increased by 55% since 2021, with now more than 1700 subscribers.

### Addressing Local Food Insecurity

Council mapped the local food system to identify key challenges such as affordability and access to fresh food, as well as mapping key strengths such as community gardens and emergency food relief. Insights informed Council's submission to Victoria's Food Security Inquiry, calling for investment in food infrastructure and support for regenerative farming. This advocacy supports healthier, more resilient communities in the face of rising living costs and climate change.



## Priority 4: Increase active living

**Goal:** People have capacity to walk and be physically active in an inclusive culture.

### Creating a Place for Women in Sport

Council's Sport and Recreation Team have been working closely with local clubs to improve outcomes for women and girls, particularly in traditionally male-dominated sports. Initiatives include Active Bystander Training, RespectED programs (facilitated by Respect Australia), Fair Access Policy education, and support to develop Gender Equity Action Plans.

In partnership with Knox and Maroondah councils and Inspiro Health, Yarra Ranges Council helped develop the Sport for All Gender Inclusive Toolkit – a practical resource supporting clubs to create safer, more inclusive environments. Council also adopted the Melbourne East Region Fair Access Policy, committing to ongoing work towards equitable access. Yarra Ranges currently leads the eastern region in AFL participation for women and girls but acknowledges there's more to do to achieve true gender equity in sport.



### Increasing Accessible Footpaths to Encourage Walking

Council has identified 246 km of missing footpath links across 570 projects, with planned upgrades prioritising routes near activity centres, schools, and community services, and meeting universal access standards. Features such as pram-friendly crossings, clear sightlines, and improved lighting make walking safer and easier for everyone, encouraging active, healthy lifestyles across the community.

### Belsay Reserve Chirnside Urban Park

The transformation of Belsay Reserve on Kimberley Drive has turned an empty space into a vibrant, flight-themed park that promotes active play and outdoor recreation. Featuring a balloon play structure (the first of its kind in Australia), the reserve also includes a flying fox, trampolines, sensory play areas, wetlands, walking trails, accessible equipment, and barbecue facilities. This playspace is one of the ways Council is encouraging active, healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities.

## Priority 5: Improve mental wellbeing and social connections

**Goal:** People have good mental wellbeing through strong community connections, family supports and ease of access to mental health services.

### Pathways for Carers

Pathways for Carers is a monthly program supported by Council for carers of people with disability or mental health challenges. It provides unpaid carers with opportunities to socially connect and enjoy light physical activity in nature. One runs in Mt Evelyn, led by Mount Evelyn Community House and Reading Room, and the second in Healesville, in partnership with Healesville Living and Learning Centre and VMCH Carer Supports.

Each month, 20-30 carers participate, walking together before gathering for morning tea, sponsored by Bendigo Bank, Beechworth Bakery, and VMCH. Guest speakers from local carer support, community health, and disability services are invited to share about their relevant services. Running for nearly 10 years, carers have reported that the program has helped reduce their feelings of isolation and increased their likelihood of seeking support.



### The Big Anxiety Festival

As part of The Big Anxiety – Melbourne Naarm in 2022, Council hosted a regional arts festival reimagining mental health care for the 21st century through creative expression. Exhibitions, public programs and events explored themes of emotional wellbeing, trauma, and community recovery post-disaster. Evaluation of Yarra Ranges programs showed 100% of people surveyed saw the value of creativity in supporting mental health, 76% felt more connected to community, 66% gained a better understanding of mental health, 44% were more likely to seek support, and 43% learned where to access local services.

### Neighbourhood Houses

Neighbourhood Houses are at the heart of Yarra Ranges communities, bringing people together to connect, learn, and contribute through social, educational, recreational, and support activities. Welcoming people of all ages and abilities, these 12 community centres support mental wellbeing by building relationships, strengthening belonging, and reducing loneliness. In 2023, they generated over \$52 million in community value, including \$6 million from improved quality of life through social connection, with 3,682 participants engaging in activities each week.



## Sit, Meet, and Eat, Community Spaces in Upwey

The Sit, Meet and Eat Community Spaces project in Upwey transformed two key locations, Main Street and Morris Road, into welcoming, accessible places that support social connection and community wellbeing. Designed to reflect and uplift the township's "village" like character, the spaces bookend the main trading area and offer flexible seating, shade, and all-abilities access. They can be activated by local businesses with tables and umbrellas or used informally by the community as places to rest, meet friends, or simply watch the world go by.

Funded through the State Government's COVIDSafe Outdoor Activation Program, the project builds on the success of temporary carpark dining introduced during lockdowns, providing permanent infrastructure that fosters stronger community connections and supports local economic and mental health recovery.



## Environmental Volunteers

Council supports over 60 environmental volunteer groups, including Friends Of and Landcare Groups. Volunteers spend their time weeding, planting, collecting litter, and educating the community about local flora and fauna. Many volunteers report that time in nature and connecting with others gives them a sense of belonging, new friendships, and improved mental wellbeing.

## Middle Years (MY) Conversations

As part of the Upper Yarra Partnership, Council led the Middle Years Conversations project, involving 182 students from eight primary schools in the Upper Yarra and Valley regions. The sessions, co-designed with Youth Ambassadors, helped children explore their wellbeing after COVID-19 and identify what supports their mental health. Six schools then implemented student-led projects, including sensory gardens and mindfulness spaces, which helped students feel proud of their achievements and more connected to school life.

## Priority 6: Prevent violence against women and children

**Goal:** Women and children live free from abuse and violence in a culture of gender equity and respect.

### Community Changemakers Program

The Community Changemakers Program supports emerging leaders from diverse backgrounds who are passionate about creating positive change. This biennial initiative offers 20 fully funded places for Yarra Ranges residents to build skills and meaningful connections. Through online and in-person sessions, participants explore asset-based community development, community engagement, cultural safety, diversity and inclusion, advocacy, and public speaking.

By amplifying the voices of people with lived experience of discrimination and systemic barriers, this program fosters a culture of gender equity, inclusion, and respect – which is key to preventing violence at a grassroots level. Many participants reported increased confidence and growth in their leadership journey. Others emphasised the power of collaboration and recognising individual strengths. One participant shared:

***“I realised that my perspective and experiences are valuable, and I have the ability to make a difference.”***



### Margins to the Mainstream

Margins to the Mainstream (M2M) was a regional project led by Women's Health East and Women with Disabilities Victoria, with Yarra Ranges Council on the Advisory Group. It aimed to prevent violence against women with disabilities by challenging ableism and sexism. Ten women formed an Experts Group, participating in initiatives such as co-designing 16 social media tiles and six videos, shared widely during a 16 Days of Activism campaign in 2021.

### Dad's Chat

Dad's Chat is a four-week strength-based workshop for dads and male carers, focused on communication, emotional regulation, child development, parenting styles, and attachment. It was developed after consulting with over 130 men across Yarra Ranges and Maroondah Council regions. In Term 1 2025, 37 participants reported stronger bonds with their children, improved communication, and greater connection with peers and community.



## Priority 7: Reduce harmful alcohol and drug use

**Goal:** People are safe from the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs.

### Local Drug Action Group

The Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) Program supports communities to work together to prevent and minimise the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. The 2024 Community Action Plan (CAP), developed with community partners including Eastern Health, EACH, the Department of Education, Victoria Police, and Inspiro, was approved in February 2024.

In response to local school needs, two student and one parent educational sessions were delivered in the Upper Yarra region, engaging 72 participants (46 students and 26 parents). Surveys showed that 68% of parents reported increased confidence in supporting their child, and 67% of all participants reported improved knowledge of alcohol and drug harms. A new CAP is being developed for early 2025.



### EMR Alcohol Flagship Group

Council is an active member of the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) Alcohol Flagship Group, which brings together local councils to collaborate on alcohol-related harm prevention.

Through this group, Council has shared its Food Systems Mapping, highlighting local alcohol outlet data, and has contributed to discussions on alcohol policy and Liquor Accords. The group also provides opportunities to connect with organisations like Turning Point and strengthen relationships with neighbouring councils to support regional approaches to alcohol harm reduction.

### Spot Checks on Tobacco Retailers

Council is funded by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to conduct spot checks aimed at preventing tobacco sales to minors and reducing harm from smoking. Since 2021, 239 retailer spot checks and 142 test purchases have been conducted, with only eight resulting in illegal sales. A further 182 checks at outdoor dining areas found no patrons smoking, suggesting education efforts have been effective in driving behaviour change. Council continues to educate businesses on recent legislative reforms, including the ban on e-cigarette sales outside pharmacies and new tobacco licensing requirements.

## Health & Wellbeing Advisory Committee

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee (HWAC) was inducted in January 2023 and meets every six weeks. It brings together 12 community members who represent all nine wards in Yarra Ranges. They provide advice, input and community voice to inform Council programs, plans and policies.

To date, the HWAC has contributed to a range of Council initiatives, including the Aquatics Strategy, Housing Strategy, Lilydale Lake Masterplan, and Disability Action Plan. The committee has also participated in a combined advisory committee meeting and supported mental wellbeing initiatives such as the Mental Health First Aid delivery and Living Stories Project. Additionally, they have provided guidance on consultation approaches for the upcoming Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029.

Council has seven formal advisory committees, each offering valuable insights and diverse lived experiences. These committees are deeply valued and play a vital role in shaping Council's work.



## Health & Wellbeing Steering Committee

The Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee was established in 2023 and meets quarterly. It brings together key service partners to support alignment in planning and delivering health and wellbeing outcomes. The committee fosters shared advocacy, strengthens collaboration and provides a service-sector perspective to Council's programs, plans and policies.

# Community Grant & Partnerships

Between 2021–2025, Yarra Ranges Council has distributed over \$5.4 million in funding across 770 approved grants, supporting community-led initiatives that foster inclusion, resilience and wellbeing.

The Community Grants Program is a key delivery mechanism for the Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 with criteria that prioritise accessibility, equity, and connection. Almost all funded projects help build a sense of belonging – one of the most powerful ways to improve community health outcomes.

Council supports creative, strengths-based initiatives that tap into community knowledge and respond to local needs, helping to build more connected, inclusive and vibrant communities across Yarra Ranges.

	No. of Grants	Fund
<b>2023-2027 Partnership Grants</b>		
Connected & Healthy Communities	22	\$1,468,000
Creative Communities	18	\$764,000
<b>Annual Grants</b>		
Community Development	170	\$876,663
Arts & Heritage	91	\$623,845
Festivals & Events	73	\$556,085
<b>Monthly Grants</b>	493	\$399,844
<b>Recreation and Sport Capital Development Grant</b>	53	\$731,769
<b>Total</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>\$5,420,206</b>

## Examples of Projects Funded



Accessible arts and storytelling workshops



Nature walking groups



Community gardens



Community dinners and cooking classes



Outdoor music and arts events



Publishing local histories and zines



Uniforms and travel bursaries for young athletes



Life skills and outdoor education for youth



Emergency relief and legal assistance



Mentoring programs and peer support groups

## Community Voices and Feedback

*"[This cooking program] definitely allowed for skills learning, how to cook easily simple but healthy meals for one person"*

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*"...what is really special to me is to see the new connections made around the table, hearing the introductions and little chatter of a new connecting community"*



# Advocacy Priorities

Council plays a vital role advocating for systemic change to improve the conditions that shape community health. During the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025, Council committed to four key advocacy priorities addressing the social determinants of health, systemic and accessibility barriers across the region.



## Improving Access to Mental Health Services

Improving access to mental health services became a major initiative of the Council Plan 2021-2025. As part of this commitment, Council delivered the Living Stories Project. Launched in October 2023, this project amplified the voices of six residents with lived experience of mental health challenges. These stories were a powerful tool in destigmatising mental illness and encouraging help seeking.

Council also improved local access to information by updating its website with clear, comprehensive mental health support listings and creating two print brochures, one for the general community and one tailored to young people.

Following advocacy to be included in the State Government's rollout of adult mental health services, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local opened in Lilydale in 2024. This free service for people aged over 25 years offers support onsite or via outreach across Yarra Ranges, improving their accessibility.



## Increasing Social and Affordable Housing and Reducing Homelessness

Council has taken a proactive approach to address housing affordability and rising rates of homelessness. In 2022, Council appointed a Homelessness and Housing Officer and refreshed the Yarra Ranges Homelessness Protocol in 2023 strengthening relationships with local homelessness services to provide outreach and rapid response.

Since 2019, Council has committed over \$2 million in grant funding to local organisations supporting people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. Council also adopted a 15-year Housing Strategy in 2024 to guide the type and location of new housing, including actions to support social and affordable housing.

Council continues to partner with the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance and Homelessness Charter Group to advocate for increased social and affordable housing in the region.



## Securing Funding for an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Service

Improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing became a major initiative of the Council Plan 2021-2025. Council partnered with Oonah Health & Community Services Aboriginal Corporation to support the establishment of the Healesville Belonging Place – a purpose-built, integrated Aboriginal health facility.

Council supported Oonah through business planning, a feasibility study, and schematic design. In 2023, the planning application was submitted. While Council's primary role has now concluded, it continues to support Aboriginal health and self-determination.



## Improving Public Transport Access

Council has long advocated for better transport options in outer Yarra Ranges, where limited services affect access to work, education, and community life. A major achievement during the Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 was the development of Connected, the Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040, which now guides long-term transport planning and investment.

The strategy responds to community feedback calling for improved public transport, safer walking and cycling links, and more accessible neighbourhoods. It provides a shared roadmap to deliver a safer, healthier, and better connected Yarra Ranges for all.

# Key Learnings

The most effective outcomes of the Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 have come from collaborative, place-based approaches that reflect the strengths and assets of Yarra Ranges communities. Initiatives that applied a health equity lens – considering factors like age, gender, culture and place – led to more accessible and inclusive outcomes. Council has also strengthened its focus on evaluation, sharing key learnings with stakeholders and closing the loop by reporting back to the community on the outcomes of key initiatives. This work is integral to building more meaningful community partnerships and guiding future investment informed by evidence-based practice.

# Conclusion

The Yarra Ranges community has faced many challenges over the lifespan of the Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025. Events such as COVID-19, frequent extreme weather – including the June 2021 storms – and the loss of funding for essential services like the Youth Health Hub have significantly impacted people's health and wellbeing.

Despite this, the community has shown great resilience. This strength provides a solid foundation for addressing key health and wellbeing issues over the next four years through Council's upcoming Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029. Council remains committed to ensuring community voice and lived experience continue to shape policies, procedures, and programs. Strategic partnerships and advocacy on key health and wellbeing issues will remain a priority to improve outcomes for all Yarra Ranges communities.







Yarra Ranges Council

# DRAFT Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029

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### Acknowledgement of Country



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

## Commitment to an inclusive and fair society

Our community is made up of diverse cultures, beliefs, abilities, sexualities, ages and genders. We recognise the strength that comes from the varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives within our community. We are dedicated to ensuring that everyone feels respected, welcomed and valued, and has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We are committed to removing systemic barriers and promoting an inclusive, equitable society that supports individuals' physical, mental and cultural health and wellbeing.

## Acknowledgements

Council would like to acknowledge and thank the many people and partners who shared their expertise and insights to help develop this Strategy:

- Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Disability Advisory Committee
- Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee
- Youth Ambassadors
- Positive Ageing Reference Group
- Service partners of Council's Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee
- The many people with lived experience who have shared their ideas and experiences to help shape this Strategy
- Support from the Department of Health



## Message from the Mayor

*“Community is at the heart of everything we do.”*

Yarra Ranges Council exists to serve the residents and businesses of our region, ensuring that current and future generations are afforded opportunities to succeed.

In addition to the beauty of the region, we take pride in our exceptional sports facilities, open spaces and community facilities, which will continue to form part of our Council's role to support health and wellbeing.

We know that the Shire will continue to evolve and face ongoing challenges such as a growing and ageing population, an increase in severe weather-related events and lack of essential services.

Through the development of this important Strategy to Council, we have identified the role of Council in taking realistic actions over the next four years to improve the health and wellbeing of communities that are playing to our strengths.

Our community has told us that they want to see all residents able to access and enjoy the many amazing places and natural spaces, plan and prepare for emergencies, and access the services and facilities that they need.

We have listened, and in response to this, many of the actions within this Strategy have an inclusion focus and a clear roadmap to support the wellbeing of our diverse community.

Council is only one stakeholder. We know that to achieve better wellbeing, we also need to continue strengthening our partnerships with other levels of government, community organisations, businesses and our residents, to maximise wellbeing outcomes into the future.

I sincerely thank and acknowledge everyone who has helped in shaping this important Strategy.

**Jim Child**

Mayor, Yarra Ranges Council



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# Introduction

The Yarra Ranges Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (the Strategy) is a strategic road map for how Council will support the health and wellbeing of local communities. It meets Council's obligations under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*<sup>1</sup> and is updated every four years, following a general Council election.



Council supports community health and wellbeing in many ways, providing a wide range of services, facilities and programs that people rely on every day. Some examples include waste and recycling, parks, sporting facilities, maternal child health, immunisation, protecting public health and the environment. While Council leads much of this work, it often collaborates with other levels of government, community groups and the private sector to achieve the best outcomes. Council also plays a critical role in advocating for change and amplifying community voice.

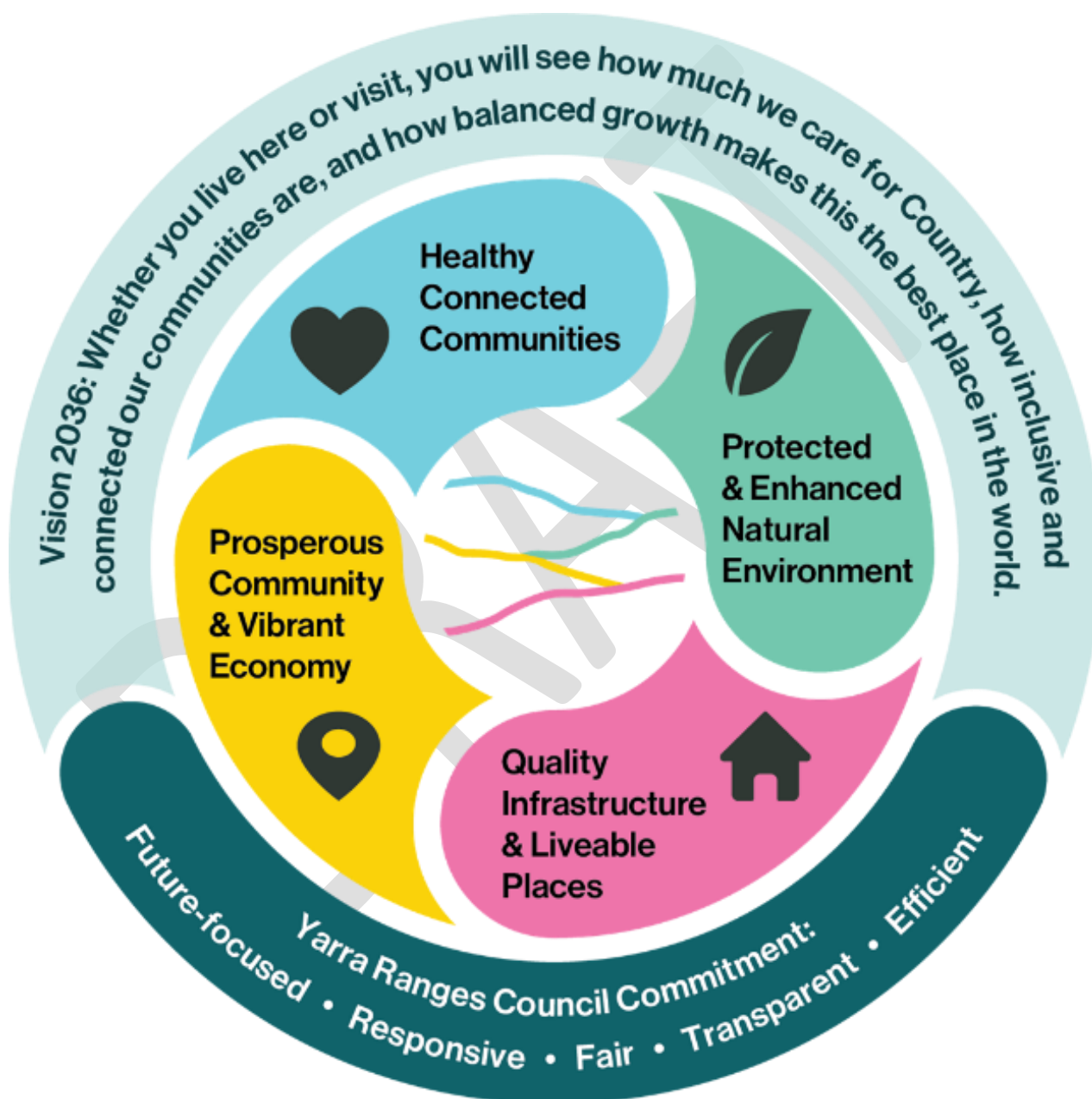
## The Strategy:

- Sets out priority areas for action to improve health and wellbeing.
- Focuses on improving systems and access to build a healthier, safer and more vibrant community.
- Identifies key partnerships across government, organisations and communities that are integral to the success of the Strategy.
- Acts as both a planning framework and an advocacy tool that sets the scene for growth over the next four years.
- Focuses on where Council has the responsibility, capability, influence, roles and resources to make a difference.

<sup>1</sup> Victorian Government: Department of Health. (2023). *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Planning*.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 is Council's lead strategy for achieving the strategic objective of the Council Plan 2025-2029: Healthy Connected Communities (see figure 1). Under this objective, it is envisioned that *"Communities are safe, healthy, inclusive and socially connected. Quality services are accessible to everyone."*

**Figure 1: Yarra Ranges Council Key Strategic Objectives 2025-2029**



This Strategy was shaped by feedback from government, local services and the community. It identifies four key priority areas to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. See *Attachment 1: Community Engagement Report*.

Evidence supports the close relationship between people's health, and the living and working conditions which form their social environment<sup>2</sup>. Factors such as socioeconomic position, educational attainment, conditions of employment, the distribution of wealth, empowerment and social support - together known as the social determinants of health - can act to strengthen or undermine the health of individuals and communities.

While this Strategy does not directly address all social determinants of health, Council's broader integrated planning framework ensures these are addressed through reinforcing strategies, policies and plans. A summary of these documents is provided. See *Appendix 1 – Supporting strategies, policies and plans*.

**Table 1: Yarra Ranges Council's roles and definitions**

<b>PROVIDER</b>	Responsible for delivery of services, programs, infrastructure and support to individuals and groups.
<b>EDUCATOR</b>	Share information, raise awareness, develop knowledge and skills to empower individuals and groups.
<b>PARTNER</b>	Build relationships and partner with others to enable things happen and work towards common goals.
<b>ADVOCATE</b>	Raise awareness and show leadership for the interests of local communities, to other decision makers e.g. State and Federal Government.
<b>PLANNER</b>	Use evidence, including community views to plan for current and future community needs and priorities.
<b>REGULATOR</b>	Prioritise safety and regulate compliance of activities through local laws and legislation

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Social determinant of health*.

# Health & Wellbeing Strategy – at a glance

**Our vision:** Yarra Ranges is a safe, inclusive and connected community, where people can access the services and information that they need to be healthy and well at every stage of life.

**Our purpose:** To achieve a healthy connected community which is safe, healthy, inclusive and socially connected. Quality services are accessible to everyone.

**Our principles:** This set of principles set the foundation for a system of belief, behaviour, attitudes and governance for Council, ensuring that we work towards our shared vision and purpose. We apply the lenses of age, gender, cultural diversity and place across all aspects of Council business.

## Human rights and health equity:

Acknowledging that everyone has the right to health and access to necessary resources, striving for fair treatment and equal opportunities in health care for all people.

## Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing:

Valuing and incorporating the knowledge, traditions, and practices of Indigenous peoples, recognising their unique perspectives on health, community, and the environment.

## Gender equity:

Gender equity ensures the fair treatment of individuals of all genders by addressing their unique needs and experiences. It focuses on eliminating disparities to provide equal access to opportunities, resources, and rights, fostering safer, healthier, and more connected communities.

## Intersectionality:

Individual characteristics such as Aboriginality, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, and cultural upbringing can shape the experiences, perspectives, needs, and challenges of individuals. The intersectional nature of a person's circumstance can result in compounding layers of barrier and discrimination, or power and privilege.

## Evidence-informed:

Using research, data and community views to guide decisions and actions, ensuring that approaches are based on the best available information.

## Social determinants of health:

Factors like housing, income, education, and environment that affect people's health and well-being, showing that health is influenced by more than just medical care.



## Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities

**Priority 1:** Increasing community adaptation to climate-related health risks.

**Priority 2:** Improving mental wellbeing.

**Priority 3:** Supporting our community to lead healthy lives.

**Priority 4:** Creating safer and more inclusive communities.

## Snapshot of health status in the Yarra Ranges<sup>3</sup>

### Mental health

- 26% of adults had high/very high psychological distress (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in state), 2023 survey
- 10.3% of residents had diagnosed mental health conditions, including 13% of females and 8% of males (7<sup>th</sup> highest in Melbourne, 2021 Census)
- 22.1% of adults experienced loneliness, compared to 23.3% across Victoria (2023 survey)

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Year
% of adults seeking professional help for a mental health problem in past 12 months	24% (9 <sup>th</sup> highest in state)	20%	2023
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds. <b>*Note</b> this data covers a period during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.	40% ↑		2019/20 to 2022/23

<sup>3</sup> Yarra Ranges Council. (2024). *Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of the Yarra Ranges: Summary Report*.

## Children and young people

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Year
Increase in number of 5–14-year-olds with a disability	47% ↑		2016-2021
Change in number of sexually transmitted disease notifications, 15–24-year-olds	9.1% ↑		2019-2023

## Climate impacts

- The number of hospital admissions for heat stroke exceeded 450

## Chronic diseases & health risk

- 8.9% of adults had experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, compared with 8% across Victoria (2023)
- 23% of adults had fair/poor dental health, compared with 27% across Victoria (2023)
- 61% of adults did not do sufficient weekly exercise, compared with 64% across Victoria (2023)

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Year
% of residents with at least one long-term health condition	35%	31%	2021
% of residents with diabetes	4.7%	6.1% (Australia)	March 2023
% of adults overweight or obese	57%	54%	2023
% of adults who smoke daily	8%	10%	2023
% of adults who vape daily	7% (3 <sup>rd</sup> highest)	4.5%	2023
Risk of increased harm from alcohol-related disease or injury	17%	13%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	19%	19.5%	2023

## Safety and inclusion

- 35% increase in the rate of crimes amongst 10–17-year-olds in Yarra Ranges, between March 2019 and March 2024
- 16% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced discrimination, equal to Victoria (2023)
- 3% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced racism, compared to 7% across Victoria (2023)

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Year
Family violence incidents per 100,000	1,224	1,366	Year to Sept 2022/23
Crime rate per 100,000	3,042	5,536	2023
Deaths from accidental falls, rate per 100,000	11.5 19% above average	9.7 (Australia)	2017-2021 combined

# Community snapshot

## Demographic snapshot for Yarra Ranges<sup>4</sup>

Census 2021 indicators	Yarra Ranges	Victoria
Estimated resident population (2023)	158,694	
Indigenous residents	1.1%	1.0%
Born in Australia	79.4%	65.0%
Adults LGBTIQ+	11.0%	11.0%
Residents with a disability	5.4%	5.9%
% aged 65+	17.2%	16.4%
% aged 0-24	30.6%	30.2%
Providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability or health condition	14.7%	12.9%
Doing voluntary work through an organisation or group (2021)	15.5%	13.3%
Family households	76.7%	70.1%
Attending tertiary education	20.6%	24.5%
Level of separate houses	93.7%	73.4%
Households with a mortgage	48.2%	36.1%
Level of properties being rented	14.0%	28.5%
Median weekly household income	\$1,881	\$1,759

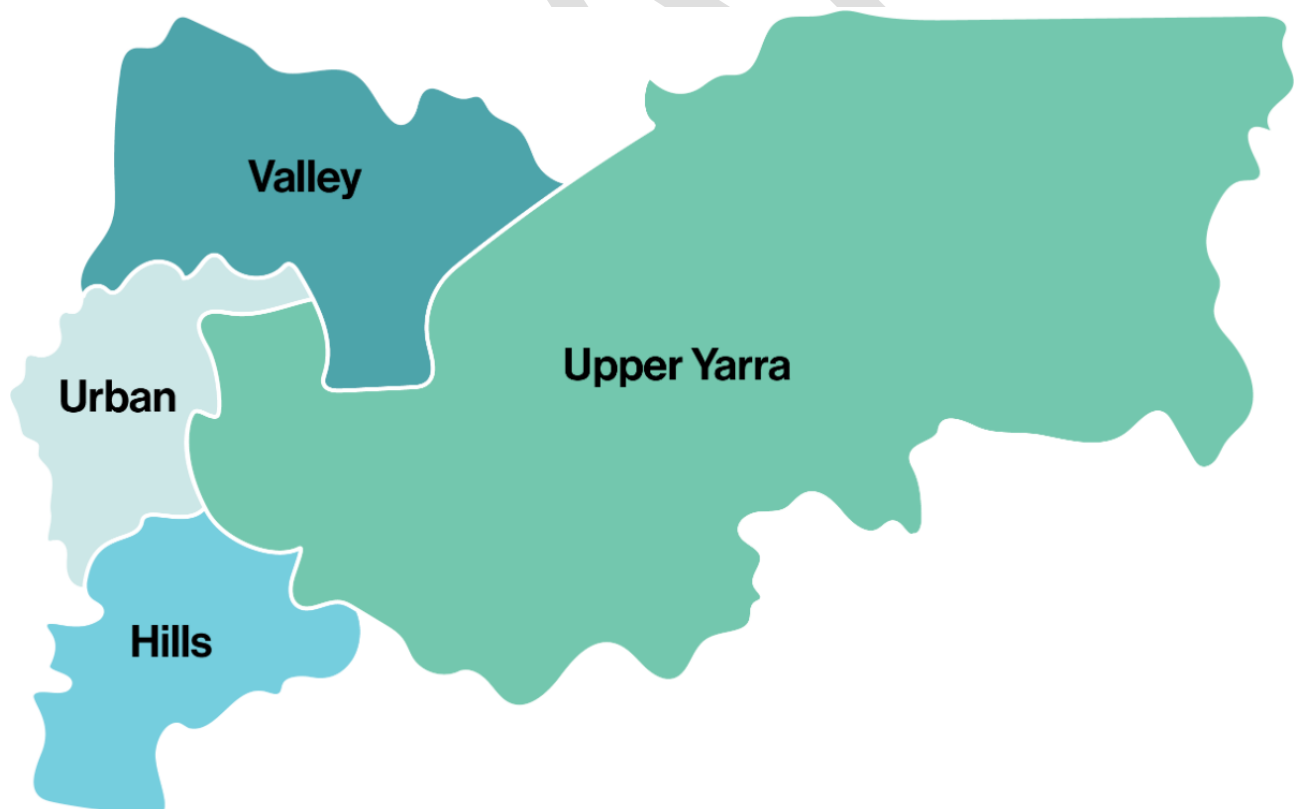
<sup>4</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Yarra Ranges 2021 Census All Persons QuickStats*.

## A place-based approach

Analysis of health data for Yarra Ranges informed the four priority areas and advocacy priorities of the Strategy. See *Attachment 2, Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of Yarra Ranges: Summary Report*. This health profile, in addition to *Access to Human Services in the Yarra Ranges*<sup>5</sup>, was developed by Council and is a resource available for local services, agencies, students and community to access.

Yarra Ranges has four sub-regions; Urban, Hills, Valley and Upper Yarra. This Strategy will take a place-based approach, considering the strengths, opportunities and priorities of these diverse local communities.

Health status varies by suburb and township within Yarra Ranges, with some areas having considerably worse health indicators and lower levels of access to services. These variations tend to be linked to socio-economic characteristics, e.g., income, housing affordability, insurance and utility costs, food security, transport access, health service access, and education and employment levels. Emergencies such as the June 2021 storms and the cost-of-living crisis have placed recent stress on the community, contributing to the health concerns outlined under each priority area in this Strategy.



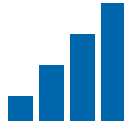
<sup>5</sup> Yarra Ranges Council. (2023). *Access to Human Services in the Yarra Ranges*.





## Our region

- Land area approx. 2,500 km<sup>2</sup>
- Largest local government area in Melbourne
- 9 wards and 55 townships
- Mix of urban and regional communities
- 52% of the population live in urban areas, representing only 3% of landmass



## Our economy

- 13,991 local businesses
- 55,544 local jobs
- Est. \$1.2b visitor spend
- Income is above average
- Housing is more affordable than in inner Melbourne
- Amongst 20% of local government areas with lowest levels of disadvantage on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage



## Our community

- High level of community involvement, volunteering and carer roles
- Very low crime rates and a high level of civic trust
- Good maternal and infant health status
- Good health status amongst older residents

## Delivering the Strategy

Council will lead the delivery of this Strategy, in partnership with other levels of government, local organisations and communities.

The Strategy focuses on four strategic priorities, each with long-term goals and outcomes to guide Council's work over the next four years. Strategic actions under each priority outline how Council will make steady, evidence-based progress to improve community health and wellbeing.

Annual business plans will support the delivery of these actions, ensuring Council remains responsive to community needs and aspirations. Progress will be reviewed and reported each year to ensure accountability and track the outcomes achieved.





Priority 1:

## **Increasing community adaptation to climate-related health risks**



# Priority 1: Increasing community adaptation to climate-related health risks

## Why is this a priority?

The *Climate Change Act 2017*, requires local governments to have regard to climate change when preparing their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.<sup>6</sup>

Climate change has both direct and indirect health impacts. Direct impacts are caused by exposure to more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves. Potential direct impacts include ill-health, injuries and deaths due to heat stress, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, infectious diseases, hypothermia, food poisoning, allergies, mental health issues, injuries, drownings and malnutrition. Indirect impacts include reduced water quality, declines in food security and safety, worse air quality, and increases in infectious diseases.

The social determinants of health are also affected, including the cost of living. For example, rising food, insurance and power costs; and impacts on housing, employment, income, transport, access to services and infrastructure, workplace safety, recreational opportunities, and social support networks. Local human services expect that climate-related disasters and extreme weather events will impact future service demand (51%), with access to climate-resilient housing seen as a challenge for low-income households.

Key indicators for Yarra Ranges include:

- Yarra Ranges has the second-highest level in Melbourne of properties at high or medium risk from climate change.
- Residents have experienced frequent impacts from heating or cooling failing due to power outages, as were seen in the 2019/20 extreme heat and the June 2021 storm. Already, 39% of Victorians feel too cold in their homes during winter and 44% feel too hot in their homes during summer. There were more than 450 hospital admissions for heat stroke amongst Yarra Ranges residents in 2022/23.
- Yarra Ranges has the second-highest level of assistance seeking from national disaster recovery funding – it has sought and received assistance 42 times since 2006/07. Assistance was mostly sought due to storms (27), floods (17) and bushfires (5), with some events involving multiple hazards (e.g., bushfire and storm).
- Yarra Ranges ranks third in Victoria for storm hotspots.

<sup>6</sup> State Government of Victoria. (2025). *Climate Change Act 2017*.

- Yarra Ranges has the highest bushfire risk in the country. The 2019/20 bushfires saw a spike in respiratory and mental health issues amongst residents, an indication of what can be expected with future increases in high heat and bushfire risk days. There was a large spike in asthma admissions in 2022/23; residents with respiratory conditions are particularly at risk from smoke and fires.
- The impact of the June 2021 storms included damage to and destruction of homes and businesses, loss of power and internet for extended periods, fallen trees, damage to roads, blocked access to communities, loss of communication including ability to contact emergency services, disruptions to schools and health services and transport, loss of access to public space.

The Emergency Leaders for Climate Action have identified five concrete steps that Australian governments can take, to better protect communities from the impacts that many people are already experiencing due to climate change and natural hazards.<sup>7</sup> These form part of the evidence base used to shape the goals and desired outcomes for Council's work in supporting the community to adapt to the health impacts of a changing climate and increasing numbers of emergency events.

## **Goal 1: Residents are equipped to protect their health and wellbeing from climate-related risks.**

### **Desired Outcomes**

- The community has the knowledge and tools to respond to climate-related health risks and extreme weather events.
- Reduced risk of climate-related ill-health and wellbeing.
- Council is recognised as a trusted source of information on climate health risks.

<b>Strategic Actions</b>	<b>Council's role</b>
Provide clear, timely information and education to enhance community understanding and response to extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and poor air quality.	Educator
Share evidence-based health advice and build community understanding of climate-related health risks through local programs and partnerships.	Educator, Partner, Provider
Support mental wellbeing by offering resources, programs and opportunities to connect with nature to help community manage climate-related stress and anxiety.	Educator, Partner, Provider

<sup>7</sup> Emergency Leaders for Climate Action. (2024). *Too close to home: How we keep communities safer from escalating climate impacts*.



Strategic Actions	Council's role
Improve community access to thermally comfortable public spaces during extreme weather events to reduce risks like heat stress.	Educator, Planner, Provider
Collaborate with key stakeholders to include community health and wellbeing in climate-health policy and planning.	Educator, Partner, Planner

## Goal 2: Council operations, assets, and services are resilient to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events.

### Desired Outcomes

- Council facilities, services, and communications are prepared for climate impacts and extreme weather events.
- Open spaces and outdoor infrastructure are designed to remain safe and accessible in hotter conditions.
- Nature-based solutions are used to reduce climate related impacts, such as urban heat.
- People and places most at risk from climate-related hazards are prioritised.

Strategic Actions	Council's role
Strengthen the resilience of Council infrastructure, services, and communication systems to ensure continued delivery of essential services to protect community wellbeing throughout extreme weather events.	Advocate, Partner, Planner, Provider
Strategic Actions	Council's role
Review and update staff and service delivery policies to ensure worker safety, mental wellbeing, and uninterrupted service during climate-related disruptions.	Regulator
In line with Council standards, integrate heat-resilient and accessible design features into open space and outdoor infrastructure, to reduce heat stress risks and encourage safe physical activity during hotter conditions.	Provider
Develop, implement and monitor guidelines to support integration of best practice nature-based solutions (e.g. tree planting) into Council led projects to cool areas, support mental wellbeing and reduce climate-related health risks.	Planner, Provider

Strategic Actions	Council's role
Identify people and places most vulnerable to climate-related health hazards, such as heat and poor air quality, to guide targeted health protection and adaptation planning.	Educator, Partner, Planner

### Goal 3: The community is prepared for climate impacts and extreme weather events.

#### Desired Outcomes

- Residents and businesses are equipped to manage disruptions to essential services and infrastructure.
- More homes are resilient to extreme weather and climate impacts.
- Residents understand the role of insurance in managing climate-related risks.

Strategic Actions	Council's role
Advocate for improved essential services and infrastructure, and disaster preparedness and recovery support.	Advocate
Support community-led climate adaptation initiatives such as community emergency groups.	Educator, Partner
Provide guidance and advocate for support to increase property's climate resilience.	Advocate, Educator
Partner and deliver education initiatives to increase awareness of insurance options and underinsurance risks.	Educator, Partner

## Playspace Chat

### How to use this board:

- Point to the symbols to share a message with someone
- You can talk while you point at the symbols
- If someone can not point, you can read out the words as you point and they can say yes or no
- Scan the QR code to use this board on your phone or tablet



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Priority 2:

**Improving mental wellbeing**



## Priority 2: Improving mental wellbeing

### Why is this a priority?

Poor mental health is a major issue in Yarra Ranges, particularly evident since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents have a high prevalence of long-term mental health conditions, particularly amongst young people and females; and more than 1 in 4 adults have high/very high levels of psychological distress. Disability related to mental health affects 10% of NDIS recipients in Yarra Ranges. More than one in five adults are lonely, and nearly one in four have low or medium life satisfaction. There has been a large rise in older residents being admitted to hospital for dementia. Residents have high and rising usage of mental health prescription medication and treatment services; and high use of hospital and emergency departments for mental health, including self-harm and attempted suicide.

These issues particularly affect children, teenagers and young adults. High school students and school leavers have also experienced reduced connections with education and employment since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and worse educational outcomes.

Yarra Ranges has a shortage of local referral and treatment services, such as general practitioners and psychiatrists. Service access is one of many issues contributing to poor mental health in Yarra Ranges. Being unable to see a GP when needed or having no private health insurance are associated with higher levels of psychological distress.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Yarra Ranges Council. (2024). *Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of the Yarra Ranges: Summary Report*.

**Goal 1: People feel a sense of belonging and strong community connection.**

<b>Desired Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public spaces and townships foster belonging, and connection to place and nature.</li> <li>Council's role in community strengthening is clear and coordinated.</li> <li>More people feel connected and mentally well through community participation.</li> <li>Council facilities support inclusion and connection across all ages and abilities.</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategic Actions</b>	<b>Council's role</b>
Work with communities to improve public spaces and support placemaking that brings people together.	Partner, Planner, Provider
Deliver programs and services that support community connection, inclusion, and civic engagement.	Educator, Partner, Provider
Embed an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach within Council and community practice.	Educator, Partner, Planner
Collaborate with community members and key partners to foster inclusion, strengthen social cohesion, and support the communities of Burma in Yarra Ranges.	Advocate, Partner
Strengthen relationships and networks to support local community groups to take action in achieving desired outcomes for community.	Partner, Provider
Via Council's grants program, fund and promote community-led projects that foster belonging, creativity, and cultural participation.	Partner, Provider
Fund and partner with Neighbourhood Houses to support social connection, lifelong learning and volunteering.	Partner, Provider
Create inclusive place-based opportunities for children, young people and families to have a say and get involved in shaping their community and Council services.	Educator, Partner, Planner, Provider
Undertake research and engagement to guide needs-based allocation of resources for the building, upgrading and maintenance of community facilities.	Advocate, Partner, Planner



**Goal 2: People have better access to mental health supports and services.**

<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community know where and how to access mental health support.</li> <li>Families are better equipped to support mental wellbeing.</li> <li>Council has strong place-based partnerships to improve wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and families.</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategic Actions</b>	<b>Council's role</b>
Work with local services and communities to better coordinate support for mental health and wellbeing.	Advocate, Partner
Work with partners to support and promote community-led initiatives that build mental wellbeing, resilience and social connection.	Educator, Partner
Build the skills and capacity of young people and families, to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes.	Partner, Planner, Provider
Strengthen place-based partnerships and programs to support health and wellbeing.	Partner, Planner, Provider
Advocate for improved access to services.	Advocate, Planner
Seek partnerships or funding opportunities which target increased availability of mental wellbeing supports and services.	Advocate, Educator, Partner, Provider

**Goal 3: People have better access to emergency, social and affordable housing.**

<b>Desired Outcome</b>	
<b>3A:</b> Community members in need are supported to access suitable housing.	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Council's role</b>
Work with local services to better coordinate support for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.	Advocate, Partner
Advocate for increased investment in social and affordable housing and homelessness services.	Advocate, Partner





Priority 3:

## **Increasing community capacity to lead healthy lives**



## Priority 3: Increasing community capacity to lead healthy lives

### Why is this a priority?

Chronic (long-term) diseases are a major cause of ill-health. Some physical health issues and risks have worsened since the pandemic. In Yarra Ranges, 35% of residents report at least one long-term health condition, compared to 31% across Victoria. The most common conditions in Yarra Ranges are mental health issues, asthma, arthritis, diabetes and heart disease. Rates are higher than the Victorian average for mental health conditions (seventh highest), asthma, arthritis and cancer. Dental health is also an issue – a high level of residents have gum disease. Females and older residents were much more likely to have chronic health issues.

Chronic diseases are the main cause of death for most residents, including coronary heart disease (10.5% of deaths in Yarra Ranges), dementia (8%), lung cancer (6%), cerebrovascular disease (6%), chronic lung disease (4%) and colorectal cancer (3%). Yarra Ranges has had a rising level of avoidable deaths amongst men aged less than 75. Death rates are high for heart and lung disease, accidental falls, some cancers, influenza and pneumonia. Hospital admissions for dementia nearly tripled in the four years to 2022/23, making it the second most common cause of death. Emergency department use for heart issues and pneumonia also rose. Cancer screening rates dropped during the pandemic.

Healthy eating, regular exercise, and avoiding smoking, vaping and drinking regularly reduce the risk of chronic disease. But many of these behaviours remain challenging across Australia. In 2023, in the Yarra Ranges:

- 37% of adults drank sugary drinks daily or a few times a week.
- 61% of adults did not exercise enough each week (average level)
- Nearly 60% of adults were overweight or live with obesity (average level)
- 7% vaped daily (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria)
- 8% smoked daily (below State average)
- 8% of adults had been sunburnt several times in the past year.
- 17% of adults were at increased risk of alcohol-related harm or injury (above the 13% Victorian average).

Alcohol treatment and hospital admissions rose substantially during the pandemic.

Food security is also a concern. In 2023, 8.9% of adults (compared to 8% across Victoria) ran out of food at some point in the past year and could not afford to buy more – up from 8% in 2020. 10.5% had been worried about becoming food insecure.<sup>9</sup>

Health risks are made worse by poor access to human services. Yarra Ranges faces critical shortages in almost all health professions, including GPs, specialists, nurses, midwives, and allied health workers. It has the third highest health workforce shortfall in Melbourne. Access to childcare is also very low, with implications for early childhood development and education outcomes.

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<sup>9</sup> Yarra Ranges Council. (2024). *Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of the Yarra Ranges: Summary Report*.

## Goal 1: The community has increased capacity to access healthy, affordable food.

<b>Desired Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased consumption of minimally processed foods and reduced consumption of discretionary foods.</li> <li>Fewer people experience food insecurity.</li> </ul>	
Strategic Actions	Council's role
Deliver and support healthy eating initiatives.	Advocate, Educator, Partner, Planner, Provider
Strengthen food security through local and regional partnerships.	Advocate, Educator, Partner, Planner, Provider

## Goal 2: The community has access to substance-free spaces and activities.

<b>Desired Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced risk of harm from alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes.</li> </ul>	
Strategic Actions	Council's role
Promote and provide substance-free environments, activities, and health campaigns.	Educator, Partner, Provider



### Goal 3: Neighbourhoods provide a wider range of accessible options to participate in physical activity.

Desired Outcome	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People have more opportunities to be physically active.</li> </ul>	
Strategic Actions	Council's role
Increase inclusive, safe and accessible options for physical activity through infrastructure, programs, and partnerships.	Advocate, Educator, Partner, Planner, Provider
Design and maintain parks, play spaces, and outdoor exercise equipment that encourage all ages and abilities to participate.	Advocate, Partner, Planner, Provider
Support access to local balance and strength activities that help older people improve agility and reduce the risk of falls.	Educator
Facilitate learn to ride programs to encourage the uptake of cycling as an accessible physical activity.	Educator, Partner, Provider



Priority 4:

## **Creating safe and more inclusive communities**

## Priority 4: Creating safe and more inclusive communities

### Why is this a priority?

Under the *Family Violence Protection Amendment Act (2017)* councils must specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence, when preparing municipal public health and wellbeing plans<sup>10</sup>.

The *Gender Equality Act (2020)* requires the public sector, councils and universities to undertake Gender Impact Assessments when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service, that has a direct and significant impact on the public<sup>11</sup>.

While Yarra Ranges is a relatively safe community, some groups face higher risks – particularly older people, young people, and those affected by family violence. Key safety issues include family violence, falls amongst older residents, and drowning. Preventing falls is essential for healthy ageing. Preventing family violence is crucial for protecting the physical and mental health of women and children and ensuring their safety and wellbeing, and social and economic security.

### Family violence

Yarra Ranges has a below average rate of family violence. Family violence increased by 18% during the pandemic but declined in 2023. However, over the past four years, there has been a sharp rise in older victims—those aged 55 and over—and significant changes in the age of perpetrators. The number of perpetrators aged over 55 more than doubled (up 103%), while those aged 0-17 increased by 72%. Most victims of family violence were female, and most perpetrators were male.

<sup>10</sup> State Government of Victoria. (2025). *Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2017 (Part 7)*.

<sup>11</sup> State Government of Victoria. (2025). *Gender Equality Act 2020*.



**Goal 1: Our community works together to prevent all forms of violence.**

<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced levels of violence against women and children</li> <li>Reduced levels of elder abuse</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategic Actions</b>	<b>Council's role</b>
Promote gender equality and prevent violence against women and children through whole-of-Council action.	Advocate, Educator, Partner, Planner, Provider
During emergency events, provide key messages regarding the increased risk of family violence, and information about local support services.	Educator, Partner
Work with partners, including the Together for Equality and Respect Partnership, promote gender equality and prevent violence against women and children.	Advocate, Educator, Partner, Planner, Provider
Support community-led initiatives that promote gender equality, respectful relationships and healthy masculinities.	Advocate, Partner
Promote respect for older people and strengthen community capacity to prevent elder abuse.	Educator, Partner, Provider
Empower older people to manage scam risks.	Educator, Partner

**Goal 2: Our community has equitable access to spaces and services where everyone feels welcome and included.**

<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased access to safe, accessible and inclusive Council spaces and services.</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategic Actions</b>	<b>Council's role</b>
Apply accessibility principles and conduct "lived experience" site visits with relevant community representatives to identify improvement opportunities in parks and playspaces.	Partner, Provider
Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and Gender Inclusive principles to enhance safety, belonging and accessibility in parks and civic spaces.	Planner, Provider

Strategic Actions	Council's role
Develop a Code of Conduct for people hiring/leasing Council venues to ensure safety and inclusion for all, including how to report concerns or complaints.	Educator, Provider
Establish a Human Rights and Social Equity position statement to guide Council's decision making, service delivery and community engagement, ensuring fair access, inclusion and respect for the rights and dignity of all residents.	Partner, Planner, Provider

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# Advocacy

In addition to the priorities of the Strategy, there are other areas where Council will take an advocacy role. These advocacy priorities point to important systemic issues and the social determinants of health. Many are a longstanding focus for Council, they are:

## **Increase housing opportunities and partnerships**

- Increased state and federal government investment in social and affordable housing and homelessness services.

## **Increase health services**

- Sustainable funding for the integrated Aboriginal community-controlled health service.
- Better access to health prevention, early intervention and health care services, particularly for children, young people, and vulnerable population groups.

## **Increase safety and inclusion**

- Improved public and community transport to increase service access in outer areas.
- Create and foster culturally safe and inclusive services and spaces, particularly for women, young people and diverse groups.

## **Increase physical activity**

- Increased funding to improve walking, cycling and transport routes.
- Support for infrastructure upgrades to create inclusive recreation and sporting facilities.

## **Increase climate adaptation and reduced impacts of extreme weather**

- Increased place-based funding and resources to help communities to adapt to the health impacts of climate change.
- Resilient telecommunications and energy infrastructure for communities and households.

## **Increase food security**

- Increased investment in food hub infrastructure such as regional food hubs, community gardens, markets, and local agribusinesses.

## Governance and reporting

Council reviews the Health and Wellbeing Strategy each year to track progress and assess whether actions are achieving the intended outcomes, need adjusting, or should be continued, stopped or replaced. This keeps the Strategy relevant and responsive to community needs. Reviews may also identify new actions in response to emerging issues. Each annual review will be published on Council's website.

These reviews help celebrate achievements, inform other Council strategies, policies and plans, guide funding decisions, and highlight partnership opportunities. The final-year review will have a longer-term view, focusing on the Strategy's overall impact and outcomes, aligned with the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework.<sup>12</sup>

Council is developing performance indicators to measure outcomes and will seek feedback from its advisory committees as part of the review process.

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee and Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee will provide ongoing advice and input into the Strategy's implementation. Neither committee has authority to make decisions on behalf of Council, nor do they have delegated authority to act for or incur expenditure on behalf of Council.

### Health & Wellbeing Advisory Committee

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee meets every 8 weeks and includes 12 endorsed community members, representing all regions of the Yarra Ranges. The committee provides advice, insights and feedback on the Strategy's development, implementation and review.

### Health & Wellbeing Steering Committee

The Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee meets quarterly, and includes organisations with an interest and/or role in community health and wellbeing issues in Yarra Ranges. The committee offers guidance to support the implementation of the Strategy, align efforts, and raise emerging trends or identified health and wellbeing issues for the Yarra Ranges community.

<sup>12</sup>State Government of Victoria (2024) *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework*.

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# Appendix 1

## Supporting strategies, policies and plans – Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029

Strategy/Policy/Plan	Key Aim
<b>Active Recreation Plan 2023</b>	This plan aims to identify: Opportunities for the activation of existing assets; Design features that can be used in new asset design and retrofitted to existing assets to help make active recreation easy and enjoyable; Equity in providing opportunities for people to be active in Yarra Ranges.
<b>Aquatic and Leisure Strategy 2022-2033</b>	Provides a 10-year road map towards a diverse network of aquatic and leisure facilities. Our facilities will deliver adventure, leisure, education, health and fitness and therapy-based programs, and participation opportunities for our community.
<b>Early and Middle Years Plans (in development)</b>	Support children aged 0 to 12 years and their families. These plans aim to foster a child-friendly Yarra Ranges, where children are meaningfully engaged and supported to thrive as they grow.
<b>Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2023-2030</b>	Presents a vision for a Yarra Ranges community working together towards a circular economy, minimising waste sent to landfill and maximising resources - avoiding waste, reusing and rehoming items wherever possible, sorting recycling well and minimising rubbish.
<b>Creative Communities Strategy 2018</b>	Council aims to foster a vibrant and inclusive creative sector by centring audience participation, celebrating local history and culture, and amplifying Indigenous voices. Key priorities include supporting local artists, developing education and employment pathways, and creating opportunities for community leadership and cultural expression.
<b>Disability Action Plan 2025-2029</b>	Improving accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities and unpaid carers by enhancing public facilities, parks, and transport pathways, providing clear accessibility information online. Supporting inclusive community programs such as Maternal and Child Health Services, Pathways for Carers, community grants, and accessible recreation. Ensuring

	inclusion in emergency planning and capacity-building initiatives.
<b>Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032</b>	Focuses on protecting and regenerating the environment, community, cultural heritage, and local character while building a diverse, resilient economy that adapts to climate change, the circular economy, and workforce challenges. Supports local businesses by streamlining permits, strengthening regional networks, and fostering partnerships. Key initiatives include workforce development, career expos, growing the night-time economy, and driving innovation through mentorship, collaboration, and innovation hubs.
<b>Environment Strategy 2015-2025</b>	Protects natural resources, supports sustainable land and water management, and strengthens climate resilience through sustainable agriculture, adaptable infrastructure, and reduced carbon reliance. It engages the community via environmental education, sustainable transport advocacy, Indigenous land management collaboration, and support for local sustainability initiatives. Key priorities include preserving agricultural land, enhancing local food systems, conserving valued landscapes, and greening urban spaces.
<b>Council Heat Health Policy (internal)</b>	Sets out Council's workforce policy for high heat days.
<b>Healthy Active Ageing Plan (in development)</b>	Supports older adults (aged 50+ years) and their carers. This Plan responds to the demographic shift taking place towards an ageing population and seeks to support Yarra Ranges residents to age well.
<b>Housing Strategy 2024</b>	Guides housing growth in the Yarra Ranges by identifying suitable locations, aligning with population changes, and supporting diverse housing needs. It will also promote affordability, sustainability, and urban consolidation while providing clarity for the community and developers.
<b>Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026</b>	Commitment to reconciliation by fostering strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, promoting cultural awareness, and celebrating key events like NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week. Key actions include anti-discrimination efforts, cultural learning, creating culturally



safe environments, and improving employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040**

Includes a suite of actions designed to make walking and cycling the first choice for the many short trips that occur every day within our local neighbourhood; Street designs that make walking and cycling safe, including prioritised crossing points, dedicated lanes for cycling and lower speed limits in built up areas; Expand the footpath network across Yarra Ranges; Advocate for much-needed transport infrastructure.

**Integrated Water Management Plan 2017**

Aims to improve water security and protect against drought, bushfire, heat, and rising costs by managing the entire water cycle. Key goals: Reduce potable water use; Increase use of rainwater, stormwater, and recycled water; Apply best practice stormwater management to protect waterways and reuse stormwater; Minimise wastewater discharges; Ensure sustainable use of groundwater and surface water.

**Key Life Stages Plan (in development)**

An integrated strategy that supports children, families, young people and the ageing population. It adopts a life-course approach, recognising that our health and wellbeing needs to be supported proactively and continuously to enable positive outcomes throughout the lifespan.

**Liveable Climate Plan 2030**

Envisions a climate-ready Yarra Ranges with energy-efficient buildings, 100% renewable energy, and a strong circular economy. It prioritises green spaces, summer shade, food security, and sustainable transport to create healthy, walkable neighbourhoods with equitable access for all. By supporting active travel, public transport, and electric vehicles, it reduces emissions while ensuring a low-carbon, resilient future for the community.

**Melbourne East Region Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy 2024**

Addresses known barriers experienced by women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people in accessing and using community sports and recreation infrastructure. It aims to progressively build the capacity and capabilities of the Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy Group and associated stakeholders in identifying and eliminating systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs,

	communications, and delivery and allocation of community sports and recreation infrastructure.
<b>Municipal Emergency Management Plan</b>	Outlines the shared responsibilities of government, emergency services, and communities in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. It serves as the overarching framework for emergency management, supported by hazard-specific and response-based plans to ensure coordinated service delivery.
<b>Nature Plan 2024-2034</b>	Aims to integrate Indigenous land management, expand environmental education, and support community-led conservation. Key initiatives include cultural awareness programs, Indigenous ranger employment, citizen science, and nature-based learning. The strategy enhances biodiversity, urban greening, and sustainable land management while strengthening community engagement in sustainability.
<b>Open Space Strategy</b> (in development)	Aims to enhance health and wellbeing by activating and better connecting existing spaces while prioritising environmental sustainability. It recognises the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, ensures spaces cater to diverse community needs, and promotes a well-integrated network for recreation, social interaction, and biodiversity.
<b>Paths and Trails Plan 2024-2034</b> (in development)	A 10-year plan to guide investment into existing and new trails throughout the Shire.
<b>People and Dogs in Parks Plan</b> (in development)	Recognises the important role dogs play in people's lives, supporting physical and mental well-being. The objective is to balance the needs of dog owners with those of the broader community by providing safe, well-planned off-leash areas while ensuring open space remains accessible and environmentally protected. This includes improving education, regulation, and standards for off-leash areas to accommodate current and future populations.
<b>Playspace Plan 2019-2029</b>	Recognises the importance of play for all people. Play is a fundamental component of health, wellbeing and community resilience. Play provides physical, social, cognitive and creative benefits for children, teenagers, and adults of all abilities. This

	plan defines a framework for the provision of play spaces across the Yarra Ranges municipality.
<b>Sport and infrastructure plan</b> (in development)	Focuses on improving sports and recreation infrastructure, promoting active lifestyles, and ensuring healthy, connected communities.
<b>Strategic Asset Plan 2022-2032</b>	Sets out how Council proposes to fund the acquisition/creation, maintenance, operation, upgrade/expansion and renewal of the assets it owns, to help achieve the objectives defined in the Community Vision and Council Plan. Planning relating to the management and maintenance of footpaths, reserves, parks, play spaces, trails, community centres, swimming pools, splash parks, sporting pavilions. Includes safety features such as lighting, change rooms, accessibility etc.
<b>Tree Canopy Strategy 2024-2044</b>	Sets our vision, objectives and targets for the long-term protection, management and planting of trees in Yarra Ranges. Our tree planting will prioritise the urban parts of Yarra Ranges in built up areas where canopy cover is low or declining. Amongst other things, the strategy commits to increasing tree canopy cover for all activity centres, key pedestrian routes, play spaces and bio links between areas with recognised biodiversity value.
<b>Workforce Plan 2022-2026</b>	Commitment to deepening Council's traineeships/partnering with educational providers. Commitment to action on gender equity through initiatives like the Gender Equality Action Plan.
<b>Youth Plan</b> (in development)	Supports young people aged 12 to 25 years. This Plan prioritises young people's safety, connectedness, and sense of empowerment, and recognises the importance of their voices in shaping their community.
<b>YR Ignite Strategy 2021-2025</b>	Embed the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to sustainable community-driven development. Progress the Gender Equality Action Plan and build our practice in delivering Gender Impact Assessments.

**Attachments**

Attachment 1: [Health Wellbeing Strategy Community Engagement Report](#)

Attachment 2: [Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of Yarra Ranges: Summary Report](#)

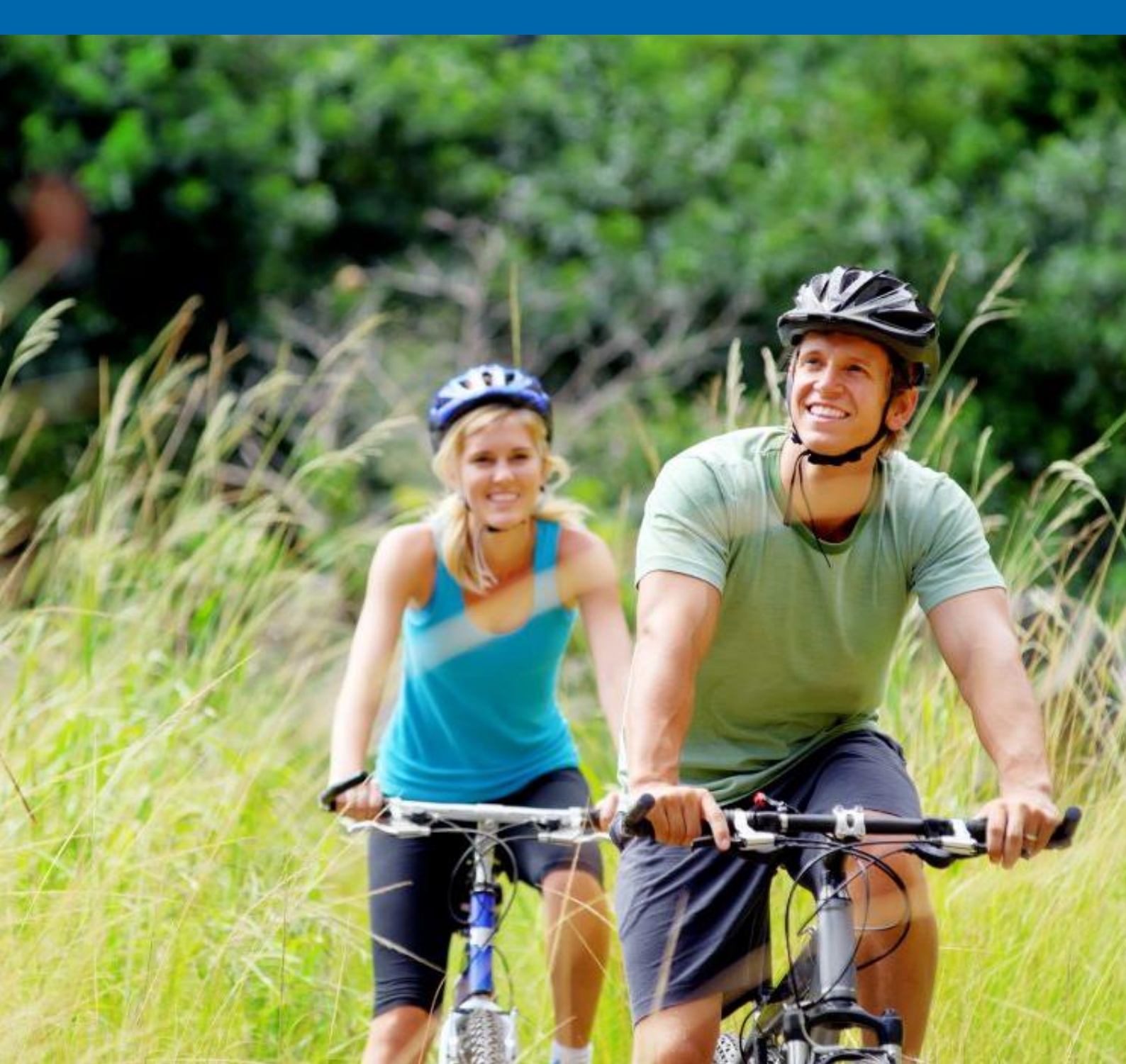
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Yarra Ranges **Council**

# **Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of Yarra Ranges: Summary Report**

**Document prepared by:** Social Infrastructure Planning team 2024/25



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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## Disclaimer

This report is published to give general information and does not purport to be complete. In addition, the publication is a snapshot in time based on historic information, which is liable to change. The Yarra Ranges Council accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability for error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on information contained in this report.

### The data published in this report has derived from various sources, including:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022). *Yarra Ranges 2021 Census All Persons QuickStats*.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). *Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: Interactive data on risk factor burden*.
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- Yarra Ranges Council (2025). *Yarra Ranges Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025*.

## What health issues are we seeing in Yarra Ranges?

Yarra Ranges is a large municipality with numerous different communities, set in extensive green space in outer eastern Melbourne. It has a high level of community involvement in volunteering and carer roles. Incomes are above average, and housing is more affordable than in inner Melbourne. Many residents work locally. Yarra Ranges is very safe, with low crime rates and a high level of civic trust. Most residents feel that multiculturalism makes life in the area better, and there is a low level of reported racism. Yarra Ranges has good maternal and infant health and also has good health status amongst its older residents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Yarra Ranges had the lowest level of COVID-19 deaths in metropolitan Melbourne, and a low level of serious illness from COVID-19.

However, the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 exacerbated a range of health and social issues, particularly for young people; and may have contributed to poorer mental health status and educational outcomes. Emergencies such as the June 2021 storms and the cost-of-living crisis have since placed further stresses on the community. Key health and social issues include:

1. **Very high and rising levels of mental health problems.**
2. **Poor health and wellbeing amongst children and young people.** Issues include poor mental health, rising disability and developmental delay amongst children, falling levels of participation in school and tertiary education, rising youth unemployment, ill-health amongst Year 12 students, increased social disconnection, rising child crime, rising sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), transport injuries, lack of access to housing, and lack of access to further education and employment opportunities.
3. **The health and wellbeing impacts of climate change,** natural disasters and environmental degradation. Potential direct impacts include ill-health, injuries and deaths due to heat stress, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, infectious diseases, hypothermia, food poisoning, allergies, mental health issues, injuries, drownings and malnutrition. Indirect impacts include reduced water quality, food security and safety, and air quality; and increases in infectious diseases. The socio-economic impacts include effects on employment, personal and business finances, housing, transport, and social connections; and access to open space, services, infrastructure, information and communications, and power and water. Yarra Ranges has the highest bushfire risk in the country, the second-highest level in Melbourne of properties at high or medium risk from climate change, the third-highest ranking in Victoria for storm hotspots, and the second-highest national ranking for seeking assistance for recovering from disasters.
4. **Chronic and infectious diseases, and health risk factors.** Some physical health issues and risks have worsened since the pandemic. Factors such as diet and exercise are longstanding national public health challenges, although locally, sports participation appears to be recovering. Screening for chronic diseases has fallen. Dementia is a growing health issue for



older residents - it is the number two cause of death in Yarra Ranges, and hospital admissions have tripled over the past few years. Yarra Ranges has a high rate of deaths from heart failure, respiratory and lung disease, accidental falls, and some forms of cancer. The level of some antibiotic-resistant infections is rising, with diseases appearing which were unseen locally before 2020.

5. **Lack of access to human services** - including accessibility, availability, affordability and use of health screening. Yarra Ranges has a major shortage of nearly every type of health worker, ranking 3<sup>rd</sup>-highest in Melbourne for its workforce shortfall. It also has a very low level of childcare access, with implications for early childhood development and education.
6. **Community safety**, including family violence, falls amongst older residents, and a high level of road deaths and injuries. Drownings are also increasing, although local-level data are limited.

Health status varies by suburb and township within Yarra Ranges, with some areas having much worse health and less access to services. These variations tend to be linked to socio-economic characteristics, such as income, housing affordability, insurance and utility costs, food security, transport access, health service access, and education and employment levels.

**Community strengths include:**

- Yarra Ranges has a low and falling total level of crime, and a very low level of hospital admissions for assault. It has a below average rate of family violence.
- During the height of the pandemic, Yarra Ranges had the lowest level of deaths in Melbourne from COVID-19, with a low level of cases and hospital admissions.
- Yarra Ranges tends to have a low level of infectious diseases. It avoided the upwards spike in respiratory infections such as influenza and pneumonia, which occurred across Australia during 2022. It has also avoided the national trend for significant growth in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- After years of rapid growth in the level of residents with diabetes, the rate has stabilised and remains below the national average.
- Maternal and infant health is good. Children in Yarra Ranges have high levels of childhood immunisation. Over the past few years, the level of pre-term births, low birthweight babies and small-for-age babies has fallen considerably. Vaccine-preventable infectious childhood diseases have been declining over the past few years.
- Older residents also have very good health, with low or average levels of hospital admissions for most diseases. Their main health risks are dementia, falls and pneumonia.
- Indigenous residents in Yarra Ranges have below average hospital admissions, compared both to non-Indigenous residents, and to Indigenous residents across Victoria.

- High-level health indicators are good, with total hospital admissions falling over the past four years, and a below average level of deaths. Total deaths amongst under-75s have fallen.
- Smoking rates amongst adults in Yarra Ranges have remained stable over the past few years and are below the Victorian average.
- Yarra Ranges has a very high level of tree canopy cover, protecting against the health impacts of urban heat.

## Snapshot of health status in Yarra Ranges

### Mental health

- 26% of adults with high/very high psychological distress (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the state) 2023
- 10.3% of residents with diagnosed mental health conditions (7<sup>th</sup> highest in Melbourne with 13% females and 8% males) 2021
- 22.1% of adults experiencing loneliness, compared to 23.3% in Victoria 2023.

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of residents with diagnosed mental health conditions	10.3%	8.8%	2021
% of adults seeking professional help for a mental health problem in past 12 months	24%	20%	2023
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds * <b>Note</b> this data covers a period during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.	40% ↑		2019/20 to 2022/23

### Children and young people

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Increase in number of 5–14-year-olds with a disability	47% ↑		2016-2021
Change in number of sexually transmitted disease notifications, 15–24-year-olds	9.1% ↑		2019-2023
Growth in teenage birth rates, 15–19-year-olds	36% ↑	-10%	2019 to 2020

## Climate impacts

- 26% The number of hospital admissions for heat stroke for 2022/23 exceeded 450

## Chronic diseases & health risk

- 8.9% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, compared with 8% in Victoria (2023)
- 23% of Yarra Ranges adults with fair/poor dental health, compared with 27% in Victoria (2023)
- 61% of Yarra Ranges adults with insufficient weekly exercise, compared with 64% in Victoria (2023).

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of residents with at least one long-term health condition	35%	31%	2021
% of residents with diabetes	4.7%	6.1% (AUS)	March 2023
% of adults overweight or obese	57%	54%	2023
% of adults who smoke daily	8%	10%	2023
% of adults who vape daily	7% (3 <sup>rd</sup> highest)	4.5%	2023
Risk of increased harm from alcohol-related disease or injury	17%	13%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	19%	19.5%	2023

## Safety and inclusion

- 35% increase in change in crimes amongst 10–17-year-olds in Yarra Ranges from March 2019 to March 2024
- 16% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced discrimination, equal to Victoria (2023)
- 3% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced racism, compared to 7% in Victoria (2023)

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Family violence incidents per 100,000	1,224	1,366	2022/23

Crime rate per 100,000	<b>3,042</b>	5,536	2023
Deaths from accidental falls, rate per 100,000	<b>11.5</b>	9.7 (AUS)	2017-2021 combined

## Demographic snapshot for Yarra Ranges, 2021

Census 2021 indicators	Yarra Ranges	Victoria
Estimated resident population (2023)	<b>158,694</b>	
Indigenous residents	<b>1.1%</b>	1.0%
Born in Australia	<b>79.4%</b>	65.0%
Adults LGBTIQ+	<b>11.0%</b>	11.0%
Residents with a disability	<b>5.4%</b>	5.9%
% aged 65+	<b>17.2%</b>	16.4%
% aged 0-24	<b>30.6%</b>	30.2%
Providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability or health condition	<b>14.7%</b>	12.9%
Doing voluntary work through an organisation or group (2021)	<b>15.5%</b>	13.3%
Family households	<b>76.7%</b>	70.1%
Attending tertiary education	<b>20.6%</b>	24.5%
Level of separate houses	<b>93.7%</b>	73.4%
Households with a mortgage	<b>48.2%</b>	36.1%
Level of properties being rented	<b>14.0%</b>	28.5%

## How is health changing in Australia?

The lifespan of Australians is increasing, supported by the medical system's growing capacity to detect and treat health issues. However, 60% of Australians have at least one long-term health condition, and Australians are now spending more years living with ill-health. Treatments are continuing to increase in cost, creating economic challenges in responding to public health issues. The primary health care system is also responding to an ageing population, an increase in mental illness, and growing prevalence of complex multiple health conditions.

Australia's main health challenges over the past five years include the impacts of COVID-19, increasing chronic illnesses (including mental health) and climate change. Heart disease, dementia, COVID-19, cancer and other long-term illnesses were the main causes of death during this period. The impact of dementia will continue to grow as the population ages. Indigenous Australians continue to have worse health than other Australians. Vaping is a rapidly growing health issue, especially for young people. The level of people struggling to maintain a healthy weight continues to rise. The impact of climate change is forecast to increase exponentially, particularly extreme heat and storms. Other community health and wellbeing issues include cost of living - including the lack of affordable housing - and lack of access to health services for prevention and treatment.

There is a range of emerging health risks whose future health impacts are unknown. These include rising levels of vaping, changing in the prevalence and transmission of infectious diseases, ultra-processed foods accounting for most foods consumed, micro-plastics throughout the food chain and ecosystem, shifts in how social media and technology are used, growing concern about how social media and internet access impact social attitudes and concentration, and rising impacts of misinformation on civic trust and health literacy.

But despite these challenges, Australians have very high life expectancy, and this is increasing. Health screening has vastly improved cancer survival rates. COVID deaths in Australia were much lower than in most other high-income countries. Australians have very good access to health care compared to many areas of the world. Thus, communities have the capacity to mitigate many of the health risks facing them.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) does a two-yearly report on Australia's health and what has changed. This includes an overview of high-level health issues and changes in health status, summarised below.

### **Australians' life expectancy has fallen for the first time in 30 years**

*Australia's Health 2024* shows that Australians have lost a month from their life spans. For the first time since the mid-1990s, the life expectancy has decreased, falling by 0.1 years for both males and females between 2020 and 2022. This change is most likely to be due to the impact of COVID-19. In 2022, there was an increase in the total number of deaths, and nearly half of these were from the



virus. COVID-19 became the third leading cause of death in Australia in 2022 – the first time in more than 50 years that an infectious disease has been in the top five causes of death.

However, life expectancy is still trending upwards, with life expectancy in 2020-2022 higher than it was in 2017-19. Other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom saw much larger drops in life expectancy, of up to two years. Australian's life expectancy at birth is the fourth highest among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. A boy and a girl born in 2020–2022 can expect to live an average of 81.2 years and 85.3 years respectively.

## **Chronic conditions: heart disease still the biggest killer**

Chronic conditions have contributed to 90% of deaths over the past twenty years. As the population ages, the number of years that Australians spend in ill-health has increased from 8.7 years to 9.7 years in men, and from 10.2 to 11.5 years in women. Around three in five Australians are estimated to live with at least one long-term (chronic) health condition.

Coronary heart disease remains the leading cause of death in Australia; cancer is also a key cause of death. Over the past 20 years, the number of new cancer cases increased by 88% and deaths increased by 41%. Population growth and ageing is a key factor in rising cancer prevalence, along with dietary and other risk factors. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men.

Five-year cancer survival rates have improved, from 53% in 1990-1994 to 71% in 2015–2019. Screening has had an enormous impact on survival rates – for example, cervical cancer death rates have halved since the National Cervical Screening Program was introduced in 1991.

## **Dementia forecast to double over the next 35 years**

Dementia is expected to affect almost every Australian over the course of their lives. A 2023 AIHW survey found that two in every three people had a family member or friend living with dementia, and that one in four had cared for a family member or friend living with dementia. The AIHW predicts that the number of Australians with dementia will more than double over the next three decades, affecting 533,800 women and 315,500 men.

## **Indigenous Australians – Some improvements**

Death rates amongst Indigenous Australians have fallen for most age groups over the past decade. However, infant and child death rates have not improved.

Cancers are now the most common cause of death for Indigenous residents, taking over from cardiovascular disease. There continue to be large differences in social determinants and health risk factors between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

## Other health indicators

General practitioner (GP) attendances have been increasing steadily. Most Australians (86%) had a GP visit in 2022/23 which was subsidised by Medicare. Tobacco smoking has decreased but vaping has increased. More people are overweight or living with obesity, with this figure increasing by 10% over the past few decades.

## Community adaptation to climate-related health risks

### Key climate change risk indicators for Yarra Ranges

Indicator	Yarra Ranges	Time Period
Number of hospital admissions for heat stroke	>450	2022/23
National ranking for assistance seeking national disaster recovery funding	2nd highest	2006/07-2024
Victorian ranking for storm hotspots	3rd highest	2023
Number of properties at high risk from bushfire	10,317 (accounting for 3 of the top 10 areas in Australia)	2024
Forecast level of properties at high or medium risk from climate change	65% (2nd highest in Melbourne)	2030

Climate change has both direct and indirect health impacts. Direct impacts are caused by exposure to more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves. They include hypothermia, hyperthermia, heat stress, injury, drownings, trauma and death. For example, extreme heat has a major impact on health via heat stroke, exhaustion, cardiac conditions, respiratory illnesses and falls due to dehydration. Heatwaves are responsible for more deaths each year than any other type of disaster, including bushfires.

Indirect impacts include increases in infectious diseases; food and water insecurity; mental health issues; and impacts of existing chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. The social determinants of health are also affected, including cost of living (particularly due to rising food, insurance and power costs), housing, employment, income, transport, access to services and infrastructure, workplace safety, recreational opportunities, and social support networks.

Many of the health impacts of climate change apply across the state and the country. But they tend to have more impact in areas which are hotter, more prone to fire/flood/storms, and have high levels of vulnerable residents.

## Impacts so far

In 2023, impacts of extreme weather events included flooding or heavy rain, hail, extreme wind, cyclones and bushfires. Most Australians (84%) say they have been directly affected by at least one climate-fuelled disaster since 2019. More than 70% are concerned about climate change impacts including food and water security, more bushfires, more extreme events, higher insurance costs, more high heat days, and general health impacts.

- **Disasters.** Yarra Ranges has the second highest level of assistance seeking from national disaster recovery funding – it has sought and received assistance 42 times since 2006/07. Assistance was mostly sought due to storms (27), floods (17) and bushfires (5), with some events involving multiple hazards at the same time (e.g., bushfire and storm). Drownings in Victoria due to storms and disasters have increased by 1900% over the past ten years.
- **Storms.** Yarra Ranges ranks third in Victoria for storm hotspots. The impact of the June 2021 storms included: damage to and destruction of homes, businesses and roads; loss of power and internet for extended periods; fallen trees; blocked access to services and infrastructure; loss of communication, including the ability to contact emergency services; disruptions to schools, health services and transport; and loss of access to public space.
- **Food insecurity.** Food insecurity is gradually increasing (9% of adults in 2023). During the pandemic-related lockdowns in 2020, Yarra Ranges had the fourth-highest level of food insecurity in metropolitan Melbourne. Both cost of living issues and natural disasters are contributing to food insecurity.
- **Bushfires and high heat.** The 2019/20 bushfires saw a spike in respiratory and mental health issues amongst residents, an indication of what can be expected with future increases in high heat and bushfire risk days. There was a large spike in asthma admissions in 2022/23; this group is particularly at risk from smoke and fires. Yarra Ranges has the highest bushfire risk in Australia. Upper Yarra Valley, Mount Dandenong-Olinda and Belgrave-Selby are in the top ten local areas for risk across the entire country, with more than 10,000 properties considered at high risk.
- **Heat and cold.** Already, 39% of Victorians feel too cold in their home during winter and 44% feel too hot in their home during summer. There were more than 450 hospital admissions for heat stroke amongst Yarra Ranges residents in 2022/23. Residents have also experienced frequent impacts from heating or cooling failing due to power outages, as were seen in the 2019/20 extreme heat and the June 2021 storm impacting the Dandenong Ranges.

## Forecast impacts

Over the coming decades, Yarra Ranges can expect two to three times the number of days with temperatures above 35°C, lower annual rainfall with more storm events, and longer fire seasons with 42% more high fire danger days.

By 2030, 65% of properties in Yarra Ranges are forecast to be at high or medium risk from climate change (under a high greenhouse gas emissions scenario). This is the second-highest level in Melbourne - only Nillumbik has a higher risk (68%). The main type of risk is bushfire - 30.5% of properties were considered at medium to high risk for bushfire, rising to 43% by 2050 and 56% by 2100. Most suburbs had 20% to 100% of properties at medium to high risk. The areas with the highest risk are located in the Dandenong Ranges. These areas also have the lowest level of amenities, public transport and pedestrian infrastructure (note that these data were not available for most of the Yarra Valley).

Local human services expect that increased climate-related disasters and extreme weather events will impact service demand (51%), with access to climate resilient housing a challenge for low income households.

Council has a major role in supporting communities to adapt to the health impacts of climate change, and also in preparing for and responding to the impacts of emergencies.

### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Tackling climate change and its impacts on health*

## What changes do we want to see?

**Residents have the information and resources needed to protect against climate-related health and wellbeing risks**

- Reduced risk of climate-related ill-health, especially from heat.
- Everyone in the community has the climate risk information that they need.
- A high level of resident's view Council as a trusted source for information on how to protect against the health impacts of climate change.

**All aspects of Council work are adapted to function in changing conditions and emergency events**

- Council buildings, facilities, services and communications are prepared for the impacts of changing weather and extreme events.

- Open spaces and outdoor infrastructure are designed to reduce heat health risks and be usable in hotter summers.
- Nature-based solutions are used to reduce urban heat.
- The people and places at greatest risk from climate-fuelled disasters are protected.

#### The community is prepared for climate impacts and emergency events

- Residents and businesses are prepared for various types of disruptions (including loss of power/gas, loss of internet/phone, water contamination and transport disruptions).
- The community has improved understanding of on appropriate home insurance.

#### The community is protected from emerging public health issues and health hazards

- Reduced risk of health impacts from emerging public health issues and hazards (including infectious diseases, vector borne diseases, food poisoning and water contamination).
- Work towards these outcomes will be through the lens of age, gender, cultural diversity and place.

## Mental wellbeing and social connection

### Key mental health indicators for Yarra Ranges

Indicator	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of adults with high/very high psychological distress	<b>26% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	19%	2023
% of residents with diagnosed mental health conditions	<b>10.3% (7<sup>th</sup> highest in Melbourne)</b> <b>13% of females, 8% of males</b>	8.8%	2021
% of adults seeking professional help for a mental health problem in past 12 months	<b>24% (9<sup>th</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	20%	2023
Growth in rate of intentional self-harm hospital admissions, 0–24-year-olds	<b>25.5% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2020/21
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds * <b>Note</b> this data covers a period during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<b>40% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2022/23



Yarra Ranges has a connected community with a strong sense of place, and relatively high levels of involvement in community activities such as volunteering. But the COVID-19 pandemic has hit some groups in the community much harder than others, both triggering and worsening a range of mental health and other health issues. Young people and females have a much higher level of long-term mental health conditions, along with indigenous residents, persons with a disability and low income residents. Overall, Yarra Ranges has a high level of residents with high psychological distress. Disability related to mental health affects 10% of local NDIS recipients; two-thirds of NDIS recipients are aged less than 25. More than one in five adults are lonely, nearly one in four have low or medium life satisfaction, and one in eight do not feel valued by society. Residents have high and rising usage of mental health medication and services; and high use hospital admissions and emergency department treatment for mental health issues, including self-harm and attempted suicide. These issues affect children, teenagers and young adults the most.

High school students and school leavers have also experienced reduced connection with education and employment since the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, and worse educational outcomes. Older residents have experienced a large rise in hospital admissions for dementia over the past few years. Yarra Ranges has a major shortage of mental health referral and treatment services, such as general practitioners and psychiatrists, despite a very high level of need.

Yarra Ranges has a relatively high level of:

- Residents with long-term mental health conditions (10%) - Yarra Ranges ranks seventh highest across Melbourne. Mental health is the most prevalent long-term health condition amongst Yarra Ranges residents, particularly amongst women, teenagers and young adults.
- Adults with high psychological distress (26%) – Yarra Ranges is ranked third in Victoria.
- Adults seeking professional help with a mental health problem (24%) – Yarra Ranges is ranked ninth highest in Victoria.
- Mental health hospital admissions amongst children, teenagers and young adults.
- Young people on prescription medications for mental health issues. Yarra Ranges ranks second highest in Victoria for 0–17-year-olds receiving prescriptions, and sixth highest for 18–24-year-olds.

The past five years (since 2019) have also seen large increases in:

- Mental health-related hospital and emergency department use amongst young people.
- Hospital admissions for youth self-harm, and emergency department use for attempted suicide amongst children and young adults.
- Young people being prescribed mental health medications.
- Adults with high psychological distress.

- Families with young children who need emotional counselling.
- Use of psychiatrists, and use of mental health services by existing patients.
- Hospital use for dementia – there was a nearly 300% increase in admissions for Alzheimer’s disease.

Lack of access to services is contributing to poor mental health in Yarra Ranges. Being unable to see a GP when needed, or having no private health insurance, is associated with higher levels of psychological distress. Yarra Ranges lacks preventative and referral services such as general practitioners and psychiatrists.

Other factors associated with high psychological distress in Victorian local government areas include food insecurity, poor general health and life satisfaction, and not feeling socially connected (e.g., being lonely, not feeling valued by society, experiencing discrimination). Being in a couple or family with children household was a strong factor in protecting against mental health issues. This is in line with research during the pandemic, which found that three key issues linked to better mental health were: adequate income, social connection, and sufficient access to services.

Council works across these determinants of mental health. It is involved in projects to improve access to appropriate affordable food; advocacy and partnership work to improve service access; and a wide range of projects and grants aiming to improve social connection, and health and wellbeing. Its economic development work supports local employment and educational opportunities; these in turn support household income. Council grants, projects and partnership work all support emergency relief and other projects assisting disadvantaged communities.

#### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Improving wellbeing*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

### **People have better access to mental health supports and services**

- Increased access to and knowledge of available mental health supports.

### **People have better access to emergency, social and affordable housing**

- Community members in need, are supported to access suitable housing.

### **People feel a sense of belonging and have strong community connections**

- Council facilities are fit for purpose to support people of all ages and abilities to participate in community activities and build strong connections.

- Council's holistic planning with communities increases amenity, liveability and sustainability of our townships.
- Council's role in strengthening communities is articulated in its Community Strengthening Strategy.
- Increased mental wellbeing through community connection and participation in civic life.

## Community capacity to lead healthy lives

### Key indicators for chronic diseases and health risk in Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of residents with at least one long-term health condition	<b>35% (38% of females, 32% of males)</b>	31%	2021
% of residents with diabetes	<b>4.7%</b>	6.1% (Australia)	March 2023
% of adults overweight or obese	<b>57%</b>	54%	2023
% of adults consuming sugary drinks daily or a few times per week, during the past week	<b>37%</b>	34%	2023
% of adults who experienced food insecurity in past 12 months	<b>8.9</b>	8%	2023
% of adults with gum disease	<b>23.9% (6th highest)</b>	20.3%	2023
% of adults with fair/poor dental health	<b>23%</b>	27%	2023
% of adults with insufficient weekly exercise	<b>61%</b>	64%	2023
% of residents participating in sport	<b>16%</b>	n/a	2022
% of adults who smoke daily	<b>8%</b>	10%	2023
% of adults who vape daily	<b>7% (3rd highest)</b>	4.5%	2023
% of adults at risk of increased harm from alcohol-related disease or injury	<b>17%</b>	13%	2023
Rise in hospital admissions for dementia	<b>286% ↑</b>	17%	2018/19-2022/23
% of adults with no private health insurance	<b>49%</b>	45%	2023

% of adults who delayed visit to dentist due to cost, during the past 12 months	<b>30%</b>	32%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	<b>19%</b>	19.5%	2023

## Prevalence of chronic diseases

Chronic (long-term) diseases and lifestyle risk factors are a major cause of ill-health in all areas of Australia. In Yarra Ranges, 35% of residents had at least one long-term health condition, compared to 31% of Victorian residents. Mental health issues, asthma, arthritis, diabetes and heart disease are the most common conditions in Yarra Ranges, and residents were above average for mental health conditions, asthma, arthritis and cancer. Dental health is also an issue – Yarra Ranges has a high level of residents with gum disease. Females and older residents aged 65 plus were much more likely to have chronic health issues.

Chronic diseases are also the main cause of death for most residents. These include coronary heart disease (10.5% of deaths in Yarra Ranges), dementia (8%), lung cancer (6%), cerebrovascular disease (6%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD - 4%) and colorectal cancer (3%). Yarra Ranges has experienced a rising level of avoidable deaths amongst men aged less than 75. Yarra Ranges has a high rate of deaths from heart and lung disease, accidental falls, some forms of cancer, and influenza and pneumonia. Hospital admissions for dementia nearly tripled in the four years to 2022/23. There was also growth in emergency department use for conditions including heart issues and pneumonia. Local cancer screening rates dropped during the pandemic.

## Risk and protective factors

Eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and not smoking/vaping/drinking regularly, all help to reduce the risk of chronic disease. People do not need huge improvements in diet, exercise and sleep to reduce our health risks. The first ever study to examine the minimum improvements across all three behaviours required for measurable improvements in health outcomes, found that slight changes substantially reduce the risk of early death. The risk of premature death was reduced by at least 10% if people slept for 15 minutes more a day, plus did an additional 1.6 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity a day and ate an additional one and a half pieces of fruit or half a serving of vegetables a day. This is if people make slight improvements across all three behaviours. For people whose sleep, physical activity and diet were poor, combined increases of 75 minutes a day of sleep, 12.5 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity and a 25-point improvement in

diet (five points equating to one less serving of processed meat a week, or an extra half serving of vegetables or a piece and a half of fruit) halved their all-cause mortality risk.

In Yarra Ranges, residents have an average level of physical inactivity and being overweight, and a high level of vaping and alcohol consumption.

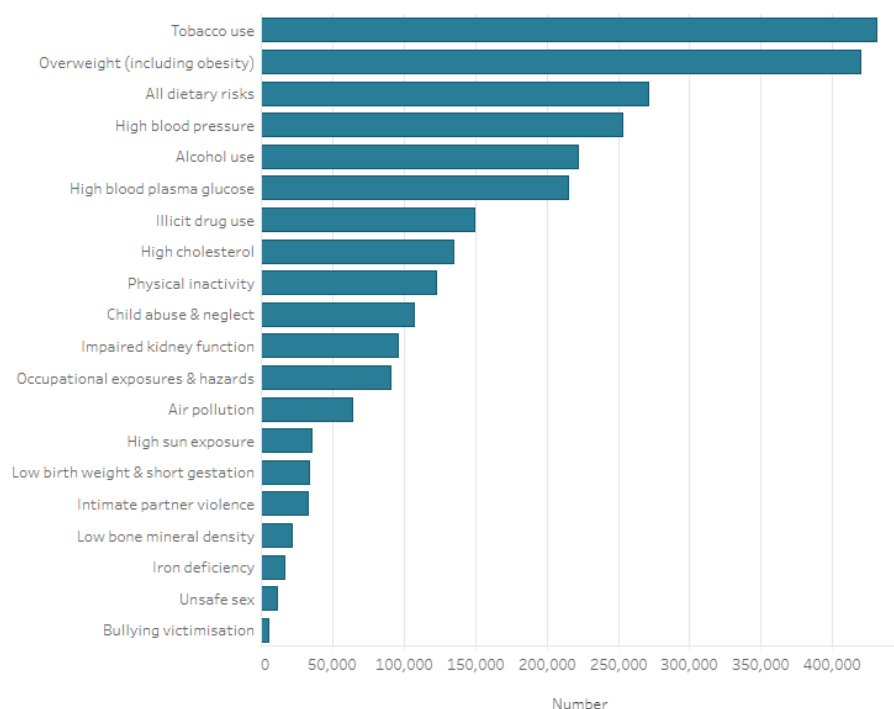
In 2023:

- 37% of adults drank sugary drinks daily or a few times a week.
- 61% of adults did not exercise enough each week.
- Nearly 60% of adults were overweight or obese.
- Yarra Ranges had a relatively high level of adults who vaped daily (7%) - Yarra Ranges was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria for vaping. A below average level (8%) were daily smokers.
- 8% of adults had been sunburnt several times in the past year.
- 17% of adults were at increased risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, above the 13% Victorian average. Alcohol treatment and hospital admissions rose substantially during the pandemic.
- Nearly 1 in 10 residents were food insecure – i.e., they ran out of food at some point in the past year and could not afford to buy more. The level was 8.9% for adults in Yarra Ranges (up from 8% in 2020), compared to 8% across Victoria. 10.5% had been worried about becoming food insecure.



## Leading risk factors contributing to disease burden in Australia, 2018

DALY= Disability-adjusted life years; YLD= Years lived with disability; YLL= Years of life lost  
ASR= Age-standardised rate per 1,000 population



### Notes:

Rates were age-standardised to the 2001 Australian Standard Population and expressed as per 1,000 population.

The risk factors high blood plasma glucose, air pollution, and low birth weight & short gestation were not estimated for all reference years.

Source: AIHW Australian Burden of Disease Database. <http://www.aihw.gov.au>

## Infectious diseases

Yarra Ranges has had a huge jump in local cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in 2024. It now has the highest level of whooping cough cases in Victoria, mostly amongst children and teenagers. Yarra Ranges is also experiencing a rising level of infectious diseases resistant to antibiotics.

Council is involved in a range of project and joint work supporting healthier lifestyles in terms of physical activity, healthy diet, food security, alcohol and drug use, disability access, healthy active ageing, and infectious disease prevention. It also advocates for better access to preventative services and treatment services. It plays an important part in providing community health warnings for weather-related hazards.

### Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:

*Improving wellbeing*

*Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use*

*Increasing healthy eating*

*Increasing active living*

*Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use*

*Decreasing antimicrobial resistance across human and animal health*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

### **The community has increased capacity to access healthy affordable food**

- Increased consumption of minimally processed foods and reduced consumption of discretionary foods.
- Reduced levels of food insecurity.

### **Neighbourhoods provide a wider range of accessible options to participate in physical activity**

- The community has increased opportunities to participate in physical activity.

### **The community has access to substance-free spaces and activities**

- Reduced risk of harm from alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes.

# Safer and more inclusive communities

## Key community safety indicators for Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Family violence incidents per 100,000	1,224	1,366	Year to Sept 2022/23
Hospital admissions for assault, rate per 100,000	24	36	2022/23
Crime rate per 100,000	3,042	5,536	2023
Deaths from accidental falls, rate per 100,000	11.5 19% above average (28% above average males, 7% females)	9.7 (Australia)	2017-2021 combined
Change in number of presentations for tendency to fall	377.3% ↑	70%	2018/19-2022/23
% of adults who experienced discrimination	16%	16%	2023
% of adults who experienced racism	3%	7%	2023

Yarra Ranges is a relatively safe community, with low total crime rates. But there remain community safety issues which particularly affect older residents, young people and people affected by family violence. The main community safety issues in Yarra Ranges include family violence, falls, transport accidents, drowning and youth crime.

## Falls

Yarra Ranges has an above average rate of hospital admissions for accidental injuries; falls amongst elderly are likely to be the main contributor. Over the past four years, emergency presentations for tendency to fall have increased nearly fourfold (up 377% between 2018/19 and 2022/23). Frail aged residents by far the most likely to go to hospital for unintentional injury, mostly due to falls. Yarra Ranges also has a very high rate of deaths from accidental falls amongst older males; its total rate of deaths from accidental falls is 19% higher than the national average.

## Road safety

Yarra Ranges has a relatively high number of road deaths and hospital admissions for serious road injuries. Across Victoria, Yarra Ranges has the highest number of hospital admissions for serious road injuries of any LGA - children and young people have the highest rate of admissions. The number of road deaths jumped by 50% in 2023 to 11 lives lost.

## Family violence

Yarra Ranges has a below average rate of family violence. Family violence increased by 18% during the pandemic but fell in 2023. Most victims of family violence were female, and most offenders were male. However, Yarra Ranges has had high growth in family violence victims aged 55 plus, over the past four years. There was also a large shift in the age profile of perpetrators. The number aged 55 plus more than doubled (a 103% increase), and the number aged 0-17 rose by 72%. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, the number of maternal and child health mother/family counselling sessions for domestic violence nearly tripled, rising from 36 to 99.

## Drowning

Yarra Ranges ranks 12th out of 31 LGAs for its number of drowning deaths in the past ten years. Victoria-wide, the number of people who died from drowning has increased since the pandemic.

## Crime

Yarra Ranges has a below average crime rate, and the rate has been trending down over the past four years. However, crime rates amongst 10–17-year-olds have been rising.

Council has a role in reducing health issues such as falls, traffic accidents and family violence through work including healthy active ageing, gender equity work, roads maintenance, L2P driver education, community safety information and a range of programs run by Council's Community Safety Team.

### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Preventing all forms of violence*

*Reducing injury*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

### **Our community works together to prevent all forms of violence**

- Reduced levels of violence against women and children.
- Improved sexual and reproductive health.
- Reduced levels of elder abuse.

### **Community members are protected from accidental injury**

- Fewer falls amongst older residents.
- Safer roads for all users.
- Reduced risk of drowning.

### **Our community has equitable access to spaces where everyone feels welcome and included**

- Increased access to safe, accessible and inclusive Council spaces.



# Healthy children and young people

## Key health indicators for children and young people in Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Rate of whooping cough cases	<b>194.4 per 100,000 (highest in Victoria)</b>	67.4 per 100,000	Sept 2024, year to date
Growth in number of NDIS participants with developmental delay	<b>36% ↑</b>		Dec 2022 to Sept 2023
Increase in number of 5–14-year-olds with a disability	<b>47% ↑</b>		2016-2021
Change in number of sexually transmitted disease notifications, 15–24-year-olds	<b>9.1% ↑</b>		2019-2023
Growth in rate of intentional self-harm hospital admissions, 0–24-year-olds	<b>25.5% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2020/21
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds	<b>40% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2022/23
Change in level of students who attended school at least 90% of the time	<b>15% fall ↓</b>		2019 to 2023
Year 12 completion rates	<b>6% fall ↓</b>		2018 to 2020
Youth unemployment	<b>15.1% (Outer East)</b>	11.9%	March 2024
Change in crimes amongst 10–17-year-olds	<b>35% ↑</b>		March 2019 to March 2024

Children and young people have tended to be the most vulnerable age group in Yarra Ranges for health and wellbeing. Post-pandemic, they have continued to have a wide range of health issues and risk factors. Mental health is the standout issue, including high and rising hospital use for: stress, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, psychosis, self-harm and attempted suicide. Young people have high use of prescription medications for mental health issues. There is also a high level of emotional counselling amongst families with young children, family mental health issues for children starting school, and ill-health amongst school leavers.

Health issues go beyond mental health. Children and young people in Yarra Ranges also have a very high level of hospital admissions across many other conditions. Disability is a growing issue amongst children - there was a 47% jump in the number of 5–14-year-olds who needed assistance with daily

living activities, between 2016 and 2021. Children and teenagers account for most NDIS recipients in Yarra Ranges, particularly due to autism, intellectual disability, developmental delay, and psychosocial disabilities (i.e. disabling levels of mental illness). The number of NDIS recipients aged grew by 11% over the year to September 2023, and most of this growth has been amongst 0–24-year-olds.

Educational attachment also seems to have fallen on measures including school attendance, Year 12 retention and completion, educational outcomes, and post-school study. Youth unemployment is increasing. Young people are experiencing rising teenage birth rates and number of STDs. Child crime is rising. The level of families with children who need homelessness services is growing, in concert with falling housing affordability, rising living costs increase and rising numbers of family violence incidents. All of these issues vary across Yarra Ranges townships, with children and young people in some areas much more affected by expanding health, education and social challenges.

Yarra Ranges Council has an active role in the health of children and young people, with dedicated teams supporting these age groups. It has roles spanning social connection, maternal and child health, school retention, advocacy for access to services and affordable housing, improving access and inclusion for person with a disability, gender equity, and economic development.

**Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Improving sexual and reproductive health*

*Improving wellbeing*

*Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

The goal for the health and wellbeing of children and young people is that children and young people have a healthy start to life, and can participate fully in education, employment and society. Specific plans for children and young people are currently being developed, which will target the key issues for children and young people.

## Accessible health services

### Key indicators for chronic diseases and health risk in Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of adults with no private health insurance	<b>49%</b>	45%	2023
% of adults who delayed visit to dentist due to cost, during the past 12 months	<b>30%</b>	32%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	<b>19%</b>	19.5%	2023
% of adults who had cancelled medical appointments			2023
➤ Cancelled surgery	<b>6% (2<sup>nd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	3%	
➤ Cancelled/postponed cancer screening	<b>5% (2<sup>nd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	3%	
➤ Cancelled/postponed medical appointment, test or procedure	<b>14% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	11%	
% of emergency presentations where no disease was found	<b>13.5%</b>	2%	2022/23
Change in level of emergency department presentations where no diagnosis made	<b>866% ↑</b>	8% increase	2018/19-2022/23

Service access is a long-term issue for residents, partly due to Yarra Ranges being located in the urban fringe area. Issues include a lack of GPs and health professionals, residents having a very high tendency to go to emergency departments when unwell, lack of private health insurance, a high level of adults cancelling medical appointments, struggles with the cost of health services, falling levels of cancer screening, and challenges in getting a GP appointment when needed.

### Service needs

The ability to access services where and when they are needed is crucial to community health and wellbeing. However, Yarra Ranges residents experience significant challenges when trying to access local human services. An analysis of service usage data and survey data shows that most services have had rising demand over the past four years and have often been unable to meet community demand.

Human services are currently facing a range of barriers to providing services. The key barriers include lack of staff and volunteers; long waiting lists and waiting times; lack of sufficient services, combined with a reduction in the number of services and programs; lack of suitable space; lack of transport to services; lack of GPs, who are often the first step in referring patients to a specialist service; rising

costs of service provision; and difficulties with referring clients to other services. Problems with referrals include waiting lists, services not accepting new clients, lack of available services or no local services. Service data also showed major shortages for all types of medical specialists, and that workers are not available in the areas that need them the most, contributing to the workforce shortages identified in the survey. Recent data shows that Yarra Ranges has a major shortage of medical workers, ranking third highest in Melbourne for its workforce deficit. It had a shortage of 1,297 nurses/midwives, 488 medical practitioners and 428 allied health workers. Wandin-Seville has the lowest number of childcare places per child in Melbourne and the fifth-lowest number in Victoria, whilst Upper Yarra Valley has no childcare access.

At the same time, most services have experienced rising demand over the past four years. And clients are presenting with more numerous and complex conditions, more advanced health problems (e.g., advanced skin cancer), worse mental and physical health, higher service needs per person, and issues such as family violence and lack of affordable housing.

## **Service usage**

Yarra Ranges has a high proportion of hospital admissions where the person was unwell, but no disease was found (13.5% in 2022/23, compared to 2% across Victoria). And over the past few years, there has been a 170% increase in these presentations (compared to 52% across Victoria). There has also been a large increase in emergency department use where no diagnosis was made, at 866% growth in Yarra Ranges, compared to 8% across Victoria. This may be linked to lack of access to GPs in Yarra Ranges, meaning that people have had to attend emergency to have their health concerns investigated. In 2023, Yarra Ranges had a high level of adults who had cancelled medical appointments over the past year:

- 6% cancelled surgery, ranking Yarra Ranges 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the state.
- 4.7% cancelled or postponed cancer screening, ranking Yarra Ranges 2<sup>nd</sup> highest.
- 14% cancelled or postponed a medical appointment, test or procedure, ranking Yarra Ranges 3<sup>rd</sup> highest.

In 2023, 19% of adults had been unable to see a GP when needed over the past twelve months (the same as the state average). Of this group, 26% were unable to see a GP due to cost and nearly one-third felt that they waited an unacceptably long time to see a GP.

Bowel cancer screening rates in Yarra Ranges dropped 6% in 2020/21, after five years of steady increases. This fall in screening is likely to be linked to lockdown impacts on service access and usage. The level of older women having breast cancer screening fell by 16% in 2019/20, despite only the final quarter of that year being affected by lockdowns. Victoria-wide, there was also a substantial fall in participation in 2020/21.

The level of potentially avoidable deaths (PAD) has risen amongst males. These are deaths amongst people aged under 75, from conditions which could be prevented through individualised care, or are treatable through primary care and hospital care.

During COVID, there was a drop in usage of antenatal care in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy amongst women in Yarra Ranges. The level who had at least one antenatal visit in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy fell from 94% in 2019 to 90% in 2021, whilst the level increased Victoria-wide. The level of women leaving hospital less than one day after giving birth rose by 50% across Victoria, but nearly doubled in Yarra Ranges, with a 95% increase.

## Service cost

In 2023, 49% of adults surveyed in Yarra Ranges had no private health insurance, compared to 45% across Victoria. The average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP has risen from \$35.32 in December 2019 to \$43.28 in June 2024, and the level of services which are bulk billed has dropped from 83.6% to 75%. At the same time, demand for GPs has surged, with appointment numbers increasing by 17%, whilst the population stayed the same. In 2023, nearly one-third of adults had avoided or delayed a dental visit due to the cost.

Council is a direct service provider for services such as immunisation. It also works with service providers, service network, and state and federal government, to advocate for and improve access to services. It provides a crucial role in supporting funding applications by partner organisations.

### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Improving wellbeing*

*Increasing healthy eating*

*Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use*

## What changes do we want to see?

Council's key goal in this space is that essential health and human services and infrastructure are accessible to all groups within the community. The desired outcome would be improved access to health screening, prevention and treatment services.

This is a key advocacy action for Council, rather than a stand-alone priority.



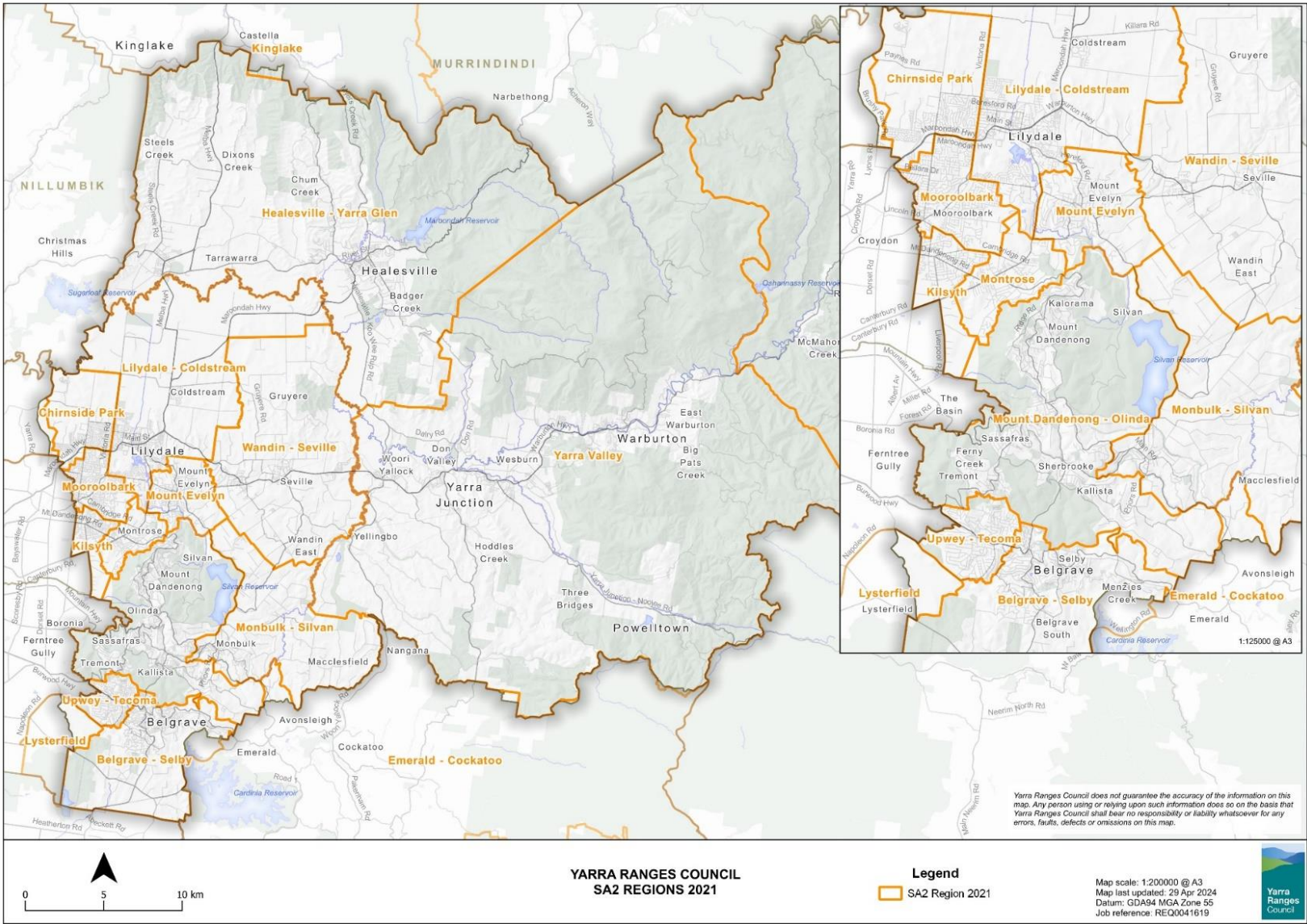
# Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority
<b>ACSC</b>	Ambulatory care sensitive condition
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>AMR</b>	Antimicrobial resistance
<b>AOD</b>	Alcohol and other drugs
<b>ATSI</b>	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
<b>Census</b>	ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing
<b>Chronic health condition</b>	A long-term health condition (e.g., asthma, cancer)
<b>COPD</b>	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
<b>COVID</b>	Refers to the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns in 2020 and 2021
<b>CSA</b>	Crime Statistics Agency
<b>DH</b>	Department of Health (Victoria)
<b>EMPHN</b>	Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network
<b>EMR</b>	Eastern Metropolitan Region
<b>GP</b>	General Practitioner
<b>Hospital data</b>	The statistics on hospital admissions and emergency department presentations are for Yarra Ranges residents, unless otherwise specified
<b>HSNA</b>	Human Services Needs Analysis
<b>iGAS</b>	Invasive group A streptococcal disease
<b>LGA</b>	Local government area
<b>LSV</b>	Life Saving Victoria
<b>MCH</b>	Maternal and child health
<b>NDIS</b>	National Disability Insurance Scheme
<b>NDSS</b>	National Diabetes Services Scheme
<b>NEC</b>	Not elsewhere classified
<b>Neoplasms</b>	Cancer

<b>NEPHU</b>	North Eastern Public Health Unit
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PAD</b>	Potentially avoidable deaths
<b>Rate ratio</b>	A rate ratio compares rates between two groups. The rate ratio for mortality (death) rates compares deaths in Yarra Ranges to deaths across Australia, where 1 means that Yarra Ranges has the same rate as the average. A high rate ratio means that Yarra Ranges is above average – a rate ratio of 1.2 places Yarra Ranges 20% above average. A low rate ratio means that Yarra Ranges is below average – a rate ratio of 0.9 places Yarra Ranges 10% below average.
<b>RSV</b>	Respiratory syncytial virus
<b>S</b>	Shire
<b>SA2, SA3</b>	Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3s) are geographic areas built from whole Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2s). They are designed for the output of regional data including Census data. They tend to align with LGAs.
<b>SEHQ</b>	School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ)
<b>STD</b>	Sexually transmitted disease
<b>TAC</b>	Transport Accident Commission
<b>VAED</b>	Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset
<b>VAHI</b>	Victorian Agency for Health Information
<b>VEMD</b>	Victorian Emergency Management Dataset
<b>VHISS</b>	Victorian Health Information Surveillance System
<b>VPHS</b>	Victorian Population Health Survey
<b>VRE</b>	VanA vancomycin resistant enterococcus

# Map of local areas in Yarra Ranges

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Yarra Ranges Council

# Health and Wellbeing

## Strategy | Community Engagement Summary Report

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### Acknowledgement of Country

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



## Introduction

This report summarises the community engagement period between November and December 2024, focusing on community health and wellbeing needs and aspirations.

Community feedback will help shape the Yarra Ranges Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029 (the Strategy). A second round of community engagement will follow once a Draft Strategy has been developed.

## Background

Improving population health means considering where people live, work, and spend time, as well as the diverse needs of different groups at all life stages. This requires collaboration with governments, health partners, organisations and communities. Community input is central to developing placed-based approaches to improving wellbeing.

To inform the Strategy, Council gathered community feedback from:

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy engagement, phase 1 (2024).
- Council Plan engagement (2024).

Council will use community feedback plus a wide range of health data to develop the Strategy. There are also legislated requirements regarding what Councils need to respond to within their health and wellbeing plans.



## Promoting engagement opportunities

Council is committed to actively listening and involving community in decision making. To reach a variety of people, Council used the following methods to promote community engagement about priorities and actions for the next Strategy.



**Website promotion**



**Social media**



**E-Newsletters**



**Presentations**



**Printed media**



**Email distribution**

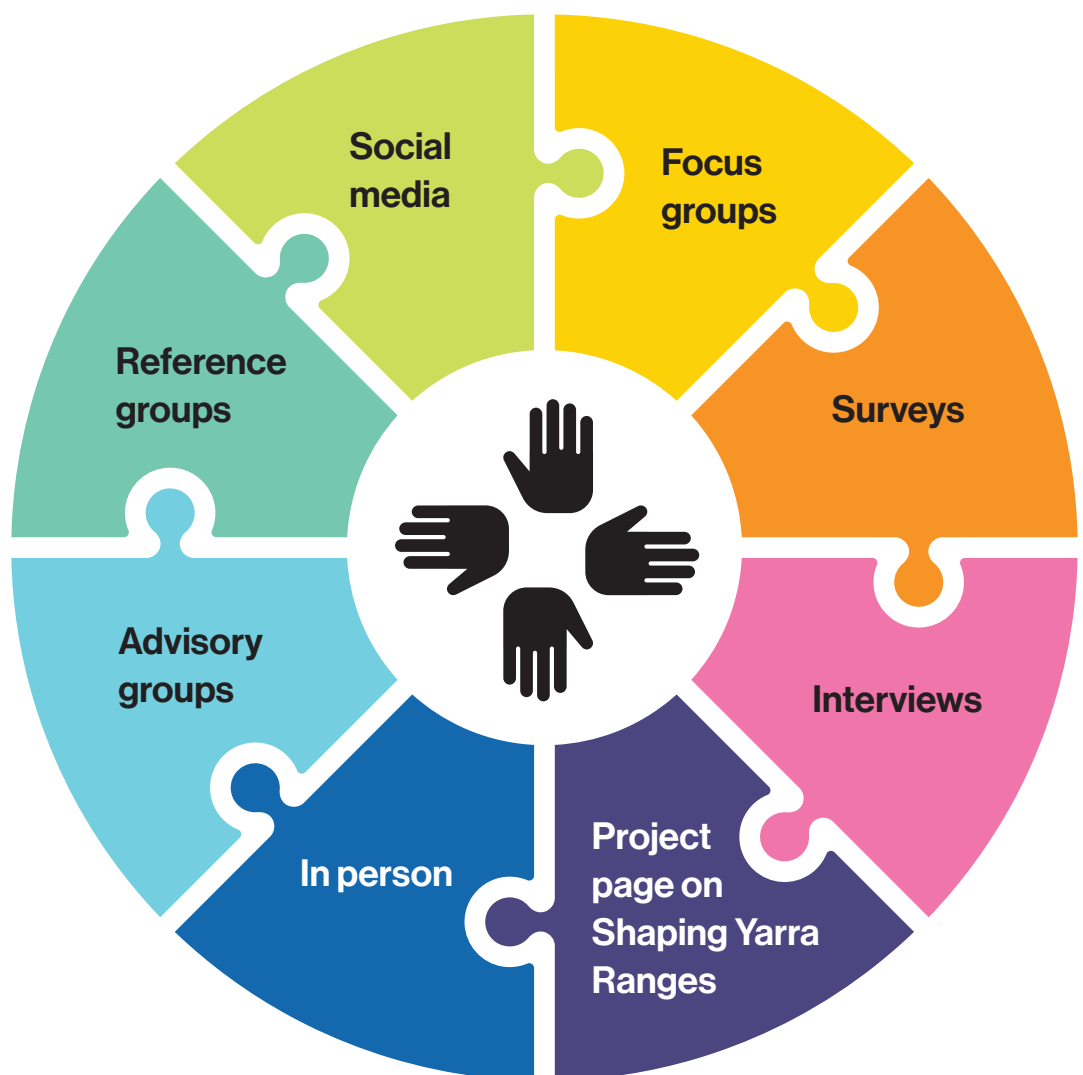






## Methods of data collection

To broaden our understanding of health and wellbeing in the Yarra Ranges, the community was able to get involved in the following ways.



## How people got involved

The engagement methods, number of participants, and key themes from those who participated, are shown below.

### E-newsletter

- Over **11,348** recipients received Council E-newsletters

### Social Media

- **16,756** people reached through Yarra Ranges Council Facebook and Instagram pages

### Printed media

- Stories in **six** local newspapers

### Youth-specific

- **Three** youth focus groups
- **3,838** people reached through youth social media
- Advice from **Youth Ambassadors**

### Shaping Yarra Ranges webpage

- **842** visitors
- **177** contributions

### Interviews, networks and Council staff

- **Three** interviews with individuals and networks
- **One** staff event

### Council Plan engagement

- **135** people at three summit events
- The Council Plan engagement reached a maximum of **5,498** people, with active involvement from **1,091** participants

### Community engagement roadshows

- **411** people reached at six community roadshows in Chirnside Park, Tecoma, Kilsyth, Seville, Lilydale and Warburton.

### Advisory and Steering Committees

- Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Youth Ambassadors
- Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee







## Summary of feedback

The community has highlighted several key themes relating to health and wellbeing, providing valuable insights. These themes are summarised below.

### Community consultation on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

#### Top priorities from face-to-face community engagement

- Mental wellbeing and community connection
- Access to services, especially mental health
- Active living
- Support for children and young people (linked to multiple priority areas)

#### Key issues for community health services

- Healthy eating.
- Adapting to the health impacts of climate change
- Family violence
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Hospital usage/access

#### Online engagement (Shaping Yarra Ranges)

- Improving mental wellbeing
- Health impacts of climate change
- Increasing active living

Amongst the comments, the over-arching theme was active living – including ways that Council could support active living, the walkability of Yarra Ranges, and access to swimming pools. Social connections and mental health support were another key theme, along with cost of living, and facilities and programs. Mental wellbeing and social connection were clearly linked for many respondents.

Issues and concerns relating to walkability included safety, accessibility, path quality and location – e.g., lighting, having good walking paths close to home.



### **Key themes from Council Plan engagement (related to health and wellbeing)**

- Reducing climate change impacts
- Community safety and health – including health services, community safety work, and emergency management
- Supporting the community – health services and information for individuals and families at all life stages
- Supporting the community to thrive
- Maintaining sports facilities, open spaces and other infrastructure

### **Community Vision (elements linked to health and wellbeing)**

- Climate change risks are reduced
- The community is connected, volunteers and supports each other
- The community is prepared for natural disasters
- Disadvantaged residents are well supported

## **Overall priorities**

**Priority 1:** Increasing community adaptation to the health impacts of climate change and natural hazards.

### **Priority 2:**

Improving mental wellbeing and community connection.

**Priority 3:** Increasing community capacity to live healthy lives.

**Priority 4:** Creating safer and more inclusive communities.

## **Key insights**

- Climate change and mental wellbeing are the top concerns.
- Children and young people are a priority across all health issues, particularly mental wellbeing and service access.
- The social determinants of health – e.g., affordable housing, food security, education, public transport, affordable services and local jobs - underpin many concerns. Locality, cultural diversity, age and gender also affect people's concerns and priorities for their wellbeing.
- Social media was a minor but interesting aspect of discussions. Young people had concerns about excessive use but were also very clear about the benefits of connecting with people with shared interests or with other minorities.

## Limitations

During the engagement, Council successfully connected with people living, working, and spending time in the Yarra Ranges. The engagement sought views on what supports individual and community health and wellbeing. The feedback reflects the views of those who self-elected to participate and may not be representative of the whole community. Council cannot take immediate action in response to all feedback received. Any action must align with the Council's ongoing legislative responsibilities, budgetary constraints, and the goals of the Strategy.

## Conclusion

Council values and acknowledges the people who informed this report and the development of the next Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The next consultation phase will ask the community for feedback on the draft version of the Strategy.

To remain up to date with this project please visit Shaping Yarra Ranges:  
**<https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing-plan>**



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## DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2029 FOR ENDORSEMENT

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Report Author: Executive Officer Health and Wellbeing

Responsible Officer: Director Communities

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

The *Victorian Disability Act (2006)* requires councils to maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP). Council's Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013–2023 met this requirement; a final report is provided (Attachment 3).

The proposed Disability Action Plan 2025–2029 (Final) is Council's next plan to support disability inclusion (Attachment 1). It moves to a four yearly planning cycle, while setting four strategic goals and a long-term vision, while also preparing for possible future requirements under the proposed *Disability Inclusion Bill*.

The refreshed DAP was shaped through two phases of community engagement, conducted over eight weeks, in addition to consultation with Council's Disability Advisory Committee; the Community Engagement Report is included as Attachment 2.

Council's Disability Advisory Committee plays a significant role in the development, implementation and review of the DAP. A yearly report is provided to Council on the implementation of the DAP and a summary of the Disability Advisory Committee's achievements. The committee's achievements for 2024 are provided as Attachment 4.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That Council endorse the Yarra Ranges Council Disability Action Plan 2025-2029.***

### RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council endorsed Equity, Access, and Inclusion Strategy 2013 – 2023 (Item 7.7, 13 May 2014)

Council endorsed appointment of Disability Advisory Committee Members 2022–2026, (Item 10.6, 20 September 2022)

Council endorsed Equity, Access & Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023, Final Report (Item 10.4, 11 June 2024).

Council endorsed Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 and supported further four weeks community consultation (Item 10.4, 25 February 2025).

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Purpose and Background***

The *Victorian Disability Act 2006* (currently under review) requires councils to maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP). Council met this requirement through its Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023, which has now ended; a final report on the ten year Strategy is provided with this report as Attachment 3.

The refreshed DAP 2025–2029 (Final) is included with this report as Attachment 1. It is Council's next iteration and ensures that Council can meet both current and emerging legislative responsibilities. It also strengthens Council's commitment to the social model of disability.

As part of the review of the *Victorian Disability Act 2006*, a *Disability Inclusion Bill* was released for sector-wide consultation, which closed in October 2022. A summary of key themes has since been published.

If passed, the *Disability Inclusion Bill* will require additional resource commitment to meet Council's new obligations. The DAP 2025-2029 (Final) positions Council well for these changes.

### ***Options considered***

Only one option was considered.

### ***Recommended option and justification***



It is recommended that Council endorse the Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 (Final). It is reflective of community expectations and in alignment with Council's service level commitments.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

Developing the DAP 2025-2029 (Final) cost \$10,000, funded through the Health and Wellbeing operational budget. Delivery of the DAP will be funded through existing operational budget. Grant opportunities and partnerships will be sought where alignment exists. This will be monitored and reported on as part of the DAP's annual reporting to Council.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

### Connected and Healthy Communities

The DAP will address the needs of people with disability in having communities which are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive, and socially well connected. It will also address the key objective to have quality services which are accessible to everyone through the identification and removal of systemic barriers.

### Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

Consultation with people with disability will be conducted when Council plans and develops quality facilities and infrastructure that meet current and future needs. Places will be well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity, and innovation. Where appropriate, Disability Advisory Committee members support site audits with officers, where project timelines and resources allow.

### High Performing Organisation:

An innovative, responsive organisation that listens to people with disability and those who provide unpaid care. Council is one of the largest employers in the Yarra Ranges and has a high proportion of employees who may be living with a disability or providing unpaid care.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

### International

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### National

- *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

### State

- *Victorian Disability Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft 2022*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

The DAP seeks to support employment opportunities for people with disability and unpaid carers, recognising the barriers they face to social and economic participation. The DAP commits to ongoing improvement of disability inclusion within Council's workforce and through advocacy and partnerships with external organisations.

### ***Social Implications***

The health and wellbeing of all community members is underpinned by the social determinants of health including education, employment, housing, economic participation, transport, gender, environment, social inclusion, violence, health literacy and power over decision making. People with disability often experience greater barriers across these areas. The DAP highlights these issues and sets out clear actions for how Council will help address them.

### ***Environmental Implications***

People with disability, particularly women, are often among those most adversely affected in an emergency, sustaining disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality, and limited access to support. The DAP recognises the need for their meaningful participation, inclusion, and leadership in disaster planning, response, and evacuation. This focus will also be reinforced in other key Council planning documents.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

An initial Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) was completed on the 17 May 2024. It recommended broad community engagement, particularly where data was lacking.

A four-week engagement period occurred to identify key themes for the DAP. In February 2025, Council supported a further four weeks of community engagement, which took place from March 6 – April 6, 2025. A total of eight weeks of community engagement has occurred to inform the DAP.

In addition to this, Women's Health East completed an independent gender analysis on the draft DAP and facilitated an independent focus group. This work strengthened

the intersectional approach and language used throughout the DAP's actions and performance indicators.

The DAP (Final) incorporates feedback obtained through this engagement period. A summary of findings is included with this report as Attachment 2, Community Engagement Report.

Council acknowledges the contributions of the Disability Advisory Committee, now in its third term, providing a voice to Council. The Disability Advisory Committee have been integral to informing the DAP. Council also worked with the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee and Positive Ageing Reference Group who also helped to inform the DAP.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Consultation has occurred with Senior and Executive Officers through the entirety of this project.

Council's Integrated Planning Control Group has ensured consideration has been given to the following key strategic documents:

- Council Plan 2025-2029 (in development)
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (in development)
- Other key strategies, plans and policy for Yarra Ranges Council where appropriate e.g. Key Life Stages Plan.

Implementation of the DAP will be tracked through Council's Corporate Performance Management system and reported annually to Council.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

### Resource Constraints

**Risk:** Yarra Ranges is one of the larger LGAs with a significantly high proportion of the population that requires a variety of service supports, in addition to ageing infrastructure.

**Impact:** Limited resources to meet growing community demand. Limited number of service providers in the region.

**Mitigation:** Capacity building and professional development opportunities for officers to build disability inclusion as part of business as usual. Continued advocacy on behalf of Council relating to matters outside of Councils jurisdiction. Enhancing partnerships between service providers.

### Legislative Changes

Risk: Ongoing reviews and potential changes to legislation requires Council to be agile and ensure resources are available.

Impact: Increased governance and reporting requirements, resulting in potential new obligations for Council.

Mitigation: Annual review and reporting on the DAP. Consider aligning Disability Impact Assessments with Gender Impact Assessment processes.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Yarra Ranges Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 - Draft
2. Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report April 2025
3. Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 Final Report
4. 2024 Disability Advisory Committee Achievements



Yarra Ranges Council

# **DRAFT Disability Action Plan 2025–2029**





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## Acknowledgement of Country



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

# Message from the Mayor and CEO

Yarra Ranges Council has prepared this Disability Action Plan in partnership with our Disability Advisory Committee and through broader community and key stakeholder consultations. Through the development of this action plan, Council has reflected upon our last action plan and the previous 10 years of work to advance disability inclusion across the municipality. We have re-affirmed our commitment and vision towards achieving an accessible, fair, and inclusive society where people with disability, and unpaid carers, can participate in community life as equal citizens.

Our Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 identifies opportunities to improve access to Council information, services, facilities and to eliminate barriers that may prevent access and inclusion across all aspects of our business. This Action Plan not only meets our legislative responsibilities, but ensures we work together through planning, broaden our understanding of disability across our workforce and work to the social model of disability. What's new in this Action Plan is a focus on access and inclusion for people with invisible disabilities and an intersectional approach ensuring we are working with all people regardless of background, identity or age.

We acknowledge the growing rates of self-reported disability within our community (26.7%) when compared to the rest of Victoria (19.5%) and are committed to continually striving for positive health and wellbeing outcomes for all people within our community. Our work is never done.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who helped to inform this Action Plan which will assist us to continually improve and provide information, services and facilities that are accessible to all people who live, work, play and visit Yarra Ranges.

**Cr Jim Child**  
Mayor  
Yarra Ranges Council

**Tammi Rose**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Yarra Ranges Council

## Our Vision

Yarra Ranges is an accessible, fair, and inclusive society where people with disability and unpaid carers can participate in community life as equal citizens.

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## Our Aim

Yarra Ranges Council leads the way, offering accessible information, infrastructure, services, and experiences to all people who live, work, visit and play in the region.

# Legislation and Policy

The importance of access, fairness and inclusion is recognised throughout legislation and policy at all levels of Australian government.

For over a decade, Yarra Ranges Council has been successful in advancing disability inclusion through the implementation of the Yarra Ranges Access, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023. This refreshed Disability Action Plan meets all legislative responsibilities and requirements for local government. The Plan ensures we work towards a common goal, advancing disability inclusion across all aspects of Council. In developing this Disability Action Plan consideration has been given to the following key documents:

**Table 1: Legislation and Policy across all levels of Australian government.**

International	Federal Government	State Government	Local Government
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)	<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i>	<i>Disability Act 2006 (Vic)</i>	Council Plan 2025-2029 (due for adoption Jun 2025)
	Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031	<i>Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft 2022 (Vic)</i>	Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (due for adoption Oct 2025)
	National Carer Strategy 2024-2034	<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</i>	Other key strategies, plans and policy for Yarra Ranges Council are referenced in the action plan below.
	<i>National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (Vic)</i>	<i>Carers Recognition Act 2010 (Vic)</i>	
	<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i>	<i>Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)</i>	
	<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</i>		

# Working together through planning

In addition to broad legislative and policy frameworks, the Disability Action Plan enables localised approach to address community needs. Council is also working to align planning to further strengthen our commitment and ability to embed inclusion in every aspect of business. This includes working together and leveraging off other Council plans such as the overarching Council Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other key plans and policies for Council.

Page 27  
It is worth noting, Council's Healthy and Active Ageing Plan sets the strategic direction for 'age-friendly' communities that are designed to value the contribution of older people and ensure their access to all aspects of community life. It outlines priority areas and helps guide the programs and services that Council provides to the community. Both the Disability Action Plan, Healthy and Active Ageing Plan, as part of the Key Life Stages Plan (in development) reinforce the benefits of ageing well across all life stages and keeping active, healthy, and involved in the broader community.

Council has many endorsed plans, policy and strategies that include specific actions or criteria to advance disability inclusion across the municipality. Where there are existing commitments residing in other plans for Council, these have not been included in the scope of the Disability Action Plan.





# Understanding disability

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) provides a comprehensive definition of disability. According to the UNCRPD, persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. These impairments when interacting with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on equal basis with others. Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible, or invisible, acquired, or congenital, fluctuating, or episodic.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout this document, the term 'carer' and 'unpaid carer' are used as defined in the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* as an umbrella term for those who provide unpaid care, support and assistance for someone with disability, a medical condition, a mental illness or is frail due to age<sup>4</sup>. Carers who receive financial support such as a Carer Payment and/or Carer Allowance are included in this definition.

Formal carers and paid support workers are those who provide care, support and assistance as a paid service, as part of a volunteer arrangement or as part of training or education for paid care services. Such formal care arrangements are out of scope for this Disability Action Plan.

Carers and unpaid carers are often hidden, working in the background to navigate complex systems and to provide continuous care without being recognised or remunerated. They often make significant personal sacrifices regarding their careers, social lives, education and financial security to care for others, this often impacts the carer's mental and physical wellbeing.

The importance of carers can not be overstated. They deserve recognition, respect, and support for their contributions to their families, friends, and broader community.

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<sup>3</sup> State Government of Victoria. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2021). *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021 – 2025*

<sup>4</sup> Parliament of Australia. (2010). *Chapter 2 – The Carer Recognition Act*.

## Invisible disability

'Invisible disabilities' (also known as hidden disabilities) is a broad term which can include any disability that may not be immediately apparent to others. Some examples of invisible disabilities include physical conditions (e.g. chronic pain, diabetes), mental health conditions (e.g. PTSD, depression, anxiety), neurological conditions (e.g. epilepsy), and neurodiversity (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia).<sup>5</sup>

## Social model of disability

The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world, developed by people with disability. The social model of disability says that people are disabled by barriers in society, such as buildings not having a ramp or accessible toilets, or people's attitudes, like assuming people with disability can't do certain things.

The medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences and looks at what is 'wrong' with the person, not what the person needs. The medical model of disability creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice, and control in their lives.

The social model helps to recognise barriers that make life harder for people with disability. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers people with disability more independence, choice, and control.<sup>6</sup>

## Intersectional experience

Individual characteristics such as Aboriginality, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, and cultural upbringing can shape the experiences, perspectives, needs, and challenges of individuals. The intersectional nature of a person's circumstance can result in compounding layers of barrier and discrimination, or power and privilege.<sup>7</sup>

This Plan demonstrates Council's commitment to doing everything we can to understand disability, to recognise and eliminate barriers and to promote genuine inclusion across the municipality.

<sup>5</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. (2022). *Public statement: Invisible disabilities*.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Federation of Disability Organisations. (2024). *Social model of disability*.

<sup>7</sup> State Government of Victoria. Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. (2022). *Applying intersectionality*.

# Our goals

## Inclusion is fundamental to all aspects of Council

Yarra Ranges Council recognises that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference, and that unpaid carers are integral for both the person they care for and as part of the broader health system. We are committed to doing everything we can to eliminate these barriers and to promote genuine inclusion across the municipality.

The Disability Action Plan identifies the actions Council will take to advance disability inclusion over the next four years while setting four longer term goals. The Plan is broken down to specific action plans under each long-term goal that will ensure incremental change can be monitored and achieved while working towards aspirational goals. They are:

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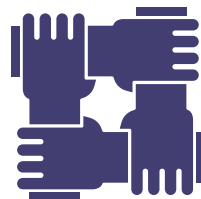
### **Inclusive Information:**

Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone in our community and supports fair participation and inclusion in community life.



### **Inclusive Places:**

Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.



### **Inclusive Community:**

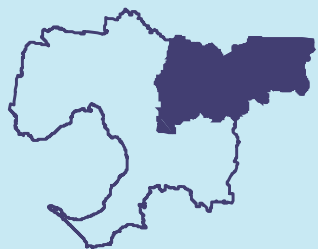
Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where everyone can participate equally.



### **Inclusive Council:**

Council's commitment to access, fairness, and inclusion is demonstrated in all aspects of the business.

# Our community



Yarra Ranges Council is a local government area in outer eastern metropolitan Melbourne.



It is 2,468 square kilometres in area

Only **3%** of this area is urban



In 2021, Yarra Ranges had an estimated 156,840 residents<sup>6</sup>

**50.3% female**  
**49.7% male**

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In 2021 **17.2%** of the Yarra Ranges population were aged **65 years and over**, compared with 16.4% for Victoria.<sup>7</sup>



**This level is forecast to rise to 19.8% by 2034.**

The prevalence of disability increases with age

**50%**

of Australians people aged 65 years and over experience some form of disability, meaning that the prevalence of disability in our community is going to increase across the life of this Disability Action Plan, as the population ages.



<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). *Regional population by age and sex, 2021*: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/latest-release#victoria>

<sup>9</sup> idcommunity. (2024) *Population and age structure | Yarra Ranges Council | Population forecast*

<sup>10</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). *People with Disability in Australia 2019: in Brief*.

## The 2021 Census found that:



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Just over

**5% of residents**

(5.6% of females and 5.2% of males) need daily support with core activities due to severe or profound disability, chronic illness, or age.

**This is 1 in 20 people**



**15% of residents**

(17.6% of females and 11.7% of males) provide unpaid care for someone due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

**This is nearly 1 in 7 people**



**26.7% of adults**

self-reported disability in the 2023 Victorian Population Health Survey, compared to 19.9% across Victoria. This includes people with invisible disability. *Gender disaggregated data is not yet available at local level.*

<sup>9</sup> State Government of Victoria. Department of Health. (2023). *Victorian population health survey data*.



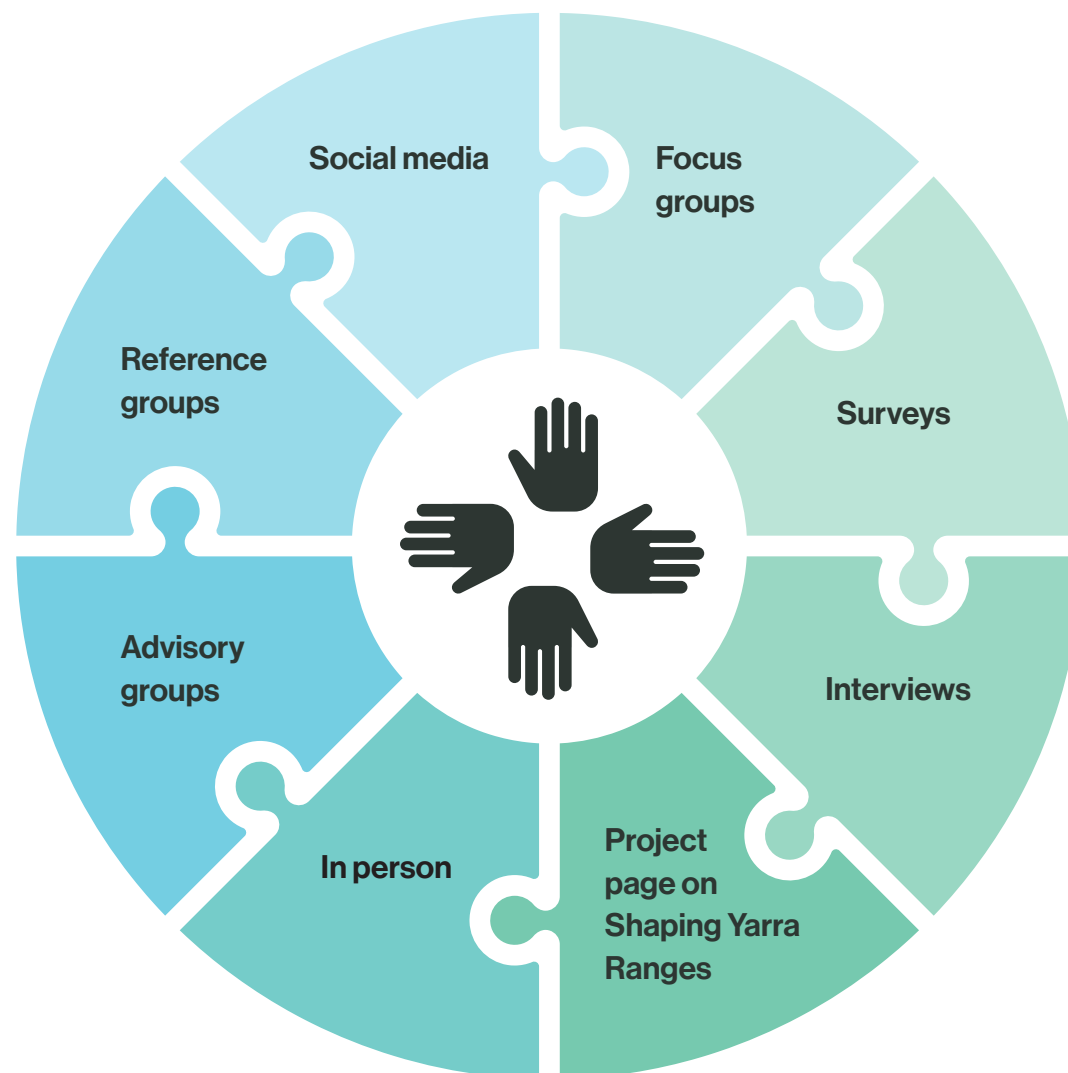
# Who we consulted

Over two rounds of consultations we asked community to help us develop a Disability Action Plan that addresses the issues important to them. We heard from people with disability, carers and unpaid carers, people with chronic illness, service providers and interested community members willing to share their feedback and ideas.

Our approach focussed on the four long term goals identified in the Disability Action Plan.

Engagement opportunities were promoted, and feedback was collected via multiple platforms to ensure that all community members had an opportunity to contribute. The full Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report can be accessed by visiting our website: <https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/disability-action-plan>

**Figure 1. Engagement and Feedback methods to develop the Disability Action Plan**



The feedback received highlighted several key themes and desired outcomes for community that warrant consideration by Council. These themes listed alphabetically provide valuable insights and opportunities for Council to improve disability inclusion as a lead, partner or advocate to achieve these outcomes.

This section also outlines Council's role in these initiatives which may include:

- **Provider:** Responsible for delivery of services, programs, infrastructure and support to individuals and groups
- **Educator:** Share information, raise awareness, develop knowledge and skills to empower individuals and groups
- **Partner:** Build relationships and partner with others to enable things to happen and work towards common goals
- **Advocate:** Raise awareness and show leadership for the interests of local communities, to other decision makers e.g. State and Federal Government
- **Planner:** Use evidence, including community views to plan for current and future community needs and priorities
- **Regulator:** Prioritise safety and regulate compliance of activities through local laws and legislation

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Key Themes	Desired Outcome	Council's Role
Accessible tourism	Yarra Ranges is a welcoming destination for all visitors.	Partner
Customer Experience	Communication aids and training are available to provide an improved customer experience for community members.	Provider
Emergency Management	People with disabilities and unpaid carers are included at all stages of Emergency Management planning and delivery.	Planner / Provider / Partner
Festivals and Events / Local Businesses	Community events and local businesses have access to information and capacity building opportunities.	Educator

Key Themes	Desired Outcome	Council's Role
Housing	Advocate for accessible housing affordability, availability, and suitability for people with disability.	Advocate
Information	Information is in an accessible format and readily available.	Provider
Infrastructure	<p>Increased accessibility in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing Places toilets</li> <li>• Footpaths</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Shade</li> <li>• Safe pedestrian crossings</li> <li>• Accessible parking</li> <li>• Community facilities</li> </ul>	Provider
Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible public transport</li> <li>• Adequate infrastructure leading to public transport.</li> <li>• Increased public transport options across Yarra Ranges.</li> </ul>	Advocate
Safety	Lighting near recreation equipment and around shopping precincts is improved.	Advocate / Provider
Social connection and wellbeing	People with disabilities and unpaid carers have access to local programs to enhance social connection and wellbeing.	Provider / Partner / Advocate
Youth Employment	Pathways for young people with disabilities to support workforce entry.	Partner

# Action Plan

Council is committed to the following actions of the duration of this Disability Action Plan. The action plan is divided into four key goals/focus areas and identifies the following:

Action	What we are going to do.
Responsibility	Which business units within Council are responsible for leading the delivery of the action.
Timeframe	When the implementation of the action will commence: Short term = Year 1, Medium term = Year 2-3, Long term = Year 4+
Frequency	How often we will complete this action.
Performance Indicator	How will we know we have achieved this action.

## Inclusive Information:

Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone and supports equitable participation and inclusion in community life.



**Image description:** Image of a group of six people on a stage with a blue curtain behind them. Two women are standing to the left, two women are seated (with one in a wheelchair), followed by another woman standing and a male standing to the far right.



**Inclusive Information: Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone and supports fair participation and inclusion in community life.**

**Aim:** Council aims to ensure that all information and communication provided by Council is accessible to everyone. This includes making sure that information is available in a variety of formats that accommodate the diverse needs of our community.

**Outcome:** Council's websites and online content are accessible. Council continually improves customer experience and community engagement opportunities for community. Council's imagery and social media campaigns are inclusive.

**Budget:**

Disability awareness campaigns	\$100,000
Workshops and training	\$200,000
Communication tools and accessible documents	\$200,000
Sub-Total	\$500,000

**Disclaimer:** The costs included in this Disability Action Plan are indicative delivery costs calculated at the time of the development of this plan. These costs are subject to the formal budget process of Council.

Action	Responsible Department	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
1.1 Disability Awareness training is provided to all Council staff as mandatory training.	Organisational Development	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	Percentage of staff and Councillors who have completed the training; target of 100% completion rate

Action	Responsible Department	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
1.2 Council documents online are available in accessible word format.	Communications	Long term - Year 4+	Ongoing	Provide critical staff with training on accessible documents.  Website guidelines include a requirement that all Council documents be available in accessible format upon request.
1.3 Provide Council documents produced in a variety of accessible formats	Communications	Long term - Year 4+	Annual	Key Council documents will be published in a variety of evidence based accessible formats
1.4 Deliver accessible communication training and tools for staff	Diversity and Inclusion Committee / Health and Wellbeing / Communications	Medium term - Year 2-3	Ongoing	Deliver at least one accessible communication training to staff  Develop accessible communication tip sheet for staff  Develop tools and templates for staff to ensure accessibility standards are met.

Action	Responsible Department	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
<p>1.5 Council's websites include information about the accessible features of all Council owned and managed public facilities with a priority focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playspaces, walking trails and other recreation facilities</li> <li>• Cultural venues and public facilities</li> <li>• Public toilets and accessible toilets</li> </ul>	Creative Communities / Design and Place / Sport and Recreation / Facilities	Long term - Year 4+	Ongoing	Information is listed on website and is reviewed and updated by relevant department areas as required.
1.6 Improve access to information for people with disabilities and their unpaid carers that enables them to make informed decisions about their lives.	Early and Middle Years / Youth / Healthy Ageing	Medium term - Year 2-3	Ongoing	<p>Information shared is in an accessible format; brochures, website, newsletters.</p> <p>Accessible communication training is delivered to staff.</p> <p>Deliver Quarterly Vitality Newsletter.</p>

Action	Responsible Department	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
1.7 Establish a Yarra Ranges Accessibility Map for inclusion on Council's website.	Health and Wellbeing	Long term - Year 4+	Annual	Establish Yarra Ranges Accessibility Map.
1.8 Increase accessibility of Self-service Digital Planning Enquiry Portal	Building and Planning	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	<p>Delivery of Self-Service Digital enquiry Portals, guiding enquiries for development proposal online.</p> <p>Review and consider customer insights to improve accessibility and user access.</p>
1.9 Include intersectional imagery in all Council publications or campaigns including people with disabilities and/or unpaid carers.	Communications	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	<p>Council publications and campaigns include intersectional images</p> <p>Council has a Library of images featuring local people with disabilities and unpaid carers.</p>

Action	Responsible Department	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
1.10 A variety of communication tools are available at Community Links and online to support an improved customer experience for people with disability and unpaid carers.	Customer Experience Information Technology	Long term - Year 4+	On-going	A variety of communication tools are available in person and online.  Customer experience staff receive training in how to use tools effectively.  Positive customer experience recorded.
1.11 People with disabilities and unpaid carers are included at all stages of Emergency Management planning and delivery.	Emergency Management	Medium term - Year 2-3	Ongoing	Workshops are held to include people with disabilities and unpaid carers in emergency planning and preparedness  Emergency Relief Centres are inclusive and accessible  Information shared is in an accessible word format



## Inclusive Places:

Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.

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**Image description:** Image of a man in a wheelchair and a young woman assisting him on a playground merry-go-round. Both individuals are smiling, showing companionship and shared enjoyment. The image focuses on the interaction between the two using a disability accessible merry-go-round.

## **Inclusive Places: Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.**

**Aim:** Council aims to ensure our buildings and infrastructure are designed, maintained, and operated in a way that ensures accessibility for everyone in our community.

**Outcome:** Councils buildings and infrastructure are accessible. Council considers accessibility and connectivity across all design phases of projects.

### **Budget:**

Infrastructure Upgrades: Buildings, Major Projects, Pavillions	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
Carparks	<b>\$100,000</b>
Parks, Open Spaces and Trails	<b>\$800,000</b>
Footpaths and Cycleways	<b>\$200,000</b>
Asset Management and Maintenance	<b>\$400,000</b>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>

**Disclaimer:** The costs included in this Disability Action Plan are indicative delivery costs calculated at the time of the development of this plan. These costs are subject to the formal budget process of Council.

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
2.1 Assess/audit building functionality to determine accessibility and inform prioritisation.	Capital Works Steering Committee (PMO and Capital Investment)	Short term - Year 1	Annual	Improvement actions are incorporated into Council's Buildings Asset Management Plan.  % of capital expenditure funding dedicated towards accessibility improvements.

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
2.2 Use prioritisation to inform asset management projects to ensure DDA compliance.	Major Projects / Strategic Asset Management / PMO and Capital Investment / Design and Delivery	Short term - Year 1	On-going	<p>Prioritise design for dignity reviews</p> <p>Feasibility and scoping of building adjustments which are practicable</p> <p>Where no practicable adjustments available, review for alternative buildings/service access, appropriateness of building stock for use</p> <p>Scheduling of access improvement projects</p> <p>Issue of Occupancy Permits by a Building Surveyor confirming the facility has been built to comply</p>
<p>2.3 Council community links and facilities accessible through review and update of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer experience and service</li> <li>Quiet and sensory spaces</li> <li>Signage and messaging</li> </ul>	Customer Experience / Facilities / Creative Communities / Community Support	Medium term - Year 2-3	On-going	<p>Cultural facilities and community links have quiet and/or sensory spaces available to public.</p> <p>Signage at community links and cultural facilities includes neurodivergent and inclusive friendly messaging.</p> <p>Customer service teams are trained in disability inclusion.</p>

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
2.4 Continue to make playspaces and parks more accessible and inclusive.	Design and Place / Recreation and Sport	Long term - Year 4+	On-going	Each region has play spaces and features that are accessible and inclusive.
2.5 Council continues to make paths, trails and footpaths more accessible through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signage                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lighting</li> <li>– Mobility Aid access (width of design is considered)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Design and Place / Recreation and Sport / Traffic and Transport / Parks, Trees, and Trails	Medium term - Year 2-3	On-going	Paths and Trails Plan considers signage, safety and communication of accessibility features.  Required maintenance is undertaken to remove barriers for people with disability to ensure safety and accessibility is a priority.  Safety and accessibility of existing shared use paths is improved.
2.6 Improve the accessibility of townships through enabling the community to walk or ride to local shops, public transport and/or other key services.	Design and Place / Infrastructure Services / Traffic and Transport	Long term - Year 4+	Ongoing	Identify barriers to accessibility, and prioritise key pedestrian crossings and movement routes in township frameworks, township master plans, and streetscape master plans.
2.7 Continue the footpath building program through the delivery of the Integrated Transport Strategy	Infrastructure Services / Traffic and Transport	Long term - Year 4+	Ongoing	Footpath connectivity is installed, supporting accessible spaces.

## Inclusive Places continued

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
2.8 Proactively identify Council projects with greater opportunities for access and inclusion.	Major Projects / All Service Owners	Medium term - Year 2-3	Ongoing	<p>Number of projects where consideration of access and inclusion are brought into scope.</p> <p># of Project Plans reviewed by Councils Disability Advisory Committee or other consultation with community.</p>
<p>2.9 Identify opportunities for renovations and/or opportunities to construct new Changing Places facilities.</p> <p>Information on public and accessible toilets are on Council's website eg; National Toilet Map</p>	Facilities / Major Projects	Long term - Year 4+	On-going	<p>New builds and/or renovations include an ambulant toilet, and a single occupant gender neutral toilet.</p> <p># of Changing Places facilities that are accredited and registered.</p>
2.10 Progressively review open space strategies and master plans, to consider and implement an accessibility lens.	Desing and Place / Recreation and Sport	Long term - Year 4+	Ongoing	New open space strategies and master plans will consider the intersectional needs of people with disability, including but not limited to cognitive, neurological, physical, and psychosocial disabilities.



## Inclusive Community:

Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where everyone can participate equally.



**Image description:** Image of a group of people posing in front of a vibrant mural. The mural is large and features abstract shapes and colours, including stylised images of trees and someone playing the saxophone. The group consist of at least 15 people of various ages and ethnicities, and are positioned in a relaxed manner.

## Inclusive Community: Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where everyone can participate equally.

**Aim:** Council will lead by example in implementing best practices for accessibility and inclusiveness across its services, programs, and events. Council will work to influence individuals and community organisations to increase access and promote inclusiveness, ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable opportunities to participate.

**Outcome:** Council services, programs and events have improved accessibility. Council owned facilities promote inclusion for all people. Council works with community to build capacity, skills and leadership to advance disability inclusion.

### Budget:

Grants Programs	\$800,000
Enhanced Support Services	\$100,000
Projects and Programs	\$250,000
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$1,150,000</b>

**Disclaimer:** The costs included in this Disability Action Plan are indicative delivery costs calculated at the time of the development of this plan. These costs are subject to the formal budget process of Council.

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
3.1 Council grants programs create the platform for increased opportunities for intersectional access and inclusion.	Community Building and Partnerships / Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Annually	Criteria for all grant programs require access and inclusion to be considered.  Number of applications received that identify methods and actions to increase inclusion.  Number of projects with a specific focus on inclusion that are funded by Council.

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
3.2 Ensure Council's School Holiday Programming continues to be inclusive.	Family, Children and Youth	Short term - Year 1	Annually	<p>Accessible and inclusive school holiday programs are offered across the region.</p> <p>Where possible, co-design sessions with families.</p>
3.3 Ensure Council's Maternal and Child Health Services continue to be inclusive.	Maternal and Child Health Services	Short term - Year 1	Annually	<p>Information and referral to services and supports for families.</p> <p>Advocate for improved health services and accessibility of health services.</p>
3.4 Partner with young people to create social stories for Council's website	Youth Development / Community Support	Long term - Year 4+	Annually	<p>Social stories are created and added to website.</p> <p>Stage 1: Community links</p> <p>Stage 2: Arts centres</p> <p>Stage 3: Libraries</p> <p>Stage 4: Play spaces</p> <p>Stage 5: Community houses</p>

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
3.5 Deliver Community Change Makers program	Community Building and Partnerships / Health and Wellbeing	Medium term - Year 2-3	Bi-yearly	<p>Deliver program in 2025 and review outcomes to inform decisions about future programs.</p> <p>Promotion, design and delivery of program is inclusive of people with disability and unpaid carers.</p>
3.6 Deliver local Over 50's Festival and Events in line with Victorian Seniors Festival	Healthy and Active Ageing Team	Short term - Year 1	Annually	<p>Deliver annual program in conjunction with Victorian Seniors Festival</p> <p>Promotion, design and deliver of program inclusive of people with disability and unpaid carers.</p>
3.7 Support township groups, networks and grant seekers through capability building to ensure inclusion of people with disability and unpaid carers.	Community Building and Partnerships	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	<p>Promote training opportunities through newsletters.</p> <p>Invite township and other network leaders to Council's celebration events ie; International Day of People with Disabilities event.</p> <p>Highlight "how to do" inclusion at the annual grants celebration event.</p>

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
3.8 Distribute Disability Inclusion Newsletter promoting information and activities relating to disability inclusion.	Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Monthly	Monitor number of subscribers to the newsletter.  Monitor correlation to attendance at events and programs.
3.9 Promote inclusive sporting opportunities with local clubs, such as All Abilities Expo or Come and Try days.	Recreation and Sport / Health and Wellbeing	Medium term - Year 2-3	Ongoing	Delivery of an All Abilities Expo  Attendance at expo  Number of Come and Try days held by sporting clubs  Attendance at events  Access and inclusion training/programs are promoted to local clubs.
3.10 Continue Pathways for Carers program in Healesville and Mount Evelyn.	Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	Participants feel socially connected and have increased knowledge of service and supports available.  # of walks held per year



Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
3.11 Deliver inclusive performances and experiences at Council owned venues.	Creative Communities	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	<p>Open Captions sessions are delivered.</p> <p>Sensory Friendly sessions are delivered.</p> <p>Hearing Loops are available at The Memo Healesville.</p> <p>Performances that showcase people with lived experience of disability are delivered and promoted.</p> <p>Performances with Auslan interpretation are prioritised.</p> <p>Relaxed performances are delivered.</p>
3.12 Promote the benefits for businesses and owners of diverse recruitment practices through the Region of Choice program.	Economic development	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	<p>Disability Inclusion Toolkit is promoted to local businesses.</p> <p>Region of Choice program is delivered with inclusive recruitment practices a key focus.</p>

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
3.13 Raise awareness of, support and promote Accessible Tourism opportunities.	Economic Development	Medium term - Year 2-3	On-going	Spotlight and promote local businesses advancing inclusion and equity.  Advocate to advance accessible tourism through awareness raising campaigns, grant criteria and collaborative partnerships.
3.14 Deliver capacity building sessions for staff and social media campaigns to promote invisible disability.	Diversity and Inclusion Committee	Medium term - Year 2-3	Annually	Raise awareness of Invisible Disabilities Awareness Week (20th to 26th October)  At least one capacity building session for staff delivered  At least one social media campaign delivered  Develop tools for staff  Review reach and impact





**Inclusive Council:**  
Council's commitment  
to equity, access and  
inclusion is demonstrated  
in all aspects of business.

**Image description:** Outdoor photo of a group of women walking along a gravel trail in a bush area in Mount Evelyn. The women are various ages and are dressed in casual clothing suitable for walking. This walk is part of the program for Pathway for Carers.

## **Inclusive Council: Council's commitment to equity, access and inclusion is demonstrated in all aspects of business.**

**Aim:** Council will embed a commitment to equity, access, and inclusion throughout all its operations. This means developing the capacity of all Council officers to systematically address barriers faced by people with disabilities, use statutory and regulatory roles to advocate for improved inclusion and accessibility, enhance local employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and ensuring sufficient funding is allocated to support access and inclusion initiatives across the municipality.

**Outcome:** Councils recruitment practices are inclusive and accessible. Council includes access and inclusion across all advocacy priorities. Councils considers people with disabilities and unpaid carers across all aspects of business.

### **Budget:**

Disability Inclusion Operations	\$150,000
Employment Programs	\$100,000
Events	\$50,000
Sub-Total	\$300,000
Total:	\$4,450,000

**Disclaimer:** The costs included in this Disability Action Plan are indicative delivery costs calculated at the time of the development of this plan. These costs are subject to the formal budget process of Council.



Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
4.1 Promote flexible working arrangements and support to recruit and retain people with disability in the workforce and include inclusive recruiter messaging in all job advertisements.	People and Culture	Medium term - Year 2-3	Ongoing	Recruitment advertisements include inclusive statement and are up to date, including Council's website.  Recruitment training and materials are updated to ensure Hiring Managers promote flexibility and inclusivity during recruitment.
4.2 Deliver Disability Awareness Training as part of Councillor induction.	Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	Training delivered to Councillors at the start of each 4-year term.
4.3 Build awareness of the Disability Advisory Committee.	Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Annually	Annual report to Council on progress of Disability Action Plan and achievements of the Disability Advisory Committee.



Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
4.4 Promote industry specific training opportunities to teams to ensure intersectional access and inclusion is considered across all aspects of business.	People and Culture	Medium term - Year 2-3	Annually	<p>Emergency preparedness resources are promoted and delivered.</p> <p>Site visits are conducted as appropriate.</p> <p>Staff professional development opportunities are identified and delivered as part of the Performance Development Plan process; Embrace Diversity.</p> <p>Continue to offer access to and promote JobAccess training and webinar sessions to promote disability and inclusive recruitment.</p>
4.5 Better understand the intersectional needs of our staff with disability and/ or provide unpaid care to inform improvements.	Organisational Development	Medium term - Year 2-3	Bi-yearly	Review results from Staff People Matter Survey, including women with disabilities, women and men who are unpaid carers, and older women.
4.6 Diversity and Inclusion Committee is available to all staff and supports internal capacity building opportunities.	Organisational Development	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	<p># of meeting per year</p> <p># of activities delivered by the committee</p> <p>Breakdown of gender dis-aggregated data and participation across business units</p>

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Frequency	Performance Indicator
4.7 Access & Equity Reference Group meets quarterly to consult on all major projects, master plans and identifies areas for continuous improvement across Council.	Health and Wellbeing  Executive Leadership Team	Short term - Year 1	Quarterly, Ongoing	Terms of Reference Updated  # of meetings per year  # of projects delivered
4.8 Continue the delivery of the Disability Advisory Committee to ensure that access and inclusion of people with disability is considered.	Health and Wellbeing  Governance	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	Terms of Reference updated  Annual Report to Council  # of projects/activities consulted on
4.9 Delivery of annual event to celebrate International Day of People with Disability	Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Annually, Ongoing	Delivery of annual event
4.10 Council includes intersectional accessibility lens across all advocacy priorities.	Advocacy and Government Relations  Health and Wellbeing	Short term - Year 1	Ongoing	Councils Advocacy Agenda  Number of successful advocacy submissions

# Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Throughout the life of the Disability Action Plan, Council will monitor and evaluate our progress and implementation of actions via an annual report to Council. Included in the annual update to Council will be the achievements of the Disability Advisory Committee, showcasing their input and influence on advancing disability inclusion across all aspects of Council business. They are also involved in the annual review of the Disability Action Plan.

In the final year of the Disability Action Plan, consultation with community and key stakeholders to review and update the Disability Action Plan will occur. This is vital to ensure Council planning is aligning with the changing needs of the community.

## **Council's Access and Equity Reference Group**

The Access and Equity Reference Group (A&E Reference Group) is a group of Council staff that meet quarterly. They are responsible for helping to implement and evaluate the Disability Action Plan. They will support the annual reporting to Council.

## **Disability Advisory Committee**

Council is dedicated to advancing access, equity, and inclusion of people with disability and unpaid carers. This includes a dedicated Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), established in 2012. The DAC provides advice to Council, bringing their lived experience to inform policy, planning and programs delivered by Council. DAC members serve a four year term and meet every six weeks with a nominated Councillor delegate.

## **Disability Inclusion Officer**

Council has a full-time Disability Inclusion Officer. This role drives community development, engagement and advises on all work across Council. It acts as a conduit between community and Council. It convenes the Disability Advisory Committee and the Access and Equity Reference Group. It builds Council's capacity in all areas.

## **Healthy and Active Ageing Team**

If you would like advice or assistance on Healthy and Active Ageing, or making your business or club more dementia friendly, please contact Council on 1300 368 33 and speak to an officer from our Healthy and Active Ageing Team.

## Follow our progress

To find out more about the range of disability support services, programs and resources available, visit our website:

**<https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Disability-Support/Disability-support-services>**

Please contact us if you would like further information or an accessible format.

### Health and Wellbeing Team

1300 368 333

**[healthandwellbeingteam@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:healthandwellbeingteam@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)**

### Yarra Ranges Council

PO Box 105, Lilydale VIC 3140

1300 368 333 | [mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)

[yarraranges.vic.gov.au](http://yarraranges.vic.gov.au)

### National Relay Service

**133 677** – for callers who have a hearing, speech or communication impairment and for Text Telephone or modem callers

**1300 555 727** – for callers using Speech to Speech relay

**9658 9461** – Teletypewriter (TTY)

### Translating and Interpreting Service

**131 450** – Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) National. An interpreting service is available if required.



# Services and Supports

In addition to contacting Council, there are free services and supports available to help you.

## Carer Gateway

Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm for support and services

Telephone **1800 422 737**

Website **[www.carergateway.gov.au](http://www.carergateway.gov.au)**

## Beyond Blue Support Service

24 hours, 7 days a week or chat online 3pm to 12am AEST.

Telephone **1300 224 636**

Website **[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

## Lifeline Crisis Support

Provides support if you are feeling overwhelmed, having difficulty coping or thinking about suicide.

Available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Telephone **13 11 14**

Text **0477 13 11 14**

Website **[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)**

## 1800RESPECT

For support if you are affected by sexual assault or domestic and family violence or abuse.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, chat online 24 hours a day,

Telephone **1800 737 732**

Website **[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)**

## 13YARN

First Nations service providing culturally safe crisis support.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telephone **13 92 76**

Website **[www.13yarn.org.au](http://www.13yarn.org.au)**

## QLife

QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTQIA+ peer support and referral for people in Australia.

3pm to midnight, every day or visit QLife - Support and Referrals.

Telephone **1800 184 527**

Website **<https://qlife.org.au>**

## Open Arms Veterans and Family Counselling

As a carer of a veteran, or a veteran who is a carer, you can contact Open Arms to find out what support and services are available for you or your loved ones.

Telephone **1800 011 046**

Website **[www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au)**

## eheadspace

eheadspace is a national online and phone support service for young people between 12 and 25.

Available 9am – 1am AEST every day.

Telephone **1800 650 890**

Website **<https://headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support>**

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Local

18 Clarke Street, Lilydale 3140

Telephone **1300 000 252**

Website: **[www.wellways.org.au](http://www.wellways.org.au)**

# Glossary

Language is important. It shapes how we see the world around us. Council understands that language changes over time and that words can mean different things to different people. Disability isn't the same for everyone and can be understood in different ways depending on a person's culture. Similarly, there is no universal preference for terminology use. People with disability have different preferences regarding how they describe their disability.

In this plan, Council have chosen to align with the Victorian Disability Action Plan and use person-first language. Person-first language puts the person before their disability – for example, 'person with disability'. This language puts the person before their disability, showing respect for who they are beyond their disability.

Whilst this is the approach we have chosen; we acknowledge that some people prefer what's called "identity-first" language, like "disabled person." They see their disability as an important part of who they are and use this language to show pride in their identity and to point out that it's society that creates barriers for them, not their disability itself.

Different people have different preferences about how they want to talk about their disability because it reflects how they see themselves, their experiences, and what their community thinks. We commit to continuing to explore and understand the evolving community preferences for preferred language use. We acknowledge people's personal preferences and individual right to choose how their identity and experiences are described.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2022). *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022-2026*.

Term	What it means in the plan
Accessible communication	Accessible communication ensures everyone has the same access and opportunity to read publications, use websites, attend events, respond in emergency situations, and find out about Council's policies and programs. <sup>11</sup>
Accessibility	Accessibility is the ability to access and benefit from a process, system, service or product. If something is accessible, then anyone can directly access or use it, regardless of their ability, location, language, culture, time and resources, or any other differentiating factor that contributes to the diversity of our communities. <sup>12</sup>
Advocacy	Advocacy means getting support from another person to help you express your views and wishes, and to help you stand up for your rights. Someone who helps you in this way is called an advocate. An advocate can be a family member, friend, or a carer. You can also access a professional advocacy service through an organisation. When Council advocates, it typically does so to other tiers of government, to improve the lives of Yarra Ranges residents. Individuals can also advocate for their own rights. <sup>13</sup>
Carer and Un-paid Carer	The terms 'carer' and 'unpaid carer' are used as defined in the <i>Carer Recognition Act 2010</i> as an umbrella term for those who provide unpaid care, support and assistance for someone with disability, a medical condition, a mental illness or is frail due to age <sup>14</sup> . Carers who receive financial support such as a Carer Payment and/or Carer Allowance are included in this definition.
Changing Places	Public toilets with adult sized change tables and hoists in major public spaces that meet the needs of people with disability. <sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> State Government of Victoria. (2023). *Accessibility guidelines for government communications*.

<sup>12</sup> State Government of Victoria. (2021). *Key definitions for common terms used in the Public Engagement Framework 2021-2025*.

<sup>13</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2024). *List of Advocacy Organisations in Victoria*.

<sup>14</sup> Parliament of Australia. (2010). *Chapter 2 – The Carer Recognition Act*.

<sup>15</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2022). *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022-2026*.

Term	What it means in the plan
Disability	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) defines people with disability as encompassing individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. These impairments, when interacting with inaccessible communities and environments, may hinder their full and equal participation in society. Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible, or invisible. acquired or congenital, fluctuating, or episodic. <sup>16</sup>
Disability discrimination	The Disability Discrimination Act states that discrimination based on disability occurs when a person with disability is either: 1. treated less favourably than a person without disability (direct discrimination), or 2. made to comply with a general requirement or condition that the person is unable to comply with because of their disability, and that leads to the person being disadvantaged (indirect discrimination). <sup>17</sup>
Discrimination	When we talk about a person being discriminated against, it means they're being treated badly or unfairly because of a personal characteristic that is protected by the law. The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 describes it as being treated "unfavourably". <sup>18</sup>
Diversity	Diversity is about what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs. It is a combination of our differences that shape our view of the world, our perspective, and our approach. Diversity is also about recognising, respecting and valuing differences based on ethnicity, gender, age, race, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. It also includes an infinite range of individual unique characteristics and experiences, such as communication style, career path, life experience, educational background, geographic location, income level, marital status, parental status, and other variables that influence personal perspectives. <sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2021). *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025*.

<sup>17</sup> Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2021). *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025*.

<sup>18</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. (2024). *Discrimination*.

<sup>19</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2019). *What do we mean by diversity and inclusion?*

Term	What it means in the plan
Equal opportunity	Equal opportunity means that every person can participate freely and equally in areas of public life such as in the workplace, in education, or in accessing goods and services without disadvantage or less favourable treatment due to their unique attributes. <sup>20</sup>
Equality / Equity	Equality means treating everyone the same regardless of their needs. Equity is about treating people differently based on their needs. It recognises each person has different circumstances and allocates opportunities and resources needed to reach equal outcomes. <sup>21</sup>
Formal Carer	Formal carers and paid support workers are those who provide care, support and assistance as a paid service, as part of a volunteer arrangement or as part of training or education for paid care services. Such formal care arrangements are out of scope for this Disability Action Plan.
Gender-equity	Gender equity: is an approach that leads to gender equality. To ensure fairness, strategies must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent everyone from operating on a level playing field. <sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2019). *What do we mean by diversity and inclusion?*

<sup>21</sup> Australian Government, Department of Social Services (2024) *National Carer Strategy 2024-2034*. Online: [National Carer Strategy 2024-2034 | Department of Social Services](#)

<sup>22</sup> Women's Health East. (2021). *Together For Equality & Respect Strategy: Preventing Violence Against Women in Melbourne's East 2021-2025*.



Term	What it means in the plan
Inclusion	<p>Inclusion occurs when people feel, and are, valued and respected, and where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have the opportunity to fulfil their potential</li> <li>• have access to opportunities and resources</li> <li>• can contribute their personal best in every encounter</li> <li>• can contribute their perspectives and talents</li> <li>• have a sense of belonging.<sup>23</sup></li> </ul>
Intersectionality / intersectional approaches	<p>Coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term 'intersectionality' refers to a way of seeing people's experiences as shaped by (but not limited to) their race, socio-economic background, sex, gender, ability, and sexuality all at the same time. This overlap or combination of differences makes up a person's unique identity. Identities within an individual may come, go, or converge, depending on time or place (for example life stages). The point of understanding intersectionality is to also understand the variety of privileges and/or forms of discrimination or exclusion that one may experience simultaneously at any given time (for example gender, race, and disability together).<sup>24</sup></p>
LGBTIQA+	<p>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning, and asexual.<sup>25</sup></p>
Person-first language	<p>Person-first language puts the person before their disability – for example, 'person with disability'. Person-first language is used to emphasise a person's right to an identity beyond their disability.<sup>26</sup></p>

<sup>23</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2019). *What do we mean by diversity and inclusion?*

<sup>24</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2019). *What do we mean by diversity and inclusion?*

<sup>25</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Education. (2024). *Inclusive Workplaces*.

<sup>26</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2022). *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022-2026*.

Term	What it means in the plan
Social Model of Disability	The social model of disability sees ‘disability’ as the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers. It therefore carries the implication that the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment must change to enable people living with impairments to participate in society on an equal basis with others. In the social model of disability, it is society that places limits on a person, not their disability. <sup>27</sup>
Wellbeing	Wellbeing includes physical, mental and social health. Wellbeing can be described as how you feel about yourself and your life. <sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> People With Disability Australia. (2022). *Social Model of Disability*.

<sup>28</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2022). *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022-2026*.

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# Appendix 1 – Additional local data

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

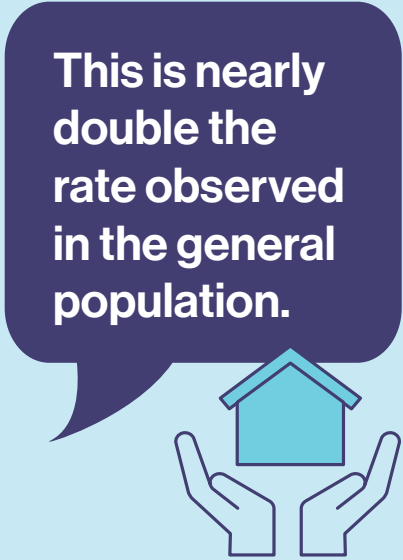
### Among the Aboriginal population

9.55%

need daily support  
with core activities

due to severe or profound  
disability, chronic illness, or age.

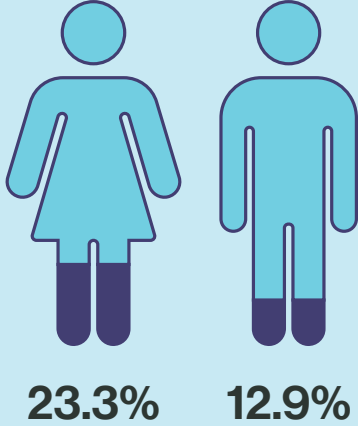
(9.7% among females;  
11% among males)



Over 18%

provide unpaid care  
for someone with disability,  
chronic illness, or age.

(23.3% of females; 12.9%  
of males)



<sup>29</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile. Yarra Ranges (LGA27450) 2468.2 sq Kms. Tab 109. Core Activity Need*

<sup>30</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile. Yarra Ranges (LGA27450) 2468.2 sq Kms. Tab 110. Unpaid Assistance*

## Culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability

**Almost 17% of Yarra Ranges residents were born overseas.**

**39 languages other than English are spoken at home**



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**Assumptions for the Yarra Ranges Culturally and Linguistically Diverse residents based on general population data suggest:**

**Over 5,000**

people have a disability

**Over 1,400**

need daily support with core activities due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

**Almost 3,800**

people provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

<sup>3</sup>.idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). *Yarra Ranges Council, Birthplace*.

<sup>4</sup>.idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). *Yarra Ranges Council, Languages used at home*.

## LGBTIQ+ people with disability

Currently, National population-based data collections, such as the Census, and the State based Population Health Survey lack of inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. Despite this, the Department of Health (2019) estimates that approximately 11% of the Australian population identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Intersex (LGBTI).<sup>31</sup>

Based on the Department of Health estimates, some assumptions for the Yarra Ranges community are:

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**Over 17,000**



**Yarra Ranges residents identify as LGBTIQ+**

(11% of the population)

Of this 17,000 people:

**Almost 3,500 have a disability**



**Over 900 need daily support with core activities**

due to disability, chronic illness, or age.



**Over 2,500**

**provide unpaid care** to a person due to disability, chronic illness, or age.



<sup>31</sup> End of Life Directions for Aged Care (2022). *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Australia's ageing LGBTI population.*





**Image description:** Image of a person who is blind, standing outdoors near a sign in a park-like setting. The person is positioned to the left of the sign and they are holding a black shoulder bag. Their posture is relaxed and their expression is neutral. The sign is an interpretive audio-sign using Woiwurrung language. It features a green background with descriptive text and graphics about a “Stringybark Tree”.

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Yarra Ranges Council

# Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report

April, 2025

Prepared by the Health and Wellbeing Team

Page 324



# Acknowledgement of Country

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Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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# Introduction

This report summarises the community engagement for the Yarra Ranges Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2025 – 2029.

It captures the two phases in which the community is engaged regarding their vision and preferences for access, equity, and inclusion for people with disability and unpaid carers in the Yarra Ranges.

Information gathered through community voice informed the development of the Yarra Ranges Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2025 – 2029.

The DAP outlines the ways Council will work to improve disability access and to advance equity and inclusion for people with a disability and unpaid carers, including Councils infrastructure, facilities, communications, and service.

## Project Background

People with disability (and unpaid carers) have a human right to be included in all aspects of community life. This also brings many social, cultural, and economic benefits to the wider community.

The Victorian Public Sector Commission, in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, defines disability as encompassing individuals with long term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. These impairments, when coupled with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal footing with others. Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible, or invisible. acquired or congenital, fluctuating, or episodic.<sup>1</sup>

Carers are people who provide unpaid care and support a person who has a disability, this may be a family member and or a friend. Carers are an integral for both the person they are caring for and as part of Australia's health system.

Individual characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and cultural upbringing can shape the experiences, perspectives, needs, and challenges of individuals living with disability. The intersectional nature of a person's circumstance can result in compounding layers of barrier and discrimination. For example, an older woman with disability, may experience difficulties participating in social activities due to mobility issues and age-related discrimination, and may also be more likely to experience violence, which influences her overall health and wellbeing.

Council actively sought to capture the intersectional experience of individuals with disability and unpaid carers, when undertaking community engagement to inform the DAP.





Almost **20%** of Yarra Ranges residents identify as having a disability.<sup>2</sup>

**Over 5%** (5.6% among females; 5.2% among males) need daily support with core activities due to severe or profound disability, chronic illness, or age.<sup>3</sup> Among the Aboriginal population, this figure increases to **9.55%** (9.7% among females; 11% among males), nearly double the rate observed in the general population.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, almost **15%** of Yarra Ranges residents (17.6% among females; 11.7% among males) provide unpaid care for someone due to disability, chronic illness, or age.<sup>5</sup> Among the Aboriginal population, over **18%** (23.3% of females; 12.9% of males) provide unpaid care for someone with disability, chronic illness, or age.<sup>6</sup>

Currently, National population-based data collections, such as the Census, and the State based Population Health Survey lack of inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. Despite this, the Department of Health (2019) estimates that approximately **11%** of the Australian population identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Intersex (LGBTI).<sup>7</sup>

Based on the Department of Health estimates, some assumptions for the Yarra Ranges community are:

- Over **17,000** Yarra Ranges residents (11% of the population) identify as LGBTIQ+

#### Of this 17,000:

- Almost **3,500** people have a disability.
- Over **900** people need daily support with core activities due to disability, chronic illness, or age.
- Over **2,500** people provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

Almost **17%** of Yarra Ranges residents were born overseas. 39 languages other than English are spoken at home.<sup>8,9</sup> Gender-disaggregated data is not available. Assumptions for the Yarra Ranges Culturally and Linguistically Diverse residents based on general population data suggest:

- Over **5,000** people have a disability
- Almost **3,800** people provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

1. Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025 (content.vic.gov.au)

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). "Region Summary, Yarra Ranges". <https://dbrabs.gov.au/region.html?lrr=iga&rgn=27450> Accessed 17 April 2024.

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7. End of Life Directions for Aged Care (2022). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Australia's ageing LGBTI population. <https://www.eldac.com.au/Resources/Diverse-Population-Groups/Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-and-Intersex#:~:text=Current%20estimates%20from%20the%20Department,based%20discrimination%20over%20their%20lifetime>. Accessed on 10 April 2024.

8. idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Birthplace". <https://profile.id.com.au/yarra-ranges/birthplace>. Accessed on 10 April 2024.

9. idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Languages used at home". <https://profile.id.com.au/yarra-ranges/language>. Accessed on 10 April 2024.



## The vision of the DAP is:

---

“Yarra Ranges is an accessible, fair, and inclusive society where people with disability and unpaid carers can participate in community life as equal citizens.”

---

## The four goals of the DAP are:



### Goal 1

Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone in our community and supports fair participation and inclusion in community life.



### Goal 2

Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.



### Goal 3

Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where everyone can participate equally.



### Goal 4

Council's commitment to access, fairness, and inclusion is demonstrated in all aspects of the business.

Council has a responsibility under the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and the *Victorian Disability Act 2006* to develop and maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP) that seeks to:

- Reduce barriers faced by people with disability in accessing goods, services, and facilities.
- Obtain and maintain employment.
- Promote inclusion and participation of people with disability.
- Achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against such people.







## Methods of data collection

Council completed a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) obliged under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, which recommended Council:

- Respond to clear gaps in gender-disaggregated data and intersectional lived experience by undertaking targeted consultation with priority cohorts.
- Establish relationships with priority cohorts who have a disability, capture their voices to inform the DAP.
- Consider the needs of LBGTIQA+, CALD, and Indigenous people with disability, including women, girls, and gender diverse people, who are currently under-served communities.

These recommendations guided Council with planning the engagement that was delivered.

To gain an understanding of how Yarra Ranges Council was performing against the Vision and Goals, the community was able to get involved in the following ways:





The Yarra Ranges community exhibits a remarkable diversity of interests and requirements relating to accessibility, shaped by factors such as the type of disability, levels of support required. Residents genuinely appreciate living in the Yarra Ranges and, Council remains committed to actively listening and involving community in making improvements.

To promote and reach a variety of people Council used the following promotional methods:



**Website Promotion**



**Social media**



**E-Newsletters**



**Radio**



**Presentations**



**Printed media**



**Email distribution**





## Limitations

Views on how accessible Councils' infrastructure, facilities, communications, and services was sought. However, due to respondents self-electing to participate, this resulted in data gathered reflecting a present-time individual needs base rather than indicating an aspirational view of future community needs.

Given the broad geographical spread of the Yarra Ranges municipality, this imposed limitations on levels of participation during the engagement process across all nine wards of the region. Therefore, note that the feedback included in this report reflects the individuals who participated in the engagement process and may not be reflective of all people with a disability and unpaid carers in the Yarra Ranges.

During the engagement, Council successfully connected with people residing, working, and spending time in the Yarra Ranges. Yarra Ranges offers a mixture of urban and rural communities. There are over 55 suburbs, townships, small communities, and rural areas, making it one of the most diverse of any municipalities in the State.

The voluntary sharing of location by some participants, in contrast to others who did not, highlights the breadth of outreach efforts across Yarra Ranges. The engagement extended to a diverse range of suburbs, including at least 34 distinct neighbourhoods. This coverage represents over 50% of the suburbs within Council, encompassing all nine wards.

Council cannot take immediate action in response to all feedback received. Any action taken due to the data collected must align with the Council's ongoing legislative responsibilities and align with the vision and intended goals of the DAP. Budgetary constraints are also a consideration.



# How did people get involved

Recognising ways that systems, structures, and attitudes can lead to multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage, the community engagement plan applied an intersectional lens. The engagement methods, number of participants, key findings and who offered feedback from the community are shown below.



## E-newsletter and Radio

- Over **13,190** recipients received Council E-newsletters

## Social Media

- **25,740** people reached through Yarra Ranges Council Facebook and Instagram.

## Shaping Yarra Ranges Page & Surveys

- **1497** visitors
- **54** contributions
- **125** surveys completed

## Interviews and Focus Group Sessions

- **500+** people reached
- **6** face-face focus group sessions
- **2** public events
- Disability Inclusion Network
- **4** Pathways for Carers Walks
- **13** interviews
- Yarra Ranges Neighbourhood House Network

## Advisory Committee's

- Disability Advisory Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Positive Ageing Reference Group.



# Summary of feedback

The Community has highlighted several key themes that warrant consideration for the upcoming DAP. These themes listed alphabetically provide valuable insights.

**Table 11 – Key themes and desired outcomes**

Number of Key Themes	Key Themes	Desired Outcome
1.	<b>Accessible tourism</b>	Yarra Ranges is a welcoming destination for all visitors.
2.	<b>Customer Experience</b>	There is a variety of options available for people with disability and unpaid carers to engage with Council. Including the latest technology to support an improved customer experience.
3.	<b>Emergency Management</b>	People with a disability and unpaid carers are included at all stages of Emergency Management planning and delivery.
4.	<b>Festivals and Events / Local Businesses</b>	Community events and local businesses have access to Information and capacity building opportunities.
5.	<b>Housing</b>	Temporary/permanent housing affordability, availability, and suitability for people with disability.
6.	<b>Information</b>	The information required is readily available and in accessible formats.
7.	<b>Infrastructure</b>	Increased accessibility in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing Places toilets</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Shade</li> <li>• Accessible parking</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Footpaths</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Safe pedestrian crossings</li> <li>• Community facilities</li> </ul>
8.	<b>Public Transport</b>	Accessible public transport Adequate infrastructure leading to public transport. Increased public transport options across Yarra Ranges.
9.	<b>Safety</b>	Lighting near recreation equipment and around shopping precincts is improved.
10.	<b>Social connection and wellbeing</b>	People with a disability and unpaid carers have access to local programs to enhance social connection and wellbeing.
11.	<b>Youth Employment</b>	Pathways for young people with disability to support workforce entry.



## Conclusion

Council values and acknowledges the people who informed this report and the development of the next DAP. It's essential to create an inclusive environment for the community.

Council will communicate and promote the final DAP following Council consideration and endorsement.



To remain up to date with this project please visit the [Access, Equity and Inclusion Strategy | Shaping Yarra Ranges](#) page.







## References

- <sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). "Region Summary, Yarra Ranges". <https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=lga&rgn=27450> Accessed 17 April 2024.
- <sup>2</sup> .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Need for Assistance". Need for assistance | Yarra Ranges Council | Community profile (id.com.au) . Accessed on 10 April 2024.
- <sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile. Yarra Ranges (LGA27450) 2468.2 sq Kms. Tab I09. Core Activity Need
- <sup>4</sup> .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Unpaid Care". Unpaid care | Yarra Ranges Council | Community profile. Accessed on 10 April 2024.
- <sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile. Yarra Ranges (LGA27450) 2468.2 sq Kms. Tab 110. Unpaid Assistance
- <sup>6</sup> End of Life Directions for Aged Care (2022). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Australia's ageing LGBTI population. <https://www.eldac.com.au/Resources/Diverse-Population-Groups/Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-and-Intersex#:~:text=Current%20estimates%20from%20the%20Department,based%20discrimination%20over%20their%20lifetime>. Accessed on 10 April 2024.
- <sup>7</sup> .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Birthplace". <https://profile.id.com.au/yarra-ranges/birthplace> . Accessed on 10 April 2024.
- <sup>8</sup> .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Languages used at home". <https://profile.id.com.au/yarra-ranges/language> . Accessed on 10 April 2024.

# Glossary of terms

Term or abbreviation	What it means in the plan
<b>Accessibility</b>	The extent to which people with disability can access something like an office, worksite, or public area.
<b>Changing Places</b>	Public toilets with full-sized change tables and hoists in major public spaces that meet the needs of people with disability.
<b>Cohorts</b>	A group of people with a shared characteristic
<b>Community engagement and consultation</b>	Community engagement at Yarra Ranges Council includes a wide range of activities aimed at involving the community in Council's decision-making processes.
<b>Community voice</b>	Involvement of members representing the community/lived experience
<b>Culturally Linguistically diverse (CALD)</b>	A community or group of people who come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
<b>Data</b>	Facts or information about a topic or group of people.
<b>Disability Advisory Committee</b>	The Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) provides advice on equity, access and inclusion to maximise opportunities for people with a disability to participate fully in the community of Yarra Ranges.
<b>Disability Act</b>	The Disability Act 2006 (Vic) provides a whole-of-government and community response to the rights and needs of people with disability including a requirement to have four-year state disability plans
<b>Disability Action Plan (DAP)</b>	An important way that state government departments and local governments ensure they are delivering inclusive and accessible services.
<b>Emergency Management (EM)</b>	The process of preparing for and responding to emergencies, including natural disasters such as storms and floods.
<b>Gender</b>	The socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; gender defines masculinity and femininity. Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.
<b>Gender Disaggregated Data (GDD)</b>	Data that has been broken down and analysed by gender.
<b>Gender Diverse</b>	Refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways. There are many terms used by gender diverse people to describe themselves, for example non-binary.
<b>Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)</b>	It's an assessment that outlines where gender analysis has been used to inform a policy to deliver better gender equality outcomes.

Term or abbreviation	What it means in the plan
<b>Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee</b>	The Health & Wellbeing Advisory Committee allows for community voice and a consultative process for a wider range of activities and initiatives, as well as advice to support Council's decision making and monitors the achievement of objectives of the Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.
<b>Health and Wellbeing Team</b>	A team within YRC that is responsible for providing advice on outcomes, namely the Disability Action Plan.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	A methodology of studying the overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination.
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, and queer.
<b>NDIS</b>	Jointly funded by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, the National Disability Insurance Scheme provides access to disability supports for eligible people with disability.
<b>Pop up sessions</b>	Directly engaging with the local community through face-to-face conversation
<b>Underserved groups</b>	Groups of people who, because of systemic discrimination or disadvantage, often miss out on important services or having their voices heard
<b>Unpaid Carer</b>	Carers are people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged.
<b>Vision</b>	In this plan the vision represents what we hope will happen if the actions do what they are meant to do.
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Wellbeing includes physical, mental, and social health. Wellbeing can be described as how you feel about yourself and your life.
<b>Focus groups</b>	Conversing with key stakeholders to inform the DAP in a group setting whether it be face to face and or online.
<b>Survey</b>	Asking people questions through a questionnaire with a written set of questions. Both online and paper surveys were available.
<b>Interviews</b>	A formal conversation one on one and or in a group setting.
<b>Shaping Yarra Ranges Page</b>	An online engagement platform that gives you the opportunity to share your ideas and feedback on the projects and services that will shape your community.
<b>Advisory Committee</b>	A group of people with skills, expertise across multiple sectors who provide independent advice on issues occurring in the community.
<b>Reference groups to Council</b>	A collective group of people providing advice/opinions of topics.





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Yarra Ranges **Council**

# **Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013–2023**

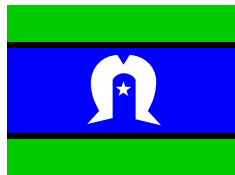
Final Report

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



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# Introduction

People with disability (and unpaid carers) have a human right to be included in all aspects of community life. This also brings many social, cultural, and economic benefits for the wider community.

Almost 20% of Yarra Ranges residents have a disability. Over 5% need daily support with core activities. This is because of age, chronic illness, or profound disability. Almost 15% of residents provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, health condition, or age.

The Yarra Ranges Equity, Access, and Inclusion Strategy (Disability Action Plan) 2013–2023 outlines some ways Council will work to improve disability access and to advance equity and inclusion for people with a disability. Council is developing the next iteration of this Strategy.

This report shares some of the highlights, achievements and reflections of Council throughout the Strategy's lifecycle. Council has completed many projects that contribute to access, equity and inclusion across the Yarra Ranges, it should be noted that this report does not feature all of them.



*Image description: Current Yarra Ranges Disability Advisory Committee members and Cr Len Cox smiling at the camera. One man and one woman seated in wheelchairs at the front. Seven women and two men stand behind them.*



# Development of the Strategy

A cross-Council working group at Council meet every three months called the Access and Equity Reference Group.

This group of staff provided advice about what should be written in the Strategy. Members of the Yarra Ranges Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) also contributed. The DAC are key stakeholders. They guide implementation of the Strategy and bring lived experience to decision making.

## Vision

Yarra Ranges is an accessible, inclusive, and equitable society that enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.

## Goals

The Strategy sets out four goals to help achieve the vision.

- Goal 1:** Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone in our community and supports equitable participation and inclusion in civic life.
- Goal 2:** Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.
- Goal 3:** Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where all citizens can participate equally.
- Goal 4:** Council's commitment to equity, access and inclusion is demonstrated in all aspects of the business.

**“You need to promote what Council has achieved and where we are heading. People don’t realise the good work that’s been done, and that Council are trying to improve lives”. – DAC member**

# ★ Highlights and Achievements for Goal 1

Goal 1: Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone in our community and supports equitable participation and inclusion in civic life.

## Accessible website

Council have an accessibility menu on the website. It allows individuals to choose features that suit their needs. Users can also pick an accessibility profile such as 'blind,' or 'dyslexia.' Once selected, the website's content transforms into an easy-to-read format. It's made for that person's preferences.

## Accessible information

There are many sporting groups, reserves, and pools. There are also water play parks and clubs. They offer accessible recreation options for community members. Information about them is on Council's website. The website also includes information about the location of accessible toilets. And Changing Places facilities. And guidance on how to access them.

### Accessible communications

'Our Brand' is an internal document. It helps staff create documents in a consistent way, including accessible colour contrast and font size.



Image description: Accessibility page from Yarra Ranges 'Our Brand', guidelines document. Image shows coloured dots with black and/or white stars to indicate accessible colour contrast for each colour.

## Lilydale Service Centre

The upgrade of Lilydale Service Centre includes an accessible counter. It has armed chairs and communication tools. It also has well-trained and supported staff.

## Accessible documents

Key Council documents are available in accessible formats on Council's website.

### Diverse representation

Council documents include images of diverse individuals with disabilities. It promotes understanding and acceptance.



*Image description: Page from the Council Plan document with three images of a diverse range of community members participating in community engagement.*

## Reflections on Goal 1

Council have guidance to help staff create accessible documents. Yet, staff do not fully understand or follow it. The next plan will focus on improving staff skills and capabilities to create accessible documents. This may involve training and creating accessible PowerPoint templates. Every public document should be available in an accessible format as standard practice.

Council will take a staged approach. Council will include information on the website about the accessible features of all Council's public buildings. Council could do the same for play spaces. And list the location of accessible car parks. Council might include the accessible features of local businesses. This could encourage them to improve accessibility. Council could look for outside funding or partners. They would help to create social stories for the website. This would support individuals who are neurodiverse. Council could put all the information on an accessibility map. The map would be for the Local Government Area.

# ★ Highlights and Achievements for Goal 2

Goal 2: Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.

## Lilydale Depot all-inclusive amenities

The redevelopment resulted in the first gender-neutral and all-inclusive amenities layout in a Yarra Ranges Council building.

### Changing Places

Facilities installed at four locations. Lilydale Lake, Monbulk Aquatic Centre, Yarra Centre, and McKensie Reserve. Another one is being built at Kilsyth Stadium. The stadium also serves as an Emergency Relief Centre.

The facilities have a shower, accessible toilet an adult hoist system, Braille signage, colour contrast and tactile indicators



*Image description: View into Changing Places facility from open doorway, showing adult sized change table.*

## Narre Warren East Pavilion Upgrades

Involved renovating the upstairs change room and including an accessible toilet. Council made a conscious decision to go beyond the minimum requirements by including a new external accessible ramp. This provides access from the downstairs social space to the newly renovated amenities.

## Millgrove Community Sporting Pavilion

The design and construction includes accessible parking, and compliant paths. There is an accessible toilet with a shower and baby change station. The community rooms include ambulant toilets, Braille signage, colour contrast, and tactile indicators.



*Image description: A new external ramp alongside construction fencing at Narre Warren East Pavilion.*

## Accessibility improvements at Kilsyth stadium

Council plays an important role in meeting the essential needs of individuals and communities after emergencies. The Yarra Ranges Municipal Recovery Plan included a review of accessibility of emergency relief centres. This review assessed floors, toilets, and signs. The DAC consulted and visited the sites. Following this, upgrades to Kilsyth Stadium are in progress. They include building a Changing Places toilet facility.

## Planning for footpaths

Has identified and mapped around 700 links, with 65% responding to community requests and 35% added for overall network improvement. These links, spanning across each Council ward, are prioritised based on proximity to public transport, schools, shops, and key facilities to maximise community benefits.

## Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail Signage

Council made five new signs. Council worked with Wurundjeri women Brooke Wandin and Mandy Nicholson to create them. They are solar powered. They include words and pictures. They also have a button. When users push the button, they can listen to stories, songs, and language in Woiwurrung.



*Image description: Community member standing to the right of signage on Warburton Rail Trail.*



## Mooroolbark Community Centre upgrades

Include a ramped entry and exit, accessible theatre seating, toilet, wheelchair access to the stage, and wide pathway and pram crossing from the car park. Handrails were repainted in a contrasting colour based on advice from the DAC and Vision Australia.

### Play Space Projects

Every new play space includes at least one piece of age- and ability-friendly equipment. Features include: Accessible paths and water fountains; Soft-fall flooring and wheelchair-accessible equipment; accessible ramps and picnic tables.



*Image description: Belgrave Lake playground with soft-fall flooring and inclusive play elements.*

## Monbulk Pavilion upgrade

including ramps for accessibility. Since the project's completion, there has been an increase in attendance and participation of people with disability.

### 2019 Inclusive Sport, Recreation, or Open Space Infrastructure award for the Lilydale to Warburton Trail

The project was inspired by resident and DAC member James. He had challenges navigating the trail. He was on his recumbent bicycle. James collaborated with Council. They redesigned chicanes for better accessibility. This helps to ensure rider safety at road crossings. This makes the trail more accessible for people with disability and creates a better fit for prams, hand cycles, tandem bikes, and other non-standard vehicles.

More collaboration followed. Council evaluated Adaptive Mountain Bike tracks near Lilydale Lake and also looked at the Wesburn and Warburton Mountains. Council checked if they are compatible with a recumbent bicycle and evaluated parking and toilet accessibility.



*Image description: Man in a red jacket and blue jeans seated on a recumbent bicycle. Council officer is in high-visible jacket watching man manoeuvre around witches' hats on a section of the Warburton trail.*

## Monbulk Urban Design Framework

The DAC provided collective advice. A DAC member did a site visit. Over 2,300 pieces of community feedback also informed the Framework. Council adopted it in 2023 and made more than 20 changes based on community input. They include combining pedestrian crossings, improving intersections, adding car parks, and pathways to toilets. The Framework guides Council's decisions and priorities for Monbulk.

### Accessible Parklets

COVID-19 presented many challenges. Council wanted to support safe outdoor gatherings. Parklets were installed throughout the Shire. This was to encourage outdoor dining and community interaction. They had accessible features. This included space for wheelchair movement, ramps, varied seat heights, and shade. Advice from a DAC member and Vision Australia helped with features for those with visual impairment.



*Image description: Three women talking at Upwey parklet. One is standing, two are seated. Entrance to accessible ramp on the left of image.*

### Belgrave Hub

The new facility opened in April 2018. The Hub provides health and other community services for the Hills area and is managed by Inspiro Health. It also has a community playground. The Hub has an easy-to-reach counter and an elevator. The Hub is also home to the Dandenong Ranges Emergency Relief Service and the Orange Door. Council's Maternal and Child Health and Aged and Disability services are here too.

## Reflections on Goal 2

All Council renovations and new buildings follow the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Requirements. But, with over 750 buildings and little external funding, there is still work to do. Council want to keep improving. Council want all public buildings to be accessible and this Strategy ensures Council continually strive towards achieving this. An audit of Council buildings and continued site visits with DAC members will help to understand the accessibility requirements on an on-going basis. Council will aim to maximise benefit of each building and renovation to community. Clear benchmarks, measures and reporting will ensure transparency.

# ★ Highlights and Achievements for Goal 3

Goal 3: Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where all citizens can participate equally.

## Grants for Community

Program supports local groups and artists. They use it to implement self-designed projects. These projects improve mental and physical health. They also foster social connection, culture and community celebration.

Councils Grants Program includes an assessment of at least 15% proposals to include diversity and inclusion. Grant applicants can ask for advice on shaping events to be inclusive and accessible.

Some programs funded through the Grants for Community Program include:

**Community Keys:** Draws from Luke Jerram's 'Play Me, I'm Yours' Street Piano artwork. It aims to bring music to the Yarra Ranges streets. Eddie and Mandy at ABC Piano Removals donated the pianos. Six will be placed in public locations from February to April 2024. Community members are invited to play and enjoy the pianos. They are all accessible via ramps or at street level. They have safety features to protect young children.



Image description: A group of four women seated, smiling at camera, each with a musical instrument in hand.



Image description: Flyer for Community Keys launch event. Black and white piano keys are positioned at the top. Text in orange is positioned from the mid-way point downwards.

## Cinema with Open Captions

Sessions are held many times each week. They are held in Healesville and Warburton. Council also provides free cinema tickets to some community support groups. They give the tickets out to the community.

**“The recipients [of the complimentary cinema tickets] were delighted to receive them! Several families that would not have had the opportunity otherwise to enjoy such a treat! One Grandparent who is a carer for her grandchildren and several single people received two tickets so they could take a friend with them.”**

**– Healesville Inter-church Community Care Inc. (HICCI) staff member.**

## Crops for Community

Will be delivered by Yarra Valley ECOSS. The program gives volunteers the chance to be active. It is for people of all abilities. They also learn about healthy eating and growing organic food from seed to harvest. Participants take produce home. They donate it to two local food relief agencies: Oonah Indigenous Tuckerbag Program and Koha Community Cafe. It is also sold at ECOSS Valley Market.

## The Parents Hub

Will create and deliver an evidence based “Building Positive Connections” program. They will do this in partnership with local business, Play Move Improve. The program will help small groups of parents and their children (under 5 years of age) with additional needs. The groups may or may not get NDIS support.

### International Day of People with Disability

Is commemorated with an event led by Council. It has run each year, for the past nine years.. It celebrates the contributions and achievements of local people with disability. This year the event had live Auslan interpreters. The presenters always have lived experience. Food is provided by localsocial enterprises. The 2023 event had keynote speakers. They were Dr. Melinda Smith OAM and Sarah Hopkins from Your Library. They discussed how using assistive technology can transform lives.



*Image description: Six people facing camera and smiling at event. Two standing either side of two seated.*



## Community Transport and Advocacy

Council advocates to the Department of Transport for a bus network review. Council want more buses at night and on weekends. Council want tele-bus services, and on-demand bus services. Until June 2022, Council helped some individual older residents. This included help with shopping, with outings and medical appointments. The Information and Navigation Service refers community members to other services they can use.

Bridges Connecting Communities is supported by volunteers. It offers safe community transport for Southwest Yarra Ranges residents.

EV Community Transport provides 1:1 or group transport services. They support people over 65 through My Aged Care and those under 65 through Home And Community Care (HACC) funding. They ran a pilot program in the Upper Yarra region from August 2023 to January 2024. It was supported by the Department of Transport. It connected community members with transport, to those who needed it.



*Image description: Woman (left) in light blue shirt and black pants, assisting a man (left) in brown trousers, grey cardigan, and brown hat into a white van.*

## Mobility Scooter Safety Program

Was conducted in 2022. It was a partnership with Council and Japara Neighbourhood House, Department of Transport, Travellers Aid, and Victoria Police. The program let participants try various mobility devices. It included members from the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Elders Group. They tried the devices and participated in a skills and safety course.

## Supporting community to Connect

Council gives \$400,000 to 11 Neighbourhood Houses. It does this each year. The goal is to address loneliness by promoting social connection and a sense of belonging. Lilydale Community House is inclusive of all abilities. It recently hosted a successful weekend line dancing event with over 80 participants.



## Anti-magination: Sharing Stories of Autistic Writers in the Yarra Ranges

Provides an opportunity for children and adults with autism to come together. They can share their passion for creative writing. Authors will see their work in print. They will help to promote positive views of autism.

### The Fish that Wanted to Fly

Created a welcoming and inclusive environment for children with disabilities and their families. The show did a Yarra Ranges Small Halls tour.

**My friend Felicity took her 6-year-old autistic son, and his younger sibling, to see The Fish That Wanted to Fly in Mt Evelyn. She said she hardly ever goes to things like this fearing they'll be too overwhelming and then unwelcoming, and was so happy to find it so inclusive, welcoming, and fun – and they all had a wonderful time. And she loved that it was local!"**

**– Audience member**



*Image description: Woman (left) dressed in green with a toy crab on her hand, smiles next to two young girls (right) who are smiling, facing forwards.*

## Voices from the Edge

Is led by Tecoma Uniting Church (TUC). It works with local people and organisations who represent those living with disability, First Nations people, LGBTIQIA+ people, and at-risk young people. The project will plan and run up to three Mini Festivals. They will be titled "Voices from the Edge." The goal is to celebrate difference. It is to offer inclusion and start conversations.

## What Lies Beneath

Is an inclusive initiative. It is led by artist Fleur Dean. It is at Steve Curry's three-story venue in Healesville. The cast is diverse. It includes Indigenous people, LGBTIQIA+ people, at risk youth, elders, and people with disabilities. The content comes from 12 weeks of workshops. The workshops explore lesser-known local lore and history. The project playfully challenges personal boundaries. It offers enlightening views on survival at home. It prioritises accessibility. Top-floor performances are prerecorded and shown on the ground floor. This gives wheelchair users a simultaneous experience. There is Auslan interpretation on one evening.

## Disability Inclusion Newsletter

Informs the community about available supports and activities throughout the Yarra Ranges. It promotes accessible events and programs and features stories of local individuals. It celebrates their achievements and resilience. It's for people with disabilities and their unpaid carers in the Yarra Ranges. Also, for anyone with a shared interest in disability inclusion.

## Intergenerational connections

Events have been held since April 2022. The Healthy and Active Ageing Team has led them. They work with Family and Children's Services. The goal is to bridge the generation gap. It brings together seniors and younger community members. There are events for grandparents and grandchildren. They are during each school holiday. The events have activities like Bingo, Treasure Hunts, Lego, and Board Games. 145 people have taken part. The gatherings have strengthened ties and also made lasting memories for all ages.

### Pathways for Carers

This program started in 2015. It supports carers of people with a disability or mental illness. Participants walk and talk with other carers. They learn more about local services and supports. The program offers social connection. It also provides reliable information and physical activity. It operates in Mt Evelyn and Healesville. Council thanks its partners. They are: Mt Evelyn Community House, Healesville Living and Learning Centre, and Villa Maria Carer Supports.

**“Pathways for Carers has helped carers to feel welcome. It is inclusive, inspiring, mood lifting, compassionate, understanding, authentic, full of fun and laughter. Carers can come as they are and feel seen and valued”.**

**– Shek, participant of program.**



*Image description: Eight women in a bush setting, smiling at camera.*

## Inclusive Programs at Leisure Centres

Belgravia Leisure operates the centres. Council owns them. The centres provide recreation for everyone. A sample of examples includes:

- A comfortable and safe gym program for older people.
- Accessible gym equipment for people in wheelchairs.
- Goldie's aquatic arthritis support group. It's an exercise program. It aims to reduce joint pain and boost mobility.
- Grooving is a chair-based exercise program. It is set to music. It is suitable for those with mobility limitations.
- Carer's Feel-Good Friday: Carers get in free at leisure centres. It's on Fridays. It recognises their key role. They are important in the community.
- Swimming lessons for individuals and community organisations supported by NDIS.
- The Take Charge program offers a free 60-day membership. You need a referral from a health practitioner to join. You can negotiate the ongoing fees. They are for continued participation.
- The RecLink program is supported by Vic Health. It provides gym and swim access to 16-25-year-olds. They get access through a referral process. The referrals come from allied health practitioners and RecLink/Belgravia Leisure. Participants, including those with disabilities, can use the pool and gym for free. They may then join group exercise sessions.



*Image description: Flyer for Feel Good Fridays for Carers program. Three cartoon people smiling, coupled with text detailing the program.*

## Interchange Outer-East

Volunteers work with Council and are committed to sustainability and minimising herbicide use. Council identified play spaces as a priority. Volunteers hand weed and collect litter in 130 play spaces. They do this every month. It helps Council reach its sustainability goals. A grant from the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning supports volunteers. The volunteers have disabilities. It expands their participation in nature projects.

## Rec Link Australia

work in partnership with Council. They deliver programs that meet the needs of the communities within Yarra Ranges. Accessible community sport, recreation, and arts opportunities activities are offered. They are free of charge or at an affordable rate.

## First Impressions Clothing Exchange

(FICE) launched in mid-2019. It is run by Cire Services. FICE is supported by grant initiatives from Council's Economic Development team. The initiatives are based on partnerships. FICE supports long-term unemployed women. This includes those with disabilities. The women get retail training in a real store. FICE also has workshops on job search and interview skills. They cover mental resilience, self-confidence, budgeting, and presenting oneself well. FICE is open Monday to Friday at Lilydale and Yarra Junction. It also has a pop-up shop at Chirnside Park Community Hub.

## Consulting with the DAC

Led to changes in the consultation for Council's Economic Development Strategy 2022 – 2032. This was to ensure an accessible Word version of the document and a captioned video for use in consultation were created.

## The Rainbow Tree

Was presented at The Memo Healesville in April 2023. It was part of Council's school holiday program. The Rainbow Tree is lively and a playful work of musical theatre for families. The performance, including songs was live interpreted in Auslan. Kirri Dangerfield was the Auslan interpreter. The Rainbow Tree makes all shows as relaxed as possible. There was a breakout area. It had fidget toys, noise cancelling headphones, and toys to cuddle and squish.

## Promoting Accessible Tourism

Council organised forums in Monbulk and Yarra Glen. Council worked with Yarra Ranges Tourism and Tourism Victoria. The goal was to educate the tourism industry. They were taught about the benefits of entering the accessible tourism market.

A third Forum was facilitated with Yarra Ranges Tourism at The Memo in Healesville. It explored the benefits of accessible tourism for business growth. The event featured insights from DAC member James. It also had presentations from Parks Victoria on the All-Terrain Wheelchair and Sherpa volunteer program. And a display by Knoxbrooke showed its employment of over 90 people with disabilities.



*Image description: Woman with dark clothing and red scarf talking to seated audience members. All-terrain wheelchair is displayed at front of room in front of a red stage curtain.*



## Dementia friendly Yarra Ranges

Caladenia Dementia Care and Council launched the Dementia Friendly Yarra Ranges Project. The project is supported by a Council Partnership Grant. The initiative is a collaboration. It aims to make the Shire more inclusive and accessible to people with dementia, caregivers, and the community.

Over the next four years, the project will focus on educating front-facing staff and volunteers. This will enhance their awareness and skills to help people with dementia. The project actively involves service providers, community members, and those with dementia. It aims to improve information and service access. This will foster a dementia-friendly environment in the Yarra Ranges.



*Image description: Flyer for Dementia Action Week. Four pictures of community members near a coffee van, and text in centre of images.*

## Margins to Mainstream

Council supports training for people with disabilities. It took part in initiatives like Systemic Advocacy Training (2015). And Enabling Women with Disabilities and Enabling Young Women with Disabilities Leadership programs (2018). Council worked in partnership with neighbouring Councils, Women's Health East (WHE), and the Outer Eastern Local Learning & Employment Network.

Since 2020, Council was in the Project Advisory Committee for the Margins to the Mainstream (M2M): Preventing violence against women with disabilities project. M2M puts the expertise of women with disabilities at the centre of prevention efforts. It is an initiative of the regional partnership, Together for Equality and Respect.

The Project Advisory Committee shaped and supported the M2M project's development and delivery. Council recruited women with disabilities for the Experts Group. They shared project training information with staff. They shared co-designed resources from M2M. They also connected with the Outer East Community Inclusion Alliance (OECIA) Network.

In 2022, Council's 16 Days of Activism event featured speakers from the M2M Experts Group. They highlighted the Council's commitment to raising awareness and addressing violence against women with disabilities.

**“The M2M workshop was incredibly rewarding. The more people I meet and learn about, I think it helps put things into perspective. And be more accepting. A lot of disabilities are invisible. There is no such thing as normal”.**

**– Marie, participant.**



## Poetic portraits

The exhibition and publication were launched at the Lilydale Civic Centre on September 28, 2023. It marked the start of the Yarra Ranges Over 50's Festival. The project was a collaboration between Council and RMIT University. It brought together people aged 50 and older. They were from diverse backgrounds in the Yarra Ranges. It included people with disabilities and chronic illnesses. It also included other community members. They shared rich life stories through poems. The poems were about relationships, ageing, and connection to self and landscape. Photographer Cathy Ronalds took portraits of the participants to go with the poems.

The application process prioritised accessibility, considering factors like colour contrast and text size to enhance readability, poems were placed at the bottom of images. They address concerns about height. The printed anthology is for sale at the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum.



*Image description: Man in white shirt and black trousers holding a walking stick, standing in front of artwork at the launch of Poetic Portraits.*

## NDIS forums delivered

To address the NDIS rollout challenges, Council held 13 workshops. They also had training programs with community partners. These initiatives aimed to equip the community with necessary knowledge and support. The goal was to help them navigate the complexities of the changing disability landscape. Council thank partners, including Yooralla, Healesville Connections, Amaze, Carers Victoria, National Disability Insurance Agency, Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council, Neami, Each, Wellways, Villa Maria Catholic Homes, Tandem Anglicare, and Maroondah Council, for their support.

**“[My son] has serious disabilities and is supported by the NDIS... For [my son] it is the only social time of his week, the only time he is with people, the only time that he gets “out of himself “ and becomes involved in something creative.”**

**– Father of long-term pottery student at Mooroolbark Community Centre.**

## Family, Children and Youth Services (FCY)

Design specific programs with a clear focus. They foster inclusion and support for all community members. Some key initiatives include:

- Preschool Field Officers (PSFO's) aim to help early childhood educators. They will enhance their skills, knowledge, and confidence. This will help them create inclusive kindergarten programs for all children.
- There are programs for small groups during school holidays. They include activities like Soccer and Bookaburra. The programs aim to help children and families with social anxiety. They do this by providing more personal interactions.
- Grand Hunt / Gumboot Walk: FCY picks accessible venues. They use outdoor spaces to ensure comfort for neurodiverse children and their families.
- Evidence-based "small-talk" programs. They are for parents and children with diverse needs. The programs are run by experienced facilitators. Council makes sure the program is inclusive and accessible. They make changes as needed. For example, they support people in wheelchairs, neurodiverse children and vision-impaired babies.
- Inclusivity Logos are displayed on flyers.
- The FCY newsletter is designed to be accessible. It has text options for images, left-aligned text, and accessible use of colour and font. It also provides a hard copy option.



*Image description: From left to right - Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag, Progress Pride flag, International Symbol of Access.*

## Community Change Makers Program

The 2023 course had 21 participants. It included people with a disability and other community members. They participated in 10 in-person/online sessions. They explored different topics. Examples include community engagement and development, cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusion. They also covered the role of local government. They covered advocacy, positive group dynamics, and public speaking.

The graduates set out to inspire positive change from what they learnt. Their projects include a BMX/skatepark in Montrose and safe pedestrian crossings in the Upper Yarra. They include volunteer projects. And environmental education and advocacy in the Dandenong Ranges.

## The Art and Sole Project

Was a collaboration between Council, Inspiro, and community stakeholders. It aimed to encourage walking in Lilydale. The project celebrates Wurundjeri art. It includes signed walks and maps. The project aimed to improve community knowledge and access to walking routes. This includes routes to Lilydale Station and the nearby shops.

Three community members conducted an accessibility audit during an onsite visit. One was a DAC member with lived experience of disability. The audit of Lilydale Station revealed some positive aspects. Including lifts, ramps, and auditory messages.

The audit also found many safety risks and accessibility issues. One concerns a curved concrete footpath near the pedestrian crossover at Main Street. It hinders wheelchair access to the pedestrian cross-over button that leads to the station entrance. Council resolved this issue by removing the curved feature. This made the station safer and more accessible for the community.



*Image description: A curved footpath met by tan bark next to a road crossing button. A person in a wheelchair with a dog are on the right of the curve.*

## Reflections on Goal 3

Many projects and programs have supported access, equity, and inclusion for people with disability. They have also supported unpaid carers. Council will keep seeking outside funding and partnerships and will also offer grants for community-led initiatives. These initiatives should enhance social connection and wellbeing. Council will keep advocating and educating about the benefits of accessible tourism. It will also help the community see and use its current assets and strengths.

# ★ Highlights and Achievements for Goal 4

Goal 4: Council's commitment to equity, access and inclusion is demonstrated in all aspects of the business.

## **Council's Access and Equity Reference Group**

Is a group of Council staff who meet every couple of months. They oversee the implementation of the Equity, Access, and Inclusion Strategy. They make sure that Council are collaborating, ensuring the advice and input of Councils DAC and reflecting and continually improving on accessibility.

## **Disability Inclusion Officer**

Council used to employ a Metro Access Officer. It was funded through the Department of Health and Human Services' Building Inclusive Communities program. The role helped advance Council's goal of creating a fair, accessible, and inclusive community. But funding ended due to NDIS changes in 2019. So, Council committed to adding a full-time Disability Inclusion Officer role.

This role remains crucial. It drives community engagement and important work with community. It continues to act as a conduit between community and Council. It facilitates the Disability Advisory Committee and the Access and Equity Reference Group. It also builds the Council's capacity in all areas.

## **Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System**

Council submitted to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. It focused on groups at a high risk of mental illness. These groups include young people, men, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, and carers.

Council's advocated for localised responses and also for outreach support, and place-based approaches for early intervention. The submission acknowledged a \$4.5 million Federal investment for a new Integrated Youth Health Hub in Lilydale. The hub is expected to address mental health challenges for young people. It will do so with a coordinated and comprehensive approach.

## Hidden voices

Was a project led by Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC). It was funded through the State Government's Suburban Revitalisation Program. A DAC member took on the role of project officer.

The project was held at Lilydale Library and Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. It featured participants, including individuals with a disability. They shared personal stories. The goal was to challenge stereotypes and prejudices through dialogue.

Shek, a carer for her son on the Autism spectrum, participated in the sessions. Her son was born in Australia. But, Shek, a migrant, faced challenges navigating the NDIS.

**“I went through a very stressful journey. My intention in joining these Hidden Voices sessions is to build awareness for carers in the community and also advocate for people with a disability. It also gives me the confidence and acknowledge that I’m on the right track.”**

**– Shek, Hidden Voice project officer and participant.**

### Lilydale Major Activity Structure Plan

During the development of the Lilydale Major Activity Structure Plan, a focus group took part. It included individuals with disabilities, advocates, and support services. They engaged in extensive community consultation. Their insights informed the Structure Plan. It now includes key directions. They enhance disability inclusion, equity, and accessibility. This includes making public spaces easy to access as people use them for community interaction, learning and socialising.



*Image description: Lilydale Major Activity Structure Plan document cover: Features a retail precinct with plants in front, accompanied by sheer waves of colour spanning the entire image.*

## Carers Employment Support Program

SwinLocal and Community House worked with Swinburne University. They worked with 21 Learn Locals and the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing. Together, they secured funding for a Carers Employment Support Program.

A DAC member was involved in the Project Reference Group. They were also the Link Worker. The program connected 108 carers with jobs in 2022. The initiative aimed to support and empower carers. It achieved great success. This success led to a one-year extension of funding.



## Accessible path for Lilydale Lake boat shed

Council secured funding to expand the Lilydale Lake boat shed. It was to create an accessible path for the Sailability program. The Lilydale Sailing Club runs the program. It is for disability services and their clients. On specific sailing days, the club welcomes the general public.

The club is not-for-profit. It was established in 1990. It is dedicated to offering an inclusive sailing experience. The Sailability program has also produced accomplished sailors. It has achieved success at the Paralympic and international levels. It originated from a broader vision of disability groups.



*Image description: Red brick structure (boat shed), with open roller door.*

## Disability Awareness Training

Council provides Disability Awareness Training for all employees. It helps them work better with individuals with disabilities.

Other training initiatives that have been delivered include:

- Autism Awareness training for Early Childhood Services staff.
- Inclusive language and accessible communication tools training for Service Centre staff.
- Youth Mental Health First Aid. It equips staff to support young people with mental health problems or crises.

**“I attended the Scope training... and found it extremely valuable. It broadened the way I think of people with disabilities and made me more aware of the issues they may face. The training helped me understand how I could remove these barriers with design thinking and with more respectful and empathic communications. It would be great if it could be part of the induction, if not for all staff, then at least for staff in customer-facing roles.”**

**– Yarra Ranges staff member**

## **Inclusive emergency planning**

DAC members shared their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. They also shared about the severe storm on 9 June 2021. They did so via Council's Pandemic and Storm Impact Survey. Council used the survey results to shape Storm Event Recovery Programs. They also used them to track the programs' success. They ensure that people in the community with additional needs are included. They are included in all emergency planning, crisis management, and recovery.

There is an approach called Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP). Michelle Villeneuve from the University of Sydney developed it. Council explained P-CEP in workshops for people with disabilities and their unpaid carers. They partnered with Red Cross, Victoria Police, and Country Fire Authority (CFA).

The Red Cross and CFA offered one-on-one discussions. The goal was to find gaps in individual's emergency planning. This would support participants to better plan for emergency preparedness and response. The Civic Centre also hosted a forum. It was for Yarra Ranges Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning. DAC members participated and were invited to register for P-CEP Facilitator Training.

## **Job Access Partnership**

In early 2023, Council partnered with Job Access. The goal was to improve disability inclusion in employment. Funded by the Department of Social Services, Job Access reviewed Council's hiring. It gave positive feedback on website accessibility and job ad clarity. Feedback suggestions were incorporated. For example, Council made the application process simpler. Council also increased font size and were clear about reasonable adjustments.

The partnership will investigate more areas. These include building disability confidence, reviewing workplace policies, raising internal awareness and finding ways to increase disability employment across Council.

## **Housing Strategy**

In 2022, Council drafted a Housing Discussion Paper. It was available for public feedback. The paper covered many housing topics. These include making housing more diverse and supporting more social and affordable housing. It received strong support from community, Council's Housing Reference Group, and the DAC. Insights from public feedback informed the 2023 Yarra Ranges Council Housing Strategy. It delved deeper into discussions on housing diversity and affordability. It outlined specific actions for the next 15 years.

# **Reflections on Goal 4**

Building staff capacity is crucial. It means that disability access, equity, and inclusion are considered in all Council business. The Access and Equity Reference Group continues to drive these ideas and encourage cross-Council collaboration across departments. Council will keep working with Job Access and aim to hire more people with a disabilities.

*Image description: The back view of two adults (left and right) hold the hand of a child (middle), walking on a path in a bush setting.*



## Conclusion

The Yarra Ranges Access, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 has made great progress towards the vision of a Yarra Ranges that is an accessible, inclusive, and equitable society. That enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. Council acknowledges that there will always be further work to do to ensure this vision.

The next version of this Strategy is being developed. It will build upon the success of the outgoing strategy. It will be strengthened by the including the voice of community. To learn more about the Strategy and to follow our progress visit our Shaping Yarra Ranges website: <https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/access-equity-and-inclusion-strategy>

Council appreciates the collaborative efforts of both internal and external partners. They continue to advocate for emerging issues and these partnerships continue to drive projects and initiatives in the community. They promote fair, inclusive, and accessible participation, connection, and wellbeing.

Council extend a special acknowledgement to the members of the Disability Advisory Committee. Their pivotal role significantly contributed to the success of the Strategy. They shared their lived experiences and advice generously. This ensured Council's work is informed and responsive to the community's needs. Council sincerely thank them for their invaluable contributions.

# Contact Information

## Community Links

Lilydale  
15 Anderson Street

Healesville  
110 River Street

Monbulk  
21 Main Road

Yarra Junction  
2442-2444 Warburton Highway

Upwey  
40 Main Street

## National Relay Service

133 677 – for callers who have a hearing, speech or communication impairment and for Text Telephone or modem callers

1300 555 727 – for callers using Speech to Speech relay

9658 9461 – Teletypewriter (TTY)

## Translating and Interpreting Service

131 450 – Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) National. An interpreting service is available if required.

Yarra Ranges Council  
PO Box 105  
Lilydale VIC 3140

**1300 368 333 | [mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)**  
**[yarraranges.vic.gov.au](http://yarraranges.vic.gov.au)**



## 2024 Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee achievements

Project	Achievements/Milestones
<b>Informing the development and review of Council Policy and Strategy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Streets and Roadside Trading Policy review</li> <li>2. Community Engagement Policy review update</li> <li>3. Health and Wellbeing Plan progress update</li> <li>4. Access and Equity Strategy review and Draft Disability Action Plan 2024-28</li> <li>5. Paths and Trails Plan</li> <li>6. Healthy Ageing Plan</li> <li>7. Upper Yarra Development Strategy</li> <li>8. Aquatics Strategy</li> <li>9. Housing Strategy review</li> <li>10. Draft Parking Management Framework</li> </ol>
<b>Place Planning</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working with Council staff to improve signage for the ramp access to Lions Park in Lilydale. Site visits at Lions Park with DAC member and Council staff. Following the visit, six arm rests installed on seats in the park and line marking on the ramp to help with navigation.</li> <li>2. Site visit from the main street to the Yarra Centre in Yarra Junction with DAC member and Guide Dogs Victoria and Council staff to identify barriers to access for people with low vision.</li> <li>3. Healesville Urban Design Framework (UDF) overview and community engagement</li> <li>4. Monbulk Urban Design Framework overview and discussion around future UDF consultation and how can we draw on more specific feedback around accessibility</li> <li>5. Site visit by DAC member at Mt Evelyn Community House. Council explore different options to renew the existing ramp entrance</li> </ol>



## 2024 Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee achievements

Project	Achievements/Milestones
	<p>and ensure wheelchair and mobility scooter users can navigate the turning circle with ease.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Kilsyth Urban Park consultation</li> <li>7. Morrison Reserve Master Plan consultation and DAC member provides feedback on proposed adaptive bike trails and infrastructure for the Morrison Reserve Youth Activation and Bike Park Project in Mt Evelyn.</li> <li>8. Lilydale Lake Master Plan consultation</li> <li>9. Healthy Ageing Plan consultation</li> <li>10. Open Space Plan consultation</li> </ol>
<p><b>Events, Celebrations and Leadership of DAC members</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tenth annual Yarra Ranges International Day of People with Disability community event held <i>Rethinking Disability – Shifting Perspectives and Embracing Diversity</i>.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Disability Advisory Committee members participated as panel members at the event.</li> <li>○ Council staff with disability participated and contributed towards event planning, including 2 staff who MC'd for the event and one staff as panel member with lived experience.</li> <li>○ Promotional stories and photos created with DAC members and shared on social media.</li> <li>○ Celebration of the DAC contributions and achievements throughout 2024.</li> <li>○ Acknowledgement of Chris Reed and Ian Lawther, DAC members who passed away in 2024. They served two Terms on the DAC since its establishment in 2012. Ian's wife Pam Lawther joined the event so we could thank her for Ian's contributions to the Yarra Ranges community.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## 2024 Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee achievements

Project	Achievements/Milestones
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accessible communication lunchbox session delivered at Council's Civic Centre as part of Global Accessibility Month. Session attended by Council staff and DAC members and co-facilitated by a person with lived experience.</li> <li>2. DAC members attend the Women's Health East (WHE) workshop for women with disabilities to discuss and learn from each other about issues that affect women with disabilities including gender inequality, ableism and other intersecting inequalities.</li> <li>3. DAC member contributes towards the Women's Health East (WHE) resource <i>We are the Experts</i> and attended the Celebration of the completion of the WHE Margins to Mainstream (M2M) Project. M2M is an innovative and proven program preventing violence against women with disabilities.</li> <li>4. DAC members' images taken in the Vic Health <i>This Girl Can</i> photo shoot are shared on social media and promotional campaigns for Council.</li> <li>5. DAC member participated in a photo shoot as part of the updating of Council's Early Years resources and promotional material to ensure it meets accessibility requirements. Family and Children's services promotional material review.</li> <li>6. DAC members participate in Community Emergency Resilience workshops to help communities become better prepared for the aftermath of emergencies such as storms, floods and bushfires.</li> <li>7. DAC member successfully applied for a Grant under the Victoria Government's <i>Connecting Carers in their Community</i> Small Grant Round.</li> <li>8. DAC members attend the opening of the Chirnside Urban Park and enjoy the accessible features of the park.</li> <li>9. DAC member promotes Carers Week and Pathways for Carers walks on Yarra Valley FM</li> </ol>

## 2024 Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee achievements

Project	Achievements/Milestones
	<p>10. DAC members attend site visit and evaluation workshop for the newly constructed Changing Places toilet at Kilsyth Sports Centre. This Accessible Toilet was developed through the Preparing Australian Communities fund, in conjunction with input from our previous and current DAC members. Changing Places toilets have automated change tables and ceiling hoists making outings more manageable and enjoyable, reducing stress for people with disability and their families</p> <p>11. Ten editions of the Yarra Ranges Disability Inclusion newsletter created by Council and distributed to the community. The content includes promotion of the DAC activities and profiles members' contributions.</p>
<b>Internal Advocacy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seeking feedback on inclusive programming and promotion of our cultural venues in Yarra Ranges.</li> <li>2. Council's Minor Works team provides an update on the Belgrave South Netball Club building and improvements to disability access.</li> <li>3. Recreation pages on Council website feedback and discussion on accessible features and images.</li> </ol>
<b>External Advocacy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DAC member attended Carers Australia Roundtable discussion in Canberra for carers from a multicultural background to inform National Carer Strategy.</li> <li>2. DAC carer member is Lead Carer for the Healesville Pathways for Carers walks. Council staff attending walks include the Community Development Officer Yarra Valley and the Housing and Homelessness Officer.</li> <li>3. DAC carer member continues to co-lead the Pathways for Carers walks in Mt Evelyn. The Lead carers continue to invite Council staff as guest walkers including Council's Community</li> </ol>

## 2024 Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee achievements

Project	Achievements/Milestones
	Engagement team members and Council's Healthy Aging Officers. The Project Coordinator Community Mental Wellbeing consults with carers on the Mental Health information on Council's website.

## **11. COUNCILLOR MOTIONS**

*In accordance with Chapter 3 Division 4 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*

There were no Councillor motions received prior to the Agenda being printed.



**12. ITEMS THROUGH THE CHAIR**

### **13. REPORTS FROM DELEGATES**

## 14. DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNING AND SEALING

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Report Author: Senior Governance Officer  
 Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services  
 Ward(s) affected: Walling;

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020 and in accordance with Clause 87 of the Meeting Procedures and Use of Common Seal Local Law 2015, as prescribed by Section 14(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

It is requested that the following document be signed and sealed:

***Doongalla Reserve, Montrose Native Vegetation Offset – Landowner Agreement.***

For establishment of a native vegetation offset site on part of Doongalla Reserve, Montrose.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That the following listed document be signed and sealed:***

***Doongalla Reserve, Montrose Native Vegetation Offset – Landowner Agreement.***

## 15. INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

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Report Author: Governance Officer  
 Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services  
 Ward(s) affected: All Wards

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public

### SUMMARY

Chapter 8, Rule 1, of the Governance Rules requires that records of informal meetings of Councillors must be kept and that the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a summary of the matters discussed at the meeting tabled at the next convenient Council meeting and recorded in the Minutes of that Council meeting.

An 'informal meeting of Councillors' is defined in the Governance Rules as a meeting of Councillors that:

- is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- is not a Council meeting, Delegated Committee meeting or Community Asset Committee meeting.

The records for informal meetings of Councillors are attached to the report.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That the records of the Informal Meetings of Councillors, copies of which are attached to the report, be received and noted.***

### ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. 17 June 2025 – Council Briefing
2. 17 June 2025 – Council Forum
3. 18 June 2025 - Disability Advisory Committee

## Informal Meeting of Councillors

### Public Record

<b>Meeting Name:</b>	Council Briefing	
<b>Date:</b>	17 June 2025	Start Time: 6.16pm      Finish Time: 6.25pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference	
<b>Attendees:</b>	<p><b>Councillors:</b> Cr Higgins (Deputy Chair), Cr McAllister, Cr Cox, Cr Heenan, Cr McIlwain, Cr Ward and Cr Marriott</p> <p><b>CEO/Directors:</b> Tammi Rose, Leanne Hurst, Hjalmar Philipp, Kath McClusky and Vincenzo Lombardi</p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Ameer Cooper, Gina Walter, Beck Stevens, Ben Waterhouse, Joanne Hammond and Stuart Wilson</p> <p><b>Externals:</b> Nil</p>	
<b>Apologies:</b>	Cr Child (Chair) and Cr Mazzarella	
<b>Disclosure of COI:</b>	For transparency, Cr McAllister noted her involvement relating to item 10.3 - Councillor Expenditure Policy - Reimbursement of Expenses for Cr McAllister and excused the Chamber while this item was discussed.	
<b>Matter/s Discussed:</b>	This briefing covered the following items of business to be considered at the 24 June 2025 Council Meeting.	
	9.1	Petition - Remove reflector poles along Fairhaven Road, Mount Dandenong
	9.2	Petition - Special Charge Scheme for Sealing of Gallemonda Park Road Menzies Creek
	10.1	Eastern Region Group of Councils (ERG) - Strategic Plan 2025-2029
	10.2	Audit and Risk Management Committee Chair Appointment
	10.3	Councillor Expenditure Policy - Reimbursement of Expenses for Cr McAllister
	10.4	Councillor Expenditure Policy
	10.5	Councillor Internal Resolution Procedure



<b>Completed By:</b>	10.6	Draft Paths and Trails Plan 2025-2035 Release for Community Consultation
	11.1	Councillor Motions - Warburton Highway Bus Stop Safety Concerns - Cr Child
	16.1	Urgent Motion - Emergency Services Volunteers Fund Levy
	Gina Walter	

## Informal Meeting of Councillors

### Public Record

<b>Meeting Name:</b>	Council Forum		
<b>Date:</b>	17 June 2025	Start Time: 5.31pm	Finish Time: 9.10pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference		
<b>Attendees:</b>	<p><b>Councillors:</b> Cr Higgins (Deputy Chair), Cr McAllister (From 5.35pm), Cr Cox(Exited 8.08pm), Cr Heenan, Cr McIlwain, Cr Ward and Cr Marriott</p> <p><b>CEO/Directors:</b> Tammi Rose, Leanne Hurst, Hjalmar Philipp, Kath McClusky and Vincenzo Lombardi</p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Amee Cooper, Gina Walter, Beck Stevens, Ben Waterhouse, Joanne Hammond, Stuart Wilson, Kathy Baltas, Alison Fowler, Nathan Islip, Adam Berkley, Yan Zhao, Christa Cowell, Karen Greer, Lucy Proctor, Rachael Giddens, Shannon Maynard, Anna O'Brien, Methni Dahanayake and Jane Sinnamon</p> <p><b>Via Zoom:</b></p> <p><b>Externals:</b> Nil</p>		
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Child (Chair) and Cr Mazzarella		
<b>Disclosure of COI:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>		
	1.1	Acknowledgement of Country	
	1.2	Declaration of Interest	
	1.3	Action and Agreement Record – 3 June 2025	
	2.1	Amendment C212 Monbulk Township Local Policy and Overlay: Consideration of Submissions and for Adoption	
	2.2	Draft Upwey Township Master Plan – Consideration for Community Consultation	
	3.1	Review of the Public Agenda for Council's Meeting on 24 June 2025	
	5.1	Updated Draft Council Plan 2025-2029	

	5.2	Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 - Draft
	5.3	Key Life Stages Summary - Draft Plan
	5.4	Councillor Expenditure Policy
	5.5	Councillor Internal Resolution Procedure
	6.0	Mayor & CEO Update
	7.0	General Business
	8.0	Forum Finish
Completed By:	Gina Walter	

# Informal meeting of Councillors

## Public Record



<b>Meeting Name:</b>	Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee	
<b>Date:</b>	18 June 2025	Start Time: 1.00pm      Finish Time: 3.00pm
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Conference Room A</b>	
<b>Attendees:</b>	<p><b>Councillors:</b> Cr Len Cox</p> <p><b>Other attendees:</b> Tracey Wannet, Lesley Grimes, James Wood, Renae Purcell, Isabella O'Hare</p> <p><b>CEO/Directors:</b></p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Amanda May, Jenna Hepburn, Simone Marais, Brendan Jahn, Erika Atwill, Kate Freeman, Shannon Maynard, Rachael Giddens, Sissi Huang, Hiroshi Uchida, Andrew Rhodes, Anne Carvill-O'Keefe</p>	
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Richard Higgins, Julie McDonald, Lisa McIlpatrick, Shek Kho, Marie Pleuger, Jackson Ellis, Michelle McDonald, Paul Stoney,	
<b>Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:</b>	None	
<b>Matter/s Discussed:</b>	1.1	NDIS updates
	1.2	Site visits to Lilydale and Warburton
	1.3	Consultation on playspace designs
	1.4	Overview of the Healesville Township Design Framework and Belgrave Township Design Framework engagement
	1.5	Disability Inclusion Officer update
	1.6	Member updates
<b>Completed By:</b>	Amanda May	

**16. URGENT BUSINESS**

*In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*



## 17. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

*In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*

### **RECOMMENDATION**

***That in accordance with section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020, Council resolves to close the meeting to members of the public to consider the following items which relate to matters specified under section 3(1), as specified below.***

***17.1 Property Matter in Kallista***

***17.2 9A Wannan Court, Kilsyth - Consideration of Land Purchase Offer***

***Both Item 17.1 and 17.2 are Confidential under the terms section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 as it contains information relating to: (a) Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Councils position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.***

Confidential Item

Confidential Item

Confidential Item

**18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Council is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 22 July 2025 commencing at 7.00pm, at Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference.





**In providing for the good governance of its community, Councillors are reminded of their obligation to abide by the provisions as set within the Local Government Act 2020 and the Code of Conduct for Councillors.**

**When attending a Council Meeting, Councillors should adhere to the procedures set out in the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.**

The following is a guide for all Councillors to ensure they act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of Yarra Ranges as a whole.

1. Councillors will respect the personal views of other Councillors and the decisions of Council.
2. Councillors may publicly express their own opinions on Council matters but not so as to undermine the standing of Council in the community.
3. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council.
4. Councillors will incur expenditure in a responsible manner and in accordance with the Councillor Expenditure and Policy.
5. Councillors will avoid conflicts of interest and will always openly disclose any direct and indirect interests where they exist.
6. Councillors will act with integrity and respect when interacting with Council staff and members of the public.
7. Councillors will demonstrate fairness in all dealings and conduct and be open with and accountable to the community at all times.
8. Councillors will conduct themselves in a manner that does not cause detriment to Council or the Yarra Ranges community.