



Yarra Ranges Council

Health and Wellbeing

Strategy | Community Engagement Summary Report



Table of contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Promoting engagement opportunities	4
Methods of data collection	5
How people got involved	6
Summary of feedback	7
Limitations	9
Conclusion	9



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



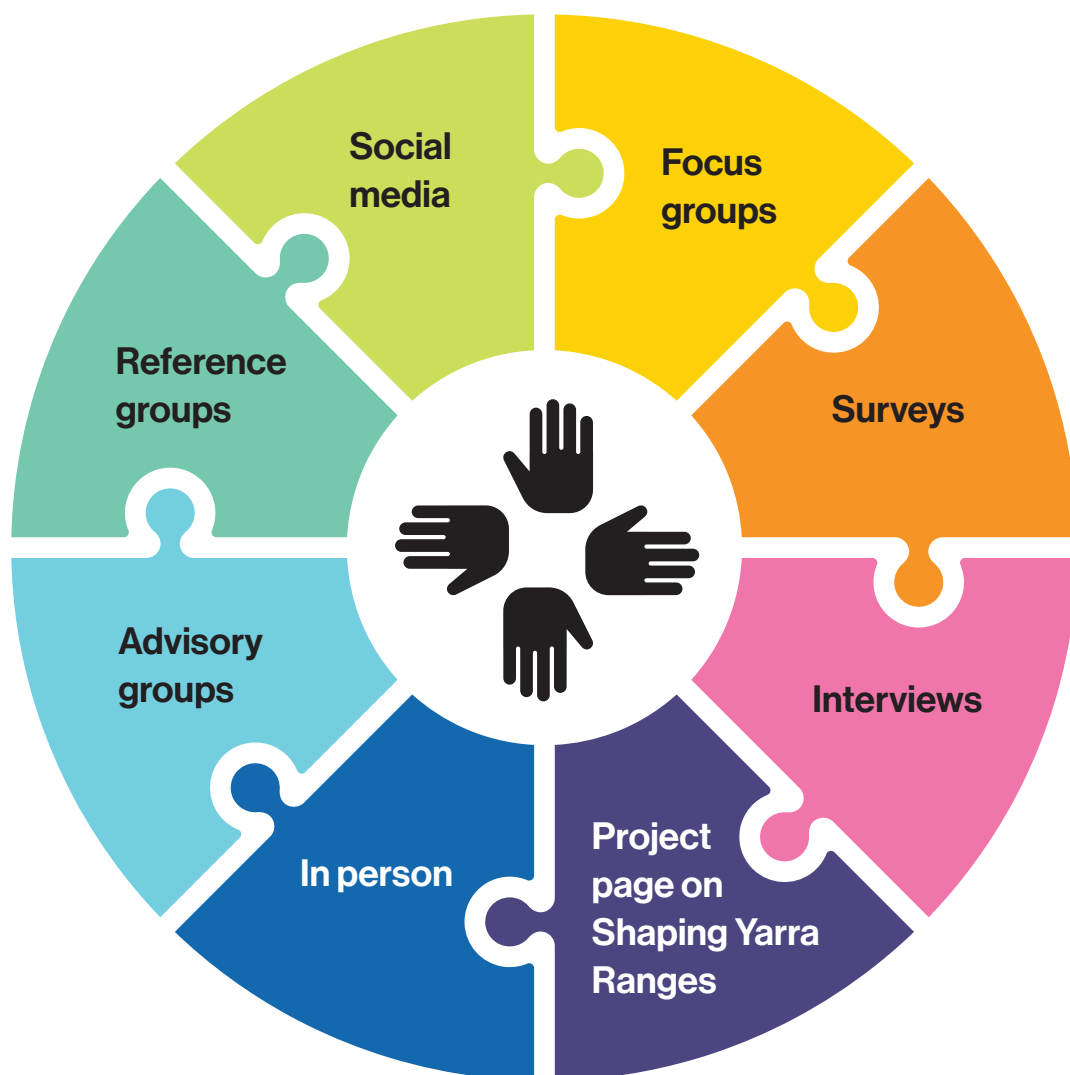
Email distribution





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>



Yarra Ranges Council
PO Box 105
Lilydale VIC 3140

1300 368 333
www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au
mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

