

Yarra Ranges Council



Health and Wellbeing Plan

2021 – 2025



Progress Report Year 2

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Executive Officer Health & Wellbeing
September 2023



Acknowledgement of country

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

We pay or 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.



Executive Summary

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires Councils to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years, and report against the progress of the Plan.

In 2021, Council finalised and commenced delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025. This summary report is intended to share examples of completed projects and initiatives that contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes. This summary report marks the mid-way point for delivery of the Plan.

The Plan is implemented through an Action Plan, with 91 actions for implementation across seven priority areas. Council maintains several collaborative partnerships with external services, community houses and various community groups across the Yarra Ranges that ensure these actions are not only achieved, but where possible sustainable for years beyond the life of the Plan.

The first two years of the Plan focused on the delivery of large projects that were both preventative and responsive to the pandemic, building community resilience and supporting mental wellbeing and social connection within community. So far, of the 91 implementation actions, 23 actions have been completed with the remaining 68 actions in progress to be delivered over the remaining two years of the Plan.

A wide range of innovative projects have occurred under each of the seven priorities areas of the Plan, however not all projects will be highlighted within this summary report.

To learn more about the Plan and to follow our progress visit:

<https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Health-and-Wellbeing/Health-Wellbeing-Advisory-Committee>



Project Highlights



Respond to public health emergencies

Goal:

Communities recover from Covid 19 and other emergencies.

Project Spotlight:

Regional Community Recovery Committees (RCRCs)

Regional Community Recovery Committees (RCRC) have been established to contribute to progressing the recovery priorities of their community. RCRCs have a crucial say into the long-term recovery from Covid-19, and the June storms that impacted the Yarra Ranges and members are dedicated to advancing community-led social, economic, and environmental recovery.

Since the establishment of RCRCs in 2021, there have been a number of benefits delivered, particularly in terms of the collaboration and strengthening of relationships between community recovery and services.





Several health and wellbeing themes have emerged from the work conducted across the four regions of the Yarra Ranges which are informing our work including:

- Mental health – This priority includes gaining access to mental health services and providing support to young people as well as the broader community
- Community connection – Building a strong community connection is seen as a priority and will be achieved through a variety of approaches including community events and other activities
- Community groups – Supporting community groups, be they formal or informal, sporting clubs, youth groups, specialist hobby clubs, or other networks is seen as being very important to recovery across all four regions.

This project has been embedded in Councils Municipal Recovery Plan. View this plan here: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/recovery/Useful-information/Councils-Municipal-Recovery-Plan>





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.

Project Spotlight:

Climate Change Roadshow and Ribbons of Green Program

This year Council hosted a series of climate change related events to inform and inspire the community to take climate action on 'Farming Solutions for a Changing Climate'.

There is a growing realisation that farmers are on the front line of climate change with warmer conditions, less rainfall and increased volatility in our weather. Not only will farmers need to adapt to these newer conditions but our farmers and landholders can play an integral role in mitigating climate change.



Council is supporting the farming sector in a number of ways including our 'Ribbons of Green' program where nearly 800,000 plants have been planted over the last 10 years and are also providing attractive environmental finance options for business via the Sustainable Australia Fund.

We offer free native plants for private properties (over 1 hectare), schools and community groups through the Ribbons of Green program. This program aims to encourage the use of indigenous plants to restore habitats across the Yarra Ranges.

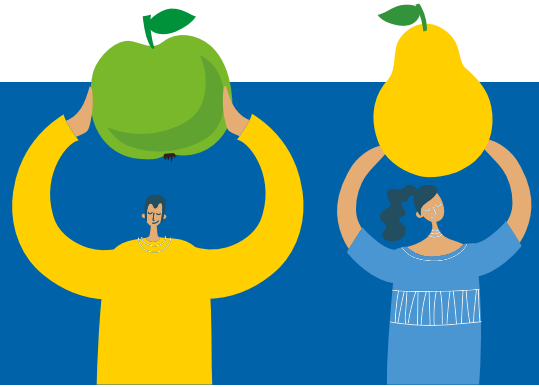
We aim to plant 60,000 native plants each year to provide habitat for native birds and animals.

To learn more about what Council are doing to take action on Climate Change, visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Environment/Climate-change>

To learn more about the Ribbons of Green Program, visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Environment/Trees-and-vegetation/Request-native-plants-Ribbons-of-Green-program>



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.

Project Spotlight:

Yarra Ranges Emergency Relief Network (YRERN)

YRERN delivers a range of supports to community during emergencies. Council is now ensuring the sustainability of this network through building the capacity of the YRERN project funded by the Preparing Australian Communities fund.

Recent events have caused unprecedented challenges for everyone. Many individuals, families and communities find themselves needing support and it can be daunting to ask for help, and to know where to start. This network of organisations are an excellent source of information, resources, community connection and can offer referrals to additional services if necessary. The YRERN includes around 50 Emergency Relief agencies of very varied sizes and around 30 affiliated organisations.

Data collected from participating services indicates that the demand for food provision is still greater than pre-covid levels therefore the need for continuation of this essential network.

To learn more about local community relief services, visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Health-and-Wellbeing/Community-relief-and-support-agencies>





Increase active living



Goal:

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

Project Spotlight:

VicHealth-funded Art & Sole Project

Art & Sole was an \$80,000 Vic Health funded project delivered over two years. It aims to increase walking and active travel in Lilydale West through the celebration of creative and cultural expression, local history and social connection. It also aims to increase accessibility and knowledge of walking routes to the station and town centre, increase the number of artistic indicators to create a sense of place and culture and increase knowledge and awareness of walking and its health benefits. The completion of the project was celebrated through a launch event late 2022. It has already proven to increase the visibility of Indigenous identity, story, art and voice in Lilydale from 16% to 37%.

To learn more about Art & Sole, visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Experience/The-Arts/Our-creative-community/Art-and-Sole>





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.

Project Spotlight:

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

In 2021-2022, Council partnered with 7 community organisation delivering a total of 16 MHFA courses courses to residents and volunteers of Yarra Ranges.

- 201 participants from 37 townships attended the courses. This represented 46 community groups and organisations.



201
participants



37
townships



46
community groups

- Yarra Ranges Council Youth Team delivered 15 Youth and Teen MHFA courses to 284 participants across 9 schools.



15
youth and teen
MHFA courses



284
participants



9
schools

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.

Project Spotlight:

Free from Violence Local Government Program

Yarra Ranges continues to promote gender equity in its own operations and were successful in joining the Free from Violence Local Government Program. The Free from Violence Local Government Program contributes to the Victorian Government's vision to create a Victoria free from violence, where all community members experience equality and respect in all their relationships.

For 16 Days of Activism in 2022, Council also placed gender equity focussed banners across the municipality, implemented gender equity book readings at all Eastern Regional Libraries. The campaign came to an end with a powerful intersectional video screening event in partnership with Margins to Mainstream, a project highlighting women with disability and lived experience of violence against women.

Council played a role in supporting the presence of two Orange Door services located in Belgrave and Yarra Junction. This service responds to family violence and child welfare issues. This will increase access to support for those experiencing gender-based violence and abuse. Council played a role brokering the locations to enable access in areas where data indicated the highest need exists.

To learn more about the Gender Equity work Council is progressing in the Yarra Ranges visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Councillors-executive-team/Gender-equity-family-violence/Gender-equity>





Reduce harmful alcohol and drug use



Goal:

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

Project Spotlight:

Sunday Sessions Equity Project

Sunday Sessions is an existing primary prevention of alcohol harm program run in partnership across five Local Government Areas in the Eastern Metropolitan Region Melbourne. This program aims to encourage participants to push back against boozy weekends by getting involved in free exercise and wellbeing activities on Sunday mornings, in conjunction with providing participants with information and resources for alcohol and other drug support.

Sunday Session first launched in March 2020, and again in May 2021. Despite the onset of the global pandemic and enforced social distancing practices, Sunday Sessions was able to help a total of 218 participants push back against alcohol and make the most of their weekend. Findings showed that 32% of participants said they consumed less alcohol than they normally would on a Friday and Saturday night before planned activities on a Sunday. The campaign encouraged a further 19% to consider changing their current relationship with alcohol.



Come and join free and fun **#SundaySessions** every Sunday morning in August. We have Pilates, Yoga, Boxing, Spin, Aquatics and Body Pump and more!

- ✦ #SundaySessions ✦ #TakeBackSunday
- ✦ #DrinkLessMoveMore



Scan the QR code to find activities and sign up.



Community Voice & Lived Experience

Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee (HWAC):



The establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee brings together 12 community members who reside in the Yarra Ranges to provide advice, input and voice to Councils programs, plans and policies.

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee was inducted in January 2023 and will meet bi-monthly. The HWAC recently participated in a focus group for the Aquatics Strategy and Lilydale Lake Masterplan providing rich and comprehensive feedback showcasing the diverse lived experience within the committee.





Disability Advisory Committee (DAC):

Over 5% of the Yarra Ranges population, almost 8,500 people, identify as having a severe or profound disability that requires daily assistance to undertake core activities. A further 12% of the population provide unpaid care to a person with a disability, age or health needs (2021 ABS Census). The sheer number of people within our community represented in this cohort highlights the importance of including their voices in the development and evaluation of key Council strategies and Plans.

Council's Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) has 11 members representing people with disabilities, their unpaid carers and service representatives. The DAC provided input to development of the Plan and will help guide implementation, bringing lived experience to decisions. In late 2022, The DAC celebrated International Day of People with Disability by showcasing many of the significant Council projects they have contributed to. Following 8-year tenures, retiring members of this important committee were acknowledged and thanked.



Community Grant & Partnerships

Council distributes over \$1.7m to community organisations across Yarra Ranges through three grant programs. The grants invite locally focused, creative and community development projects that respond to health and wellbeing issues. Health and wellbeing goals form part of the grant criteria, along with access, inclusion and equity, Reconciliation and Environment Strategy goals. The grant programs are designed to elicit strength-based projects that tap into local skills, knowledge and energy to meet needs and take up opportunities to build vibrant communities. The programs deliberately drive strategic and evidence-based outcomes that are identified in Council's strategies.

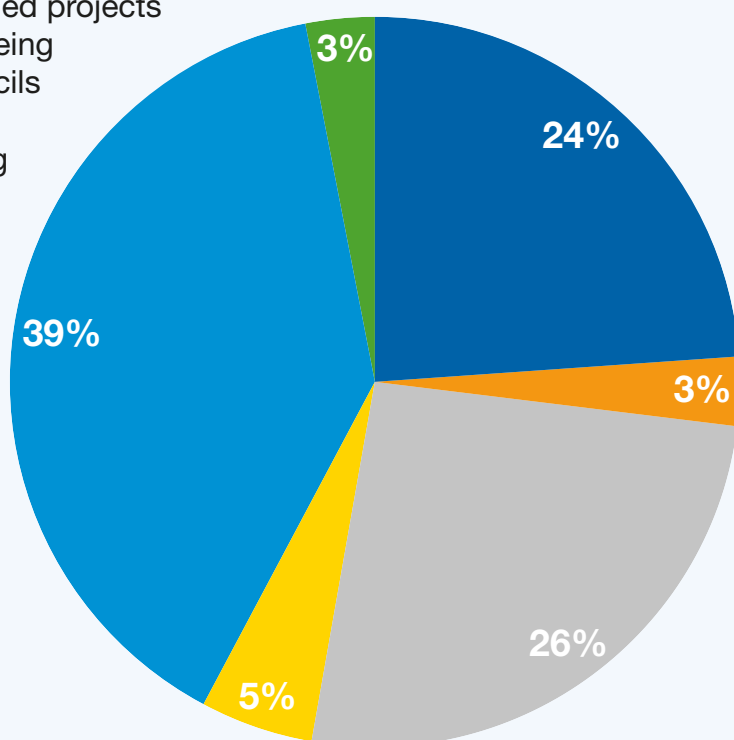
Over the past two years Council has supported 38 projects that have been delivered within the community and around 30% of grants applications contributing to the goals. The table below shows the breakdown of how these projects support the priority areas and health and wellbeing outcomes of the Plan.

Table 1. Community Grants delivering Health & Wellbeing Outcomes Breakdown

Table 1 breaks down grant funded projects into the seven health and wellbeing priority areas of the Plan. Councils grants programs are also supplemented with skill building activities for community that build capacity, leadership and sustainability.

Changemakers is one example of a leadership development course that is provided to supplement the community grants program. It provides a more intensive development opportunity and aims to grow new leaders who can contribute with confidence and skill to community development and asset-based community development activities in their local communities.

Council has an influential role supporting and facilitating activities that bring people together to do what they identify as meaningful and important.



- Yarra Ranges Communities recover from COVID-19 and other emergencies. **15**
- Tackle climate change and its impact on health. **2**
- Increasing Physical Activity. **16**
- Increasing Healthy Eating. **3**
- Increasing Mental Health & Social Connection. **24**
- Preventing Violence Against Women & Children. **2**

Grant Projects Build Health and Wellbeing

The new 2023-2027 *Partnership Grants* fund five emergency relief agencies. These agencies offer food and material aid and referral to other services and supports that address health and wellbeing. These agencies also support mental wellbeing and connection and were essential during the pandemic and post, for many people experiencing unemployment and other forms of financial hardship.

A partnership with Anchor funds an assertive outreach project to engage early with people who are sleeping rough. Arising from a longstanding partnership with Council and other housing agencies, the project meets a need that is growing.

Small Grants are for catalytic projects that make a difference in local projects. Examples of those supporting healthy communities included:

- Over 50s Friendship Group - providing ongoing get-togethers, social meetings and outings, Ballroom Dances and free Community Meals for people from the Yarra Valley. Increases social connection for the older demographic in Yarra Valley;
- ADRA – to support a range of community actions during the recent highway closure. This preventative project offered a workspace to access internet during the closure and aimed to reduce social isolation;
- The Healesville Community Garden included a Welcome to Country ceremony at their Homegrown Food Fair. This strengthened the garden’s relationship with local Wurundjeri-Woiwurrung community members. It provided opportunities for local community members, volunteers and groups to engage, connect on Country and share knowledge about gardening and environmental sustainability.

The annual Grants for Communities program includes festivals and events. These are more important after the years of lockdown to help reconnect and build back confidence through localised events. The Kilsyth Festival showcased local artists, the Chin community, local organisations and health focused businesses and showcased young people through dance. The longstanding Belgrave Lantern Festival adapted during Covid, using projections and window displays to light up Belgrave, when gatherings could not occur.

Community development grants awarded annually, invite applications that address the goals of the Health and Wellbeing Plan.

For more information visit:

<https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Grants/Apply-for-Community-Grants>





Conclusion

The Yarra Ranges community has faced great adversity over the first two years of the Plan due to the pandemic, extreme weather events and loss of funding for essential services within the region.

Despite these challenges, Council have been able to work with community to create greater opportunity for community voice and lived experience to inform local health and wellbeing issues. Council have also been able to establish critical internal and external relationships with partners to continue to advocate on emerging issues, and continue to deliver projects and initiatives within the community that build resilience, connection and wellbeing.

**Health and
Wellbeing Plan**
2021 – 2025

