

HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2025-2029 - CONSIDERATION FOR ADOPTION

Report Author: Executive Officer Health and Wellbeing

Responsible Officer: Director Communities

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

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (the Act)*, councils must prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) every four years, within 12 months of a general council election. The proposed Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (the Strategy) meets these requirements and is ready for Council endorsement. The Strategy (Attachment One) is due to the Department of Health 26 October 2025.

In July 2025, Council endorsed the Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 for public exhibition. The Community Engagement Report (Attachment Two) highlights feedback received from the two phases (eight weeks) of community engagement. Both internal and external consultation showed strong support for the Strategy, the four focus areas, advocacy priorities and strategic actions.

This report is seeking Councillor adoption of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 Final Draft (Attachment One) and Community Engagement Report (Attachment Two) ensuring Council meets its legislative deadline.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Adopts the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029.***
- 2. Endorses the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 - Community Engagement Report.***

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)

Council endorsed Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 in July 2025 (Item 10.3, 08/07/2025)

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

The Act 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 councils in promoting community health and wellbeing, based on where councils have 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 ready for adoption by Council and is referred to as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 (the Strategy). It is Council's lead strategy to achieve the key strategic objective of Healthy Connected Communities as stated in the Council Plan 2025-2029. The Strategy is due to be submitted to the Department of Health in October 2025.

The Act sets out requirements for councils when preparing and implementing a 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
- Specifies measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community
- Has regard to climate change, as required under the *Climate Change Act 2017*.

In developing the Strategy, Council has ensured that a transparent approach to meeting the requirements of *the Act* has been achieved, including:

- Development and publishing of the Yarra Ranges Health Profile and the Yarra Ranges Human Services Needs Analysis.
- Two phases of community engagement and ongoing engagement with the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee.
- Identification of four clear focus areas, and evidence-based strategies and actions to improve community health.
- Used a data and locally informed approach to specify measures to prevent family violence.
- Used a data and locally informed approach to have regard to the health impacts of climate change, as required under the *Climate Change Act 2017*.

The Strategy meets legislative requirements. Council will annually review, monitor and report on the progress of the Strategy's implementation.

Options considered

Only one option was considered.

Recommended option and justification

It is recommended that Council adopt the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029-Final Draft and endorse the Community Engagement Report. This allows Council to meet all legislative requirements and deadlines under *the Act*.

The Strategy has been informed by a large body of work, spanning the past 18 months. This includes two phases of community engagement, deep data analysis, and alignment and integration with other plans for Council. The Strategy has been prepared alongside the Council Plan 2025-2029 and is the lead strategy for achieving Healthy Connected Communities. Developing the Strategy alongside other key plans which are also in development, such as the Asset Plan 2025-2035 and Financial Plan 2025-2035, has provided the platform for comprehensive engagement, shared insights, guidance for future implementation and mutual reinforcement of activities delivered.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The total budget for developing the Strategy is \$47,000. This included all information assets and attachments. This has come from the Health and Wellbeing operational budget FY 24-25 and FY 25-26.

Due to alignment with other developing plans for Council, larger costs typically incurred for external design and consultancy have been minimised.

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

Council will continue to partner with Community Health Services, Women's Health Services, Public Health Units, Primary Health Networks and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. These organisations are also working in partnership with the Department of Health to meet the requirements of *the Act*.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan: Healthy Connected Communities.

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

RELEVANT LAW

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)

Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic)

Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Municipal Strategic Statement / Municipal Planning Scheme (Vic)

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The Act requires the Strategy to focus efforts on public health prevention and health promotion. Consideration must be given to State Budget and pending legislative impacts. For example, 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. With prevention funding cuts likely to re-occur, Council must have a clear advocacy position and strategic foresight, to position Council to obtain funding, and to support the delivery of the focus areas and actions included in the Strategy. Where appropriate, Council must partner with government, health services and community to undertake a collective impact approach, working towards a common agenda for sustainable health and wellbeing outcomes.

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 have been considered in the development and implementation of the Strategy, and where Council has roles and resources to make a positive difference. The Strategy identifies a set of Guiding Principles that

ensure health equity, and a place-based lens are applied across all focus areas of the Strategy. Any action must align with Council's ongoing legislative responsibilities, budgetary constraints, the focus areas of the Strategy, and subsequent plans.

Environmental Implications

Climate change presents a range of significant risks for Council to respond to as it delivers on its vision for the community. It often compounds the health and wellbeing inequalities experienced by vulnerable cohorts. The Strategy has regard to the *Climate Change Act 2017* and the impacts of climate on human health. The Strategy has relationship to existing plans and commitments, such as the Liveable Climate Plan 2020-2030. The link between environmental and extreme weather impacts on human health is addressed within the Strategy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Two phases of community engagement helped shape the Strategy, using a variety of methods to actively listen and involve community in decision making. The final Community Engagement Report is attached (Attachment Two). It summarises both phases of community engagement, and provides insights into community sentiment, which have been incorporated into the Strategy where feasible.

During the engagement, Council successfully met obligations under *the Act*, to involve community in informing and decision making when developing the Strategy. Council 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.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Council has collaborated with other councils, as well as key stakeholders and networks. Stakeholders include;

- North Eastern Public Health Unit and associated councils.
- Eastern Metro Primary Health Network.
- Women's Health East and Together for Equality and Respect Partnership.
- Eastern Health, Access Community Health and Inspiro Community Health.
- Municipal Association of Victoria Health and Social Planners Network.
- Other services, networks and 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 and will partner to support the implementation of the Strategy.

Collaboration has occurred internally for Council to create the Strategy, through: inter-department engagement; attendance at advisory committees; 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 acknowledges the Indigenous Advisory Committee, Disability Advisory Committee, Youth Ambassadors, Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee, Positive Ageing Reference Group 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 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
State Budget; Prevention funding cuts limiting scope and partner capacity to deliver strategic actions.	M	M	Clear advocacy priorities and desired outcomes articulated within the Strategy. Delivery of Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee included prevention funded partners.
Emerging Health Issues	M	M	The Strategy is written at a high level that allows for agility. Annual review of the Strategy to inform implementation plans. Evaluation Framework.

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. Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029.
2. Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 - Community Engagement Report.