



Yarra Ranges Council

Key Life Stages

Plan 2025–2029



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Acknowledgement of Country



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples 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.

1.0 Introducing the Key Life Stages Plan

The Key Life Stages Plan demonstrates our commitment to the age-specific supports that Council delivers. By creating alignment between these supports we can better address gaps in the system, understand changing priorities and needs between generations, and foster intergenerational connection.

The Key Life Stages Plan is one of a number of plans that support Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a legislated document that focuses on the health and wellbeing of the overall community. However, due to the additional support, heightened vulnerability, and developmental changes associated with some age cohorts, the Key Life Stages Plan was developed to focus specifically on those critical periods.

Throughout our lives, experiences we have and decisions we make have an impact on our health and wellbeing now and in the future. These experiences include physical, cognitive, emotional and contextual changes, the foundations of which begin during our childhood. These changes continue into adolescence and young adulthood and are influenced by the decisions we begin to make about our lives. As we grow older these decisions, as well as experiences we have, shape our ageing journey.

This Plan combines four age specific plans into one. It's simpler, clearer and shows how our services work across the key transitional life stages.

Our life trajectories are also influenced by our individual gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability and other factors, and how these present in our community. These factors can intersect, further defining our experiences. And as we move through each life stage, these experiences may look and feel different depending on what age we are.

The Key Life Stages Plan 2025-2029 adopts an integrated approach that inclusively captures and addresses the needs of people at key life stages where heightened vulnerability or developmental needs are experienced, namely children, young people and the ageing population. The expiration of Council's Early and Middle Years Strategic Action Plans, Youth Plan, Child and Youth Strategy, and Healthy and Active Ageing Plan created an opportunity to develop a new, consolidated strategy.

There is consistent and compelling evidence that a life-course approach, which consider the influence of different stages of ageing as a continuum, is the best way to support health and wellbeing. An integrated Key Life Stages Plan allows us to clearly identify Council's role in the delivery of age-specific services, and to advocate for better funding. It also makes Council's strategic priorities more visible to the community.

Although the Key Life Stages Plan places emphasis on certain age cohorts, it is still inclusive of all ages. The Plan supports parents and caregivers, who provide care to those in the key life stages. Its underpinning frameworks also recognise that all life stages are interrelated, that proactive measures need to be taken from a young age to support healthy ageing, and that the needs of people of all ages need to be supported to foster intergenerational connection.

The Key Life Stages Plan recognises the important and complex roles that carers play. A carer is someone who provides support to a family member, friend, partner, neighbour or anyone in the community.

A carer can be any age and provide support in many different ways. The support they provide is not through formal care services arranged by volunteer carers or paid carers.

Carers play an important role in creating and strengthening a supportive community.

The Key Life Stages approach helps to strengthen the bridge between our community's own strengths and the supporting roles of government, enabling our community to thrive at an individual and collective level.

Below are the expected benefits of a Key Life Stages approach:

Impact to Council and Industry

Greater collaboration between Council's service functions, and with other organisations.

Strengthen alignment between services and address gaps.

Opportunities to respond appropriately to social trends and projections.

Promote a greater understanding of changing priorities, needs and challenges among children, young people and the ageing population.

Clear alignment with the Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



Impact to community

Greater opportunities to foster intergenerational connection that resultingly strengthen community.

Residents supported through key transitional periods in their life.

Positive health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

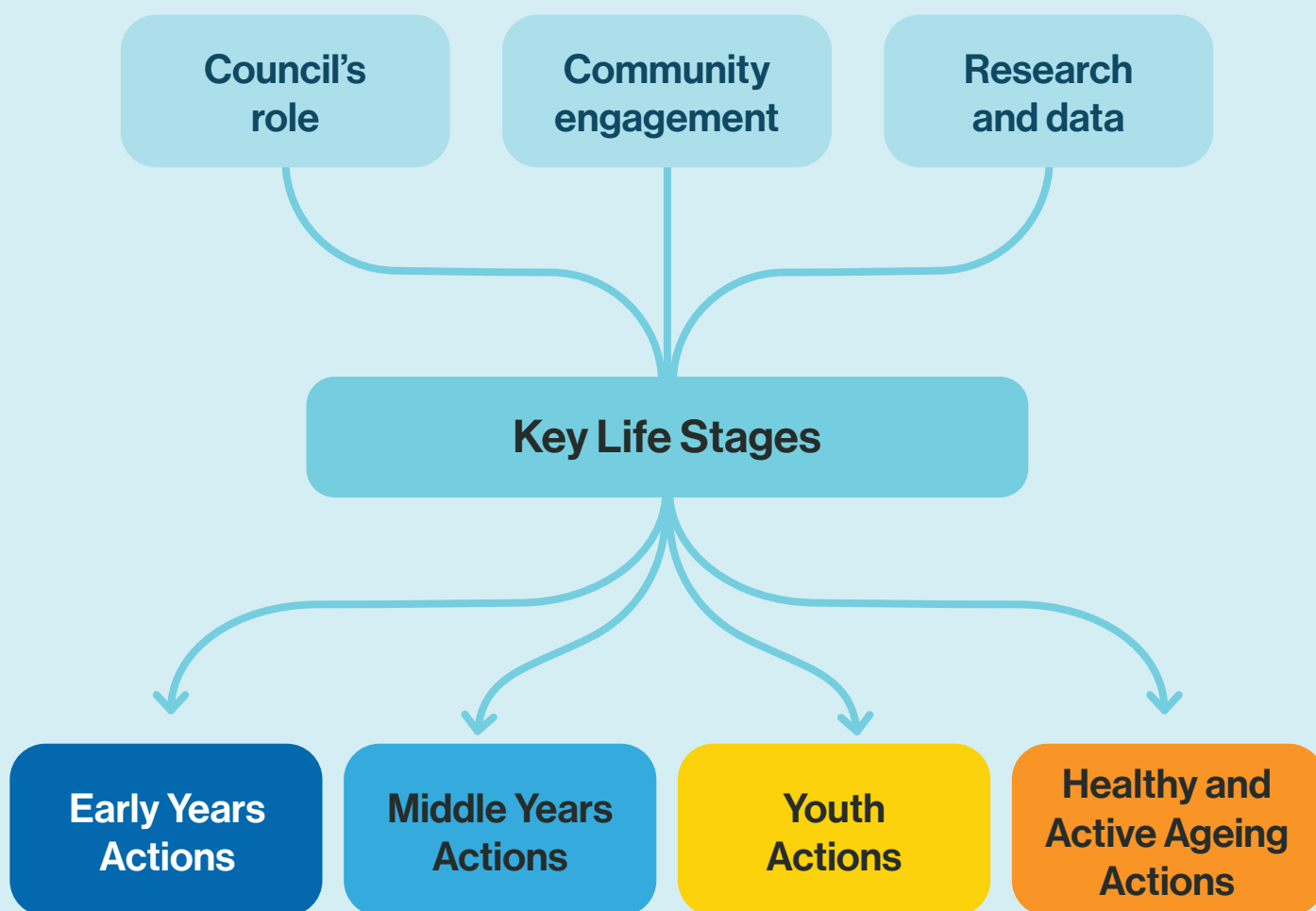
Address population inequalities.

Community is informed on individual steps they can take to strengthen resilience across the key stages of their lives.



2.0 The Key Life Stages Plan

The Key Life Stages Plan 2025-2029 brings together the collective aspirations of our community, local data primarily from the 2021 Census, and the state, national and international policy contexts, to identify themes and actions for our key age cohorts:



Community Engagement

The Key Life Stages Plan is informed by the extensive broad community consultation undertaken by the next Yarra Ranges Council Plan, Disability Action Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. We also referred to other engagement conducted by Council with our key age cohorts over the last 3 years.

To supplement the whole-of-community engagement, targeted engagement activities were undertaken from June 2024 to March 2025 to ensure representation from our key age cohorts and relevant stakeholders: the ageing population, young people, families and children, carers, and service providers. The methods we used to engage with community and have conversations included:

- Focus groups
- Reference and advisory groups
- Project page on Shaping Yarra Ranges
- Interviews

Our Themes

By engaging with research and data, consulting with community, and considering our role as a Council, we developed three themes to guide the Key Life Stages Plan and considered how these themes function across and within generations.

Each of our action plans address the below themes in the context of each key life stage.

Connection

Strong connections enhance community resilience. We strengthen community by linking people and supports (services, infrastructure, community networks) with each other.

Places

We plan and advocate for safe and accessible places that include buildings, parks, playspaces, community spaces and natural environment, all of which have a role in supporting communities to thrive and connect.

Inclusion

Embracing and valuing the diverse experiences, cultures, and abilities of all community members enriches our collective strength. We lead, partner and advocate for a community that is inclusive, welcoming, accessible, and celebrates everyone.



2.1 Our Approach

The Key Life Stages Plan supports Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029, which is a legislated strategy that focuses on the health and wellbeing of our entire community.

Certain aspects of our community require additional support to achieve good health and wellbeing, as such the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is supported by other Council strategies and plans. The Key Life Stages Plan is one of these supporting plans, alongside the Disability Action Plan 2024-2028, Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026, Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032, Housing Strategy 2024, Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040, Environment Strategy 2015-2025 and Creative Communities Strategy 2018.

2.2 Context

The Key Life Stages adopts a life-course approach which recognises that:

- All stages of our lives are intertwined and connected to the lives of those born in the same period, and that of past and future generations of our families.
- Health and wellbeing is dependent on interacting risk and protective factors that appear throughout our lives.
- It is important to take action early, appropriately and together to ensure a healthy life course.

We consider health and wellbeing across the lifespan. The foundations set in our childhood which mature during our adolescent and young adult years are relied on as we get older. For example, social development occurring in childhood sets the foundation for social skills that mature during adolescent and young adult years, that can support our social connection as we age and mitigate isolation and loneliness.

Why these life stages?

The Key Life Stages that this plan focuses on are childhood, youth and older age. Note that there is an overlap in the age ranges of children and young people, this is because those aged 12 to 14 share experiences and developmental traits of both of these cohorts. The significance of these life stages is based on the following:

Early Years Children (0-8 years)

Physical, cognitive, emotional and social development during childhood form the foundation for future health and wellbeing, and can be helped or hindered by socioeconomic factors.

Middle Years Children (8-14 years)

Physical, social and emotional development occurs alongside abstract thinking, problem-solving and developing independence. This life stage is also associated with change – as they transition out of secondary school and experience shifts in relationship dynamics.

Young People (12-25 years)

In addition to development continuing from childhood, youth is a period of identity formation and is a life stage that is sensitive to the effects of stress on mental health. It is also a time when key life choices are made that can impact an individual's future trajectory.

Adults (26-49 years)

Although this Plan does not place emphasis on this cohort, we support them as parents and caregivers of those in the key cohorts. Adults in this cohort are the focus of other key strategic documents including Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Recreation and Open Spaces Strategy, Creative Communities Strategy and Economic Development Strategy.

Ageing Population (50+ years)*

Ageing is an ongoing process that begins much earlier than we realise, though the more pronounced physical changes start to appear at the age of around 50 years. Healthy and active ageing is best supported by preparing early and setting up the physical, social, financial and other supports we need to support our ageing journey.

** 50+ years is the ageing population's cohort in alignment with other government policy and aged care program eligibility. It also recognises the ageing well approach which emphasises acting early and taking proactive measures for healthier and longer lives.*

Council's age-specific services and support

Council supports the entire Yarra Ranges community, however there are services, programs, and partnerships delivered through Council that centre on the specific needs of certain age cohorts. These sit within the Family, Children and Youth teams and the Healthy and Active Ageing team. The Key Life Stages Plan will provide direction to all aspects of Council, however it will be a key strategic document for these teams, other providers in the municipality, and government partners whose work focuses specifically on these key life stages.

Are we missing anyone?

Cohorts aged from 26 to 49 years are not explicitly centred in the Key Life Stages Plan, however they are not left behind. The key life stages were identified based on age-based needs and Council's age-specific programs currently delivered as part of its core business. However, in adopting a life-course approach, and looking to support intergenerational connection and healthy and active ageing, this Plan is relevant to everyone at every stage of life.

The Yarra Ranges Health & Wellbeing Strategy advocates for adults to have equal opportunities to contribute to their community through strong employment and access to both formal and informal learning. It also aims to ensure adults enjoy formal and substantive equality, access safe and culturally appropriate services, and feel secure in their neighbourhoods and homes.

In addition to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Council has numerous strategies focused on adults, such as the Recreation and Open Spaces Strategy, Creative Communities Strategy, and Economic Development Strategy.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy, along with the Key Life Stages Plan, guides the development, implementation, and reporting of these plans, ensuring the needs of residents at every life stage are considered.

Transitions in adulthood are also reflected in other life course outcomes within this Plan. For instance, early years outcomes support adults transitioning into caregiving of children, while outcomes for older adults provide necessary support for those transitioning into caregiving of older children.



2.3 Structure of the Plan

The Key Life Stages Plan is a document that adopts a holistic approach to supporting Yarra Ranges' residents through their more critical life stages, and acknowledges that support during these periods has the greatest benefit for individuals, families and the community.

This Plan provides an overarching structure to the four individual Action Plans (section 3.0) that support the key age cohorts:

This structure allows us to implement a holistic and inclusive approach to targeted service delivery that supports the key life stages, through a consistent vision, set of principles, and guiding frameworks, whilst recognising that the work we do to support each key life stage will be different.

Key Life Stages Framework

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graph TD; A[Key Life Stages Framework] --- B[Early Years Action Plan (0-8 years)]; A --- C[Middle Years Action Plan (8-14 years)]; A --- D[Youth Action Plan (12-25 years)]; A --- E[Healthy and Active Ageing Action Plan (50+ years)];
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**Early Years Action Plan
(0-8 years)**

**Middle Years Action Plan
(8-14 years)**

**Youth Action Plan
(12-25 years)**

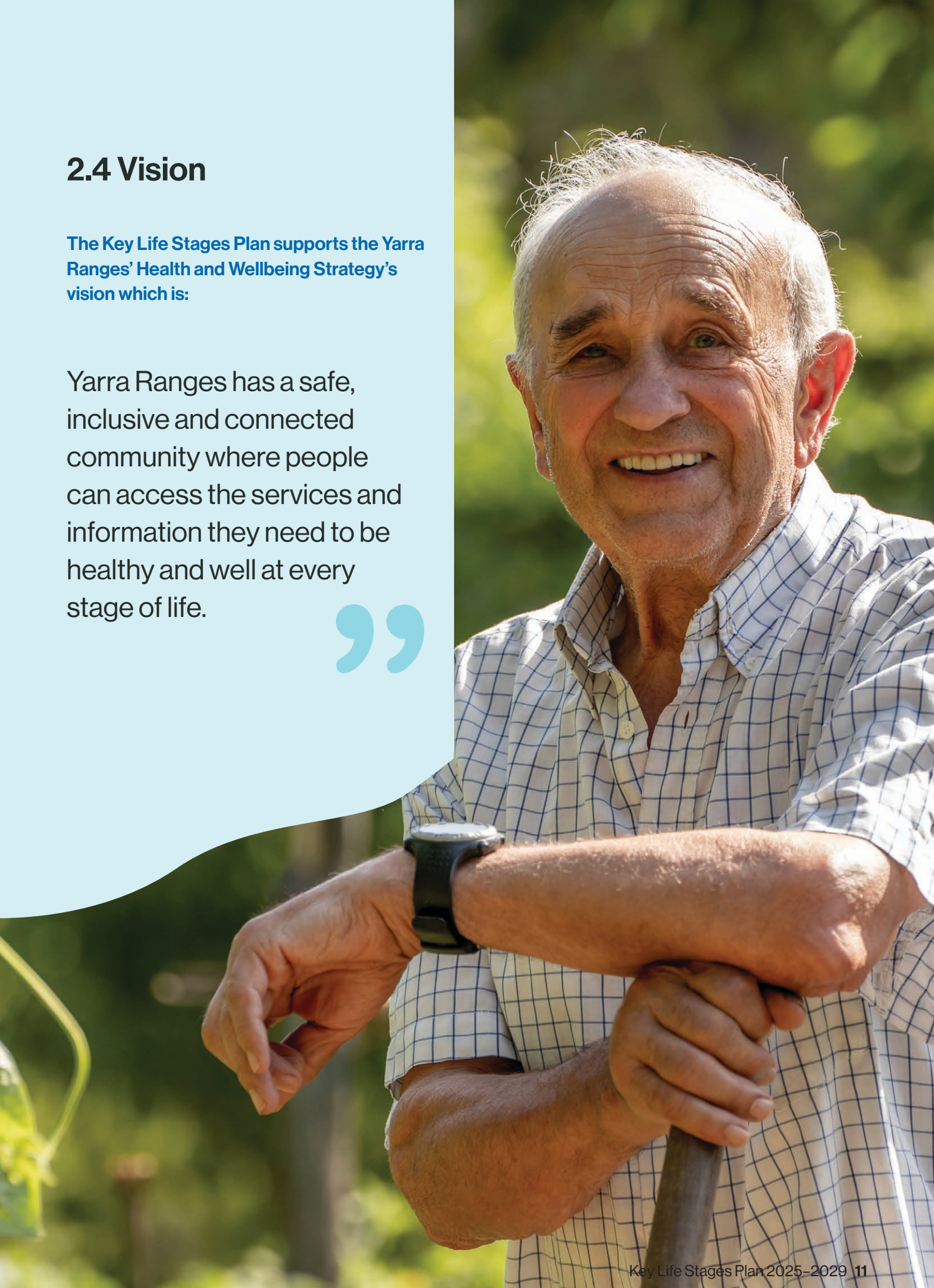
**Healthy and Active
Ageing Action Plan
(50+ years)**

2.4 Vision

The Key Life Stages Plan supports the Yarra Ranges' Health and Wellbeing Strategy's vision which is:

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

”



2.5 Principles

The Key Life Stages Plan's principles are also aligned with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

They helped guide our approach to defining our actions and Council's role, particularly where there are additional vulnerabilities experienced in an age range:

Evidence informed	Using research and data to guide decisions and actions, ensuring that approaches are based on the best available information.
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
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.
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.
Human Rights and Health Equity	Ensuring 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.

The Key Life Stages Plan is also underpinned by an additional set of principles that speak to our approach to supporting more effective services being offered to our community by Council and other providers:

Community voice	Including the voices of community in decision making.
Universal inclusion	Achieving equity in service and support access requires targeted measures to reach those who are at high risk of experiencing vulnerabilities
Community Partnerships	Celebrate our community's strengths and experiences, supporting civic and social participation.

2.6 Guiding frameworks and approaches



Place-based approach

The consideration of each region's unique strengths, opportunities and circumstances and work with local communities to address local priorities.



Community Led Approach

Focusing on the diverse strengths that exist within communities, rather than needs or problems, and building on those by identifying and supporting community-led solutions.



Lifecourse framework

Our life stages are intertwined with each other, with our families' and the broader society's. Risk and protective factors which appear at certain points in the lifespan can impact other life stages, therefore taking action early, appropriately and together is essential to supporting a healthy life course.



Child Safe Standards

11 mandatory standards released by the Victorian Government for organisations dealing with children to ensure they are safe and protected from abuse by creating a culture of child safety and implementing policies, procedures and practices that prevent and respond to abuse.



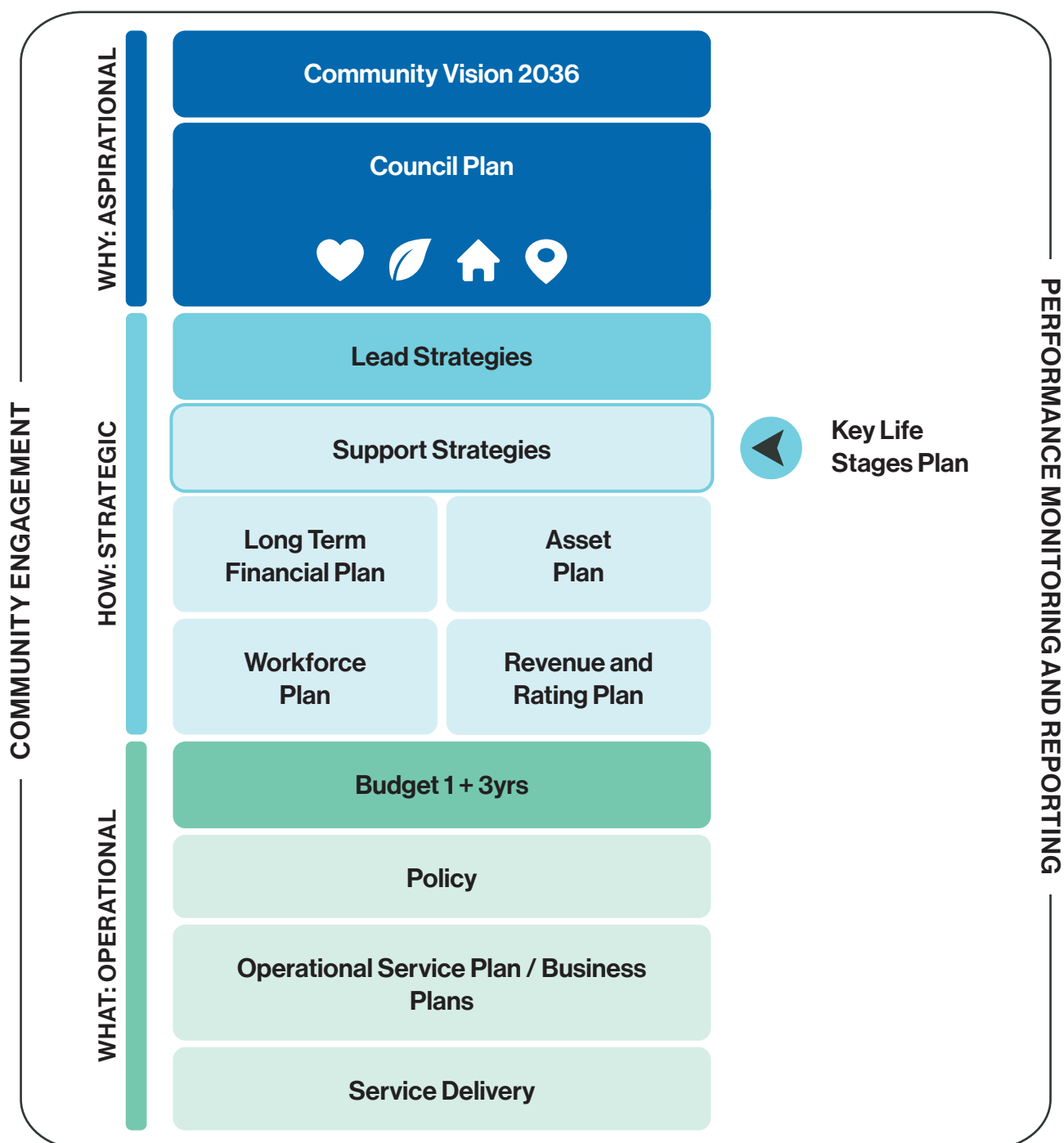
Age friendly and child friendly communities

Inclusive and intergenerational communities that consider the age-specific needs of the ageing population, young people and children in planning and policy work. They are supported through appropriate design, programs, resources and supports. This involves recognising shared and different generational requirements and navigating the diverse uses of space.

2.7 Strategic Context

The Key Life Stages Plan supports the Health and Wellbeing Strategy by focusing on how the health and wellbeing of the key life stages are supported within and by our community.

The Key Life Stages Plan is also informed by the community consultation undertaken as part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Council Plan and Disability Action Plan.



3.0 Age Cohort Action Plan



3.1 Yarra Ranges Early and Middle Years Children

Yarra Ranges Council is committed to promoting and ensuring the health and wellbeing of children who live in the Yarra Ranges.

This Early and Middle Years Plan recognises the significance of a child's early and middle years, the importance of optimising opportunities for children's growth, learning and development as well as addressing diversity and inclusion, vulnerability and safety to better achieve lifelong wellbeing.

Children thrive when supported by a broad network that extends beyond parents and immediate caregivers. Council works in partnership with services across the municipality to support greater connectivity between them and help make them easier to navigate.

Schools, services, and community, make up an essential network of support for children and families. This collective approach not only promotes children's wellbeing but also helps ensure that caregivers are not left to carry the full responsibility alone, reflecting the age-old notion that ***“it takes a village to raise a child.”***

You'll notice that in some parts of this cohort action plan, the early and middle years are discussed separately, and in other parts they are combined. This is because of the way that the various data sources related to these age groups has been collected and how guiding policies are structured, which makes consistency in separating these cohorts challenging.

Though they share similarities, these equally important life stages are different from each other, in both their experiences and the support they need. This justifies separate actions plans for each of them.

Introduction to the Early Years (0 to 8 years)

Remarkable developments take place in the early years of a child's life but especially in the first five years. A child's brain develops more and faster than any other time in their life. It is during these early years that the very foundations for learning, health and behaviour throughout the whole of life, are laid down. When a child receives the right support at the right time, strong foundations are laid for healthy development. The early years are a critical stage of brain development. Science shows that life is a story for which the beginning sets the tone. That makes the early years of childhood a time of great opportunity, but also great risk. The quality of a child's early experiences makes a critical difference as their brains develop, providing either strong or weak foundations for learning, health and behaviour throughout life.

Essential supports for children in the early years include:

- **Relationships:** Positive, healthy, respectful and ongoing relationships that are stable and nurturing and to build emotional security and social skills
- **Education and Care:** Access to quality early childhood education and childcare with well-trained educators and stimulating learning environments, to foster cognitive and language development.
- **Services:** Access to health and wellbeing services including nutrition, healthcare, mental health, and other supports.
- **Supported Families:** Supporting parents and carers with their mental health, financial stability and caregiving skills.
- **Environments:** Safe, stable, nurturing and stimulating environments that support physical and emotional wellbeing.
- **Early intervention:** Identifying and addressing developmental and social challenges early.



Introduction to the Middle Years (8 to 14 years)

In 2017 Yarra Ranges Council developed its first ever Middle Years Strategic Action Plan, recognising the middle years of childhood (8–14 year-olds) as a critical period when children are experiencing significant physical, emotional and social development.

The middle years are typically viewed as a “between” stage and quieter time in development. However, this timeframe is a critical development and transition period when protective barriers can be developed and risk taking can emerge.

It is a key time for children developing independence by exploring peer relationships and making autonomous decisions. Children in the middle years begin to think more abstractly, problem-solve and use logical reasoning. These changes in thinking can be empowering as well as challenging to navigate.

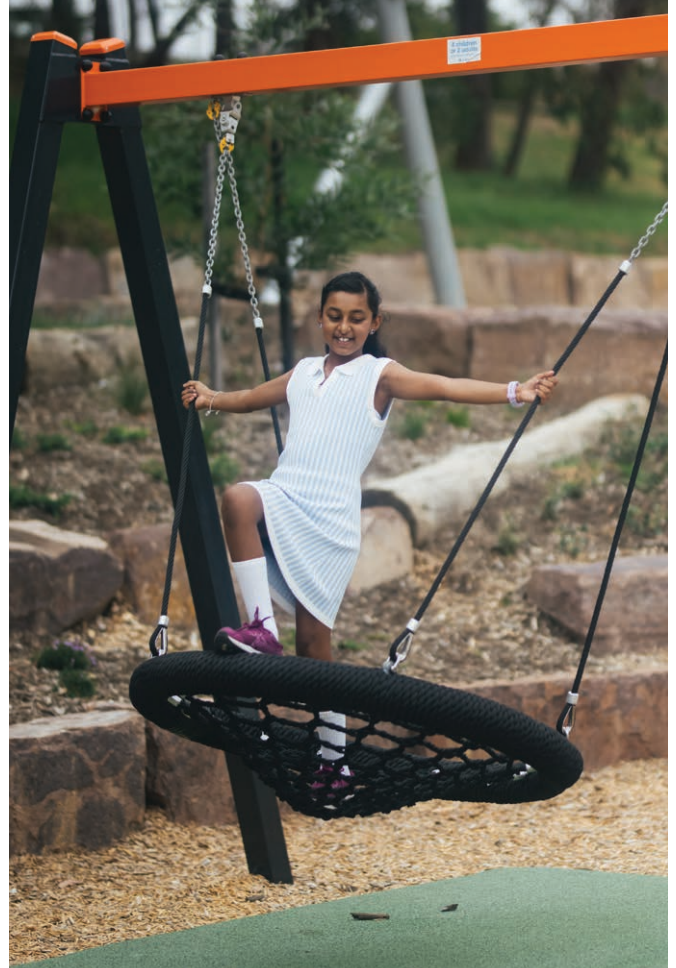
The middle years offers a ‘window’ and opportunity for early intervention and prevention to build protective factors as children transition to adolescence.

Transitioning into secondary school during this time also brings with it an extreme shift in a child’s learning environment, their engagement with peers, teachers and families. This transformative phase is a critical time for focusing on opportunities for prevention and mental health promotion.

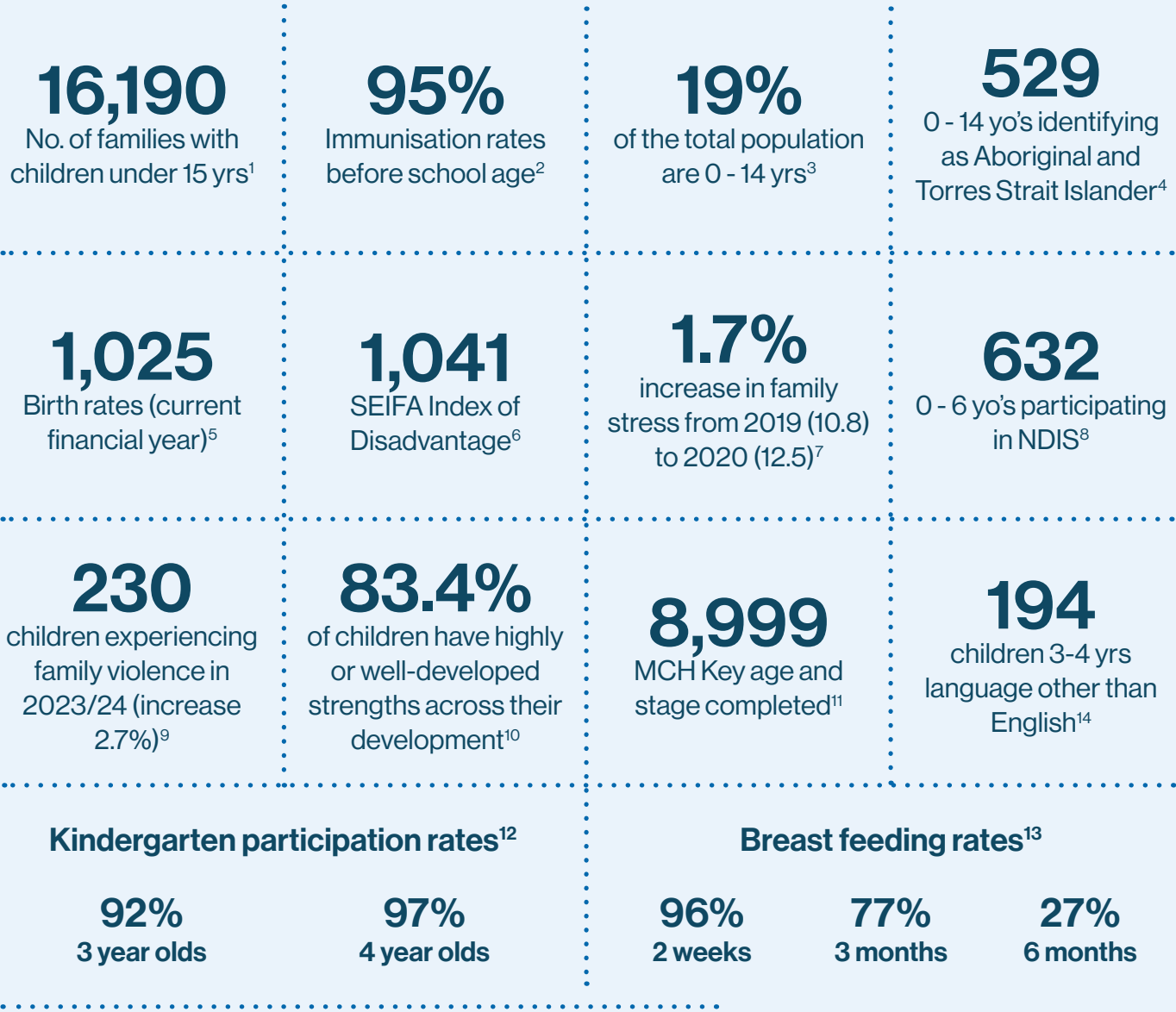
Children in the middle years can be supported by:

- **Participation:** Listening to children in the middle years and providing opportunities to actively participate and be involved in the community.
- **Relationships:** The importance of safe and trustworthy relationships through friendships, family and broader community.
- **Environments:** Home, school and the broader community are supportive environments that enhance wellbeing for children in the middle years.

Services and governments must prioritise early intervention, Middle Years specific policy and frameworks, and collaborate with each other to best support children in the middle years.



Yarra Ranges Snapshot



No. of families with children under 15yrs¹⁵

Age	0-4yrs	4-9yrs	10-14yrs
No. of children	9,298	9,765	9,963

Early and Middle Years Children Community Engagement

We have listened to the voices of children and families through the Middle Years Conversation project (2023) and the 'Listen to Learn' consultation that was undertaken by the Upper Yarra Partnerships (August 2024 to March 2025). The Middle Years Conversation project engaged with 182 middle years students aged 8-12 from across 8 primary schools in the Upper Yarra and Valley areas. The purpose was to gather the perspectives of middle years children with a focus on their wellbeing. Students were supported to utilise these insights to co-design and implement their own wellbeing projects at their school. The aim of the Listen to Learn project was for professionals to listen, and learn from, families and carers of young children aged 6 years and under. The project looked to understand experiences and insights of what helps children have the social and emotional wellbeing they need to thrive. Listen to Learn engaged 187 community members.

We also listened to key service organisations that support children and families through a sector consultation in February 2025.

What we heard from services

- **Nature and Climate:** Natural spaces are an asset of Yarra Ranges and families need to be encouraged to make use of them. Services and families need capacity building to prepare, respond and adapt to climate emergencies.
- **Infrastructure:** Safe and accessible infrastructure, such as transport, roads, lighting and footpaths, support better integration of children and families with their environment, community, health and education opportunities. There are limited spaces in Yarra Ranges designed to cater for children in the middle years.
- **Service awareness and access:** Service accessibility is an issue for families, with time and cost being significant barriers, and families in non-urban regions being highly disconnected. Services, programs and events need to be promoted through more targeted approaches.
- **Service alignment:** Services need to collaborate, share data and resources, understand each other's roles, and develop cohesive advocacy priorities.
- **Role-modelling:** Parent/ caregiver support to role model social connection and emotional development to their children is important.
- **Children's voice:** Children have unique perspectives and can offer valuable insights on their own lives and that of the community. Meaningfully engaging with them requires creative and inclusive approaches to reach those who are scarcely heard from. However, there are perceived challenges around engaging them, such as consent, lack of time and expertise.

What we heard from children

Supporting positive mental health:

Connection with peers, physical activity and time spent in nature support children's positive mental health and wellbeing.

**More fun things to do
in the area after school**

**Going up bush with
my friends**

**More fun playgrounds
that kids help create**

**More community
markets and festivals**

Children and young people's voices:

Children and young people have a range of experiences, thoughts, ideas and perspectives that can enrich decision making processes. They need to be recognised as well-placed to suggest solutions about issues that impact them and be engaged with meaningfully.

What we heard from families

Connection to services and community:

Enablers of connection include supportive and empathetic service providers, community connections, and accessible information about services. Families also benefit from early intervention programs and community activities that foster social connection.

I first reached out to a sports coach, they were concerned and referred me to go to a GP. In reflection I can see how important the role of coaches can be

Low-income area impacts the struggle. You have to pay to travel anywhere if you can even afford the service

Joy didn't necessarily come from a learning outcome academically or because of an achievement or event. Joy came from sharing an experience together and connecting.

Support network is vital for children to shine. It would be a confusing world for them if they don't have the support network around them.

Social and emotional wellbeing:

Children's social development is supported through connection to family and the broader community. The involvement of parents, caregivers, grandparents, extended family, and community supports plays a crucial role in improving children's social and emotional wellbeing.

Families' voices:

Families want to have a voice in how services are designed and how decisions that affect them are made. They want to be actively involved in the decision-making process to ensure that services meet theirs and their children's needs.

It's important for us to be involved in decisions that affect our family, ensuring the support is tailored to our needs.

Getting the kids out and about is great because they get the zoomies! It is beneficial for reducing screen time, and it supports both my mental health and theirs.

Community spaces like parks are great for meeting other families. You immediately have an unspoken bond with other parents making conversations easier.

Places and spaces:

Place plays a significant role in supporting families' connection, belonging and wellbeing. Nature and shared spaces in the community can create opportunities to connect and enhance sense of belonging. Spaces need to be suitable for families to use, and existing spaces need to be better utilised.

Policy Context

All levels of government have a role to play in supporting children in the early and middle years. The following are the core policies that guide the work undertaken by Council and its partners in this space. *Note that there is a gap in guiding policies that specifically focus on children in the middle years. This cohort is instead supported through both early years and youth policies.*

Federal Government

National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032: a national policy framework committed to a country free of gender-based violence where women and children are safe and can live free from fear and violence in all settings. The Plan recognises that violence against women and children can be addressed at a local level through adequate services and infrastructure that are culturally safe, removing barriers to safety and improving access, and place-based models of services.

National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030: outlines the national approach to improving children and young people's health outcomes and aims to ensure that all children and young people are healthy, safe and thriving, and have opportunities to fulfill their potential.

National Early Years Strategy 2024–2034: sets the national direction to nurture young children for a bright future and ensure they thrive in their early years, with connection to community being a key focus.

Victorian Government

Our promise, Your future: Victoria's Youth strategy 2022–2027: outlines the Victorian Government's next steps to improve young people's outcomes, with a focus on working with young people and relevant community sectors to do so.

Victorian Early Childhood Reform Plan: outlines the Victorian Government's vision for the early years and intends to deliver systemic change, creating a higher quality and more equitable and inclusive early childhood system, and helping families get their children ready for kindergarten, school and their lives. The Best Start, Best Life reforms are an element of this Reform Plan.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF): identifies guidelines and resources to support all professionals who work with children aged 0 to 8 years. It focuses on working together with children and families to achieve 5 learning and development outcomes: identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communication.

Victorian Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change: sets out a long-term vision for addressing the significant impact that family violence has on the Victorian community, in particular women and children.

Child Safe Standards: 11 mandatory standards released by the Victorian Government for organisations dealing with children to ensure they are safe and protected from abuse by creating a culture of child safety and implementing policies, procedures and practices that prevent and respond to abuse.

Our Themes

The three themes of **Connection, Places and Inclusion** run across all the **Key Life Stages**. Below is the definition of how these three themes are applicable to the early and middle years.

Connection

Strengthen community connection by linking children, families, and services with each other to build resilience.

- Connection supports optimal health and wellbeing
- Social connection and development of emotional regulation for children
- Isolation - geographic, social, financial, cultural
- Fragmented service system

Places

Support families by planning future infrastructure, planning for environmental impacts, and providing accessible and safe services.

- Best Start Best Life Reform infrastructure assessment
- Natural environment is an asset for optimal health and wellbeing
- Increasing climate emergencies and the need to prepare for this.

Inclusion

Empower children and families and meaningfully engage with them by listening and responding to their unique perspective and voice. Collaborate with partners for coordinated and cohesive advocacy around inclusion.

- Children and families are valued and included
- Support coordinated advocacy across service sector
- Better outcomes and service engagement

Our Action Plans

There are many parties involved in supporting early and middle years children. The following Action Plan sets out Yarra Ranges Council's focus and role for this age cohort from 2025-2029.

Early Years Action Plan

1.0 CONNECTION		
Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Families are healthy and informed connecting with services as needed.	1.1 Provide support for families to access universal services and initiatives which improve health and well-being of families and children.	Advocate Educator Partner Planner Provider
	1.2 Plan and prepare for increases in workforce demands, infrastructure impacts and service support in response to the Best Start Best Life early years reform.	Advocate Planner Provider
Services connected to services - Services are knowledgeable of the available support options.	1.3 Build and maintain strategic partnerships to improve wellbeing outcomes for children and families using a place-based approach.	Partner
	1.4 Plan and deliver initiatives that increase knowledge, community engagement, social networks and supports for families with other providers.	Educator Partner Provider
	1.5 Develop opportunities to strengthen community to connect with and support each other.	Educator Partner Provider
Families with Families - Families have opportunities to develop strong connections with each other.	1.6 Provide community connection and development opportunities for targeted communities and cohorts.	Educator Provider
Children with Children - Children are socially connected and together are active participants in their community.	1.7 Promote and deliver local activities and programs that support age-appropriate social connection and inclusion opportunities.	Partner Provider

2.0 PLACES

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Our natural environment is an asset and protective factor for positive health and wellbeing.	2.1 Provide opportunities for families and children to explore and engage with our local natural environments	Advocate Partner Provider
	2.2 Ensure adequate, accessible and inclusive community infrastructure that promotes engagement with Council's Family and Children's services	Advocate Partner Planner Provider
Community infrastructure that is family friendly, welcoming, inclusive and accessible.	2.3 Promote child safe and culturally safe environments in Council facilities.	Educator Provider
	2.4 Provide support for families to prepare for the increase in weather emergencies to ensure they are connected, safe and informed.	Educator Planner
	2.5 Ensure that children are supported throughout and post emergency events.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider
Families are informed and empowered to plan for weather related emergencies.		

3.0 INCLUSION

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
All children and their families are safe and can participate in and influence planning and service delivery.	3.1 Capture the voice of children and families so they can influence planning and service delivery across Council services and services in the municipality.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider
	3.2 Services collaborate to share knowledge of community trends and needs to better support service planning and responses, and ensure gender equity, culturally safety and inclusivity.	Educator Partner
	3.3 Work with key stakeholders to identify advocacy priorities and planning to help children and families access supports and services they need to thrive.	Advocate Partner Planner Provider

Middle Years Action Plan

1.0 CONNECTION		
Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Children, families and services are well connected and informed to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Yarra Ranges children in their middle years.	1.1 Increase participation and social connection of middle years' children within their local community. This will focus on promoting health and wellbeing through physical activity, connection with nature and creative activities.	Advocate Educator Partner Planner
	1.2 Design, deliver and evaluate Early and Middle Years' place-based partnerships including the Upper Yarra Partnership	Planner Partner
	1.3 Increase communication and the promotion of available supports for middle years children and their families.	Educator Partner
	1.4 Work with families to build knowledge and capacity to best support children in the middle years.	Educator Partner
	1.5 Work with schools to identify middle years connections, wellbeing supports and opportunities.	Planner Partner

2.0 PLACES

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Children in their middle years are active participants in the planning of programs and places designed to support them.	2.1 Facilitate relationships between local community-based organisations and providers, and children in their middle years.	Educator Partner Provider
	2.2 Develop clear processes for children in the middle years to be actively and meaningfully engaged in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation across all areas of Council's business.	Planner Provider
	2.3 Work with Council departments to engage middle years children into initiatives that support emergency preparedness and resilience.	Partner Planner
	2.4 Ensure that Community infrastructure is family friendly, inclusive and accessible.	Advocate Educator Partner Planner Provider

3.0 INCLUSION

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Yarra Ranges' children in their middle years have a strong profile and support platform from which to be heard, included and valued.	3.1 Develop a Yarra Ranges Middle Years Profile that identifies current supports and opportunities, to inform and guide a Middle Years advocacy platform.	Advocate Educator Planner
	3.2 Support coordination and advocacy efforts that improve access and early intervention with local mental health supports and services.	Advocate Partner
	3.3 Increase data, accountability, evaluation and learning to inform planning and delivery across all our work.	Educator Partner Planner
	3.4 Ensure Council's Middle Years programs and engagements are gender equitable, culturally safe and inclusive.	Educator Provider
	3.5 Develop a model to increase the civic participation of middle years children.	Educator Partner Planner

3.2 Young People

Introduction

For the purposes of this strategy young people will be defined as 12 to 25 years of age.

Yarra Ranges Council is deeply committed to supporting inclusion and ensuring young people are active participants in their community. Council recognises intersectional vulnerabilities and is committed to working towards equitable access, especially in our geographically diverse setting, where opportunities might not be as readily available. Council creates opportunities by actively working with young people, their schools, communities, and community organisations to ensure young people are valued and are supported to reach their potential.

The way that we support young people's connections is different to how we support that of children in the early and middle years. One key reason for this shift in approach is because children under 12 years of age are typically more dependent on families and carers. Council's children's services and supports are designed to recognise these relationships. We do recognise the importance of young people's networks, as seen in our community development role supporting parents/ carers' capacity building. However, our focus in this space is about empowering the individual as they navigate a stage of independence and autonomy.

Council also works in partnership with service providers in the municipality, to build greater connectivity between services and improve their accessibility for young people to use.

Our Young People

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a time of significant growth and self-discovery. Yarra Ranges' young people are embracing their individuality, aspirations, and the role they want to play in shaping their community; from the local all the way to global community.

Whilst many young people are passionate about public policy and eager to engage with issues that shape their communities and futures, there is a growing dissatisfaction with traditional institutions, such as government bodies or formal political structures.

In Yarra Ranges, young people have expressed their focus on:

- Accessing mental health and other services.
- The need for schools to do more to empower young people and build their capacity on disability/ accessibility, LGBTQIA+, bullying and emergency management.
- Improving access to transport.
- Creating safe and inclusive spaces and services.
- Creating youth focused spaces.
- Developing more opportunities to engage / participate e.g. intergenerational connection etc.



Yarra Ranges Snapshot

18,344

of residents are 15-24 years,
12% of population¹⁶

325

15-24 yo's identify as Aboriginal
and/or Torres Strait Islander⁴

16%

of 15-19yo's not engaged
in work and/or education,
compared to 13% across
Greater Melbourne¹⁷

15%

of young people attend higher
education, compared to 28%
across Greater Melbourne¹⁸

10%

of young people attend
vocational education,
compared to 5% across
Greater Melbourne²¹

11%

of 20-24yo's had left school
before Year 11 completion,
slightly higher than the 7.8%
state average²²

12%

of 15-19 were unemployed
in the Outer East, which is
average compared to Greater
Melbourne²³

**Mental and behavioural
conditions** were the 2nd
highest reason for hospital
admission among young
people¹⁹

13%

of 15-24yo's have a diagnosed
mental health condition,
compared to 10% across
Greater Melbourne²⁰

17.4%

of Indigenous young people
are carers compared to 12%
of total young people in Yarra
Ranges²⁴

7%

of young people are
responsible for housing costs²⁷

16%

of the population receiving
Rent Assistance payments
were young people²⁸

Limited to no access to public transport²³

**Limited to no access to essential and
recreational facilities and services²⁶**

Youth Community Engagement

Young people in Yarra Ranges are highly resilient - actively shaping technological advancements, the job market, and evolving industries.

Over half of the young people in Council's recent Youth Survey (2023) believe Yarra Ranges has good job opportunities for them. They reported the benefits of being able to access local sporting opportunities, facilities and infrastructure, youth events, activities, programs, and education and awareness programs.

Young people also recognise the natural beauty of Yarra Ranges and the relative access they have to enjoy time in nature.

Through, our Youth Survey, the 2025 Youth Summit and consultation for the 2024-2028 Disability Action Plan and the 2025-2029 Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, we have been talking to young people about their priorities and concerns.

We also consulted with youth service providers who deliver significant services across the municipality. They spoke about a need to focus on:

- **Connection between services and building their capacity:** Services needing to collaborate to build a stronger and more cohesive voice on sector and community issues.
- **Young people's connection to services:** Young people needing a platform where they can learn about and easily link in with services that are available.
- **Service accessibility:** The availability and accessibility of services across all of Yarra Ranges needs improvement, with an emphasis on a "no wrong door" approach.
- **Safe spaces for young people:** Young people need safe spaces to connect with each other and access support.
- **Youth voice:** Young people of all backgrounds and lived experiences need to be and feel represented and have accessible and safe opportunities to advocate for themselves.

What we heard from youth engagement

Access to Mental Health Services:

Ensuring young people have timely and affordable access to mental health support can be life changing. This could include counselling, crisis helplines, or community programs designed to promote emotional well-being. Young people have told us they have not been able to access mental health services, regardless of the service being at a cost or not cost.

Youth Hub:

A centralized space for young people was a much-needed resource, offering everything from job readiness programs to social connections and even mentoring opportunities. The Youth Hub resource is no longer available, and young people have expressed that they want it reinstated. It was a space where they felt safe, supported, and able to engage meaningfully.

More environmental education

Environmental Concerns:

Empowering young people to participate in environmental initiatives, from sustainability workshops to local conservation projects, can have a lasting impact both on them and the planet.

More places for youth to express themselves and their interests

Reliable Transport:

Affordable and accessible public transport helps young people stay connected to education, work, and social opportunities. Young people have told us that outside of the urban areas they have little or no access to reliable public transport.

It's hard to get experience for jobs

Youth Voice in Decision-Making:

Involving young people in discussions on issues that directly affect them ensures that their perspectives are valued and incorporated into decisions.

The effects of lack of transportation is compounded for young people who are equity-denied

More youth centres near schools

More community funding for towards sports and clubs

Safe Spaces for Young People:

These are essential for creating environments where young people can gather, learn, and grow without fear or judgment.

Policy context

All levels of government have a role in supporting our young people. The following are the core policies that guide the work undertaken by Council and its partners in this space.

Federal Government

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032: a national policy framework committed to a country free of gender-based violence where women and children are safe and can live free from fear and violence in all settings. The Plan recognises that violence against women and children can be addressed at a local level through adequate services and infrastructure that is culturally safe, removing barriers to safety and improving access, and place-based models of services.

National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People: outlines the national approach to improving children and young people's health outcomes, and aims to ensure that all children and young people are healthy, safe and thriving, and have opportunities to fulfill their potential.

Victorian Government

Our promise, Your future: Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022–2027: outlines the Victorian Government's next steps to improve young people's outcomes, with a focus on working with young people and relevant community sectors to do so.

YACVIC Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector: consists of 8 youth work principles and 10 youth work practice responsibilities, and explains issues around duty of care and legal obligations, and how to challenge unethical behaviour.

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27: sets the direction for improving public health and wellbeing in Victoria and provides a framework for coordinated action to ensure everyone in Victoria has the opportunity for optimal health and wellbeing, so they can fully participate in their community, in education and employment.

Victorian Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change: sets out a long-term vision for addressing the significant impact that family violence has on the Victorian community, in particular women and children.

Our Themes

The three themes of **Connection, Places and Inclusion** run across all the **Key Life Stages**. Below is the definition of how these three themes are applicable to the priorities of our young people.

Connection

Connection is about building strong relationships between young people, services, and the community they live in.

Accessible pathways to support services helps to strengthen networks and capacity to navigate the complexity of transitioning into adulthood.

Events, activities, and opportunities for youth participation in decision-making enhances connections to peers, communities and services.

Safe spaces offer environments where young people can connect and engage authentically, and build meaningful relationships, contributing to their emotional wellbeing.

Service capacity building and collaboration enables a more unified and coordinated voice on key issues impacting the youth sector, young people and their communities.

Places

Places focus on creating and enhancing functional spaces for young people.

Centralised hubs and safe spaces for young people are integral in providing secure environments where young people can thrive, gather, and grow.

Service accessibility across Yarra Ranges ensures everyone can access support regardless of their location, promoting greater inclusion.

Environmental concerns relate to the preservation and improvement of spaces that hold significance for young people, allowing them to contribute actively to the sustainability and quality of their surroundings.

Inclusion

Inclusion centres on equitable access and representation for all young people.

Service availability and accessibility across the region ensures that barriers to support are minimized, following a “no wrong door” approach.

Amplifying youth voices ensures that individuals of all backgrounds and lived experiences feel represented and have safe avenues to advocate for themselves.

Service collaboration promotes inclusivity, ensuring diverse voices are incorporated when addressing community needs.

Safe spaces further reinforce inclusion by offering environments where everyone feels welcomed, supported, and valued.

Our Action Plan

There are many parties involved in supporting our young people. The following Action Plan set out Yarra Ranges Council's focus and role for this age cohort from 2025-2029.

1.0 CONNECTION		
Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Young people in Yarra Ranges are active members of their community and are involved in decision making processes which impact them and their communities.	1.1 Improve accessibility of entry points to Council services—both online and in-person—to ensure young people and their families/carers can easily access the help they need.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider
	1.2 Establish and maintain safe Council environments—both online and in-person—where young people feel welcome to gather, express themselves, and build peer and community connections.	Educator Partner Provider
	1.3 Coordinate collaborative platforms and networks that enhance service coordination and amplify a collective voice on issues affecting young people.	Advocate Educator Partner

2.0 PLACES		
Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Young people have equitable access to safe, inclusive, and functional services and programs across the Yarra Ranges that support their wellbeing, connection, and development.	2.1 Empower young people to shape the design, development, and purpose of their community, ensuring youth voices are meaningfully embedded in decisions about the places they use and value most.	Advocate Partner Planner Provider
	2.2 Create opportunities for young people to lead and participate in the care, maintenance, and sustainability of shared spaces.	Advocate Partner Provider
	2.3 Strengthen the capacity of sector professionals in the municipality through targeted training, networks, and strategic partnerships such as Youth Service Providers Network, School Wellbeing Network and others.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider

3.0 INCLUSION

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
All young people have equitable access to support, representation, and opportunities to participate in all aspects of their community.	3.1 Advocate with young people for localised services, programs and places that empower and support their independence, wellbeing and social connections.	Advocate Educator Partner
	3.2 Embed gender equitable and culturally safe pathways for young people from diverse backgrounds to actively participate in shaping policies, programs, and community initiatives—ensuring their voices are genuinely heard and reflected in decisions.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider
	3.3 Work with community partners to co-design and maintain spaces that are inclusive, identity-affirming, and trauma-informed—where all young people feel respected, represented, and safe to express themselves.	Advocate Partner Planner Provider
	3.4 Advocate for continuous improvement and development of local service systems and places, to address identified gaps such as access to reliable transport, mental health supports and spaces for connection.	Advocate Partner Planner Provider
	3.5 Deliver leadership training and support to young people so they have more leadership opportunities and can participate in decision-making processes.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider
	3.6 Embed the voice of young people in program design, event planning, and local decision-making processes to empower active participation.	Advocate Educator Planner Provider

3.3 Healthy and Active Ageing

Introduction

Australians can now expect to enjoy longer and healthier lives than any previous generation because of improvements in health care, living conditions, and various economic and lifestyle factors. These factors are also influenced by the experiences we had and decisions we made as young people, and the foundations laid for us during our childhood.

Most older adults in the Yarra Ranges Municipality live independently at home and actively contribute to the community, civic society, businesses, families, and workplaces. Their lived-experiences, skills, and wisdom are valuable assets to our society. Although ageing brings changes, it does not necessarily lead to mental and physical decline or dependency.

There are many factors that impact how we age, including gender, culture, health, disability, social and economic, with some of us experiencing ageing better than others. Our attitudes to ageing impact our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Our human rights and values do not and should not diminish as we get older.

Yarra Ranges Council's Healthy and Active Ageing Plan:

- acknowledges the aspirations, challenges, and remarkable diversity of ageing in its community;
- establishes a progressive vision to challenge existing norms; and,
- facilitates the contributions of our community and numerous partners.

Age-friendly 'lens'

In 2016, Yarra Ranges Council became a signatory to the Victorian State Government's '*Age Friendly Victoria Declaration*,' demonstrating our commitment to delivering age-friendly initiatives.

To strengthen this commitment, we will continue to apply an 'age-friendly lens' to all Council business, services, and programs to support our ageing population. This approach involves considering the diverse needs and abilities of people of all ages in our service design and delivery.

Ageing Populations

Living longer, ageing well

A rapidly ageing population means it's more important than ever to focus on increasing health span — years spent in good health — in addition to lifespan.

For the first time in history, most people can expect to live longer than any other generation. The nature of ageing, along with our expectations, has evolved. We aspire to remain engaged and informed, continue learning and creating, actively enjoy life, and participate in society with a voice that is heard.

Intergenerational longevity studies have identified commonalities in communities experiencing exceptional longevity and quality of life that continue to live their later years in their community. Amongst other factors is a sense of purpose - belonging and connection with family, friends and community - is clearly a significant factor in the health and wellbeing of these remarkable centenarians.

Whilst some of these communities have evolved with significant government involvement, others have achieved this longevity and connection with minimal government presence.

Regardless these communities provide us with valuable lessons to learn about supporting older people to be healthy, happy and resilient.

Living longer, ageing 'not so' well

Health indicators globally and nationally suggest that older people are not necessarily ageing healthier than previous generations of the same age.

The consequence of longevity for health, health systems, their workforces and budgets will be profound. Population growth will impact labour supply, economic output, infrastructure requirements, and government budget.

As Victoria's population gets older, planning for healthy ageing is a growing public health and wellbeing challenge. The proportion of life spent in 'good health' is decreasing, as the prevalence of chronic conditions is increasing.

With nearly one in two Victorians having one or more chronic diseases, treatments are continuing to increase in cost – there is an economic and social value of investing in public health prevention.

Valuing Diversity

Our places

The diverse experiences of older residents in Yarra Ranges vary significantly based on their living environments.

This Plan acknowledges that some people living in Yarra Ranges may not have access to the aged care support and services they may need in the long term.

Therefore, empowering our ageing population with information on local supports and services is critical. This enables individuals to plan and make informed choices about their future, ensuring they can age in places that support their changing needs.

Our people

Today, diversity is increasingly normalised and celebrated but for many older people this may not have been their experience due to historical policies and systemic barriers, societal attitudes, culture and stigma.

Older individuals have varied experiences of ageing, and those in specific groups are more susceptible to the challenges and barriers this may bring.

We recognise that to support our diverse population this Plan needs to be respectful and inclusive of all people —no matter their background, life experience or care needs. We acknowledge the common reasons why some people cannot access the support they need to age well and consider how we can collectively remove these barriers.



Yarra Ranges Snapshot

Yarra Ranges' population is older than the Melbourne Metro and Victorian averages and is ageing at a faster rate. **By 2044 there will be 69,474 older adults** aged 50+ years living in the Yarra Ranges, representing 38% of the total population. This cohort begins at 50 years in alignment with other government policy and aged care programs, and in recognition of the importance of acting early and being proactive for healthier and longer lives.

59,849

residents aged 50+
37% of the total
population²⁹

50-54

year old's are the
largest cohort³⁰

80-84

year old's expected
to see the largest
increase in the next
decade³¹

278

55 year old's identify
as Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander⁴

15%

of residents provide
unpaid care
18% of female and
12% of males³²

High level of 45-
60yo unpaid carers
compared to Victoria.
They often support
parents/ caregivers
aged 75+ ³³

Retirees often care
for partners and
grandchildren³⁶

Indigenous residents
become carers at a
younger age³⁷

1,203

people in residential
care⁵⁰

2.2%

of residents served in
the ADF. 1.8% above
state average³⁴

50%

of 85+ year olds
have a disability³⁵

40%

of 85+ year olds
live alone³⁸

1,789

receive
superannuation
income^{*39}

136

elder abuse incidents
reported. 96 were
adult perpetrators.
(2020-2024)⁴⁰

20%

of 65 to 74 year olds
volunteer. 17% of
75 to 84 year olds
volunteer.⁴¹

**There is limited local data representing the level of super income older residents in Yarra Ranges receive, however our understanding is that many older retirees lack sufficient super income due to a variety of reasons including outliving savings, system complexity, and that mandatory contributions began only in 1992.*

Health in Yarra Ranges:

Major health issues causing death⁴²

- Coronary heart disease
- Dementia
- Lung cancer
- Cerebrovascular disease

Lung disease and heart failure 36% more frequent than national average⁴³

2 out of 3 residents aged 65+ have at least one chronic disease⁴⁴

2,209
people live with dementia: 61% females and 39% males⁴⁵

15,656
people living with dementia by 2050⁴⁶

Highest prevalence of dementia in Urban: Lilydale, Coldstream, Mooroolbark; Valley: Healesville, Yarra Glen, Upper Yarra⁴⁹

Accidental falls rank among top 10 causes of death⁴⁷

19%
more frequent falls compared to Australia⁴⁸

Life expectancy in Yarra Ranges is below average

Most residents aged 65+ are **retired**, those who work are part-timers

Most residents 55 to 64 years are **still working, generally full time**

Yarra Ranges has an above average level of older adults who **volunteer** compared to Victoria. Volunteer levels dropped in 2021.

Ageing Population Community Engagement

This Plan is informed by the voices of thousands of older people and their carer/s in the many community consultations that have occurred at a national, state level and importantly from our local community. We have heard from our local community through various engagements conducted with older residents and/or their carers, including through targeted focus groups conducted recently and consultation undertaken by our previous Healthy and Active Ageing Plan 2019-2023. We have also listened to local feedback and insights provided through engagement processes of other Council strategies and from our Positive Ageing Reference Group (PARG).

Targeted focus groups

Through June to July 2024, 15 engagement sessions were run across the municipality. Consultation was sought through advisory groups, neighbourhood house program attendees, other community groups, and Council staff. Four sessions were also run across Yarra Ranges, in order to ensure geographic representation in engagement.

Our community told us:

The fundamentals that are important for them to age well are being supported in their physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, being connected to family and friends, and having a say in decisions that affect them.

Older people reflect the diversity of the Yarra Ranges communities and have told us about how their lives can be different. While they are connected because of their age, older people have different needs, aspirations, interests, and lived experiences.

During our consultations, four consistent themes emerged:

Connection: People want to be connected to their communities and the people and services that matter to them as they age.

Friends helping each other out and pop-in. Not making appointments

Inclusion: People want to be recognised and celebrated for the significant contribution they make to our economy and our society as they age.

When you have a disability and you get older, people's attitudes change.

Resilience: People want to adapt to changing circumstances, navigate challenges and recover from setbacks with a strong sense of self confidence and achievement.

Change culture of 'age is just a number' – it's not. Things change when you age – needs to be less fear around what that means.

Places: Older people want accessible outdoor spaces and built environments to age well in their local community.

Safe and accessible and well-maintained walking paths.

Policy context

All levels of government have a role in supporting our communities to age well. The following are the core policies and frameworks that guide the work undertaken by Council and its partners in this space.

International

World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-friendly Framework: is designed to create environments that support healthy and active aging. It focuses on eight interconnected domains that address various aspects of urban life to enhance the well-being and participation of older adults: social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services, transportation, housing, and outdoor spaces and buildings.

McKinsey Health Institute Healthy Ageing Framework: longitudinal studies of communities where people have exceptionally long, and healthy lives, the framework recognises the relevance and interdependencies of physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of individuals and the communities they live in. Wellbeing and 'optimal' health are the focus, not just the absence of disease. It is anchored around 'functional' capacity as health is only relevant to the extent it enables people to live meaningful lives. Communities are inclusive and have a strong focus on intergenerational relationships.

Federal Government

The Australian Government is responsible for some important areas that affect ageing well including, primary health care, income support, taxation and superannuation, workplace relations and protection from age discrimination.

Aged care services and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are the most significant areas of responsibility for the Australian Government for people with care needs. Services are provided to people in their homes, in the community and in residential aged care facilities.

Key policy and reports:

- Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality & Safety Report (2021)
- Australian Government Intergeneration Report (2023)

Victorian Government

The State is responsible for providing access to mainstream government services and facilities, like public spaces, public transport, healthcare, social housing and justice. They also provide concessions for older Victorians and provide services relating to recreation, sport, cultural and arts sectors.

The Victorian State Government is responsible for the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (aged 0 to 64 years) with the aim of supporting people with a disability and their carers to live as independently as possible.

Key policy and reports:

- Ageing Well in Victoria 2022-2026
- Commissioner's report Ageing well in a changing world (2020)

Our Themes

The three themes of **Connection, Places and Inclusion** run across all the Key Life Stages. Below is the definition of how these three themes are applicable to the priorities supporting **Healthy and Active Ageing** in our communities.

Connection

We aim to enhance community resilience by fostering strong local connections and support networks to create inclusive and supportive environments for people to age well.

- Physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits
- Independence to age well and maintain autonomy
- Adaptability to life changes

Places

Our age-friendly facilities and civic spaces empower all community members to thrive and live fulfilling lives.

- Safe and inclusive spaces
- Environment, natural spaces and enhanced resilience
- Connectivity options ensures accessibility
- Ageing in place
- Emergency preparedness

Inclusion

We value diversity and strive for a welcoming, accessible community, breaking down systemic barriers to inclusion for people to age well.

- Voice and opportunities to participate in the community
- Access to information
- Respect, feeling appreciated and valued
- Culture of inclusion

Our Action Plan

There are many parties involved in supporting our communities to age well. The following Action Plan set out Yarra Ranges Council's focus and role for this age cohort from 2025-2029.

1.0 CONNECTION		
Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
People have access to affordable and safe opportunities to remain active, happy and healthy as they age.	1.1 Enable older residents to come together to be physically active and support good mental health and wellbeing. We will do this by encouraging healthy lifestyles and promoting services and supports to maintain physical and mental well-being.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider
People are actively engaged, participating and contributing to their communities and doing things they enjoy as they age.	1.2 Promote and support opportunities for people to participate in accessible, inclusive, and affordable social, recreational, lifelong learning, and cultural pursuits. We will do this by utilising local talents, spaces, and volunteer networks.	Educator Partner Provider
People are supported to remain independent and have access to the services and supports they need to age well.	1.3 Advocate for and collaborate with appropriate community support and health services to be available to assist an ageing population, acknowledging the vital role of carers. We will do this by fostering collaborations between local health and community organisations and peer support networks.	Advocate Partner Provider
People can adapt to life changes and access necessary information and services to age well.	1.4 Build the capacity of older people during times of life transition to navigate their changing world and to support them making informed decisions about their lives. We will do this by offering community-based workshops, peer support networks, and clear and accessible relevant information.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider

2.0 PLACES

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
Our places, spaces and buildings are safe, inclusive, easy to navigate and encourage regular use by people of all ages and abilities.	2.1 Ensure our open spaces, community facilities, and outdoor infrastructure are safe, inclusive, and easy to navigate, supporting older residents' connections to their local community. We will do this by involving older residents in the planning and design processes.	Planner Provider
People have access to open spaces and natural environments and are supported to be adaptable and resilient in the face of a changing climate.	2.2 Ensure that our ageing community has access to open spaces and natural environments and provide support to help them be adaptable and resilient in the face of climate change. We will do this by promoting information and community-led initiatives.	Educator Partner Planner Provider
Our townships offer a variety of connectivity options to ensure accessibility as people age.	2.3 Encourage opportunities for innovative and cost-effective community and other transport options. We will do this by leveraging local resources and partnerships to improve mobility for older residents.	Advocate Partner Planner Provider
People are supported to age in place in affordable, secure and accessible housing that is close to transport, shops and community services.	2.4 Support residents to remain independent as they age through encouraging appropriate housing choices and modifications, sustainable living adaptation, and access to services and supports. We will do this by connecting them with local resources and expertise.	Advocate Educator Planner
Older people can access emergency planning information to make informed choices	2.5 Ensure older residents can access emergency planning information to make informed choices. We will do this by providing clear, accessible information and community training sessions.	Educator Partner
People are free from violence and elder abuse and feel respected and valued.	2.6 Raise awareness and support activities that will prevent elder abuse and enhance safety for older residents through community education and advocacy programs.	Advocate Educator Partner Provider

3.0 INCLUSION

Desired Outcome	Priority Objective	Council's Role
People have a voice and contribute to the shaping of initiatives across the community as they age.	3.1 Ensure meaningful engagement and relationships occur with older residents on issues that affect them. We will do this by actively involving them in decision-making processes.	Advocate Planner Provider
People can easily access information and advice they need to age well, stay informed and connect with the community.	3.2 Council provides timely, trusted, and relevant information that is easy to access and understand and connects residents to what they are looking for. We will do this by utilising various communication channels and community networks.	Educator Partner Provider
People feel appreciated and have increased visibility as valued and contributing citizens as they age.	3.3 Increase community awareness of ageism and the need for respectful inclusion. We will do this through education campaigns and community dialogues.	Educator Partner Planner
People's diverse needs, experiences and backgrounds are recognised and celebrated through promotion of a culture of inclusion, respect, safety and social cohesion as they age.	3.4 Ensure connections are inclusive, and all older residents are able to participate. We will do that by promoting equity and accessibility, including gender equity and cultural safety, in all community services.	Partner Planner Provider
People have a range of employment, continual learning, and volunteering opportunities as they age.	3.5 Increase opportunities for engagement in a diverse range of employment, continual learning, and volunteering activities. We will do that by tapping into the skills and experiences of older residents and creating inclusive opportunities.	Educator Partner Provider

4.0 Implementing this strategy

Council will seek to work across its various functions to undertake the following key activities, which will enable the Plan's themes to be achieved.

Council will:

- Be active in monitoring and influencing outcomes for the key life stages.
- Coordinate partnerships with stakeholders to collectively plan and enable service awareness and accessibility for the key life stages.
- Listen to and co-design with the community to test solutions to identified issues.
- Coordinate or undertake activity that addresses/prevents priority health issues, and strengthens community capacity.
- Collaborate internally to take a whole-of-council approach to ensure Yarra Ranges is suitable for all ages and supportive of intergenerational connection.

Further details on implementation can be found in the separate action plans for each key life stage.



5.0 Monitoring and Reporting

Council will monitor the Key Life Stages Plan as well as the actions that sit within the cohort action plans.

Governance of this Plan's evaluation will be managed by a Key Life Stages Steering Committee, comprised of stakeholders of each key life stage who represent teams in Council, service organisations and community. The monitoring process will involve tracking and measuring the progress of the Key Life Stages Plan, which will be reported on annually.

Council will monitor the impact of the Key Life Stages Plan using sector and service user feedback, indicators of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and in-depth evaluation of key actions within each cohort plan.

Evaluation of the Key Life Stages Plan will determine:

The extent to which the Plan has addressed the health and wellbeing of our community throughout their life course.



Measurement

Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy's indicators

The level of success in addressing service gaps and creating alignment and cohesion among services and supports.



Measurement

Sector focused feedback mechanism

The degree of improvement in the three themes, particularly in the context of intergenerational connection and age and child friendly communities.



Measurement

Service user feedback

Following each annual evaluation, the Key Life Stages Plan will be reviewed and changes will be implemented based on the review.

6.0 About Yarra Ranges

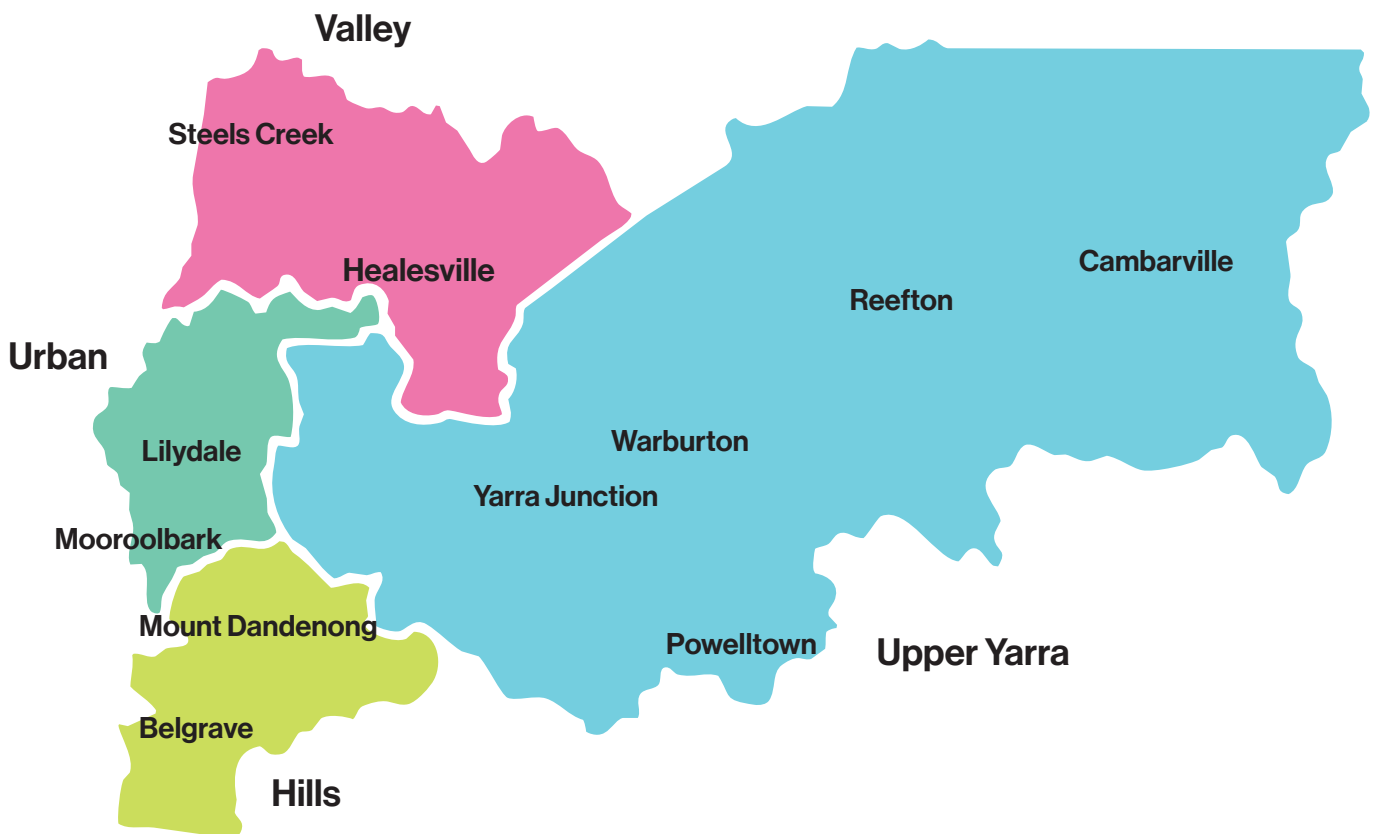
Yarra Ranges is made up of diverse places and communities with distinct geographies and identities.

There are 55 suburbs and townships across the almost 2,500 square kms² of the municipality. The urban areas of Yarra Ranges are on the fringe of Melbourne whilst the central and eastern parts are more rural.

Council uses four planning areas that reflect our distinct places: The Hills, Urban, Valley and Upper Yarra areas. The urban area which is 3% of the land mass of the municipality, is home to 52% of the population.

Rural land is used for agriculture, horticulture, tourism and viticulture. Significant forests and State parks edge the municipality.

As at June 2024, the estimated resident population of Yarra Ranges is 160,134.



7.0 Council's Roles



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 partnerships with others to enable things to happen and work towards common goals.



Advocate

Raise awareness and promote 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

Regulating activities through local laws and legislation.

8.0 Glossary

Term	Definition
AEDC:	Australian Early Development Census
Ageing population:	Increasing proportion of adults aged 50+ years, in which they represent a larger proportion of the total population.
Ageing well and Healthy and active ageing:	Both terms describe quality of life and wellbeing for people as they age, commonly referring to actions taken by and/or on behalf of individuals to achieve health and wellbeing.
Ageism:	The stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination directed towards others or oneself according to age.
Best Start, Best Life reform:	A Victorian Government initiative focused on transforming early childhood education and care in Victoria to provide children with high-quality education and support families.
Capacity building:	Developing or strengthening skills, knowledge and resources to achieve specific goals.
Carers and caregivers:	A person who provides regular care and assistance to another person such as a family member, friend or neighbour, not including formal care services arranged by volunteer carers or paid carers.
Childcare:	Care away from a child's home, typically for children aged 5 and under, but also available to school aged children in outside of school hours. Examples include day cares and outside of school hours care.
Cohort:	A group of people who share a common age range.
Critical stage/ period:	A specific period in the life span associated with significant physical, cognitive, emotional and/or social changes.
Cultural safety:	Feeling respected, affirmed and able to express their cultural identity without fear of judgement or discrimination.
Early childhood education:	Educational practices and programs for children in their early years (0 to 8), that supports the foundations of their learning and development.

Term	Definition
Early intervention:	Providing support as early as possible, typically to support development and well-being and prevent further challenges and maximise potential.
Early years:	Children aged between 0 to 8 years.
Health and Wellbeing Strategy:	Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) that guide's Council's work to support optimal health and wellbeing in Yarra Ranges. It is prepared every 4 years as required under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.
Hills:	Sub-region comprising Upwey, Belgrave, Monbulk, Olinda and surrounds.
Identity affirming:	Acknowledging, respecting and celebrating a person's unique identities and experiences.
Integrated strategy:	A strategy that is made up of multiple strategic areas, collated together for better alignment and cohesion between those areas.
Intergenerational connection/ communities:	Supporting relationships and interactions between individuals from different generations (children, young people, adults and older adults) to foster mutual understanding, respect and learning, and community harmony.
Intersectionality:	The inter-related nature of social identities such as age, race, class, gender, sexuality, disability etc. and how the overlapping of these can expose people to overlapping forms of discrimination and vulnerability.
LGBTQIA+:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual.
MCH:	Maternal and Child Health
Middle years:	Children and young people aged between 8 to 14 years.
Monitoring and evaluation:	A process of collecting and analysing data to assess progress and outcomes and identify areas for improvement.
NDIS:	National Disability Insurance Scheme
Protective barriers:	Factors that can mitigate harmful effects and promote good health and wellbeing.

Term	Definition
Rent Assistance Payments:	Financial Support provided by Services Australia to eligible individuals who are renting a property and receiving a Centrelink payment.
SEIFA:	Socio-economic Indexes for Areas
Service organisations:	A provider of services to the community.
Social development:	Refining the ability to interact with others, form relationships, and navigate social situations.
Systemic barriers:	Structures that create and/or perpetuate in-equity.
Trauma-informed:	Safe and supportive environments that are considerate of the impacts of trauma and work to avoid re-traumatisation and promote recovery.
Universal services:	Services designed to be accessible to everyone.
Upper Yarra:	Sub-region comprising Woori Yallock, Warburton and surrounds.
Urban:	Sub-region comprising Chirnside Park, Lilydale, Mooroolbark and surrounds.
Valley:	Sub-region comprising Healesville, Yarra Glen, Yarra Junction, Warburton and surrounds.
Young people:	Children and adults aged between 12 to 25 years

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