

ACTIVE RECREATION PLAN

Report Author: Executive Officer Recreation & Sport
Responsible Officer: Director Built Environment & Infrastructure
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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 to:

- Inform Council of the outcomes of the recent consultation undertaken for the draft Active Recreation Plan (the draft Plan) - Attachment 1.
- Identify any changes proposed following consultation.
- Seek Council's endorsement for the draft plan.

The plan targets an increase in physical activity levels in Yarra Ranges by 15% over ten years. Currently, over 42% of women and over 36% of men in Yarra Ranges are sedentary or insufficiently active.

The draft Plan was available for community consultation from 10 July 2023 to 31 August 2023.

89% of feedback was in support of the plan. Most comments received related to suggestions for activation and infrastructure projects that could be considered as part of the plan's implementation.

There were two changes made to the plan following collation of all feedback and community consultation which related to how the plan referenced Aquatics facilities and altering the document structure to improve how some sections related to each other.

The development of the draft Plan is being partially funded through a grant received from Sport and Recreation Victoria in 2019. Full implementation of the plan is estimated to cost \$8,325,000 over ten years and will be subject to grant opportunities and budget availability.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Note the feedback and changes from the community consultation.**
- 2. Endorse the Active Recreation Plan.**

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

27 June 2023 – Council meeting – Yarra Ranges Active Recreation Plan – Community Consultation

DISCUSSION

The Active Recreation Plan will guide Council's effort to encourage people to be healthy and active through the provision and design of active recreation infrastructure and programs that remove barriers and respond to people's participation preferences over the next ten years.

Physical activity supports community health and wellbeing. It helps people become healthier, has proven mental health benefits and can also be a social connector. There is a spectrum of physical activity that people can participate in ranging from 'active living' (gardening, walking for transport, etc) through to organised and elite sport. Active recreation sits between these two in the spectrum and is defined as 'leisure time activity undertaken outside of structured, competitive sport' (<https://sport.vic.gov.au/our-work/participation/active-recreation>).

Active recreation is important because it enables people to participate in a way that they choose at a time that suits them. This flexibility can help to overcome many of the barriers to participation that more traditional, structured activity presents. Research has shown that active recreation is particularly important for women and girls, making up at least half of all physical activity undertaken for some cohorts (Active Impacts: The economic impacts of active recreation in Victoria, Sport & Recreation Victoria, 2018).

Over 42% of women and over 36% of men in Yarra Ranges are sedentary or insufficiently active. 89% of residents said they would be more active if there was something interesting, appealing, accessible, and convenient for them (Vic Health 2021). A higher percentage of residents in Yarra Ranges, when compared to the rest of Victoria, have sought help for a mental health-related problem in the last 12 months. Yarra Ranges community has 11% more residents who have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression than the Victorian average. Engaging in physical activity can have a significant positive impact on mental health. Providing options for people to be active at low cost and at times that suits them removes barriers to participation.

This plan identifies key principles to guide Councils actions to encourage physical activity. It takes a strategic approach to investment in recreation and identifies actions that are delivered through current operations, low-cost options to diversify opportunities and capital investment in the renewal of existing recreation assets and where gaps have been identified the provision of new infrastructure.

The plan targets an increase in physical activity levels in Yarra Ranges by 15% over ten years and encourages people who are not meeting their physical activity guidelines to be more active by engaging in at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day, on at least five days of the week.

Council’s Youth Advisory Committee, Positive Aging Reference Group, and Disability Advisory Committee have been consulted during the development of the draft Plan. Their advice and feedback have been incorporated into the draft Plan.

Community engagement

Following the development of the plan we sought feedback from the community about whether we had missed anything. The community were encouraged to view the plan and submit their feedback. Between 10 July 2023 and 31 August 2023, Council used a range of different communications and engagement methods to make sure the community were able to provide feedback if they wished.

Council communicated and promoted the engagement via the following methods:

- Digital
- Shaping Yarra Ranges
- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram and Yarra Ranges Youth Facebook and Instagram pages)
- Yarra Ranges Local e-Newsletter.

Table 1: Digital engagement

Digital	Engagement	#
Shaping Yarra Ranges	Contributions	81
	Visitors	856
Facebook	Posts	3
	Impressions	12,149
	Reactions	94
	Link Clicks	185
	Shares	13
Instagram	Posts	3
	Reach	506
	Likes	52
Newsletter	Inclusions	3
	Link Clicks	695

- Community Pop ups
 - Four face-to-face opportunities were promoted and provided for people to talk to Council staff and learn more across the municipality.
 - 223 people engaged with the project team during these sessions.
- Advisory Group Sessions
 - A range of advisory group sessions were held with the Positive Ageing Reference Group, Disability Advisory Group and email correspondence with Indigenous Advisory Committee and Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee.
- Hard copies of the plan were available for review and feedback at our links and libraries during the community engagement period.

The project team reviewed the feedback received during the consultation period. 89% of the comments were in support of the plan whereas 11% of comments were either not in support of the plan or suggested that Council should be focusing on other priorities. The common themes that come through across the engagement were:

Table 2: Common Themes

Theme	Suggestions
The need for safety and access improvements (27%)	Road crossing/pedestrian access, renewal works, lighting, shared use paths and trail links
More of existing (18%)	Netball facilities, equestrian, exercise equipment, walking trails, croquet clubs, dog parks.
New facilities (17%)	Pickleball, disc golf, shaded areas.
Programming (14%)	Events, parents walking groups, programs for older adults
Other (13%)	Aquatics, biodiversity, environmental

The project team provided copies of the plan to the Indigenous Advisory Committee, Health and Wellbeing Committee and the Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee for comment.

Revised draft Active Recreation Plan

There were two changes made to the plan following collation of all feedback and community consultation which related to how the plan referenced Aquatics facilities and altering the document structure to improve how some sections related to each

other. Specifically, the 'design considerations' section was moved forward in the plan to respond to Action Area 1: Safety and Accessibility.

Options considered

The draft Plan considers the current and future demographics of the area, community feedback, feedback from advisory committees, and internal recommendations during the development of the draft Plan.

Most comments received related to suggestions for activation and infrastructure projects that could be considered as part of the Plans implementation.

Recommended option and justification

The draft plan supports the community to be healthy and well through physical activity. Increasing the number of people meeting physical activity guidelines can contribute to preventative health and have a positive impact on chronic illness.

It is recommended to note the feedback and changes from the community consultation and endorse the Active Recreation Plan.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The cost of the full implementation of the plan is estimated to be \$8,375,000 over ten years. Capital projects will be subject to suitable grant opportunities and budget allocation through renewal reserves and budget allocation through the public open space fund. The projects will be subject to assessment and approval by Councillors to determine opportunities for upcoming grants and capital funding allocation from the Public Open Space Fund (POSF) through the capital budget process.

- \$1,100,000 of the total cost is attributed to design upgrades to existing assets to address existing safety and accessibility to encourage a broader range of users. This is a one-off capital cost and can be funded through a combination of POSF and suitable grant opportunities.
- \$4,450,000 of the total cost is attributable to increasing facility provision in areas that have identified gaps. This is a one-off capital cost but will be subject to a long term (20-50 year) renewal program. This can be funded through a combination of POSF and suitable grant opportunities.
- \$2,515,000 is attributable to the provision of new recreation assets, or assets that don't currently exist within Yarra Ranges. This is a one of capital cost but will be subject to a long term (20-50 year) renewal program. This can be funded through a combination of POSF and suitable grant opportunities.
- \$260,000 is attributable to actions that support programming and activation through digital technology and equipment purchase. This will be sought through Government Grants and the Recreation and Sport operational budget.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objectives in the Council Plan:

- Connected and Healthy Communities
- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

The provision of improved facilities as identified by the plan will deliver facilities and infrastructure that meets the growing and diverse needs of our community. Activation and events will provide additional opportunities to form social connections with local people.

Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

- Increase active living; and
- Improve mental wellbeing and social connection.

New and improved facilities will contribute to improved health and wellbeing with increased opportunities to socialize and exercise. Activation and programming will provide additional opportunities for social connection.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013 - 2023

The Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013-2023 sets out directions for creating healthy and active environments and services in Yarra Ranges and provides a framework to guide future development and management of Council's recreation reserves, parks, and community spaces.

Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023

Through this Strategy, Council recognises that inclusion for people with a disability in all aspects of community life is a human right that also brings many social, cultural and economic benefits for the wider community. It further states as one of the goals that Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.

Child and Youth Strategy 2014-2024

This Strategy has the vision that Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making. Outcome 2 has the most relevance to this draft Plan,

recommending that “Adequate Infrastructure exists to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.”

RELEVANT LAW

This plan is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Yarra Ranges community. A Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) was undertaken as part of this work. The GIA was undertaken in collaboration with Council’s Gender Equity Team.

The draft Plan was developed from a whole of community perspective, including consideration of equitable opportunities for use of open space for recreation by females, males and gender diverse people. Underpinning the recommendations is the objective to provide opportunities and access that encourages people of all ages, abilities, gender preference and cultural background with spaces that are safe, welcoming and has the potential to improve individual health and wellbeing. A specific recommendation from the GIA was to apply a gender lens, and where appropriate seek feedback from specific genders, for future infrastructure and program design that is undertaken as part of the plan’s implementation.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

Implementation of the draft Plan has the potential to provide economic benefit to local communities and businesses. Research has shown that people walking or cycling to destinations are more likely to shop locally, visit more frequently and spend longer visiting local businesses. This plan encourages active modes of transport to destinations by making them easily accessible to residents of Yarra Ranges.

Likewise, given that people want a diversity of active recreation opportunities in the one location, there is the potential for people to spend longer at these locations while they undertake more of these activities and consequently will look for refreshments and snacks nearby. More people on bikes will also have a flow on effect to the local bike shops for supplies and services. The safe introduction for people to try new activities through this plan has the potential to develop life-long activity patterns that will have flow on effects for community sporting and recreation groups and private fitness and recreation providers.

The improvement to and/or provision of facilities is also expected to contribute to the local economy through employment opportunities and as a source of materials and equipment.

Improving overall health through physical activity has an economic benefit through preventative health outcomes that can lessen the burden on health facilities.

Social Implications

The Yarra Ranges municipality has a population of 157,419 (ABS 2021). Compared with the Greater Melbourne average, there is a higher percentage of older adults aged 50-84 (25% of residents), as well as those aged under 18 (16% of residents). The draft Plan aims to ensure that older residents and young people in the community are well catered for, particularly teenage girls who are often not well catered for in public space and so can lack an important sense of belonging in the community.

There are strong links to social and community impacts resulting from the development and improvement of active recreation initiatives and recreation spaces, which include:

- Enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages alternative health and wellbeing outcomes
- Revitalization of local communities
- Reduction of social isolation, and
- Increased sense of belonging for females and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies high levels of obesity, dementia, and poor mental health as significant issues for our community. Provision of safe and accessible active recreation opportunities, as well as other diverse social active recreation opportunities are important contributors to improved health.

Environmental Implications

A highly valued aspect of the Yarra Ranges municipality is its unique nature and natural setting. The landscape provides the opportunity to walk, exercise, sit and take in the view, watch the children play or cycle one of the many trails. A consistent message through the consultation was that this unique connection and access to nature is what sets the area apart and why a lot of people choose to live in the Yarra Ranges.

The preservation, enhancement, and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities is a key driver for improvement underpinning recommendations. It is also vital that throughout this proper care and environmental consideration is taken wherever any upgrades or facility installations are implemented, to ensure sustainable materials are sourced and that the natural habit and connection to nature and the environment is maintained. The plan is not in conflict with Council's draft nature plan or the liveable climate plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The draft Plan was developed following a review of extensive consultation undertaken for the draft Recreation and Open Space Strategy, the draft Paths and Trails plan, various reserve master plans, as well as a review of community requests received by Council. Targeted consultation was undertaken with young people and

their parents/guardians at skate programs and Councils Youth Advisory Committee, Disability Advisory Committee and Positive Aging Reference Group to help shape the plan.

The draft Plan provides a 10-year strategic approach to improve access to, and use of, recreation programs and facilities across the municipality. Officers from across Council were engaged early in the process to identify issues and opportunities and later to provide feedback to enable refinement of the draft Plan.

Between 10 July 2023 and 31 August 2023, the draft Plan was released for community consultation. The community was engaged through the 'shaping Yarra Ranges Page', advisory group sessions and four pop up sessions as part of the community engagement roadshows lead by our community engagement team. The consultation for the plan was advertised through social media and our winter edition of the living local newsletter and through the Community Development Officer newsletters. Copies for comment were also made available at our links with hard copy surveys available on request.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Internal collaboration has been ongoing throughout the research and development phases of the draft Plan through an internal project reference group. Additional comment was sought from the Youth Advisory Group, the Positive Ageing Reference Group and the Disability Advisory Committee to help shape the early concept design, refine the content and layout of the design and initiatives included in the draft Plan.

A copy of the draft Plan and summary document was emailed to the Indigenous Advisory Committee, Health and Wellbeing Committee and the Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee for comment.

In addition, comment has been sought from Sport and Recreation Victoria as the funding partner for the project.

RISK ASSESSMENT

There was some risk to Council reputation if the community misinterpret how Council can deliver the actions within the plan. However, a disclaimer was included in the draft Plan and on all consultation, material stating the project delivery is subject to grant opportunities and allocation of capital budget.

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 Active Recreation Plan 2023
2. Draft Yarra Ranges Active Recreation Plan 2023 Summary
3. Active Recreation Plan 2023 Consultation and Engagement Summary