Ordinary Meeting of Council

Attachments

Monday 22 September 2025

Council Chamber

ATTACHMENTS

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DIRECTOR STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR BRIEFING – PUBLIC RECORD

Briefing Details:

Date: Monday 25 August 2025   Time: 6:00pm   Location: Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, Realm

All items discussed at a Councillor Briefing are considered confidential in nature.

Attendees:

Councillors
Cr Kylie Spears (Mayor)	Cr Catherine Gordon	Cr Paul Macdonald
Cr Linda Hancock (Deputy Mayor)	Cr Claire Rex	Cr Daniella Heatherich
	Cr Nathaniel Henderson	Cr Rob Steane OAM

Council Officers:
Steve Kozlowski	Chief Executive Officer	
Tony Rocca	Director/Chief Financial Officer	
Adam Todorov	Director Assets & Leisure	
Marianne Di Giallonardo	Director People & Places	
Andrew Fuaux	Director Strategy & Development	
Emma Hills	Governance Officer	
Steve McIntosh	Manager Projects & Asset Management	Item 2
John Richardson	Coordinator Assets, Projects & Facilities	Item 2

Apologies:

Councillors:	Cr Chris Jones
Council Officers:	Nil

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Councillors:	Nil
Council Officers:	Nil

Items Discussed:

1	Council Meeting Agenda
2	Major Projects Update
3A	Councillor Delegates Report
3	Items of a General Nature Raised by Councillors

Record completed by:

Council Officer	Emma Hills
Title	Governance Officer

COUNCILLOR BRIEFING – PUBLIC RECORD

Briefing Details:

Date: Monday 8 September 2025

Time: 6:00pm

Location: Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, Realm

All items discussed at a Councillor Briefing are considered confidential in nature.

Attendees:

Councillors

Cr Kylie Spears (Mayor)	Cr Catherine Gordon	Cr Paul Macdonald
Cr Linda Hancock (Deputy Mayor)	Cr Claire Rex (entered 6:08pm)	Cr Daniella Heatherich
Cr Chris Jones	Cr Nathaniel Henderson	

Council Officers:

Steve Kozlowski	Chief Executive Officer	
Tony Rocca	Director/Chief Financial Officer	
Adam Todorov	Director Assets & Leisure	
Chris Zidak	Acting Director People & Places	
Andrew Fuaux	Director Strategy & Development	
Emma Hills	Governance Officer	
		Item
Steve McIntosh	Manager Projects & Asset Management	1 & 7
Eli Bates	Acting Manager Business & Precincts	2
Phil Medley	Manager Governance & Performance	3
Kirsten Jenkins	Manager Community Safety	4
Danielle Butcher	Manager Communications & Citizen Experience	5
Grant Meyer	Manager City Futures	6
Heather Burns	Manager Community Services	7

Apologies:

Councillors:	Cr Rob Steane OAM
Council Officers:	Marianne Di Giallonardo

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Councillors:	Cr Chris Jones: Item 1 - Tender Evaluation Report - Contract 21095 - Hughes Park Pavilion *Reason: I am a sponsor of Croydon North MLOC FC who occupy the facility at Hughes Park which is proposed to be redeveloped.*

COUNCILLOR BRIEFING   1 of 2   *8 SEPTEMBER 2025*

	Cr Nathaniel Henderson: Item 2 - Tender Evaluation Report - Contract 21092 - Cleaning Services for Creative Places Facilities (MFE, Wyreena, Karralyka & Community Halls) *Reason: I both own and work in the cleaning industry.* Cr Nathaniel Henderson: Item 3 - Tender Evaluation Summary Recommendation - Contract 21093 Cleaning Services for Realm *Reason: I both own and work in the cleaning industry.* Cr Nathaniel Henderson: Item 11 - Community Assistance Fund - Approval Table for Individual/Organisation - September 2025 *Reason: One of the applicants is a customer from my past business who I get along with still.*
Council Officers:	Nil

Items Discussed:

1	Tender Evaluation Report - Contract 21095 - Hughes Park Pavilion
2	Tender Evaluation Report - Contract 21092 - Cleaning Services for Creative Places Facilities (MFE, Wyreena, Karralyka & Community Halls)
3	Tender Evaluation Summary Recommendation - Contract 21093 Cleaning Services for Realm
4	Domestic Animal Management Plan - Consultation Report and Draft Plan
5	Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2029
6	Draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2031
7	Kindergartens - The Way Forward
8	Review of Councillor Gifts Policy
9	Annual Review of Council Delegations & Authorisations
10	Councillor Delegates' Meeting Report
11	Community Assistance Fund - Approval Table for Individual/Organisation - September 2025
12	Items of a General Nature Raised by Councillors

Record completed by:

Council Officer	Emma Hills
Title	Governance Officer

Maroondah Access Inclusion and Equity Advisory Committee – Minutes

Meeting Details:

Date: Tuesday 19 August 2025   Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm   Location: Maroondah Federation Estate

Attendees:

Councillors Cr Chris Jones (Chair) Cr Catherine Gordon Cr Nathaniel Henderson Cr Kylie Spears (Mayor) (arrived 11:42am) **Council Officers:** Grant Meyer, Manager City Futures Heather Burns, Manager Community Services Chris Riseley, Team Leader Community Development Emma Hills, Governance Officer (Minute Taker) Kate Klep, Team Leader Corporate Strategy   *Item 4.2*
Agency Representatives: Angelo Talidis (Wellways) Annalisa Cercone (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing) Catherine D'Arcy (Women's Health East) Jeff Garrioch (Glen Park Community Centre) Sasha Eden (FVREE) Peta Koopmans (MMIGP) Adele Braun (EV Strengthening Communities) Maidie Graham (Uniting) **Community Representatives:** Jenny Tang Philip Hughes
Others: Karen Milward, First Peoples Senior Cultural Advisor to Council   *Item 4.3*

Maroondah Access Inclusion and Equity Advisory Committee
19 AUGUST 2025

Apologies:

Councillors:	Nil
Council Officers:	Andrew Fuaux
Agency Representatives:	Kate Gibson
Community Representatives:	Jerry Jahau

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Councillors:	Nil
Council Officers:	Nil
Agency Representatives:	Nil
Community Representatives:	Nil

Items Discussed

1. OPENING OF MEETING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

    Cr Jones provided an Acknowledgement of Country.

2. WELCOME

    Cr Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES - TUESDAY, 17 JUNE 2025   ITEM 3

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed by consensus.

4. ITEMS

CHANGE TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE   ITEM 4.1

Cr Jones provided an overview of changes that have occurred to the structure of Council's advisory committees that has meant that this Committee will conclude at the end of 2025.

Cr Jones thanked everyone who has participated in this Committee and provided insights into how it has helped inform Council.

Cr Jones noted that the focus areas of this Committee will be absorbed into other Council advisory committees and members are welcome to nominate for those when the EOI process commences later in 2025.

MAROONDAH VISION 2050 UPDATE   ITEM 4.2

Kate provided an overview of the steps involved in developing the 2050 Community Vision and Council Plan.

Kate provided an overview of the Vision and how it helps to shape Council's work. She also spoke about the outcome areas that sit within the Vision.

Kate provided some more detailed information regarding the Healthy, Inclusive and Connected outcome area including the key directions, priority actions and performance indicators that will assist in achieving Council's goals in this space.

Kate spoke about how Committee members can assist in implementing the Community Vision into the future and it was noted that further information regarding the documents discussed can be found on Council's website.

RECONCILIATION PLAN 2025-2029 - THEMES & PRIORITIES   ITEM 4.3

Chris provided an overview of the community engagement undertaken to date for the preparation of the Reconciliation Plan including who was consulted and how this was done.

Chris provided a high-level overview of the plan's themes of history art and culture, relationships collaboration and partnerships, and leadership governance and economic participation.

Karen spoke about each of the theme's priorities including existing activities and the importance of continuing and expanding that work. Karen also spoke about other organisations that work to create and help people understand opportunities that are available.

Discussion surrounded increasing connection with First Peoples businesses and organisations to increase awareness of what already exists. The Committee suggested that Council could include a page on the website that highlights First Peoples businesses.

Chris spoke about the next steps in the development of the Plan.

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2026 AND BEYOND   ITEM 4.4

Chris provided an overview of the highlights and achievements from the 2022-25 Disability Action Plan in the areas of social and economic inclusion, services and information, design infrastructure and transport, and advocacy and leadership.

The Committee broke into groups to discuss the following questions:

Think of a key issue for people living with a disability over the next 5 years
1.   What could Council do to tackle it?
2.   How should Council gather more community opinion about this issue?

The groups discussed the following issues in relation to the questions:

Transport
- Challenges associated with the modification of vehicles
- Buses can typically only assist people with 'low' mobility
- Limited availability of maxi taxis and not being able to rely on them in an emergency
- Putting more information regarding services on Council's website
- Organisations like EV Strengthening Communities can help in this space

Isolation
- Providing community boards
- Providing activities and physical spaces to connect

- Exercise machines in public spaces
- Who to consult with: Dementia Australia, Victorian Multicultural Commission, Migrant Information Centre, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Vision Australia, Neighbourhood Houses

Social Connection (mental health)
- Having safe places like EACH, community houses, Realm and churches
- The way in which grants are given can make businesses improve how they run programs
- Having things like quiet hours at gyms and pools to make them less intimidating
- Looking at neurodiverse solutions and consulting with those who have lived experience
- Who to consult with: YDAS, EV Strengthening Communities, EACH, Community Houses

Homelessness and Accessibility
- Making sure housing is well connected to transport
- Think about what Council can and can't do and focus on partnerships where there are limitations
- Planning and approvals and making sure people with disabilities are consulted
- Improving connection through roads, paths and modes of transport
- Who to consult with: the community, people with disabilities, agencies who provide support services.

Chris advised that this year the theme for the International Day of People with Disabilities is transport and the details of this Council event will be provided to members shortly.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MAROONDAH ACCESS INCLUSION AND EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2021-2025   ITEM 4.5

Chris spoke about some of the Committee's highlights and provided an overview of the topics that were covered from the Committee's inception in 2021 through to 2025.

Chris referred to particular members of the Committee throughout the years and some of the presentations that they gave to the Committee.

Committee members spoke about the Committee's impact and thanked Chris for his leadership over the years.

Cr Jones spoke about the importance of the values of this Committee and the impact that they have had.

Cr Spears joined the meeting and spoke about the history of the Committee and the Councillors who have chaired it. She also thanked the Committee members for their input over the life of the Committee.

The Meeting concluded at 11:48am.

Councillor Gift Policy

Adoption date: TBC
Responsible Service Area: Governance and Performance

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish compulsory standards for Councillors, established pursuant to Part 6, Division 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)*, regarding the receipt and disposal of gifts (including benefits and gratuities) and to define parameters by which gifts must be declined.

Background / Context

Section 138 of the Act provides a framework for addressing Councillor gifts and benefits. Considerable attention has been placed upon the Local Government sector regarding gifts and benefits and the potential or perceived conflict of interests that may arise.

Scope

This Policy applies to Councillors, as defined by Section 28 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Objective

The objective of this Policy is to build and maintain public confidence and trust in Councillors by ensuring decision making is transparent and impartial.

Policy position

Councillors should be mindful of their obligations to both maintain and enhance public confidence regarding the integrity of Maroondah City Council.

Duties must be performed impartially and transparently. It is not appropriate for Councillors to accept gifts and benefits that affect, are likely to affect, or could reasonably be perceived to affect, the performance of their official duties.

Councillors must also not seek, or encourage the giving of any form of gift or benefit in connection with the performance of their official duties.

Policy Control Schedule			
Policy Title: Councillor Gift Policy			**Policy type:** Council
Current version approved: TBC		**Current version number:** 1	**Policy review date:** August 2025
Parent policy: Model Councillor Code of Conduct	**Child policy/policies:** N/A	**Policy responsibility:** Governance and Performance	
All printed copies of this policy are uncontrolled. Please check Council's website for the most recent version of this policy.			Page 1 of 7

Councillor Gift Policy

Policy implementation

Gifts Procedure

1. Section 137 of the Local Government Act 2020 specifies the circumstances under which a gift may or may not be accepted.

   Below tables provide a decision guide and course of action for Councillors:

   Table 1: Gifts of any value, excluding token gifts

If Decision Is	Course of Action
Decline	• If gift is valued at $50 or more, gift declaration form to be submitted. • If gift is valued at less than $50, no declaration is required.
Accept	• Gift is retained and a gift declaration form submitted. • Gift must also be recorded on the Gifts Register. • Council has adopted the requirements of section 137 of the *Act* for acceptance of all gifts.

   For further information, refer to Appendix 3.

2. Maroondah City Council has adopted the requirements of section 137 for all gifts accepted. This includes details as follows:

   a. The name and address of the person (or organisation) making the gift are known to the Councillor; or
   b. At the time the gift is made, the Councillor is provided with the name and address of the person making the gift and that the Councillor reasonably believes that the details provided are true and correct.
   c. The Councillor receiving the gift is also to make the person making the gift aware that their details will be included in Council's Gift Register.

3. Any accepted gift or material benefit, irrespective of its value, must be declared. Any offer of a gift valued at $50 or over, that is declined, must also be declared.

4. Where there is actual or a perceived conflict of interest, Councillors must always refuse a gift, regardless of value (as per the Councillor Code of Conduct).

5. Councillors must ensure that gifts accepted or declined are declared within one month of being offered.

6. Councillors must note that any gift or benefit accepted may imply a relationship that could interfere with objectivity and independence.

7. Councillors may consider whether or not to refuse a gift where it is likely to cause embarrassment or offence (i.e. cultural perspective), however, point four above always takes precedent.

8. Any offer of a gift in the form of cash, cheque or cash equivalents (incl. gift card or vouchers) should be declined. This includes gift cards or vouchers that form part of another gift (e.g. hamper)

9. It is important to understand the requirements of section 128 (4) of the Act and its duration for recording gifts and any future Council decision making.

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Councillor Gift Policy

10. As per Section 3 of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*, the definition of a gift does not apply in respect to the following;
    - gifts received by a specified person from a family member;
    - gifts disclosed in an election campaign donation return made under section 306 of the Act;
    - any reasonable hospitality received by the specified person at an event or function that the person attended in an official capacity as a Councillor, Chief Executive Officer, member of Council staff or member of a delegated committee.

Relationship to the Maroondah 2050 Community Vision

Community Outcome: A well governed and empowered community

Key Directions: 5.1 Ensure transparent and accountable governance, including balanced and sustainable decision making that is evidence informed and is in the best interests of the community

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Councillors	• *Understand and abide by the requirements and procedures of this Policy.*
Chief Executive Officer	• *Receive written declarations from Councillors of any gifts accepted for inclusion on the Councillor Gift Register* • *Provide advice to Councillors regarding this Policy when sought*
Manager Governance and Performance	• *Develop, monitor and review the implementation of the Councillor Gift Policy and associated procedures*
Manager Executive Office	• *Facilitate induction and training of Councillors in relevant policies and legal requirements*
Governance Team and Councillor Support	• *Coordinate the receipt and formal recording of all Councillor gift declaration forms* • *Maintain the Councillor Gift Register for all accepted gifts*

Related legislation, policies, strategies, procedures and guidelines

- Local Government Act 2020
- Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020
- Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

Definitions

Gift

As per section 3 of the Act, the definition of a "Gift" means any disposition of property otherwise than by will made by a person to another person without consideration in money or money's worth or with inadequate consideration, including;

(a) the provision of a service (other than volunteer labour); and

(b) the payment of an amount in respect of a guarantee; and

(c) the making of a payment or contribution at a fundraising function.

(d) intangible items such as memberships/subscriptions or digital gifts such as e-books

A gift is any item or service of value that is given without expectation of return.

Token Gift

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Councillor Gift Policy

A "Token Gift" means a gift or benefit that is inconsequential or trivial in value to both the person making the offer and the individual accepting it. Typically in the course of attending a meeting, training or a conference (e.g. pens and notepads).

Reasonable Hospitality

The receipt or offer of "reasonable hospitality" is not considered a gift under this Policy. Reasonable Hospitality is defined as hospitality that:

(a) an independent fair minded observer would consider is appropriate and proportionate and not excessive; and

(b) that is received by the Councillor at an event or function that the Councillor attended in an official capacity as a Councillor.

Both elements must be present (reasonable and official capacity).

Examples of reasonable hospitality which are considered appropriate/proportionate and received by a Councillor in an official capacity include:

- Sandwiches and pastries (or similar) over a lunchtime meeting or at a free seminar;
- A pre-game lunch provided ahead of a local football game;
- Coffee/tea and/or morning/afternoon tea at another organisation's premises before, after or during a meeting or seminar;
- A cup of coffee or tea at a café (unless the other person is a supplier, applicant in a current or future statutory process, involved in a current or future tender or EOI or would otherwise create a perceived (general) or actual (material) conflict of interest) where Council business is discussed.

Examples of hospitality that would not be reasonable/proportionate/appropriate and/or that are not received by a Councillor in an official capacity and therefore constitute a gift include:

- An offer to pay for a working lunch at a restaurant (with or without alcohol)
- An offer of free entry to a major sporting event

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Councillor Gift Policy

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - COUNCILLOR GIFTS REGISTER

Date Offered	Offered to - Name	Offered by (entity and individual name	Reason Offered	Description of Gift	Estimated Value	Provide the address of the person/entity making the gift
20 June 2021	Cr John Citizen	Service Club (name) - Mr. Smith	Oversaw election of office bearers at AGM	Plant – Large Azalea and decorative pot	$50	**1 Smith Street, Melbourne**
20 July 2021	Cr Josephine Citizen - Mayor	Art Club - Ms Smith	Formal opening of Art Show	Artwork	$500	**1 Latrobe Avenue, Melbourne**

APPENDIX 2 - POLICY IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

A.   A Councillor is approached by a constituent who has a local business in Maroondah. The constituent is known for his generosity and offers the Councillor an 'all expenses paid' return business class holiday to Queensland in recognition of the great work that Council has been doing over the past 12 months. It is estimated that the holiday is valued at $5500. The Councillor declines the offer.

   Action Required:
   - Gift is refused
   - Offer of the gift to be declared.

B.   A Councillor is presented with a hand-woven silk and gold thread head scarf following a citizenship ceremony. The donor of the scarf told the Councillor that the scarf is culturally significant, and refusal of the gift would cause offence. The Councillor accepts the gift on behalf of Council.

   Action Required:
   - Gift to be accepted
   - Councillor to estimate value of scarf.
   - The Councillor would also complete the Gift Declaration Form so the details can be recorded on the Councillor Gifts Register.
   - The gift may be either retained by the individual Councillor or provided to the Councillor Support Officer for retention by Council.

C.   A Councillor is provided with a free ticket to a catered President's Lunch at a local football club in their capacity as a Councillor. There is no formal role for the Councillor in the proceedings at this event, but a three-course meal is provided.

   Action Required:
   - No declaration required, as it is considered reasonable hospitality in their role as a Councillor
   - However, a Councillor must always consider actual or perceived conflict of interests in accepting an invite to an event.

Councillor Gift Policy

D.   A Councillor attends a function for a local football club. The Councillor is given a raffle ticket for a door prize upon entry. The Councillor wins first prize which is an overnight stay in a luxury city hotel. The value of the prize is $650.

Action Required:
- If the Councillor accepts the gift:
  - Councillor to estimate value of prize.
  - The Councillor would also complete the Gift Declaration Form so the details can be recorded on the Councillor Gifts Register.

- If the Councillor declines the gift:
  - Councillor to declare declining of the gift.

- If a raffle ticket was purchased by the Councillor and they won the prize, no further action is required.

E.   A Councillor is invited to deliver a speech for a local Community group and to take the Chair while elections are being held at the Annual General Meeting. On stage, at the close of the meeting the President of the Community group presents the Councillor, and others involved in running of the meeting with a box of chocolates / hamper / bottle of wine / potted plant etc. as a thank you for their assistance in running the meeting.
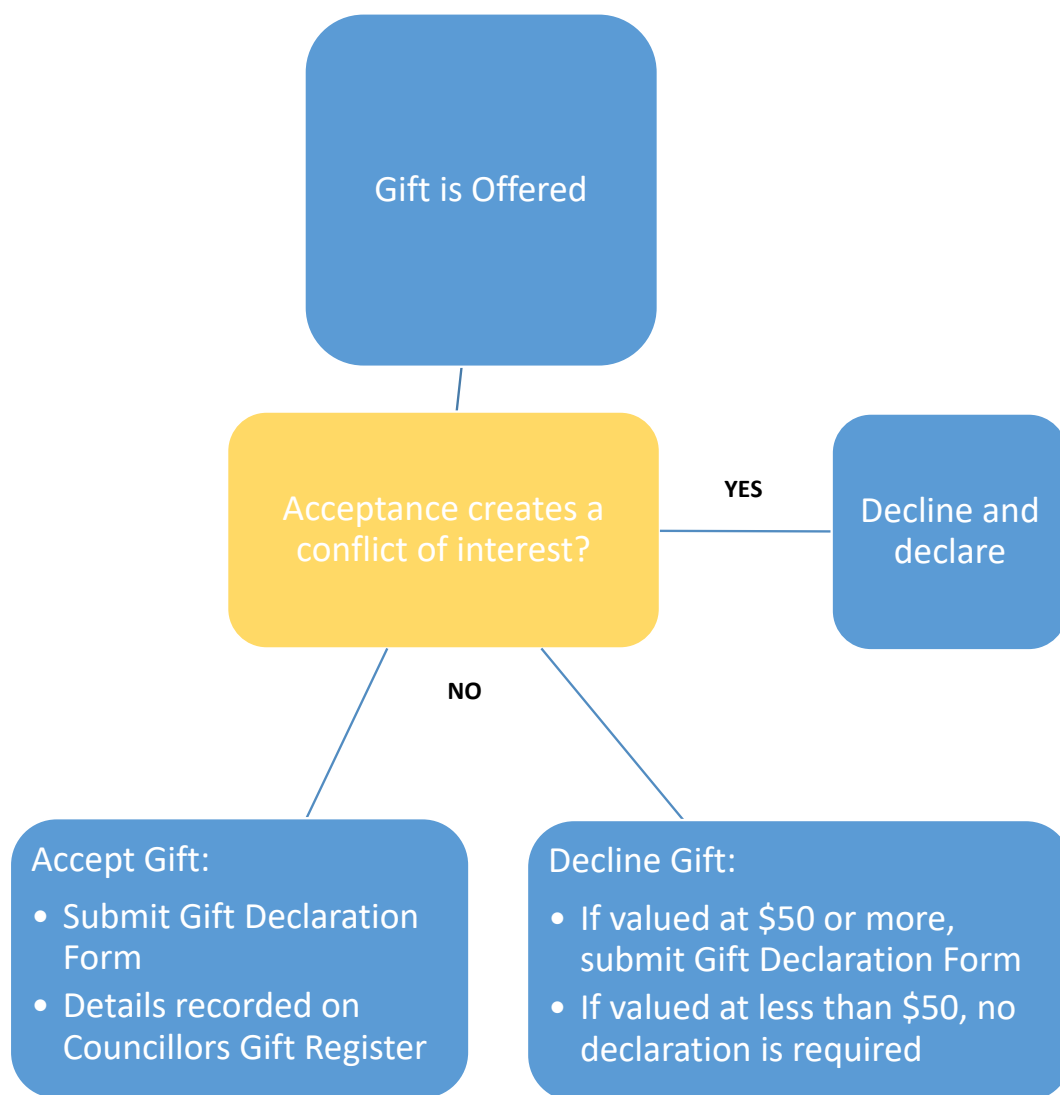
Action Required:
- Gift to be accepted
- Councillor to estimate value of gift.
- The Councillor would also complete the Gift Declaration Form so the details can be recorded on the Councillor Gifts Register.
- The gift may be either retained by the individual Councillor or provided to the Councillor Support Officer for retention by Council.

Councillor Gift Policy

APPENDIX 3 - DECISION FLOW CHART

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                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │  Gift is Offered │
                    └──────────────────┘
                             │
              ┌──────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
              │ Acceptance creates a │   YES    │ Decline and  │
              │ conflict of interest?│──────────│   declare    │
              └──────────────────────┘          └──────────────┘
                 NO         │
        ┌──────────┘        └──────────┐
        │                              │
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Accept Gift:
- Submit Gift Declaration Form
- Details recorded on Councillors Gift Register

Decline Gift:
- If valued at $50 or more, submit Gift Declaration Form
- If valued at less than $50, no declaration is required

RESOLUTIONS

NGA 2025
National General Assembly

National Convention Centre, Canberra 24 - 27 June 2025

2025 RESOLUTIONS

Motion number 1 Whitsunday Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to include the President of the Australian Local Government Association into the National Cabinet to reinstate the Local Government's representation into national decision making that existed in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Carried

Motion number 2 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistant Grant to local government to support sustainability.

Carried

Motion number 3 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expedite the delivery of the nation-building Inland Rail project.

Carried

Motion number 4 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to release the Government response to the Local Government sustainability inquiry and implement funding increases to better support the Local Government sector.

Carried

Motion number 5 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to lead collaboration with state and local governments to review, simplify, and streamline the delivery and governance of grant funding to local government, ensuring a more efficient, equitable, and sustainable funding model. To achieve this, the Australian Government should:

1. Consolidate disparate funding programs delivered across multiple Commonwealth and State Government agencies into a "block funding" model, ensuring grant funding is delivered in a way that aligns with local government planning cycles. The current fragmented system leads to inefficiencies, duplication, and short-term funding constraints that hinder long-term community planning and development.
2. Ensure equitable access to grant funding by identifying broader funding mechanisms beyond requiring direct co-contributions from councils. Many local

governments, particularly in rural and regional areas, lack the financial and resource capacity to provide matching funds. Yet, they are among those most dependent on grants for critical infrastructure and service delivery. Alternative models, such as needs-based assessments or in-kind contributions, must be considered to ensure all councils have fair access to funding opportunities.

3. Reduce the administrative burden on local governments by harmonising governance frameworks, systems, and documentation requirements across funding programs and agencies. The complexity and inconsistency of grant processes create inefficiencies, divert resources away from service delivery, and disadvantage councils with limited administrative capacity. Standardising processes will improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

4. Strengthen intergovernmental collaboration to ensure that funding programs are better aligned with local and regional priorities. A more coordinated approach between the Australian Government, state governments, and local councils will enhance the strategic impact of grants, avoid duplication, and maximise the effectiveness of public investment.

5. Support long-term local economic development and resilience by ensuring funding models empower local governments to undertake sustainable, high-impact projects. A more predictable and accessible funding system will enable councils to invest in initiatives that foster economic growth, job creation, infrastructure development, and community well-being.

Carried

Motion number 6 Wyndham City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to renew the National Conversation on Local Government Financial Sustainability.

Carried

Motion number 7 Knox City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to explore and, where feasible, implement grant programs that address infrastructure needs, prioritising the renewal, upgrade, and maintenance of existing essential infrastructure.

Carried

Motion number 8 District Council of Grant SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- Increase targeted investment in operational aspects of regional airports to support ongoing usage of essential infrastructure and long-term viability.
- Introduce strategies which result in fairer airline pricing policies, encourage competition and reduce airfare disparities.

- Establish frameworks that safeguard regional flights, frequencies and reliability.
- Expand regional aviation support programs ensuring that communities reliant on air travel are not left behind.

Carried

Motion number 9 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue the local roads and community infrastructure program at a minimum investment of previous programs.

Carried

Motion number 10 Lithgow City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make improvements to better support local government in the context of an operating environment characterised by climate change and an increase in natural disasters.

Carried

Motion number 11 Mitchell Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide sufficient funding to enable preventative infrastructure works to support increased resilience to natural disasters.

Carried

Motion number 12 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated Local Government Resilience Fund to support councils in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters.

Carried

Motion number 13 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly:

1. Thanks the Australian Government for commissioning the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (Colvin Review) and acknowledges the importance of its focus on proactive disaster risk reduction and resilience investment, including reform of Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA);

4 | P a g e

2. Calls on the Australian Government to commit to co-designing reform initiatives with State and Local Governments to ensure they are practical, regionally responsive, and adequately resourced; and
3. Encourages the Australian Government to ensure that implementation of the review's recommendations does not result in additional administrative burden or cost-shifting to local governments, particularly in regional and remote areas with limited resourcing.

Carried

Motion number 14 City of Tea Tree Gully SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Include a seat at the table for representation from ALGA as a Member of the Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council,
2. Reduce the current funding shortfall of $5.7 billion enabling infrastructure required to bridge the gap between current constructions and Australia's housing targets,
3. Work with State and Local Government to ensure that the funding for housing is appropriately distributed among Local Government areas to address the needs for this infrastructure in our Local communities.

Carried

Motion number 15 Singleton Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to substantially increase direct Australian Government investment to councils for the construction of local enabling transport and community infrastructure and utilities critical to supporting national housing targets by unlocking and accelerating the delivery of housing on existing development-ready land.

Carried

Motion number 15.1 Maitland City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to substantially increase direct Australian Government investment to councils for the construction of local enabling transport and community infrastructure and utilities critical to supporting national housing targets by unlocking and accelerating the delivery of housing on existing development-ready land.

Carried

Motion number 16 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a local infrastructure fund for local councils to unlock housing supply and supplement affordability that is targeted to regional communities with demonstrated needs.

Carried

Motion number 17 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide more financial support to help councils build the infrastructure needed to enable new housing.

Carried

Motion number 18 Logan City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide for full involvement of local government representatives as parties in decision making processes impacting on homelessness policy and funding including the Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council and National Cabinet.

Carried

Motion number 19 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate for targeted federal investment in local government workforce development programs, including apprenticeships, traineeships, and upskilling initiatives.

Carried

Motion number 20 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commit to long-term, sustainable funding for local government community services, including seniors, disability and youth programs.

Carried

Motion number 21 Shire of Laverton WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the effectiveness of the 4G network following the withdrawal of the 3G network and where there was coverage under 3G, there is no coverage under the 4G or 5G and the impacts on rural and remote communities.

Carried

Motion number 22 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a Cybersecurity Resilience Fund to assist councils in strengthening digital security infrastructure and protecting community data.
Carried

Motion number 23 Moree Plains Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government take urgent and proactive action to provide an equitable level of services in communication and connectivity across all of Australia.

Carried

Motion number 24 Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase funding to local governments for coastal protection and climate resilience in alignment with national climate adaptation strategies and emission reduction targets.

Carried

Motion number 25 Break O'Day Council TAS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a dedicated Local Government Climate Action Fund to support councils in delivering place-based renewable energy initiatives and climate adaptation programs, including:

1. Financial incentives and grants for local councils to invest in community renewable energy projects, such as solar farms, battery storage, and microgrid solutions to enhance energy security and reduce reliance upon fossil fuels.
2. Supporting the development and implementation of local circular economy initiatives, including Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) programs, aimed at reducing to reduce landfill waste and lower emissions.
3. Funding energy efficiency retrofits for council-operated owned buildings, public infrastructure, low-income housing and local industries to reduce energy consumption and costs.
4. Facilitating sustainable transport initiatives, such as the expansion of electric vehicle charging networks and active transport infrastructure, to lower transport emissions. Initiatives to transition to sustainable transport and industry, such as electric vehicle charging networks, active transport infrastructure and opportunities for local economies to lower emissions and adapt to their climate futures.
5. Providing resources for climate risk assessments and adaptation planning to improve community resilience to extreme weather events. Providing resources for climate change adaptation, such as risk assessment and

planning and risk reduction programs and infrastructure, to improve community and economic resilience to the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather events, sea level rise and drought.

Carried

Motion number 26 City of Mitcham SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a National Solar Panel and Battery Recycling System.

Carried

Motion number 27 Port Macquarie-Hastings Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support Local Governments in addressing the need for Climate Adaptation initiatives, through formula-based funding that is provided to all Councils.

Carried

Motion number 28 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate funding for adaptation measures at the local government level to allow the proactive asset betterment to build back better after disaster events.

Carried

Motion number 29 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to enhance cooperation between national and local governments, and allocate sufficient funding to help enable Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to be rapidly reduced.

Carried

Motion number 30 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide targeted funding and policy support to enable councils to transition to renewable energy sources in council operations and community services.

Carried

Motion number 31 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to mandate that all energy projects of State and National significance (such as hydro power, transmission lines, batteries and solar/wind farms) leave a lasting legacy fund to the communities that are impacted by such developments.
Carried

Motion number 32 Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ban the importation and use of products containing PFAS-group chemicals by the end of 2026, rather than requiring local government and water service providers to upgrade treatment technology to protect community health and the environment from these chemicals. The ban should include products not covered by the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (cosmetics, personal care products, food packaging, clothing).

Carried

Motion number 33 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase funding available to enable the recovery of all Threatened Species and Ecological Communities, and to support on-ground actions to track and inform priorities to support nationwide biodiversity.

Carried

Motion number 34 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to recognise and support local governments as key partners in biodiversity conservation efforts through dedicated funding and legislative frameworks.

Carried

Motion number 35 Northern Beaches Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government for legislative and policy reform to:

1. Develop a program to phase out the use of 'difficult to recycle' plastics such as soft plastics and polystyrene.
2. Develop and implement a national product stewardship scheme for plastics, where organisations that make and sell plastics also take responsibility for managing adverse impacts.
3. Support the plastic recycling sector by:
   a. providing an appropriate level of funding to help build infrastructure to recover valuable materials from recyclable plastics.
   b. developing sustainable markets for recovered plastics.

Carried

Motion number 36 Maroondah City Council VIC

That this National General Assembly calls upon the Federal Government to:

- Lead the development of a nationally consistent Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) - in collaboration with all states and territories - to harmonise regulations, refund values, and operations across Australia, creating a uniform approach to container recycling; and
- Ensure that the National CDS is to include all glass beverage containers such as wine and spirit bottles, whilst exploring the expansion of the scheme to include glass jars used for food - thereby ensuring these containers are covered by deposit/refund incentives for recycling.

Carried

Motion number 37 Gladstone Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address the risks of battery disposal by:

1. Implementing appropriate battery product stewardship legislation, that includes extended producer responsibilities.
2. Moving to a mandatory national product stewardship scheme, to ensure all producers and importers of loose and embedded batteries are captured and contribute to the end-of-life risk mitigation and disposal and recovery costs.
3. Support local government efforts through funding, to manage and mitigate battery related risks to waste services and infrastructure.

Carried

Motion number 38 Moree Plains Shire Council NSW

That the Federal Government recognises the strategic national importance of increased investment in regional infrastructure to support local industry, jobs and regional economic and population growth, funding it accordingly.

Carried

Motion number 39 Isaac Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expand the Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEA)'s remit to ensure all emissions intensive regions affected by the transition to net zero are eligible for support by way of broader 'emissions-intensive project closure plans' and/or community transition plans.

Carried

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Motion number 40 Frankston City Council VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with States and Territories, in consultation with Local Government, to prioritise the decentralisation of government jobs and agencies beyond major cities.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 41 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Include local government as a key stakeholder in the Intergovernmental Data Sharing Agreement (IGDSA) and to develop mechanisms that ensure the participation of local governments in the ongoing development and operation of this framework.
2. Provide greater support and resources to local councils to help them meet the expectations set by the Australian Government Data and Digital Strategy, enabling whole of government data framework adoption and development of the national data asset.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 42 Berrigan Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls upon the Australian Government to formalise structured and ongoing engagement with local government through the inclusion of an Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) representative as a permanent participant in National Cabinet meetings and associated subcommittees. Additionally, the Assembly urges the establishment of a Local Government Advisory Council as a dedicated forum to strengthen co-operation on shared national priorities.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 43 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Renegotiate the 2006 Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations to prevent cost shifting of Commonwealth and state government responsibilities onto Councils.
2. Introduce stronger controls in all Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) that restrict the ability of state governments to diverge from the intent of the Commonwealth on similar topics, when states form their own IGA's with their respective local government organisations.

<u>Carried</u>

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Motion number 44 City of Onkaparinga SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to restore Financial Assistance Grants to at least one per cent of taxation revenue and for the provision of an additional once-off payment of $3 billion to address the historical practice of paying these grants in advance.

Carried

Motion number 45 Hindmarsh Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a funding stream targeting small towns (up to 2,500 residents) in regional Australia, focused on innovative renewal for a sustainable future.

Carried

Motion number 46 Shire of Lake Grace WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistance Grants to local governments and recalculate distributions to those local governments in remote and rural locations that are providing financial incentives to assist in funds associated with attracting and retaining general practitioners, therefore redirecting ratepayer funds to local government responsibilities.

Carried

Motion number 47 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to harmonise the disparate application and relevancy of accounting standards for Local Government to ensure the consistency of the measurement and management of depreciation and the approach to valuation of associated non-current assets.

Carried

Motion number 48 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a National Royalties for Regions Framework to address current gaps and state-level inequities in the distribution of funding to mining-affected communities.

Carried

Motion number 49 Glen Innes Severn Council NSW

National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to adopt Place-Based, Needs-Based, and Outcome-Driven Funding Models, allocating a minimum of $1,000 per

person annually for 10 years to each Local Government Area to strengthen councils as enablers of essential community and social services.

Lost

Motion number 50 Logan City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to investigate the need for the establishment of a National Local Government Funding Authority.

Carried

Motion number 51 Balonne Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to pay the Federal Assistance Grants to local governments in full at the beginning of each new financial year (in the year that they are due) to eliminate uncertainty and to mitigate significant surplus or deficit results caused by revenue recognition requirements.

Carried

Motion number 52 Strathfield Council NSW

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Remove the requirement on Councils to provide "co-contributions" to grant funded programs.
2. Mandate the provision of grant funding upfront, removing the need for Council to tie up already budgeted finances in anticipation of payment after program delivery.
3. Mandate that all Commonwealth and State government grant funded programs cannot exclude design related work from their eligible actions. Councils are not in the financial or operational position to develop considerable volumes of plans and designs, which then "sit on the shelf" waiting for an appropriate grant funding opportunity.

Carried

Motion number 53 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide adequate financial assistance, via Services Australia, to eligible ratepayers (Pension and Low-Income earner's) to assist with payments of council and water rates.

Financial assistance should be provided at an amount, or percentage, that reflects current level of rates and should be delivered via a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism, than is currently used.

Carried

Motion number 54 Shoalhaven City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider a percentage of Gross Regional Product collected as tax revenue from tourism industries to be distributed back to Local Government for the purposes of addressing asset maintenance.

Carried

Motion number 55 Isaac Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to

- a. Recognise full-time-equivalent (FTE) populations in funding models.
- b. Acknowledge the additional demands they place on communities.
- c. Ensure FTE data is considered when allocating grants.

Carried

Motion number 56 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate to the state governments to review and reconsider rate capping policies, allowing councils to set rates based on local community needs and financial sustainability.

Carried

Motion number 57 Maranoa Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Review the current practice of applying variable funding contribution percentages within a single local government area under federal funding programs; and
2. Support a more equitable model that ensures consistent and higher percentage contributions (e.g. 80/20) from the Australian Government for regional, remote, and very remote areas, based on the broader classification of the local government area rather than the project's specific location within it.

Carried

Motion number 58 City of Karratha WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a revenue-sharing model that allocates a fair proportion of Commonwealth taxation revenue back to local governments in high-contributing regional areas to support their role in enabling national productivity. Returned revenue would be directed toward the delivery of social and community infrastructure, which is essential to sustaining the workforce and liveability conditions that underpin economic performance.

<u>Carried</u>

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Motion number 59 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to harmonise the curfews for all major metropolitan airports across Australia.

Lost

Motion number 60 Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reinstate the 80/20 Federal Funding Model for road infrastructure projects.

Carried

Motion number 61 City of Adelaide SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider:

- Working with the Australian Local Government Association to develop a toolkit for local government areas to develop or update an active transport strategy.
- Working with the Australian Local Government Association to develop a framework and/or self-assessment tool for local government areas to audit their cycling/walking/active transport strategies.
- Providing federal funding support to develop these frameworks and tools.

Carried

Motion number 62 City of Adelaide SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider:

1. Working with the Australian Local Government Association to commit 30 per cent of journeys to school by active transport by 2030 (30 by 30).
2. Working with the Australian Local Government Association to developing an overarching action plan to support local government areas who also commit to '30 by 30'.
3. to work with the State and Territory Governments to prioritise the funding and delivery of drop-off/pick up areas, paths and crossings for schools, at no cost to local government, to help ensure safety for children and the community.

Carried

Motion number 63 City of Vincent WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with the State and Territory Governments to reduce the default speed limit in Australia on Residential Local Roads from 50km/h to 40km/h.

Lost

Motion number 64 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Increase Roads to Recovery Funding for all States, beyond the current projections to reflect the increasing demand on local roads;
2. Introduce a specific road safety component within Roads to Recovery to prioritise projects that address high-risk areas and accident blackspots;
3. Reintroduce a Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program;
4. Expand Roads to Recovery Eligibility to Support Road Safety Technology and Innovation;
5. Introduce a Forward Funding Model for Long-Term Planning; and
6. Increase Funding for Bridge and Intersection Upgrades.

Carried

Motion number 65 Penrith City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Develop a dedicated national infrastructure investment framework that ensures equitable funding for transport, roads, and essential infrastructure in outer metropolitan growth areas. It should include:

- Recognising outer metropolitan growth areas as distinct regions requiring specific federal funding allocations.
- Prioritising transport infrastructure investment, including strategic road networks, public transport expansion, and active transport options, to improve connectivity and reduce congestion.
- Ensuring equitable access to social infrastructure, such as healthcare, education, and recreational facilities, to enhance liveability and economic participation.
- Aligning infrastructure funding with population growth projections, to prevent the cycle of underinvestment and service shortfalls in rapidly expanding communities.

2. Increased investment in transport, roads, and essential infrastructure, to address the current chronic infrastructure deficits in these regions.

Carried

Motion number 66 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding to local councils to facilitate the acquisition of land and enable infrastructure development including social infrastructure and environmental protection.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 67 Noosa Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to collaborate with local governments to mandate road user agreements with industry, ensuring fair cost distribution among road users, including those responsible for increased freight loads that damage local government roads.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 68 Woollahra Municipal Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to better regulate the import, manufacture and classification of electronic powered cycle bikes (e-bikes) and other electronic mobility devices, some of which currently are able to travel at speeds equivalent to smaller motorbikes and mopeds. This measure is required to ensure e-bikes and electronic mobility devices are properly classified vehicles with national limits on their speed capacity and other restrictions necessary to protect the safety of users and the general public.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 69 Woollahra Municipal Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to prioritise new and increased funding for councils in order to ensure that they are able to plan for and provide adequate green spaces and community facilities before higher density development is approved.

<u>Carried</u>

<u>Motion number 69.1 Whitehorse City Council VIC</u>

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Investigate the impact of urban densification on the availability and quality of public open spaces, particularly in areas with low open space per person.
2. Examine whether densification genuinely delivers affordable housing given high rates of population growth.
3. Review the implications of government acquisition powers on public open space, highlighting the effect of compulsory acquisitions for infrastructure projects and their impact on local communities.

4. Advocate for stronger protections and policies to preserve and expand public open spaces in middle and outer-ring suburbs, recognising the environmental, social, and health benefits these areas provide.
5. Examine the impact of urban densification on physical and community infrastructure, such as schools, health services, drainage, and congestion on roads.
6. Engage with relevant stakeholders, including community groups and planning bodies, to identify best practices and policy recommendations for maintaining and enhancing open spaces in the face of urban growth.

Carried

Motion number 70 Moyne Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a permanent, indexed funding stream to close the $1 billion annual local road maintenance gap, enhance the Roads to Recovery program to provide greater support for rural and regional councils based on road length and need, and expand funding for community infrastructure projects that strengthen economic activity, service delivery, and resilience in rural areas.

Carried

Motion number 71 West Arnhem Regional Council NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

a. Establish a dedicated Public Lighting Infrastructure Fund to support local governments in upgrading and modernising street lighting networks across Australia.
b. Provide financial incentives and low-interest loans to accelerate the transition to energy-efficient LED street lighting, particularly in regions that have made limited progress to date.
c. Develop national guidelines and standards for smart lighting technologies to ensure interoperability and maximise energy savings and safety benefits.
d. Fund research and pilot projects exploring innovative public lighting solutions that can enhance community safety, reduce energy consumption, and support smart city initiatives.

Carried

Motion number 72 West Arnhem Regional Council NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Establish a dedicated funding program specifically for the upgrade and ongoing maintenance of unsealed road networks in regional and remote Australia
2. Allocate a minimum of $200 million per annum for this program, indexed annually to account for inflation and construction cost increases.
3. Prioritise projects that demonstrate a clear link to improved community safety, enhanced economic opportunities, and increased access to essential services for residents in remote and isolated areas.
4. Work collaboratively with state and territory governments and local councils to develop streamlined application processes and reporting requirements for this funding program, minimising administrative burden and maximising the efficient use of resources.
5. Ensure that the funding allocation formula for this program takes into account the unique challenges faced by remote councils, including vast distances, low population densities, extreme weather conditions, and limited access to skilled labour and materials.

Carried

Motion number 73 Western Downs Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate a dedicated funding program to support the redevelopment and/or remediation of aquatic facilities.

Carried

Motion number 74 East Gippsland Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expand access to the Roads of Strategic Importance Program to deliver vital road safety and industry transport links including food production for the south-east of Australia.

Carried

Motion number 75 Port Phillip City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest further in Australia's urban active and public transport infrastructure projects.

Carried

Motion number 76 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to enhance road safety through further driver education.

Carried

Motion number 77 Wyndham City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to join a unified call towards the development of very Fast Trains Between Major Cities.

Carried

Motion number 78 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to conduct a review of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to extend the "Farm Gate Access Program" to allow ad-hoc use of B-Doubles on low volume roads where appropriate.

Carried

Motion number 79 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide small and rural communities with no public transport with additional support to compensate.

Carried

Motion number 80 Livingstone Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to-

a. Review the Building Code of Australia for wheelchair accessibility to address new wheelchair technology and increased dimensions; and
b. Review the Australian Standards AS1428 Design for Access and Mobility to include wheelchair beach accessibility, technology and increased dimensions.

Carried

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Motion number 81 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide funding and resources to ensure every local council can develop and implement a comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

Carried

Motion number 82 Bathurst Regional Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Substantially increase investment in sovereign aerial firefighting assets and associated infrastructure in each state and territory to reduce reliance on leased international resources, ensuring year-round readiness to combat increasingly frequent and severe fire events.
2. Expand funding for the Disaster Ready Fund to address oversubscription and ensure councils have adequate resources to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, particularly bushfires, which disproportionately impact local communities and council resources.
3. Establish a permanent national grant program for local governments to enhance fire resilience through preventative measures, such as vegetation management, firebreak creation, community education programs, and improved infrastructure for fire suppression.

Carried

Motion number 83 Glen Eira City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Develop a National Urban Flood resilience strategy to coordinate federal, state and local governments and ensure a consistent, long-term approach to infrastructure renewal, especially in urban areas experiencing high growth.
2. Significantly increase funding to the Disaster Ready Fund to meet the growing demand from local governments for flood mitigation and resilience projects, acknowledging the significant oversubscription of the current program.
3. Establish a dedicated funding stream within the Disaster Ready Fund specifically for stormwater infrastructure upgrades and flood mitigation works in urban municipalities, ensuring equitable access to resilience funding beyond rural communities.
4. Promote nature-based solutions to improve water permeability in urban environments by investing in green infrastructure, permeable surfaces, and sustainable drainage systems to counteract the increased flood risk associated with increasing urban density and reduced natural infiltration.
5. Expand opportunities to improve the capacity and capability of local government to respond to the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events due to climate change.

Carried

Motion number 84 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Increase funding for research, development, and implementation of advanced Early Warning Systems across Australia to improve accuracy and timeliness of warnings;
2. Review and enhance the flood warning system with an emphasis on warning accuracy and timeliness;
3. Continue to promote the integration of early warning systems with emergency management frameworks and communication channels to enable stakeholder collaboration and seamless dissemination of warnings;
4. Consider the accessibility and needs of at-risk communities in system improvements, including the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community; and
5. Invest in accessible public education campaigns to raise awareness about effectively responding to warnings.
6. grant councils' access to the National Messaging System being developed by the National Emergency Management Agency to assist councils in managing local emergencies.

Carried

Motion number 85 Western Downs Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to make home insurance accessible and affordable for all Australians, regardless of their postcode.

Carried

Motion number 86 Whitsunday Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to emulate the community benefits and effectiveness of the National Cyclone Reinsurance Pool with a National Flood Reinsurance Pool.

Carried

Motion number 87 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- Simplify application and claims processes under DRFA to reduce the enormous administrative burden on Councils.
- Implement reasonable, fair and consistent assessment criteria for demonstration of damage to essential public assets such as roads and drainage.
- Accept substantiation documentation produced by existing local government asset and financial management systems (which are already subject to independent audit) rather than applying requirements which effectively mean the creation of inefficient and costly parallel processes and often manual records.

Carried

Motion number 88 Shire of Campaspe VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to mandate a resilient homes program with all State Governments to raise or retrofit residential properties at risk of flood inundation or other natural disasters, and which prioritises homeowners affected by disaster events since 2022 to build back better.

Carried

Motion number 89 Burdekin Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest in incentive programs that address the steady decline of volunteer numbers and implement initiatives to attract emergency management volunteers, improve training offered to volunteers ensuring they are adequately skilled, including in areas of leadership and that qualifications are portable nationally, and embrace and encourage spontaneous volunteers who may already hold relevant skills and qualifications

Carried

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Motion number 90 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Establish standardised definitions for common policy terms used across all jurisdictions to ensure consistent application of housing policy and legislation.
2. Prioritise standardisation of terms relating to housing policy as part of the National Housing Accord, including affordable housing, social housing, public housing, seniors housing, essential worker housing, and community housing.

Carried

Motion number 91 Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state, territory, and local governments to ensure that social, public, and community housing maintains at least its current proportion of the total housing stock, with new social and community homes being built at the same proportional rate as the broader housing stock.

Carried

Motion number 91.1 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to encourage investors back into the rental market to assist in the housing crisis as only 3% of housing is Community Housing with 90% being 'mum and dad' investors.

Lost

Motion number 92 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to specifically fund social, public and affordable housing for women in poverty and young people by supporting councils to work with the community housing sector, relevant community groups and developers to create innovative solutions close to activity centres and community services to address housing affordability and homelessness for these cohorts.

Carried

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Motion number 93 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Provide a national infrastructure strategy that supports its housing targets and includes a funded infrastructure plan that is aligned with the housing growth; and
2. Ensure that the strategy and plan include the timely delivery of infrastructure that supports the development of new and growing communities.

Carried

Motion number 94 Glen Innes Severn Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to deliver a Land Development and Housing Construction Fund to Address the Housing Crisis.

Carried

Motion number 95 West Tamar Council TAS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop and implement a National Property Disclosure Standard applicable to all real estate transactions across Australia.

Carried

Motion number 96 City of Sydney NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to encourage and fund Australian Councils to implement Affordable Housing Contribution Schemes to ensure Councils can better contribute to tackling the national housing crisis.

Lost

Motion number 97 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide improved national information databases through increased funding that governments and the private sector rely on to plan for new housing across Australia.

Carried

Motion number 98 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to call for the development of a National Homelessness Prevention Strategy, with local governments playing a key role in coordination, service provision, and community-based solutions.

Carried

Motion number 99 Central Coast Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to remove the double taxation on home insurance policies by working with the states to remove stamp duty or GST which are both charged making policies more affordable and equitable.

Carried

Motion number 100 North Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with the local government sector to review the Housing Australia Future Fund Act 2023 (HAFF) with a view to establishing a fixed portion of the HAFF to support investment in social, public, and affordable housing in regional and rural local government areas where there is demonstrated evidence of unmet housing need.

Carried

Motion number 101 Mount Alexander Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to compel and encourage the National Cabinet to adopt common policy approaches and strategic plans to resolve our affordable housing crisis through a national vision for urban, regional and rural planning policy. These should include but not be limited to measures which will inform our National Planning Reform Blueprint and deliver adequate housing to all Australians including:

- Adequate housing diversity
- Genuinely affordable housing options
- Adequate social, public and community housing
- Support for innovative housing solutions including co-housing and community-led models
- Ensure that local government is resourced adequately.
  and for the government to fund a housing officer for councils who choose to deliver, to support the delivery of housing outcomes.

Carried

Motion number 102 City of Karratha WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reform Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) legislation to provide a 100% exemption for housing-related benefits-rent, home purchase costs, and mortgage interest-when paid from pre-tax income in designated mining-affected communities. The motion also calls for the creation of a new FBT category, "Remote Area - Mining Community," recognising regions impacted by volatile housing markets, fly-in-fly-out workforces, and commodity price cycles.

Carried

JOBS AND SKILLS

Motion number 103 Yarra Ranges Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to incentivize Regional University Study Hubs and where possible, leverage available LGA infrastructure, to provide support services with appropriate safeguards to local secondary and tertiary students who are learning by distance whether that learning is in Outer Urban, Regional or Rural and Remote areas nationwide."

Carried

Motion number 104 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with local councils and businesses to facilitate job ready skills and re-training opportunities for young people, women and older workers to positively contribute to the local economy.

Carried

Motion number 105 City of Greater Dandenong VIC

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Recognise the critical role of local government in supporting Australia's manufacturing sector, particularly in regions like Greater Dandenong, which is home to significant industrial and advanced manufacturing precincts.
2. Partner with local government to implement the "A Future Made in Australia" plan by investing in local infrastructure, innovation hubs, and workforce development initiatives that directly support manufacturing precincts.
3. Support local government-led initiatives to strengthen supply chain resilience, including the development of regional logistics, warehousing, and digital infrastructure that enable efficient and sustainable manufacturing operations.
4. Ensure government procurement policies at all levels prioritise Australian-made products, particularly for infrastructure, health, energy, and defence projects, to strengthen sovereign manufacturing capability and protect jobs.
5. Support the transition to, and fund local government programs that facilitate the transition to, advanced and sustainable manufacturing, including clean energy technologies, automation, and digital innovation.
6. Collaborate with local government to deliver place-based workforce development strategies, including apprenticeships, TAFE partnerships, and upskilling programs tailored to the needs of local manufacturers.
7. Review and implement competitive tax settings and policy incentives to ensure Australian manufacturers can compete on a global scale.
8. Strengthen anti-dumping enforcement and trade protections in consultation with local government and industry stakeholders to safeguard local jobs and manufacturing competitiveness.
9. Establish a national-local government manufacturing taskforce to coordinate policy, funding, and planning efforts that support the long-term viability of manufacturing in local communities.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 106 Leeton Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement streamlined and expedited visa processes to attract and retain international health professionals, including doctors, nurses, and allied health workers, in regional areas to address critical workforce shortages.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 107 Leeton Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide local Councils with both the mandate and direct financial resourcing to provide local oversight to the PALM Scheme Program and provide contextual partner-based representation to employers (and workers) and provide temporary work rights for workers disengaged from the PALM Scheme who are residing and working in regional areas.

Carried

Motion number 108 Western Downs Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reform building certifier accreditation processes, to allow persons with appropriate equivalent competencies to become Building Certifiers and include Building Certification on the Occupation Shortage List.

Carried

Motion number 109 Huon Valley Council TAS

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a 'Skills and Capability Framework' that sets out the capabilities and scope of practice for multi-disciplinary health care professionals (e.g. nurse-practitioners, paramedics, pharmacists). Against this framework, Medicare Billing Schedules (MBS) should adopt a block or blended funding model to allow all relevant health care professionals to bill the MBS for services delivered through a multi-disciplinary health care team. This will help ensure financial viability of medical services and improve patient access and health outcomes across regional and remote Australia.

Carried

Motion number 110 Federation Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide a funding support package to encourage planners, engineers, building surveyors to work in regional and rural councils.

Carried

Motion number 111 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide an environmental health skills and training package composed of funding, incentives and promotion initiatives to enable a sustainable long-term supply of qualified environmental health officers entering the workforce. The increasing discontinuation of environmental health courses within universities is limiting the supply of environmental health graduates available, particularly at the local government level. National strategies are required to support environmental health as a career of choice and to provide the necessary support to universities to ensure that the provision of environmental health courses remains viable.

Carried

Motion number 112 Warrnambool City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expand the skills and training aspects of its 'Future Made in Australia' plan to better support workers who are willing to learn and live in the same region that they work.

Carried

Motion number 113 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government and all State and Territory Governments to amend current education and training laws to allow school students to leave school at the age of 16 to undertake full-time TAFE apprenticeships. This change would provide an earlier transition into the workforce, help address Australia's critical skills shortages and offer an alternative education pathway for students who may not thrive in a traditional academic setting. The reform should include appropriate safeguards such as mandatory career counselling, secure apprenticeship placements before leaving school, and ongoing mentoring to ensure student success.

Carried

Motion number 114 Knox City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund an "earn and learn" program that targets areas of skills-shortage and attracts job seekers to access training and employment programs within the Local Government sector.

Carried

Motion number 115 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to extend financial support for the delivery of health services and equipment in rural and remote communities using a place-based and cooperative approach with local government.

Carried

Motion number 116 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to undertake a full review of the Modified Monash Model (MMM) classification for health and aged care and develop a new model that will incentivise more doctors and other health professionals to regional areas in Australia.

Carried

Motion number 117 City of Onkaparinga SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support local government action to combat misinformation and disinformation. This includes funding to support local government to continue providing the spaces and programs that build civic engagement and trust, as well as appropriate multi-level information sharing and training to enable better preparation for disinformation narratives and events.

Carried

Motion number 117.1 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide additional resources and support to local government, in consort with the Australian Federal Police, to proactively manage the increasing operational impacts and associated community risks associated with the burgeoning Sovereign Citizen movement and other fringe anti-government movements.
Carried

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Motion number 118 Glen Eira City Council VIC

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to strengthen and invest in community services by:

1. Fostering community safety and social cohesion through dedicated funding streams and resources for local councils to implement evidence-based community safety initiatives that promote social cohesion and inclusivity. These initiatives may include infrastructure improvements (e.g. improved lighting, clear and effective signage, graffiti removal, safer pedestrian routes), delivery of events, community engagement programs, and anti-discrimination measures.
2. Enhancing the prevention of family violence through sustained and long-term investment in primary prevention initiatives, tailored funding for support services and resources, including long-term housing, ongoing counselling, employment services, and legal and financial support. As one example, federal tax revenue from alcohol sales could be directed to support the delivery of targeted alcohol rehabilitation and responsive domestic and family violence services.
3. Improving community wellbeing through:
    a. ensuring more inclusive and accessible public spaces
    b. expanding funding for mental health support services and social cohesion programs
    c. partnering with councils to deliver sustainable, local programs that address the impacts of rising living costs and support climate action, with a particular focus on supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, and
    d. delivering increased funding to support homelessness services and prevention initiatives, ensuring individuals receive assistance before reaching crisis levels.

Carried

Motion number 119 Camden Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to specifically fund the establishment of integrated, co-located hubs of community services delivery in growth areas as one-stop-shops to bring services to where people are through effective partnerships and collaborative approaches.

Carried

Motion number 120 Dungog Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the fiscal arrangements affecting the sustainability of essential services provided by Licensed Post Offices and Mail Delivery Contractors and establish terms for financial sustainability with the postal services and those provided on behalf of the government.

Carried

Motion number 121 City of Greater Bendigo VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Legislate the right to food in Australia and embed this right into all relevant national, state and local government policies, budgeting processes and activities.
2. Develop a National Food System Plan and appoint a Minister of Food to lead its development, implementation and evaluation. Such a Plan should provide for food security, including nutritional security of the nation and its people. It should have clear objectives and measurable targets set out in action plans and be subject to regular review. It should apply a food systems approach to account for the complex relationships involved from farm to fork, and foster relationships and synergies between government, relevant industries and civil society, and the community.
3. Facilitate resources to enable local governments to complete their own place-based food security data collection and evaluation, and to lead the participatory development of community food system strategies.
4. Increase income support payments, including Jobseeker, to above the poverty line and index them to wage growth, consistent with a rights-based and income-first approach to food security.
5. Recognise that whilst essential, emergency food relief is not the single solution to food insecurity. Instead, work with state and local governments and the food relief sector to develop new coordinated and collaborative approaches to improve dignified, affordable access to fresh and healthy food.
6. Support the development and implementation of regular (at least every two years) and comprehensive monitoring against the 6 dimensions of food security in Australia. This will assist active responses to changing needs and emerging issues that may impact food security, such as the rising cost of living and poverty rates. It should account for food security measures for both adults and children.

Lost

Motion number 122 Brimbank City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to commit to implementing all thirty-two recommendations of the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm in full.

Carried

Motion number 123 Moyne Shire Council VIC

That the National General Assembly congratulates the Australian Government for developing a national early years reform strategy released in April 2025 and urges the government to implement the recommendations as soon as possible

Carried

Motion number 124 Frankston City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to properly reimburse local governments for citizenship ceremonies noting costs such as marketing, venue hire, special guest speakers, materials, gifts, certificates, certificate frames, catering, staff (often at overtime rates), security, photographers.

Carried

Motion number 125 City of Kingston VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider a range of adjustments and enhancements to Commonwealth support for local government as a major provider of in-home aged care.

We urge the Commonwealth to engage with us to address issues which currently threaten the viability of in-home aged care services, including, but not limited to:

- Inadequate funding of case management
- Excessive focus on compliance administration, at the cost of time available to provide direct care
- Counter-intuitive pricing of package levels, which provide no incentive to offer the necessary level of care to high-needs clients
- The lack of any dementia supplement within the Support At Home program
- Pressure on providers to seek individual pricing consent with no mechanism for dealing with situations where consent is not provided
- The difficulties and barriers to providing services to clients with higher acuity, complex mental health needs, housing or financial issues
- The enforcement-focused model which provides few if any positive incentives to improve performance against standards
- The failure to share any of the significant costs of transition and service transformation
- The absence of any measures which assist in growing the attractiveness of employment in the in-home care sector.

Carried

Motion number 126 City of Kingston VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to acknowledge the role that local governments play in addressing the cost-of-living crisis through the sector's support for community food banks, homelessness services and the shifting of many of the costs of in-home aged care to local government.

- In particular, we urge the Commonwealth to increase the real value of all social security payments so that recipients can afford to buy food after their unavoidable living expenses have been met.
- We urge the Commonwealth to recognise the important role of food banks by increasing the funding available to charities working with local government to provide food to those living in poverty due to joblessness, ill health, disability, age or social isolation.
- Provide the Federal Government with other Cost of Living Relief options as researched by institutions and think tanks.

Carried

Motion number 127 Shellharbour City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to commit a further 5% of its health budget to investing in preventative health measures.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 128 Randwick City Council NSW

This National General Assembly of Local Government calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Ensure that programs to fund meaningful wage increases to Early Childhood Education and Care and Residential Aged Care Workers continue beyond 2025 and 2026, including workers employed in the Local Government Sector;
2. Continue working with all relevant stakeholders to address Gender Based Undervaluation and ensure the pay and conditions of workers in traditionally feminised industries properly reflect the value of the work, skills and responsibility required and / or the conditions under which the work is performed;
3. Allocate funds to support councils in delivering and expanding our services in these areas to address the growing needs of our communities amidst the increasing cost of living and sectoral crises.

<u>Carried</u>

<u>Motion number 128.2 Penrith City Council NSW</u>

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the hourly rate contribution subsidy of $23.00 for an Additional Educator under the Inclusion Development Fund program.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 129 Paroo Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the level of subsidy available to aged care accommodation facilities with less than 20 residents to enable such facilities to provide a service to rural and remote communities. Due to limited revenue raising capacity, smaller facilities require additional financial support to cover increased regulatory requirements and the costs of specialist staffing.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 130 Wollongong City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to address chronic shortages in residential aged care beds which is having a severe impact on health services and communities across Australia.

Carried

Motion number 131 City of Darwin NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a publicly-funded residential care operator in Australia, with the first facilities built in regional areas of high need in partnership with aged care providers.

Carried

Motion number 132 Shire of Ashburton WA

This National General Assembly acknowledges the 2024 motion calling for a feasibility assessment of a banking model to restore face-to-face banking services in regional Australia, with findings to be presented at the 2025 Assembly.

Following this, a detailed study commissioned by the Shire of Ashburton has identified the most suitable model to support banking access in remote communities.

This Assembly now calls on the Australian Government to:

- Endorses the findings of the Local Government Bank feasibility study and the preferred banking model as a viable solution to restore and sustain banking services in regional and remote communities.
- Calls on the Australian Government to support a more detailed study into the financial, operational, and technical aspects of implementing this model, including risk assessment, regulatory compliance, cost analysis, resource requirements, and scalability.
- Urges the Australian Government to explore partnership agreements with licensed financial institutions to utilise Local Government assets for service delivery.
- Recommends the investigation of expanding Bank@Post services in remote communities as part of the broader initiative to improve regional banking access.
- Calls on the Australian Government to subsidise the costs incurred by residents in regional and remote communities to access the limited transactional banking services available, ensuring affordability and equitable access to financial services.

Carried

Motion number 133 Paroo Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the regulations governing day care centres in rural and remote locations with a specific focus on:

- relaxing the qualifications required for all staff; and
- streamlining necessary regulatory and compliance measures to ensure fit for purpose models for rural and remote communities.

Lost

Motion number 134 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a National Mental Health Support Strategy, with local government collaboration to improve accessibility to mental health services at the community level.

Carried

Motion number 135 Wyndham City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement the Recommendations of the Multicultural Framework Review.

Carried

Motion number 136 Logan City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to fund a grant program to support local governments to establish multicultural centres in fast growing regions across Australia.

Carried

Motion number 137 Forbes Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently review and amend the National Health Act 1953 and the associated Pharmacy Location Rules. The proposed amendments should promote fair competition, support independent pharmacy ownership, and expanded scope of practice for pharmacists, and improve accessibility, particularly in rural and under-serviced areas.

Carried

Motion number 138 Mount Alexander Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Federal Government to ensure rural and remote communities have access to the medical care they need by maximising place-based allied health services in the regions.

Carried

Motion number 139 Shire of Campaspe VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to promote how and where people can access sexual and reproductive healthcare across regional and rural Australia.

Carried

CLOSING THE GAP AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RECONCILIATION

Motion number 140 Blayney Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review and update the process for assessing and considering applications under section 10 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, including;

- How to consult with all Aboriginal groups and gain a full and balanced understanding of the cultural significance of the application area,
- How to take into consideration the beliefs of all sections of the aboriginal community when making a determination,
- Determination of the ramifications of a reduction in job opportunities for Aboriginal people if a project falls under a section 10 declaration,
- Involving and consulting with local government for the section 10 process,
- How to examine what impacts a determination will have on local government in the declared area and their community assets before a determination is made,
- Review of the financial ramifications on local government if a determination is made,
- Providing a compensation fund for impacted communities and local governments if a declaration is made,
- Development of a method to take the National interest into account before a section 10 is declared.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 141 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to lead culturally appropriate consultation and develop a nation-wide plan with First Nations people to address their requirements for fit-for-purpose temporary accommodation models and wrap-around support.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 142 Roper Gulf Regional Council NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to consider Local Government Councils as Aboriginal Controlled Organisations in its Indigenous Procurement Policy, if individual Councils have >51% of their Elected Members comprising of Aboriginal People.

<u>Carried</u>

Motion number 143 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Establish a dedicated funding stream for local government to implement community-led strategies and projects directly addressing Closing the Gap priority areas as outlined in the National Agreement. This funding must support place-based, culturally appropriate programs that improve outcomes in priority areas such as early childhood, housing, employment, and community safety.
2. Invest in resolving prolonged Aboriginal Land Claims to reduce distress among First Nations communities, unlock economic opportunities, and ensure timely determinations that uphold the principles of self-determination and land justice.
3. Strengthen accountability mechanisms by introducing an independent oversight process to monitor all levels of government on their progress towards Closing the Gap targets.
4. Commit to genuine partnerships with First Nations organisations and local governments to ensure that funding and policy decisions are aligned with the needs of communities, particularly in areas where community-controlled service delivery has proven successful.
5. Ensure transparency in data collection and reporting to track progress on Closing the Gap initiatives, particularly in critical areas such as Indigenous incarceration, child protection, and suicide prevention, where current approaches are failing.

Carried

Motion number 144 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) so that Indigenous corporations are regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) the same as non-Indigenous corporations.

Carried

Motion number 145 Torres Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work in partnership with First Nations councils and communities to increase long-term investment in transport infrastructure, prioritising all-weather road connectivity, to improve year-round access and resilience in remote First Nations communities. The Assembly urges a comprehensive review and expansion of Federal funding provided for sea and air transport subsidies also, particularly in remote areas where communities face disproportionate freight costs and chronic social equity issues.

Carried

DATA, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CYBER SECURITY

Motion number 146 City of Prospect SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Develop a policy framework for the use of Artificial Intelligence tools (including but not limited to Large Language Model Artificial Intelligence Tools and Utilities) by member councils.
2. Ensure that such a policy framework include guidance on disclosure requirements for reports and documents produced by councils using Artificial Intelligence tools.
3. That the Federal Government provide a report back to Local Governments on what community consultation has been done to develop a shared vision for the use of Artificial Intelligence in our nation, and what regulations have been put in place to protect this shared vision.

Carried

Motion number 147 Frankston City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to provide more clarity and direction on the use of blockchain as an efficiency tool for local government. This is to include ethical and grant-acquittal suitability insofar local governments utilising blockchain technologies.

Carried

Motion number 148 Frankston City Council VIC

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that social media providers implement the necessary requirements to comply with the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024*, within the designated 12-month timeframe. The Federal Government should fund organisations, such as SmackTalk to deliver key educational initiatives, including the provision of free awareness sessions to schools, businesses, and community groups, addressing the risks of social media.

Carried

Motion number 149 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a national framework to guide and support councils in adopting digital transformation strategies for improved service delivery and governance, while protecting and strengthening jobs in local government.

Carried

Motion number 150 Logan City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to invest in the dark fibre network in metropolitan and regional areas with a focus on local government key major activity centres and economic hubs.

Carried

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Motion number 151 Maribyrnong City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Establish programs to assist communities in transitioning to electrified homes, prioritizing vulnerable and low-income households;
2. Create a program that prioritises raising the energy efficiency of the lowest efficiency homes particularly to support vulnerable households with cost-of-living and providing a safe, comfortable living environment;
3. Provide financial incentives, grants, and subsidies for the adoption of energy-efficient electric appliances and systems;
4. Offer educational resources and workshops to inform residents about the benefits of electrification and how to achieve it;
5. Work collaboratively with state governments, industry stakeholders, and community organizations to secure funding, resources, and technical expertise for the transition;
6. Advocate for policies and regulations that support the adoption of renewable energy and electrification at all levels of government;
7. Establish a framework for regular monitoring and reporting on the progress of the transition to renewable electricity and community electrification; and
8. Ensure transparency and accountability by publishing annual progress reports and engaging with the community through public consultations and feedback sessions.

Carried

Motion number 152 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Maintain its support for the development of offshore wind projects as part of Australia's transition to a low-carbon economy.
2. Recognise the potential of offshore wind energy to contribute significantly to national energy security, with projects such as Novocastrian Wind demonstrating the capacity to generate over two gigawatts of electricity-equivalent to powering 1.2 million homes.
3. Support the development of domestic offshore wind manufacturing hubs at key ports, such as the Port of Newcastle, to drive economic growth, create long-term employment opportunities, and ensure Australia maximises local content in the renewable energy supply chain.
4. Work with state and territory and local governments to invest in infrastructure upgrades that facilitate the transport and deployment of renewable energy components, ensuring efficient supply chains for Renewable Energy Zone projects nationwide.
5. Develop a national Renewable Energy Workforce Strategy to support skills training and job creation in offshore wind and related industries, ensuring a just transition for workers in traditional energy sectors.
6. Reaffirm its commitment to renewable energy as the foundation of Australia's future energy mix and continue to prohibit the establishment of nuclear energy generation, recognising its high costs, risks, and long lead times compared to renewables.

Carried

Motion number 153 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Establish and fund a national network of Local Energy Hubs, providing funding to support regional communities in navigating the clean energy transition.
2. Ensure Local Energy Hubs are independent, regionally based service centres, staffed by trusted local experts, to provide clear and accessible information on renewable energy projects, household energy efficiency, and community-led energy initiatives.
3. Develop Energy Hubs Australia as a national coordinating body to support knowledge sharing, collaboration, and technical assistance for Local Energy Hubs, similar to existing models such as Landcare and Regional Development Australia.
4. Recognise Local Energy Hubs as a key mechanism to strengthen social licence for renewable energy infrastructure, facilitating community engagement in transmission, solar, wind, and storage projects, and countering misinformation about the energy transition.
5. Support Local Energy Hubs in delivering targeted programs that:
   a. Help farmers and regional businesses develop decarbonisation plans and reduce energy costs.
   b. Promote household electrification and energy efficiency upgrades, increasing uptake of existing government incentives.
   c. Facilitate community-led energy projects, such as shared solar and battery storage initiatives.
   d. Provide First Nations communities with tailored support for off-grid renewable solutions and negotiations with energy companies.
   e. Integrate Local Energy Hubs with the work of the Net Zero Authority to ensure alignment with national decarbonisation strategies and community engagement initiatives.

Carried

Motion number 154 Newcastle City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to lead the delivery of place-based, whole-of-government policy and planning to support mining-affected regions in transitioning to net zero economies. This should include:

1. A clear vision and strategic plan for each mining-affected region's economic evolution, ensuring long-term prosperity and job creation.
2. A national coordinating entity with the authority to direct cross-government and agency efforts, reducing duplication and improving policy alignment.
3. Adequate funding and resources to support:
   a. Communities adversely impacted by the transition to a net zero economy through workforce retraining and economic diversification.
   b. The use of city and regional deals as mechanisms to attract investment and coordinate sustainable development.
4. Support for and investment in circular economy solutions, driving innovation, resource efficiency, and sustainable industry development.
5. Clear and certain planning pathways for the adaptive reuse of mining and industrial lands to create new, high-value jobs in renewable energy, technology, and advanced manufacturing.
6. A formal commitment to local government representation in decision-making processes affecting local and regional communities, ensuring transparency and community engagement.

Carried

Motion number 155 City of Perth WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to implement a national program to support renewable energy and energy efficiency in existing buildings to reduce carbon emissions, and lower living costs for vulnerable communities.

The program may include:

1. Coordinated efforts across the Australian Government, State, and local governments to scale retrofitting, especially for apartment buildings.
2. Funding programs, tax incentives, and grants to support retrofitting, and renewable energy interventions.
3. Policies and funding measures to promote retrofitting and renewable energy projects in the existing apartments through local government support.

The Assembly further calls for prioritising this climate and socio-economic opportunity to deliver comprehensive community benefits across the country.

Carried

Motion number 156 Maitland City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to directly support the acceleration of local government actions that address imminent and substantial job losses arising from large scale industry closures in regional economies rapidly transforming to net zero by:

1. Clearly identifying and establishing a single Federal Government Minister and Agency with responsibility for delivering funding and coordinating the provision of broader agency resources directly to Council led initiatives.
2. Directly investing in Council led, place-based initiatives that Pilot reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands and infrastructure to create urgently needed new employment lands.
3. De-risk industry investment and strategically inform and accelerate industry attraction, skills development and job creation.

Carried

Motion number 157 Cabonne Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support communities to become energy independent and resilient through renewable energy and ensure the transition considers reliability, sustainability and affordability in regional communities.

Carried

Motion number 158 Warrnambool City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a uniform Community Benefit Fund in each Australian municipality that hosts or directly supports large scale energy projects, to be administered by Local Government, and with mandatory contributions made by each developer.

Carried

Motion number 159 Wakefield Regional Council SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to prioritise its support for the establishment of a renewable fuel industry in Australia, with the aim of providing locally produced alternative fuels for industries such as heavy transport, mining, agriculture and construction (including local government civil construction), where electrification is not a realistic option.

Carried

Motion number 160 Paroo Shire Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to embed in its regulatory framework a compulsory Code of Conduct for the Australian Carbon Farming Industry to safeguard that carbon farming activities are environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, and economically viable.

Carried

At 5:00 pm the Assembly voted to continue debating motions for an additional 15 minutes.

The following (23) motions were debated at the NGA indicatively, as quorum was lost and therefore were referred to the ALGA Board for consideration.

Motion number 161 City of Cockburn WA

This National Assembly calls on the Australian Government to amend the National Construction Code and implement a blanket ban on the use of dark coloured roofing materials to alleviate the urban heat island effect (UHI), particularly in newer suburbs.
*Indicative lost (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

ENVIRONMENT

Motion number 162 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to urgently implement the National Established Weeds Priority (NEWP) framework to manage biosecurity (weeds) risks with an associated focus on updating the Australian Weeds Strategy 2017-2027 and Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity to focus on harmonisation of Biosecurity (Weeds) legislation across mainland States and Territories.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 163 Noosa Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review the *Waste Reduction Act* 2020, to better equip the Act to address the current and future circular economy needs and to address resource recovery and waste challenges. This includes the viability of soil remediation within the circular economy to encourage social and environmental best sustainable practice at local level to contribute to healthier communities, sustainable development, housing, and responsible resource management.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 164 Woollahra Municipal Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to step up its efforts to protect significant waterways and coastal waters by accelerating the rollout of state-of-the-art wastewater treatment systems and spearheading the establishment of new marine parks, particularly in and around urban coastal areas.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 165 Brisbane City Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to collect information through the Australian Census for data information about pet ownership, particularly around domestic animals (dogs, cats, chickens, birds, etc).
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 166 Narrabri Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to develop a nationally accessible Companion Animals Register.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 167 Bega Valley Shire Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with each State Government to develop Bi-lateral Agreements that allow the EPBC Act to "turn off" requirements of state based environmental legislation, when the same species or ecosystem type requires assessment under both Federal and State Legislation.

*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 168 Lake Macquarie City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a regulatory environment allowing for the adaptive reuse of mining related sites that balances future employment generation and environmental stewardship.

*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 169 Sunshine Coast Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase funding to local governments for litter management programs to address the environmental, amenity, and financial impacts of roadside litter by targeting products or services which generate common roadside waste such as plastics, wrappers, cigarettes and vapes.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 170 Loddon Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to put Basin communities at the heart of Basin Plan delivery and future water reform by ceasing the damaging water purchase programs in our irrigation districts. Water purchasing programs will lead to job losses, put food production in our region at risk and will add to the cost of living crisis. We call on the Australian Government to instead engage with communities and local governments to deliver a long-term sustainable future for food growing and manufacturing in the Basin, and to ensure improved environmental outcomes for all the Basin's valued riverine and floodplain ecosystems.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 173 Sunshine Coast Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to expand the support provided to local governments in fire ant eradication and suppression treatment areas to include financial support for resources allocated to meeting general biosecurity obligations for fire ants.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 174 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate for increased federal funding for urban greening initiatives, including tree planting programs and green space enhancements in local communities.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 175 Whitsunday Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate dedicated funding and resources for Local Governments to support the implementation of the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 176 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure that blackberries be considered as a priority weed and controlled for all Local Government Areas across Australia.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 177 Town of Bassendean WA

This National General Assembly:

1. Requests the Australian Government to take urgent action to legislate to restrict the sale nationally of Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs).
2. Requests the Australian Government, as a priority, to curtail the use of SGAR's in all Commonwealth national parks, reserves and property administered by the government and/or it's agents as a first step towards a legislative ban or restricted sale of SGAR's.

*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Motion number 178 Blacktown City Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Adopt broader legislative change to introduce right to repair laws
2. Adopt legislative change to mandate that electronic and electronic items have a repairability index
3. Remove GST from repair services.

*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 179 Noosa Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to commit to conducting a feasibility study to evaluate the implementation of a policy similar to the European Union's Urban Wastewater Treatment and Reuse framework, as part of Australia's efforts to achieve its Zero Pollution goals.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 180 Noosa Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to undertake a comprehensive review into the end of waste criteria for resource recovery products against the specification for materials used in federal, state, and local infrastructure projects.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 182 Town of Claremont WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state, territory, and local governments to:

1. Develop a National Recycled Materials Market Development Strategy that includes:
    a. Investment incentives for manufacturers using recycled content
    b. Mandatory recycled content procurement targets for all levels of government
    c. Research and development support for new recycled material applications
    d. Funding for regional recycling hubs that can achieve economies of scale
2. Establish a nationally consistent regulatory framework for the circular economy that:
    a. Harmonises definitions, standards, and end-of-waste criteria across jurisdictions
    b. Implements a national contamination standard for recyclable materials
    c. Streamlines approval processes for recycling facilities and technologies
    d. Expands mandatory product stewardship schemes for priority materials
3. Create a dedicated National Organics Recovery Program that:
    a. Supports the expansion of Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection systems
    b. Develops nationally consistent quality standards for processed organics
    c. Invests in regional-scale organics processing infrastructure
    D. Removes regulatory barriers to beneficial use of processed organics in agriculture, landscaping, and land rehabilitation.

<u>*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)</u>

Motion number 183 Strathfield Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Develop a national Circular Economy Strategy with targeted funding and regulatory support for local governments.
2. Provide direct financial assistance to local councils to invest in circular economy initiatives, including infrastructure, waste reduction programs, and local circular business partnerships.
3. Strengthen producer responsibility schemes to reduce waste at its source and incentivise circular design.
4. Standardise national procurement policies to prioritise recycled and sustainable materials across all levels of government.
5. Facilitate knowledge-sharing networks and provide capacity-building support for councils to implement circular economy principles effectively.

*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

OTHER ISSUES

Motion number 186 Darebin City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

- Confirm its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of Agenda 2030.
- Deliver a program to support local governments to adopt the UN SDG Framework and integrate consideration of the Goals into Council Plans and other key strategic documents.
- Deliver a grant program to support local governments to fund actions aligned with the SDG commitments developed through their strategic objectives.
- Create a reporting framework that local government can participate in to record and demonstrate the collective action on the SDGs across the country.

*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 187 Tamworth Regional Council NSW

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to immediately apply resources to investigate and thwart the increases in cigarette and vape stores establishing in the regions around Australia selling illegal foreign products harmful to the health of Australians and detrimental to the Commonwealth's taxation revenues and established businesses that currently sell legal products.
*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)

Motion number 192 City of Greater Dandenong VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Acknowledge Greater Dandenong City Council as Secretariat of the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum on behalf of the following councils that are members:
   a. Executive Members - Blacktown City Council, Brimbank City Council, Casey City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Kingston City Council, Monash City Council, Merri-bek City Council, Wyndham City Council, Yarra City Council
   b. General Members - Ararat Rural City Council, City of Ballarat, Banyule City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Hawkesbury City Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Inner West Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Newcastle City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Orange City Council, City of Port Adelaide Enfield, Randwick City Council, Surf Coast Shire, City of West Torrens, City of Whittlesea; and
   c. Supporter Councils - Albury City Council, City of Greater Bendigo, Cardinia Shire Council, City of Greater Geelong, City of Port Phillip, City of Hobart, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Queenscliff Borough Council, Wellington Shire Council, City of Wagga Wagga, and
2. Provide people seeking asylum with a valid visa and the opportunity to work while they await decisions on their protection application, including automating the bridging renewal process. By providing people work rights, they can contribute skills to Australia, remain independent in society and stay engaged in the asylum process.
3. Expand the eligibility criteria of the Status Resolution Support Services program to ensure people's basic needs are met, including health care, accommodation, crisis support, so people in need can live safely and not in destitution and deep poverty.
4. Grant permanent visas to people who have been previously refused a visa via the unfair 'Fast Track' process. Ending the uncertainty, by providing a pathway to permanency to the 7,700 people, will at last resolve the matter, enabling them to rebuild their lives.

<u>*Indicative carried (noting there was no quorum present for the vote)</u>

At 5:15 pm the additional time allocated for debate had expired and the below (9) motions were resolved to be sent to the ALGA Board for consideration.

The following motions were not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 171 Nillumbik Shire Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase grant funding and investment of infrastructure to support the delivery of their National Feral Deer Action Plan 2023, which aims to limit the spread of feral deer into new areas and reduce their negative impacts on agriculture, communities and the environment.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 172 Cabonne Council NSW

That this National General Assembly call on Australian Government to develop a national water strategy in conjunction with local government, state and territory government and agencies to increase its commitment to water security to ensure local water authorities can future-proof water resources, preparing for droughts and building sustainable water networks.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 181 Glen Innes Severn Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support implementation of the Australian Biochar Industry 2030 Roadmap, the world's first such roadmap to provide concurrent action on energy, climate, sustainability and circular economy across the Australian economy, providing potential new 'green' jobs in regional and urban communities, and upcycling more than 50 million tonnes per year of carbon-based biowastes into valuable biochar for agriculture and industry, and liquids and syngas for energy and renewable fuels. Supporting the roadmap also helps satisfy recommendations of the Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group's (CEMAG) final report to prioritise market development for biochar and would be in line with significant international movements such as in Denmark.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 184 City of Darwin NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to review regional waste processing to identify opportunities for more innovative waste processing approaches by councils, including waste aggregation and transfers to more advanced recycling facilities and alternative technology facilities including waste to energy.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 185 Hume City Council VIC

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to better support the community that is suffering due to increased cost of living expenses.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 188 City of Adelaide SA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government, in the context of Scope 3 of the Australian Sustainability Reporting Standards - Disclosure of Climate-related Financial Information, to amend its mandate requiring tenancy only in 6-star rated new builds, so that, subject to conversion, existing building stock could qualify for being leased as office space for Commonwealth agencies, to serve the dual purpose of:

1. Incentivising inner city property owners to invest in renovation and conversion of existing building stock, and
2. Avoiding the continued and increasing loss of carbon embodied in existing buildings.

Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 189 City of Melbourne VIC

That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government's Productivity Commission to investigate the current and future productivity of Australia's cities and towns, and their competitiveness compared to global peers. Specifically, this should include the efficiency and appropriateness of current finance and governance arrangements as it relates to infrastructure and service delivery.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

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Motion number 190 South Burnett Regional Council QLD

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to reduce red tape and regulations imposed upon non-profit organisations. For example, food safety standards - lesser standard of compliance for NFP groups, insurance, compliance, minimise Financial Reporting.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

Motion number 191 Snowy Valleys Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to hold a Royal Commission into the handling of COVID-19.
Motion not debated at the NGA 225 given quorum was lost and time for debate expired.

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Cost Shifting Update

Councillor Meeting

Monday 22 September 2025

1

Background

Cost shifting has become a significant structural issue in the local government sector over a long period. Having arisen and incrementally impacting the sector when the Commonwealth or State Government:

- Transfers service responsibilities to local government without adequate ongoing funding.

- Withdraws from direct service delivery or reduces grants, expecting councils to fill the gap.

- Imposes regulatory or compliance obligations on councils without covering costs.

A 2022 ALGA report estimated that cost shifting represents between 10% - 20% of Council operating budgets nationally.

Since then, two parliamentary inquiries have taken place at a State and Federal level and both reports highlight the financial constraints faced by the sector. Cost Shifting just exacerbates this issue whilst community expectations continue to rise.

Discussion

Like any local government authority, Maroondah is not immune to the impacts of cost shifting. Council finances have been eroded by declining funding sources for services that were originally fully or partially funded by State and Federal Governments. The table below notes key services at Maroondah, the cost to Council for those services, and the Council's percentage contribution to the overall cost to deliver these services:

Area	Details	Estimated Impact	Percentage Of Service Funded by Council	Historically	Cost to Council Annually (Beyond Agreed/ Historic Funding)
School Crossing Supervisors	Partial withdrawal of State subsidies.	$1M	65%	50/50	$240K
Maternal Child Health	Increased service demand not matched by state funding indexation.	$1.6M	53%	Largely by State Government under shared arrangements.	$1.6M
Emergency Management	Council bares cost of local coordination and recovery roles.	$149K	100%	No historical agreement.	$149K
Immunisation	Gov funding for Council $10 approx. for a vaccine. Only reimbursed approximately 60 - 65% of total costs.	$329K	78%	State	$329K

2

Area	Details	Estimated Impact	Percentage Of Service Funded by Council	Historically	Cost to Council Annually (Beyond Agreed/ Historic Funding)
	Has only risen by index in last 15 years.				
Mowing, Reactive Pruning, Graffiti Removal	3% increase is estimated for 25/26. Different services like mowing, pruning and graffiti removal is provided on behalf on various authorities such as VIC Roads, PTV (Public Transport Authority), Schools, Molan St AUSNET.	$286K	90%	Covering marginal component of what it costs Council.	$286K
CCTV	CCTV maintenance and installation is related to the safety of the community that should be managed by VIC Police	$40K	100%	No historical agreement.	$40K
Libraries	Funded by Council and partially funded directly by the State.	$3.6M	83%	50/50.	$1.46M
Early Childhood Services	Historic arrangements in place that have shifted over time.	$367K	88%	50/50	$158K
Kindergarten Services Support	No historical agreement, however, a State responsibility.	$155K	54%	No historical agreement.	$155K

3

Area	Details	Estimated Impact	Percentage Of Service Funded by Council	Historically	Cost to Council Annually (Beyond Agreed/ Historic Funding)
Aged & Disability	Only Grant we budgeted to receive is for the Food services from year 25/26.	$567K	61%	State was to carry majority of the burden.	$567K
Infringements	Infringement lodgement cost to Fines Victoria is about 50% of actual Infringement payment returned in income	$820K	100%	As a result of State taking their cut, of what they are collecting, rather than going to debt collection.	$820K
TOTAL		**$8.913M**			**$5.8M**

Other Items of Note

Area	Details	Estimated/Potential Impact	%
Waste Reform Implementation	Glass bin roll-out and bin lid replacement implementation	$4M	90%+
Waste Reform Annual Impact (Separate Glass Service Pick-Up)	The reform then requires regular pick-up of a separate glass service, that will require separate bins, trucks and drop-offs.	$1.3M	100%
Landfill Levy	Cost of processing waste and levy collected by State without direct benefit to LG Sector	$3.3M	100%
TOTAL		**$8.6M+**	

What are the Impacts on Council

- Increased reliance on rate revenue.

- Reduction in discretionary services.

- Challenges in maintaining long-term financial sustainability.

- Community expectations mismatch when responsibilities are not clearly understood.

4

Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability

There is a relevance of the outcomes of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability and cost shifting. The inquiry identified that the role of the sector has expanded exponentially beyond what historically was known as the three Rs - rates, roads and rubbish. Becoming more about four P's such as People, Places, Participation and Partnerships. Increasingly being relied upon to deliver services and infrastructure which was traditionally delivered by other tiers of government. In the report itself, it highlighted that many of the new roles and responsibilities are a consequence of the practice of cost shifting.

Throughout the inquiry, the Committee received substantial evidence through submissions and at public hearings on how local government financial sustainability and funding frameworks were being impacted by evolving infrastructure requirements, service delivery obligations and cost shifting.

The Committee heard that some LGAs have increasingly taken on responsibility for the management of health, aged care and childcare, and mental health related services. LGAs have also been playing an increasing regulatory role in the areas of development and infrastructure/asset management and planning, housing, environmental biodiversity/ conservation requirements, and climate adaptation management (Parliament of Australia, 2025).

The interim report clearly highlights cost shifting as a key driver of the financial impacts and challenges being faced by the sector across the country.
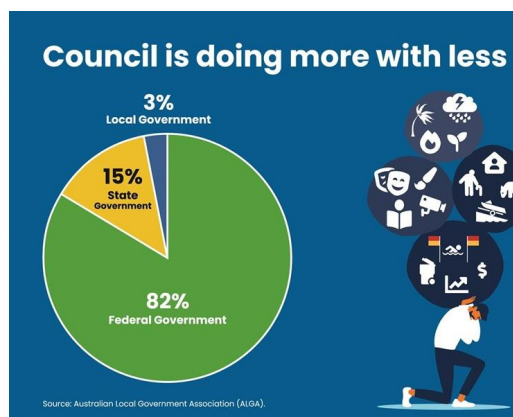
With some of the key issues identified:

- There is no formal, enforceable funding agreement between state and local government for most shared services.

- Funding arrangements are often historical "handshakes" without legal backing, allowing the state to progressively to withdraw.

- State policy reforms frequently add new unfunded mandates (e.g. waste reforms, emergency management roles).

Economic and Legislative Framing

- **Vertical Fiscal Imbalance (VFI) -** Council's raise approximately 3.5% of all taxes but we deliver 20-25% of public services by volume.

  The graph below illustrates this, in terms of the taxation pie across three tiers of government, yet the services that the local government sector is expected to deliver for its communities:

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Council is doing more with less

3% Local Government
15% State Government
82% Federal Government

Source: Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

- **LGA 2020 Context -** While the act drives and enforces rate capping and fiscal responsibility placed on local government, it does not enshrine funding commitments from the state, meaning cost-shifting is legally possible without breach.

- **Population Growth Pressures and Housing Targets -** Again, targets and natural growth that Councils such as Maroondah must face, however, there is no proportional state/federal funding adjustments.

Advocacy and Sector Alignment

Council has continued to advocate through:

- FinPro

- MAV and ALGA Motions

- Direct correspondence to local MPs and Ministers, and where applicable, citing critical financial information

Further alignment with sector bodies can strengthen advocacy to:

- Restore State funding for mandated services.

- Establish cost sharing frameworks

- Requiring regulatory impact statements on any new reforms that involve local government.

6

Conclusion/Next Steps

Cost Shifting has played a large part or has even been a root cause to some of the financial challenges that the sector is facing. With the above information, it is critical that Council keeps the discussion front and centre, whilst ensuring the community is aware of the impacts cost shifting has on its Council. As well as this, where advocacy opportunities arise, that we are equipped to talk to these points and highlight the impacts it has on Council finances.

Next options for Councils consideration include:

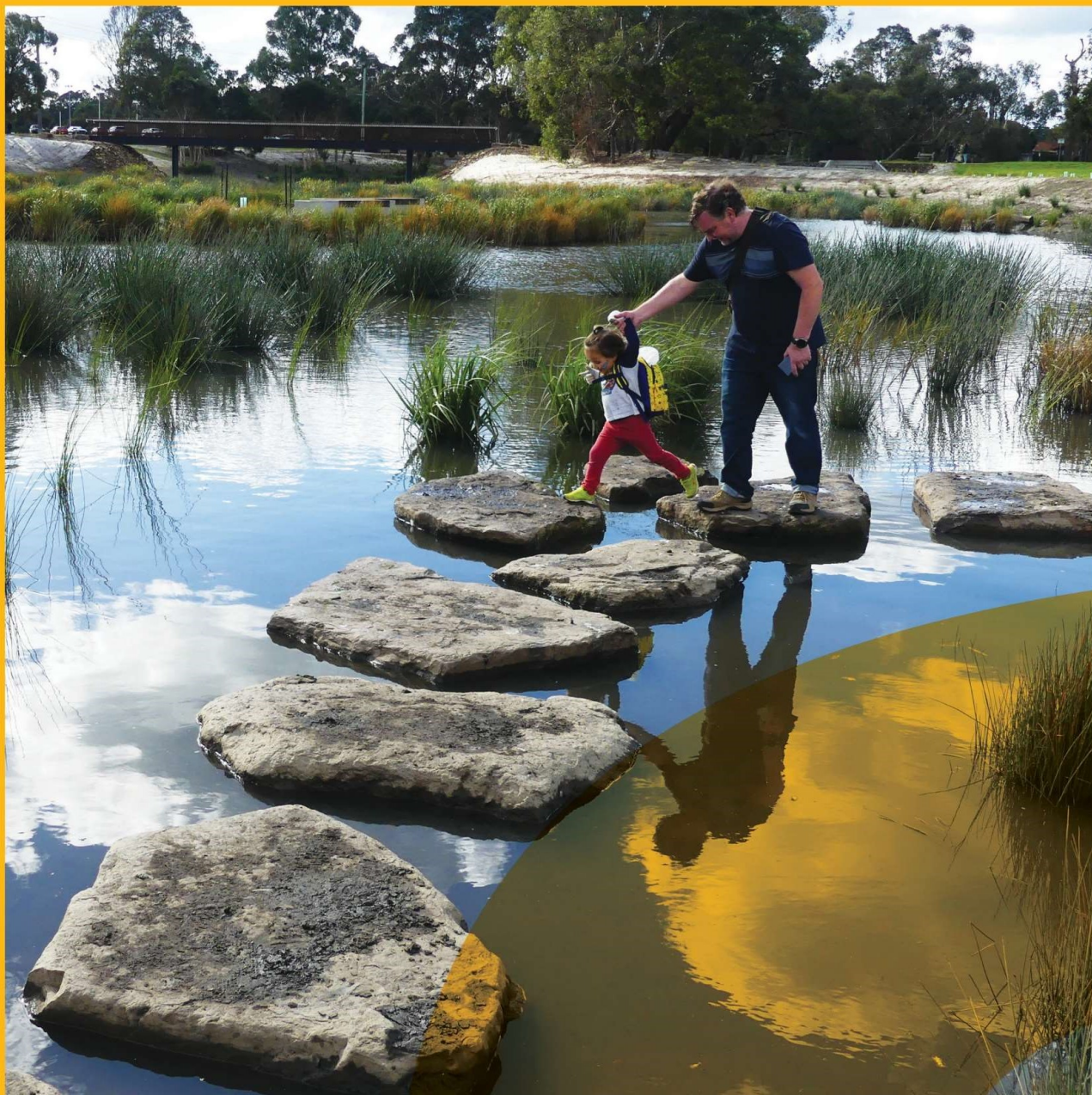| Options	Description
Continue current advocacy	Maintain existing sector collaboration.
Develop cost-shifting position paper	Clearly outline local impacts for targeted advocacy (partially included in this report).
Review State/Federal services that have been shifted to LG	Reassess non-core service models where funding is not adequate from other levels of government (this is a current practice and is already in place).
Pilot joint service models	Share responsibilities across councils. This aligns with the objectives of the Eastern Region Group of Councils, selecting services that would assist in mitigating cost-shifting impacts (libraries is a good example)

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MAROONDAH
2050 | Maroondah City Council

Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031

Maroondah Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 Update

Working towards a healthy, inclusive and connected community

Contents

Executive summary

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025) (the Strategy)* is Council's key social environment strategic plan that describes how Council and partners will work towards enhanced community health and wellbeing, liveability, and resilience over 10 years from 2021-2031. The Strategy is also Maroondah's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

In accordance with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, Council is required to prepare a health and wellbeing planning document every four years, within 12 months of general council elections. The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* meets these statutory requirements and is an updated version of the previous *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031.* As a requirement of good practice and in response to the Victorian Public Health Act 2008, the Strategy has been updated to

- incorporate recent community consultation and feedback,
- update the data and research, and,
- review the priority actions in line with the above.

The Strategy outlines a vision for the future social environment of the municipality supporting the desired outcomes within *Maroondah 2050- Our future together*. Through this Strategy and supporting action plans, Council and its partners will work towards a common agenda that is evidence informed, community driven and seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of Maroondah residents.

In addition, Council also has a range of other supporting strategic documents that guide service delivery for population cohorts, age groups, enabling activities and community issues.
These include strategic documents in relation to children and families, young people, ageing residents, people with a disability, gender equity, arts and culture, reconciliation, physical activity, affordable housing, and gambling.

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* was originally developed in 2021 through extensive community engagement, stakeholder consultation, and background research and this version has been updated with 2025 engagement, consultation, data, and research. This work has helped to inform areas of population health that are key priorities to address, community aspirations and needs and gaps in service provision and support within our community. The impacts of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the Maroondah community have also been considered to incorporate long-term directions for community recovery. Details on the background research findings, community feedback and the social health profile can be found in the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy Background Report - (Update 2025)*.

The background research and community engagement has led to an expanded perspective of community health that incorporates three broad and interconnected community outcomes of: community health and wellbeing, liveability, and resilience.

To support the efforts towards these three interrelated community outcomes, a set of six focus areas are identified: healthy lifestyles, liveable neighbourhoods, safe communities, social inclusion, embracing diversity and social harms. These focus areas form the basis of this Strategy and Council will continue to develop partnerships across a wide range of community service agencies, community organisations and groups, and community members to facilitate successful implementation.

To articulate the specific actions of Council in working towards the key priorities in this Strategy, a number of action plans will be developed and implemented. These associated action plans, including the *Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2025-2029,* will highlight the short-medium term priorities of Council in working towards the Strategy and will be reviewed regularly during its lifespan to ensure they are responsive to community needs.

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* provides a clear framework and common agenda for Council and its partners to collectively work on over 10 years to enhance the health and wellbeing, liveability, and resilience of our community.

A message from our Councillors

We are pleased to present the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (2025 update)*

The Strategy is Council's key social environment strategic plan that describes how Council and partners will work towards achieving enhanced community wellbeing, liveability, and resilience over the next 10 years. In 2031, Maroondah will be a liveable, healthy, and resilient community where everyone can belong, thrive, and grow.

The Strategy is guided by the community vision for Maroondah as outlined in *Maroondah 2050 - Our future together* and fulfils the statutory requirements of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 as Maroondah's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The Maroondah 2050 Community Vision was adopted in May 2025 following extensive research, and community and stakeholder consultation. It reflects emerging trends, community needs and aspirations. The Vision is the foundation from which Council shapes all its long-term plans for the municipality.

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (2025 update)* has been developed through extensive community engagement, stakeholder consultation, and analysis of factors that influence the health, wellbeing, liveability, and resilience of the Maroondah community.

Council's contribution to delivery of this Strategy will be highlighted in a range of supporting action plans, including those with a focus on health and wellbeing, disability, children and families, and positive ageing.

These action plans will be revised periodically to enable adaptation to emerging community needs and aspirations over its lifespan.

Through the implementation of this Strategy, Council will continue to take a lead role in ensuring our city remains a great place to live, work, play and visit.

Acknowledgment of Country

We, in the spirit of Reconciliation, acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land now known as the City of Maroondah, where Indigenous Australians have performed age old ceremonies. We acknowledge and respect their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection to it. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging

MAROONDAH LIVEABILITY WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE STRATEGY 2021-2031 (2025 UPDATE) **| 6**

Background

Our city

The City of Maroondah covers a land area of 61.4 square kilometres in Melbourne's outer east, 25 kilometres from the Central Business District.

The area is an urban residential municipality, with an estimated population of 119,354 residents and 44,167 households with an average of 2.53 people per household.

The first settlers to the area prior to European colonisation were the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin nation approximately 60,000 years ago.

The Wurundjeri People have a deep spiritual connection to the land and a unique ability to care for Country.

The City of Maroondah includes the suburbs of Bayswater North, Croydon, Croydon Hills, Croydon North, Croydon South, Heathmont, Kilsyth South, Ringwood, Ringwood East, Ringwood North, and Warranwood. The city also includes small sections of Kilsyth, Park Orchards, Vermont, and Wonga Park.

Maroondah has four activity centres at Croydon, Ringwood, Heathmont, and Ringwood East with Ringwood being one of the largest in Melbourne. Maroondah has the strategic advantage of being located at the north-eastern junction of the Eastern Freeway - East Link corridor. There are two train lines and a large number of bus routes linking the city with other regions. Our sustainable transport links continue to expand, with on-road cycling paths and 40 kilometres of shared trails, including the Mullum Mullum Creek Trail, the East Link Trail, the Tarralla Creek Trail, and the Dandenong Creek Trail.

In addition, a range of key service and retail precincts are clustered along the Maroondah Highway corridor and 31 neighbourhood, community and local shopping centres are spread throughout the municipality.

Over 10,100 businesses operate within the city, with 97.5% of these being small businesses employing less than 20 people. Most businesses (61.5%) by number are in the construction; professional, scientific & technical services; rental, hiring & real estate services; retail; and health care & social assistance. The top sectors for jobs (64.6%) are health care & social assistance, retail trade, manufacturing; construction; and education & training.

Compared with metropolitan Melbourne, Maroondah has a slightly higher proportion of residents aged 50 and over and a lower proportion of residents aged between 20 to 34 years.

Maroondah is an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse community. About one in four Maroondah residents were born overseas. The most common countries of birth for overseas residents are England, China, India, Myanmar, and Malaysia.

With little remaining land available for greenfield residential development, future population growth will be stimulated by housing consolidation.

MAROONDAH LIVEABILITY WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE STRATEGY 2021-2031 (2025 UPDATE) **| 7**

Strategic context

The Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025) is a long-term strategic plan that outlines a vision for the future social environment of the municipality supporting the desired outcomes within our *Maroondah 2050* Community Vision. Through this strategy and supporting action plans, Council and its partners will continue to strive towards enhancing the health and wellbeing, liveability, and resilience of our community.

Maroondah 2050: Our future together

Maroondah is a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community, striving for a green, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.

The Maroondah 2050 Community Vision describes our community's aspirations for the future of Maroondah looking ahead to the year 2050.

It is a vision that is unique to Maroondah. It speaks to:

- The way our community wants to feel - safe and included,
- How they want the municipality to be - vibrant and green, and
- What they want to strive for - a prosperous and sustainable future for all.

Future outcomes we are working towards

To bring the Maroondah 2050 Community Vision to life, and focus the work of Council, five outcome areas have been identified.

A healthy, inclusive, and connected community	A safe and liveable community	A green and sustainable community	A vibrant and prosperous community	A well-governed and empowered community

Guiding principles

In delivering on the outcome areas the following guiding principles were identified by the Maroondah Community Panel to shape the services, functions, and activities of Council.

- Affordable
- Accessible
- Inclusive
- Liveable
- Sustainable

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027

In Victoria, the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 gives state and local government specific responsibilities to plan for and contribute to protecting and improving community health and wellbeing. The Act requires a State public health and wellbeing plan and municipal public health and wellbeing plans to be prepared sequentially every four years. These plans inform each other and provide the basis for an integrated planning approach in Victoria.

MAROONDAH LIVEABILITY WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE STRATEGY 2021-2031 (2025 UPDATE) **| 8**

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 identified 10 priority areas as seen below. The Plan recognises key links between a number of these priority areas, including recognition that many actions to increase active living and healthy eating can contribute to reducing climate change.

Where relevant to its role and local community needs, Council will seek to work in partnership with other agencies to support the areas of priority and focus highlighted in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027.

- Improving sexual and reproductive health
- Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use
- Improving wellbeing
- Increasing healthy eating
- Increasing active living
- Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use
- Tackling climate change and its impacts on health
- Preventing all forms of violence
- Decreasing antimicrobial resistance across human and animal health
- Reducing injury

Maroondah's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

The Strategy along with the *Background Research Report-Update 2025*, is also a statutory document that has been prepared in accordance with requirements set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. This Act requires Council to prepare a health and wellbeing planning document every four years, within 12 months of general council elections.

The Act requires that this document describes how Council and its partners will work towards achieving maximum health and wellbeing for our community over the next four years.

The Act requires that the plan must:

1. Include an examination of the data about health status and health determinants in the municipal district.

2. Identify goals and strategies based on evidence for creating a local community in which people can achieve maximum health.

3. Provide for involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the public health plan.

4. Specify how Council will work in partnership with the Department of Health and other agencies undertaking public health initiatives, projects, and programs to achieve the goals identified in the plan.

5. Be consistent with the Council Plan and the Municipal Strategic Statement.

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031(Update 2025)* and the *Background Research Report (Update 2025)* meets these statutory requirements and is an update of the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031*.

In updating this Strategy and our response to the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027,* six focus areas have been identified. The focus areas and the strategic priorities for each of them respond to the research and community consultation and align with *Maroondah 2050 Community Vision*.

What we mean by community health and wellbeing, liveability and resilience

One aim of this Strategy is to integrate and align the broad domains of wellbeing, liveability, and resilience as they relate to and impact community health and wellbeing. Whilst historical health planning in local government has focused primarily on the social determinants of health, it is increasingly recognised that wellbeing, liveability, and resilience are broader concepts that include the social determinants and together, play key roles in enabling people to live their best lives.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a concept that encompasses the social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions that people need to flourish and fulfil their potential. While there are many definitions and models of wellbeing, this Strategy is based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition that considers wellbeing as a state in which every individual realises their potential, can cope with normal stresses of life and work productively, and contribute to their community.

Wellbeing is considered a state of equilibrium that balances physical wellbeing, resources, psychological wellbeing, good relationships, and freedom and effectiveness in action. This 'state of equilibrium' or balance is affected by life events and challenges. Stable wellbeing is achieved when individuals have the psychological, social, and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social, and/or physical challenge. In more recent years, wellbeing has been considered and measured across age group cohorts, different geographic scales, and population groups.

Wellbeing is measured both subjectively and objectively. Subjective wellbeing is based on how an individual evaluates their life and is determined by their own assessment of domains such as standard of living, personal health, achievements in life, personal relationships, personal safety, community connectedness, future security, and spirituality/religion. Objective wellbeing focuses more on measuring the observable conditions that affect an individual's life such as life expectancy, income, nutrition, employment, education, and democratic participation.

Council's background research, data analysis and community engagement highlighted five key wellbeing areas of focus in Maroondah: community safety, healthy lifestyles, socially inclusive communities, open space, and environmental sustainability.

Liveability

Liveability links the importance of place to community health and wellbeing, sustainability, and productivity through consideration of how natural and built environments, including availability and access to amenities, can support people's quality of life. The concept of 'liveability' is experienced differently by various population groups and liveability varies over time. At an individual level, liveability is the extent to which we enjoy the quality of life afforded by the place we reside, while at a community level it reflects the degree to which a place offers opportunities for the community to enjoy its attributes.

Council's research for this Strategy identified the key factors that contribute to the liveability of a community. These include shared physical features of the natural built and economic environment; availability of healthy environments for home, work, and play; services provided to support people in their daily lives; socio-cultural features of a place including social cohesion and safety; and the perceived reputation of an area.

Examples of key contributors to community liveability include employment, food, housing, public open space, transport, walkability, and social infrastructure.

The liveability of a place contributes to the desirability and attractiveness of that place and has both a direct and indirect influence on community health and wellbeing. Liveable communities create conditions that optimise health and wellbeing outcomes for people by influencing the social determinants of health. The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre identifies the following domains of liveability that contribute to the

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health and wellbeing of a community: crime and safety; education; employment and income; health and social services; housing; leisure and culture; local food and other goods; natural environments; public open space; transport; and social cohesion and local democracy.

Examples include the provision of supportive infrastructure; creating a 'sense of community' and social support; reducing crime rates and improving perceptions of safety; facilitating education opportunities and providing access to open space.

Council's background research, data analysis and community engagement highlighted six key areas of focus for liveability in Maroondah: alcohol environments, food environments, community connectedness, employment, open space, and housing.

Resilience

Resilience describes a desired state to cope effectively with challenging events for individuals, households, communities, and organisations. Individual resilience refers to the ability to cope with personal challenges, while collective community resilience relates to how a community remains connected and functional when faced with societal level challenges such as natural disasters and pandemics.

Resilience is measured against seven community resilience characteristics of being: safe and well; connected, included, and empowered; a dynamic and diverse local economy; sustainable built and natural environment, culturally rich and vibrant; democratic and engaged; and reflective and aware. Communities that are resilient typically have a strong economy, good access to services and infrastructure, ample quality open space environments, low rates of crime, positive social interaction and inclusion, strong institutions and governance, and positive leadership.

Resilience can be built by reducing vulnerability and empowering people to be well-resourced, connected, and prepared. Strengthening our wellbeing (e.g., physical, and mental health), connection (e.g., personal networks and relationships to the neighbourhood), knowledge (e.g., local, and shared knowledge) and security (e.g., adequate shelter and personal safety) can increase our resilience.

Council's background research, data analysis and community engagement highlighted a broad range of focus in the social, built, natural and economic environments to enhance community resilience in Maroondah. Some examples include ensuring construction is well designed and accessible; maintaining opportunities for social inclusion and connection; and nurturing vibrant local businesses.

The role of local government in facilitating community health and wellbeing, liveability and resilience

Local government is uniquely placed and plays a particularly significant role in enhancing community health and wellbeing, liveability and resilience.

Historically local governments have had responsibility for delivering community services such as immunisation, early years and childcare services, youth, and aged care services; regulating behaviour in public places and the handling of food; disposing of waste; building community facilities; and maintaining our public places and spaces.

These roles are increasingly more dynamic and require councils to collaborate with partner agencies to collectively shape community wellbeing, liveability and resilience at individual, neighbourhood, municipal and regional levels.

Through integrated strategic planning, agile and responsive service delivery, building partnerships with local stakeholders, and empowering community members, local government works to build social capital, create community capacity, address the social determinants of health, and enhance the places and spaces where people live, work and play.

In accordance with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, the function of local government, is to seek to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within a municipality by:

- Creating an environment which supports the health of members of the local community and strengthens the capacity of the community and individuals to achieve better health by initiating, supporting, and managing public health planning processes at the local government level
- Developing and implementing public health policies and programs within the municipal district
- Developing and enforcing up-to-date public health standards and intervening if the health of people within the municipal district is affected
- Facilitating and supporting local agencies whose work has an impact on public health and wellbeing to improve public health and wellbeing in the local community
- Coordinating and providing immunisation services to children living or being educated within the municipal district
- Ensuring that the municipal district is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.

A snapshot of just some of the services provided by Council to facilitate and enhance community health and wellbeing, liveability and resilience are highlighted in the table below:

Wellbeing	Liveability	Resilience
- Providing access to sport and recreation facilities - Delivering maternal and child health services - Enabling early childhood education - Empowering and supporting youth and young adults - Supporting vulnerable residents - Promoting lifelong learning and social connection through community houses	- Enhancing and maintaining open space, bushland, and reserves - Providing and enhancing shared trails, footpaths, and roads - Planning for changes to land use - Promoting and activating liveable neighbourhoods - Supporting local businesses and shopping strips - Facilitating community gardens	- Leading emergency management preparation, response, relief, and recovery - Providing community grants to support local groups and organisations - Mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change - Planning for the future housing needs of the community - Ensuring a financially sustainable approach to service delivery

• Delivering community wellbeing activities, events, and programs	• Providing public art, access to galleries and community involvement in arts and cultural activities • Encouraging connection to First Peoples cultures	

Additional frameworks

In addition to *Maroondah 2050 Community Vision* and the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027* as detailed above, several other frameworks have informed this Strategy to support the enhancement of community health and wellbeing, liveability, and resilience outcomes in the municipality.

Social determinants of health

The social conditions in which people are born, live and work are considered important determinants of their health outcomes. The health advantages and disadvantages experienced by people are shaped by their broader social and economic conditions. The Framework suggests that inequalities in health appear in the form of a 'social gradient of health' that relates a person's socioeconomic position to their overall health and wellbeing outcomes.

Factors such as income, education, housing, conditions of employment, power, and social support act to strengthen or undermine the health of individuals and communities. Because of their potent and underlying effects, these health-determining factors are known as the 'social determinants of health.' The World Health Organisation (WHO) has described social determinants as the circumstances in which people grow, live, work, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness.

PERMA+

While the identification and treatment of mental health problems is critically important for those facing mental illness, it provides an incomplete picture of mental health. Positive psychology is a complementary approach that shifts the focus from what is clinically wrong, to the promotion of wellbeing and the creation of a satisfying life filled with meaning, pleasure, engagement, positive relationships, accomplishment, and health. Positive Psychology, also referred to as Wellbeing Science, is the scientific study of human flourishing, and an applied approach to optimal functioning. It has also been defined as the study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities, and organisations to thrive.

The components of PERMA+ (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment PLUS Optimism, Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Sleep) provide a framework to understand and cultivate wellbeing. When introduced effectively, positive psychology provides strong scientific evidence about what works to improve wellbeing at both an individual and community level.

The PERMA+ model has been central to Council's partnership with Communities of Wellbeing Inc. over recent years. Established in 2015, Communities of Wellbeing Inc collaborates with local stakeholders across a range of settings to build capability, wellbeing literacy and social connections to enable communities to flourish.

Communities of Wellbeing Inc. works across five key areas of impact in Maroondah: home and family life, financial life, learning and education, work life, and social and public life. One key area of impact has involved the Maroondah Positive Education Network which has seen teachers and students embed wellbeing into the curriculum and culture of local schools.

P E R M A +

POSITIVE EMOTIONS   ENGAGEMENT   RELATIONSHIPS   MEANING   ACCOMPLISHMENT   PLUS

Place Planning for Liveable Neighbourhoods

The Place Planning for Liveable Neighbourhoods project (the 'Project') focuses on better planning of our local activity centres to create places that are more liveable, where people can connect with their community, attract investment, and support local resilience. Council is seeking community input to ensure that local aspirations are included in future planning.

Croydon South and Ringwood North have been chosen as the first focus areas for the Project due to their potential to improve the quality of life for local communities within a walkable area and to build on previous community projects. The Project aims to identify opportunities to bring social, economic, and environmental benefits to local neighbourhoods. The Project aligns with the 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' focus area of this Strategy.

Liveable neighbourhoods can shape the way we live, feel, enjoy, and experience our community and are important for health and wellbeing. Liveable neighbourhoods are safe, attractive, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. They aim to support 'living locally' by planning for walkable, well-serviced places where Maroondah residents can meet their needs. The outcomes of the Project seek to improve Council's approach to planning for liveable neighbourhoods and are intended to be replicated across the municipality.

What the evidence tells us

Significant and comprehensive background research was undertaken into a range of topics, issues and population health needs to inform this Strategy. Research has focused on the impacts on the Maroondah community where data has been available but has also sought to understand the broader national and international context through a literature review.

Comprehensive community consultation has also informed the Strategy focus areas and strategic priorities that support the three outcome areas of health and wellbeing, liveability, and resilience.

Details of the research and community consultation results that have informed this Strategy can be found in the *Background Research Report: Liveability, Wellbeing, and Resilience Strategy (Update 2025)* that is a companion document to this Strategy.

A Strategy for Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience in Maroondah

Our community vision

Maroondah is a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community, striving for a green, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.

Our key focus areas

To deliver this vision and support the overall vision of Maroondah 2050 - Our future together, six focus areas have been developed (see diagram below) that will create a framework for actions that Council will undertake to achieve this vision.

Our focus areas and priorities

Healthy Lifestyles

In 2031 Maroondah will be a healthy and active community where all people are physically and mentally well.

The research tells us

Healthy lifestyles refer to positive outcomes that are achieved through behaviours that promote health, including reducing the risk of chronic illness and disease and improving overall physical and mental wellbeing. Healthy lifestyles can help to improve happiness and satisfaction in life, reduce our risk of chronic illness and disease, improve life expectancy, and maintain good mental health. Healthy lifestyles are directly influenced by physical and mental wellbeing, physical activity, and social interaction, along with consumption of healthy food and drinks.

Our health is also strongly linked to external environmental factors. Individual lifestyle behaviours are affected and shaped by the conditions and environment in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age.

Physical inactivity significantly increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, breast and colon cancer, mental health issues, experiencing falls and musculoskeletal conditions.
Spending time in nature has been shown to have many positive effects on physical, social, and mental health. However, our changing climate has significant consequences for the environment and for public health, wellbeing, and safety. The direct and indirect impacts of climate change are likely to exacerbate existing public health risks and represent a substantial risk to human health.

Did you know?

- The percentage of adults in Maroondah who are obese or overweight increased from 52% in 2017 to 56.7% in 2023. Men are 20% more likely than women to be obese or overweight.

- In 2023 over 20% of Maroondah residents reported experiencing high to very high levels of psychological distress. And 20% sought professional help for a mental health problem. However, men in Maroondah are less likely to have sought professional help for a mental health problem (7%), compared to women in Maroondah (22%) and men in Victoria (14%).

- In 2023 almost 16% of Maroondah's adult population reported that they undertook no physical activity at all while 47% reported that they undertook less than the recommended amount of 150 minutes per week.

Our community said

Our community values enhanced physical and mental health and wellbeing facilitated by exercise, healthy eating, and access to health services. There is an understanding that healthy lifestyles, which include being socially connected and with opportunities to connect with nature, lead to improved wellbeing and reduced illness. Mental health within the community was particularly impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the community desire a greater focus on mental health in Council's service delivery, programs, and events.

The community also highlighted the need for more affordable facilities, free outdoor recreation options as well as active and passive activities that promote health and wellbeing for all. Health and wellbeing facilities, spaces, services, programs, and events provided by Council, and its partners, are highly regarded. Community members highlighted that Council should further raise awareness of what is on offer within the Maroondah community to enhance residents' health and wellbeing. The community suggested that programs should be co-designed with user groups and relevant community organisations for suitability

and success. Partnering with community groups could increase funding opportunities, strengthen advocacy, and enable greater delivery of initiatives.

We will work towards healthy lifestyles in Maroondah by focusing on the following strategic priorities and objectives:

Physical health and activity

Work in partnership to promote physical health, through the delivery of accessible initiatives, programs, and services.

Provide and enhance accessible active and passive open spaces, active travel infrastructure, sporting precincts and integrated recreation facilities, to increase opportunities for and participation in physical activity.

Work in partnership to provide safe, inclusive, and accessible environments and opportunities for all community members to undertake physical activity.

Gendered health outcomes

Work in partnership to provide services and initiatives that support gendered health outcomes including known health risks, heart disease, cancer, physical activity, maternal health, parenting, healthy masculinities, reducing stigma and supporting those experiencing vulnerability.

Mental health and wellbeing

Work in partnership to promote awareness of mental health, build the capacity of the community to navigate mental health challenges, and advocate for and support at-risk community members to access services.

Work in partnership to promote awareness of mental wellbeing and using prevention and strength-based approaches to build the resilience of the community and enhance their wellbeing.

Public health

Work in partnership to implement a preventative approach to addressing current and emerging public health issues, including communicable diseases and drug-resistant infections, and chronic diseases.

Work in partnership to advocate for and support the community to minimise the health impacts of climate change, with a focus on vulnerable groups.

Healthy eating

Provide leadership in healthy eating through the promotion of healthier food and drink options for Council facilities, events, spaces, and places.

Work in partnership to promote healthy eating through community education, initiatives, and service delivery.

Encourage and promote sustainably grown local produce, enhanced food security and facilitate social inclusion.

Connection to nature

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Enhance Maroondah's canopy vegetation, habitat corridors, parklands, bushlands, and waterways to promote mental wellbeing, facilitate physical activity, encourage the community's social connection to the natural environment.

Cultural participation

Work in partnership to curate arts and cultural activities, installations, and activations to promote health and wellbeing and encourage social connection.

Indicators of progress

Self-reported health
Percent of Maroondah residents reporting their health as very good or excellent

Subjective wellbeing
Subjective Wellbeing Index for Maroondah residents and Maroondah resident satisfaction with life as a whole

Physical activity
Percent of Maroondah residents who are sufficiently physically active

Healthy eating
Percent of Maroondah residents who meet daily consumption guidelines for fruit and vegetables

Alignment to Maroondah 2050 Outcomes

- A healthy, inclusive, and connected community
- A green and sustainable community

Alignment to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities

- Increasing healthy eating
- Increasing active living
- Improving wellbeing

"People are living older and improving people's mental and physical health should be a financial and social benefit to community."

Croydon Hills, 18-34, Male

Liveable neighbourhoods

In 2031 Maroondah will be a network of liveable neighbourhoods with a range of opportunities to live, work and play locally.

The research tells us

Neighbourhoods shape the way we live, feel, enjoy, and experience our community and are important for health and wellbeing. Liveable neighbourhoods are about 'living locally' - giving people the ability to meet most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk from home, with access to safe cycling and local public transport options. They are safe, attractive, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. Key elements of a liveable neighbourhood include affordable and diverse housing, education and employment opportunities, public open space, local shops, health and community services, and leisure and cultural opportunities, via convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure. Local neighbourhood design and activation influences physical activity, health outcomes, social connectedness, and sustainability.

Did you know?

- In 2021 33.5% of Maroondah residents lived and **worked locally**.
- 72% of Maroondah dwellings are estimated to be within **400m of public open space**, which is higher than Knox (69%) and Yarra Ranges (53%).
- In 2021, 33% of renters were experiencing rental stress and 14% of homeowners were in mortgage stress
- An estimated 88% of households and businesses in Maroondah are located within **400m of regular public transport.**

Our community said

Our community highly values the location, proximity, and accessibility of Maroondah with 25% of community contributions identifying this as something that makes Maroondah great. Further development of accessible local neighbourhoods within Maroondah is also supported. Facilities and community services, parks and playgrounds, shops and businesses, accessibility and amenities, open space and green space, public transport and walkability all contribute to liveability in Maroondah.

There is a desire to foster a sense of community and create inviting places of belonging within neighbourhoods. Our community would like to see the creation and activation of local innovative spaces and places that provide the potential for passive recreation and social connections. Our community understand the impacts of climate change and recognise the importance of action for our future, with a strong sense that the green space, clean air and natural environment in Maroondah needs to be protected. There is a desire for stronger action to address climate change and encouraging community behaviour change to reduce environmental impact

We will work towards healthy lifestyles in Maroondah by focusing on the following strategic priorities and objectives:

Social and Community Housing

Work in partnership to increase investment in accessible, high quality, safe and well-located social and community housing.

Affordable Housing

Advocate and promote a diverse range of high quality innovative and affordable housing options to meet the needs of all income levels and life-stage requirements.

Local neighbourhoods

Facilitate an integrated network of thriving local neighbourhoods across Maroondah that facilitate a sense of belonging and healthy lifestyles, that also enable access to key services and amenities; and education and employment opportunities; and places of connection.

Walkability/Bike-friendly

Work in partnership to facilitate local neighbourhood networks that are walkable and bike-friendly, and promote active travel of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Transport network

Advocate and work in partnership to enable an integrated network of safe, accessible, and efficient transport options, including public transport, which meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Open spaces

Promote and enhance Maroondah's active and passive open spaces to provide opportunities for connection, exercise, play and enjoyment for all people.

Continuous learning

Plan, advocate, and facilitate improved access and opportunities for continuous learning for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Employment pathways

Work in partnership to facilitate local employment pathways with a focus on young people, people with a disability, along with people experiencing mid-career transition and seeking to re-enter the workforce.

Climate change

Foster liveable places and spaces for our community that can adapt to climate change and responding to current and future risks.

Work in partnership to reduce Maroondah's greenhouse gas emissions and foster a culture of sustainable living within the community.

Indicators of progress

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Attractive open space
Public open space in Maroondah (hectares)

Household stress
Percent of Maroondah households in the lowest 40% of incomes who are paying more than 30% of their usual gross weekly income on housing costs

Transport proximity
Percent of Maroondah households that are within 200 metres of a bicycle facility and/or 400 metres of a bus stop and/or 800 metres of a train station

Environmental leadership
Community perception of Council's performance in relation to environmental sustainability

Alignment to Maroondah to 2050 Outcomes

- A safe, and liveable community
- A healthy, inclusive, and connected community
- A green and sustainable community
- A vibrant and prosperous community

Alignment to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities

- Tackling climate change and its impact on health
- Increasing active living
- Improving wellbeing

> *"Liveable neighbourhoods involve a balance between housing, green corridors, sporting facilities, schools and community facilities."*
>
> *Warranwood, 60+, Female*

Safe communities

In 2031 Maroondah will be a community where all people feel and are safe.

The research tells us

Safety is a fundamental component of wellbeing, liveability, and resilience. The degree to which someone feels safe within a home, workplace or community has a significant impact on how and where they live, work and play. Feeling safe and secure within a home, neighbourhood, workplace, online and in community can affect one's sense of freedom, levels of stress and overall physical and mental health, trust, social habits and lifestyle behaviours, social connections, work and study productivity, and participation in leisure, community, and physical activities.

Did you know?

- In 20201/22, the Maroondah offence incident rate was marginally lower than the Victorian rate (6,128 per 100,000, compared to 6,694). Most incidents occurred in Ringwood and Croydon, and the major locations were in homes and streets/lanes/footpaths.
- Over 15% of the vision statements suggested by our community related to safety.

Our community said

Our community view safety as the foundation of liveability. To further improve safety in Maroondah, our community recommend addressing and improving infrastructure in the community that impacts perceptions of safety, including lighting and CCTV. There is a desire for Council to partner with organisations to promote community safety, positive cultures in community sport, digital safety awareness and behaviours, provide family violence education and support those at risk of family violence.

There is a desire from the community for Council to continue supporting residents during emergencies and an understanding that climate change is likely to increase these events. Responsiveness and reaction time are crucial to support residents (particularly vulnerable residents) during emergencies. The community also see value in learning from the experiences of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and extreme weather events in emergency planning and management.

We will work towards safe communities in Maroondah by focusing on the following strategic priorities and objectives:

Community safety

Work in partnership to promote community safety and implement initiatives and practices aimed at improving the actual and perceived safety of the community.

Plan and advocate for the application crime prevention and community safety principles that facilitate safe places and spaces.

Promote and facilitate safer cultures, spaces and settings relating to issues of gambling, alcohol, and other drugs.

Promoting gender equality and preventing violence

Work in partnership to promote gender equality and inclusion in Maroondah to facilitate fairness of opportunity, safe environments and respectful relationships that reduce all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Elder abuse

Advocate and support initiatives for the prevention of all forms of elder abuse.

Child protection

Promote a culture of child safety that is prevention focussed and proactive, encourages the empowerment of children and young people, and supports all people in the community safely disclose risks of harm to children and young people, and to respond effectively to allegations of child abuse.

Road safety

Work in partnership to advocate for road safety infrastructure and promote road safety through education and training.

Emergency management

Work in partnership to utilise existing community resources and strengths to build resilience and preparedness and reduce vulnerability.

Provide leadership in community-centred response, relief, recovery, and regeneration arising from disruptions and emergencies, including those resulting from climate change.

Digital safety

Work in partnership to raise awareness of digital safety to minimise harm and promote safe online behaviours and interactions.

Indicators of progress

Perceptions of safety
Percent of Maroondah residents who agree that they feel safe when walking alone at night

Crime
Offence rate per 100,000 population in Maroondah

Appearance of public areas
Community satisfaction with the appearance of public areas

Alignment to Maroondah to 2050 Outcomes

- A safe and liveable community
- A vibrant and prosperous community
- A healthy, inclusive, and connected community

Alignment to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities

- Reducing injury
- Preventing all forms of violence

"We should all feel safe to go about our business, regardless of the hour of the day or day of the week. We should be able to walk the streets at night or early morning without fear or trepidation."

Ringwood, 35-59, Female

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Social inclusion

In 2031 Maroondah will be an inclusive, accessible, and equitable community where all people can participate, feel connected and experience a sense of belonging.

The research tells us

A socially inclusive community enables all members of the community to fully participate and contribute to social, economic, and cultural life in a welcoming and safe manner. Being socially included means that people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to participate in education and training (learn), participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities (work), connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities (engage), and influence decisions that impact them (voice). Research shows that social connection and participation is fundamental to positive mental health and wellbeing, reduce psychological distress and help to maintain overall health and wellbeing. Being inclusive involves deliberate actions taken to remove or reduce barriers to inclusion and to create opportunities that facilitate and encourage full and equal participation.

Did you know?
- In 2021, 24% of all households in Maroondah were lone person households and 60% of those are women.
- In 2023, 16.4% of residents reported that they had experienced discrimination in the previous six months which is the second highest percentage in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.
- Maroondah's rate of homelessness is 42.1 per 10,000 people which is the third highest in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.
- Almost 15% of Maroondah residents volunteer in the community which is fourth highest in the Eastern Metropolitan Region and higher than Greater Melbourne at 12.1%.

Our community said

Maroondah is seen as a friendly and inclusive community. Social inclusion is seen as currently supporting health and wellbeing needs in the community through its promotion of acceptance, belonging and support. It is important for people to be part of a community with friendships, environments where people feel valued and appreciated, and opportunities to volunteer. No one in the community should experience discrimination, feel threatened or be excluded.

Social relationships were understood to be important in preventing family violence and critical to survival in an emergency, as people who are not connected are more vulnerable. Key areas of need included supporting community members with a disability and elderly people, increasing community connection, addressing homelessness, and supporting vulnerable people and those living alone.

Social inclusion is facilitated through initiatives, activities, programs, and events, which bring people together and provide the opportunity for social connection and community participation. There is a role for Council to promote opportunities for community involvement, encourage local leaders to act as community connectors, create opportunities for volunteers and support local volunteer-led organisations. The importance of bringing people together to create a shared purpose, foster community connection and create networks using inviting places and spaces that create a sense of belonging was identified. There is a strong desire to ensure that all community members have access to services, facilities, and community connection opportunities where everyone can feel valued and empowered. Council can learn through lived experiences of community groups and embed this input into planning and service delivery.

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We will work towards safe communities in Maroondah by focusing on the following strategic priorities and objectives:

Accessibility

Promote, provide, and improve community infrastructure, services and events that are accessible for all people.

Equity

Promote and create opportunities for equity across all abilities, ages, cultures, genders, languages, religions, sexualities, and socio-economic groups.

Community participation

Work in partnership to create opportunities for community participation and social connection for all people.

Sense of belonging

Encourage and promote opportunities for all people to develop a strong sense of belonging to their local community.

Community infrastructure

Plan, provide and promote opportunities and places for social connection and cultural vibrancy through community infrastructure and activation across Maroondah.

Vulnerable communities

Work in partnership to advocate for and support vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and community members.

Homelessness

Work in partnership to support community members experiencing or at risk of homelessness and promote pathways out of homelessness.

Volunteering

Work in partnership to support, empower and connect organisations and groups that involve volunteers. Promote diverse and attractive opportunities and empower local volunteers.

Digital inclusion

Work in partnership to enable access to digital environments and build confidence in digital literacy.

Indicators of progress

Sense of community
Percent of Maroondah residents who agree people are willing to help in their neighbourhood
Percent of Maroondah residents who agree they live in a close-knit neighbourhood

Social connectedness
Percent of Maroondah residents who agree people in their neighbourhood can be trusted

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Volunteerism
Percent of Maroondah residents who actively volunteer

Alignment to Maroondah 2050 Outcomes

- A healthy, inclusive, and connected community
- A vibrant and prosperous community
- A well-governed and empowered community

Alignment to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities

- Preventing all forms of violence
- Improving wellbeing

"…it creates good people and strong communities when people do things together with a common interest."

Croydon, 35-59, Female

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Embracing Diversity

In 2031 Maroondah will be a harmonious community that celebrates and embraces diversity where all people are respected and valued.

The research tells us

Diversity plays a major contributing factor towards community liveability, health, and wellbeing. Embracing diversity is the practice of including and involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, or other ideologies.

The practice includes the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment, moving beyond simple tolerance and embracing and understanding the rich dimensions of diversity within everyone.

Maroondah is home to a diverse range of communities including, but not limited to, people with disability, cultural and linguistic diverse (CALD) communities, First Peoples, people with a range of faiths, and community members with different gender and sexual identities.

Did you know?

- In 2021, almost 20% of Maroondah residents spoke **a language other than English** at home. Compared to 17% in 2016.
- In 2021 6.2% of Maroondah's population had a profound or severe disability
- 734 Maroondah residents identified as First Peoples compared to 560 residents 2016.
- In 2021 the most prevalent health condition of First Peoples was a mental health condition at 20.1%. This is almost double the general Maroondah percentage at 10.4% and higher than Greater Melbourne at 18.6%.
- In 2023, 58% of LGBTQIA+ Victorians reported that they faced unfair treatment based on sexual orientation and 78% of trans and gender-diverse Victorians have faced unfair treatment based on their gender identity.

Our community said

Our community values the celebration of diversity, with an expectation that it can increase community harmony and promote acceptance. With increasing diversity of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, there is continued desire to see this diversity celebrated and embraced.
Council has a role in leading by example and encouraging diversity to be visible, normalised, and celebrated in Council services and activities. Community leaders of diverse groups provide insights in the planning and delivery of services.

The community also see the importance of educating the community about embracing diversity and learning from the wisdom of diverse groups, including First Peoples. Our community also recognise the importance of creating welcoming environments and accessible services for diverse groups within Maroondah. Council has an opportunity to explore communication channels to effectively reach all diverse groups across Maroondah.

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We will work towards Embracing Diversity in Maroondah by focusing on the following strategic priorities and objectives:

Intersectionality

Understand, respond to and advocate for intersectional needs of all communities, with a focus on reducing discrimination and barriers; promoting equality and respect; and inclusive service delivery.

Disability

Facilitate and advocate equal opportunity for people of all abilities, their families, and their carers to actively and fully participate in the life of our community.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

Work in partnership to understand and support the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to participate in the life of our community actively and fully, including refugees, new arrivals, migrants, and interfaith communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Work collaboratively to celebrate, promote, recognise, and integrate the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to facilitate equity, respect, understanding and reconciliation.

LGBTQIA+ communities

Advocate and promote equity, safety, inclusion, and wellbeing for community members of all sexualities.

Gender identity

Advocate and promote equity, safety, inclusion, and wellbeing for community members of all genders and gender identities.

Needs of different age groups

Work in partnership to facilitate the health and wellbeing of all children and their families through meaningful engagement, proactive advocacy, opportunities for participation and access to inclusive local services and spaces.

Work in partnership to raise the wellbeing of Maroondah's young people to be healthy, connected, engaged, and prepared.

Work in partnership to encourage positive ageing by optimising opportunities for participation, health, and security to enhance the quality of life as people age in our community.

Indicators of progress

Recent migrants

Number of migrants and refugees settling in Maroondah

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Proportion of residents who speak a language
other than English at home

Alignment to Maroondah 2050 Outcomes

- A healthy, inclusive, and connected community
- A vibrant and prosperous community
- A safe and liveable community
- A well-governed and empowered community

Alignment to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities

- Preventing all forms of violence
- Improving wellbeing

"As a person from a marginalised group, having diversity as something not only encouraged but celebrated is something I believe is actually needed. Without it, many people face significantly diminished quality of life and social rejection that can have severe consequences."

Croydon, 18-34, Female

Social harms

In 2031 Maroondah will be a socially responsible community that inspires positive choices and reduces impacts from harmful social behaviours.

The research tells us

There are a range of social behaviours that result in disruptive and negative impacts on individual, family, and community wellbeing. Lifestyle behaviours such as tobacco, drug, and alcohol abuse, problem gambling and excessive screen use are acknowledged as contributing factors to poor mental and physical health. Harmful levels of alcohol consumption present major health issues associated with increased risk of chronic disease, injury, and premature death. Effects of Illicit drug use can be severe, including poisoning, heart damage, mental illness, self-harm, suicide, and death.

Tobacco smoking is the single most important preventable cause of ill health and death in Australia, and longitudinal data shows that there is a downward trend in national tobacco consumption. There is however, a concerning increasing trend toward the use of vapes, especially among younger people. Excessive screen use can lead to broad-ranging harms with significant physical, mental, social, and economic costs for individuals and communities. Gambling-related harm involves adverse consequences leading to health or wellbeing impacts on an individual, family unit, community, and population levels. Problem gambling has been linked to poor employment outcomes, higher rates of diabetes, poor mental wellbeing, and suicide ideation as well as family violence.

Did you know?

- Maroondah has a far higher rate of alcohol-related ambulance attendances than any other Local Government Area in the EMR, as well as Metropolitan Melbourne. In 2023, 18.5% of Maroondah residents surveyed reported that they smoked or vaped daily. This is the highest percentage in the Eastern Metropolitan Region and equal to Greater Melbourne.
- Electronic Gaming Machine losses in Maroondah in 2023/24 amounted to $64 million compared with $45 million during 2019/20 (a 42% increase in losses).
- In 2024 there were 1428 incidents of family violence in Maroondah which is an increase of 9% from 2023.

Our community said

The community understand there is a continued need to proactively address safety issues around gambling, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and excessive screen use. It is viewed that addressing these harms will strengthen the community atmosphere of Maroondah. Our community are aware of the need to promote positive coping mechanisms and healthier alternatives to drugs and alcohol.

There is also a need to change unhealthy and harmful attitudes surrounding alcohol and other drugs, particularly in community sport. Educating the community on how alcohol, drugs and problem gambling are linked to family violence was seen as important. The community also highlighted the importance of positive social connections as a preventative measure to social harms.

We will work towards addressing Social Harms in Maroondah by focusing on the following strategic priorities and objectives:

Gambling

Work in partnership to prevent and minimise gambling-related harm in the community through collective advocacy, health promotion and raising awareness around the impacts of harmful gambling behaviours.

Alcohol

Work in partnership to prevent and minimise alcohol-related harm in the community through joint advocacy, education and promoting safer alcohol cultures and environments.

Tobacco

Work in partnership to de-normalise smoking behaviours and reduce smoking-related harm through education, community awareness, regulation and increasing smoke-free public spaces.

Illicit drugs

Work in partnership to minimise illicit drug-related harm in the community through advocacy, education, and facilitating safer cultures, spaces, and places.

Excessive screen use

Work in partnership to raise awareness of the health impacts of excessive screen use and promote safe and healthy screen behaviours and interactions.

Indicators of progress

Gambling

Reduction in EGM per person spend

Alcohol

Reduction in presentations of alcohol related incidents at emergency departments during high alcohol consumption hours

Illicit drugs

Reduction in hospital presentations of drug-related incidents

Tobacco

Reduction in daily smoking rate

Alignment to Maroondah 2050 Outcomes

- A safe and liveable community
- A healthy, inclusive, and connected community

Alignment to Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities

- Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use
- Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use
- Preventing all forms of violence
- Improving wellbeing.

"Pokies are a blight on the outer suburbs and alcohol is too readily available, e.g., home delivery 24hrs a day."

Heathmont, 60+, Female

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Related Council documents

- Arts and Cultural Development Strategy 2020-2025
- Asset Plan 2025-2035
- Children and Families Strategy 2020
- Climate Change Risk Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy 2018/19-2021/22
- Council Plan 2025-2029
- Croydon Structure Plan
- Disability Policy and Action Plan 2022-2026
- Equally Active Strategy 2019
- Gambling Policy 2018 (under review)
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
- Gender Equity Policy 2018
- Housing Strategy 2022
- Maroondah 2050 Community Vision
- Maroondah Affordable and Social Housing Policy 2018
- Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan 2021
- Maroondah Vegetation Strategy 2020-2030
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2023-2026
- Open Space Strategy 2016 (under review)
- Physical Activity Strategy 2024-2029
- Positive Ageing Framework and Action Plan 2021-2025
- Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 (under review)
- Ringwood Metropolitan Activity Centre masterplan 2018 (under review)
- Road Management Plan 2021-2025
- Sustainability Strategy 2022-2031
- Youth Strategy 2017

Making it happen

Council will continue to play a key role in leading work on each of the themes, strategic priorities, and objectives. Partnerships between a wide range of State government departments, community service agencies, community organisations and groups, and community members will be vital in implementing the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031(Update 2025)*.

This Strategy will form a key pillar within Council's Integrated Planning Framework taking direction from *Maroondah 2050 Community Vision* and the *Council Plan 2025-2029* and providing direction for a wide range of other action plans, social policies, Council services and programs, and projects.

The Strategy, and its related documents will help to shape where Council will focus its resources, energy, and efforts - whilst acting as a catalyst for community partnerships and providing a strong evidence base for seeking grant funding from other levels of government and relevant sectors.

To articulate the specific actions of Council in working towards the key priorities in this strategy, a number of integrated action plans will be developed/reviewed and implemented. These associated action plans will highlight the short/medium priorities of Council in working towards the strategy and be reviewed regularly during the lifespan of the strategy to ensure they are responsive to community needs.

Guiding principles

In framing the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025),* the following guiding principles provide core underpinning values that guide future action, service delivery and decision-making.

Human Rights

Council recognises and protects the rights, interests and responsibilities of individuals, the community, and public bodies across the City of Maroondah in accordance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The Charter contains 20 basic rights that promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. All of Council's strategies, policies and decision-making procedures are compatible with the Victorian Charter, which reflects the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Council aims to ensure that it pursues a human rights approach across all areas of Council activity.

Equity

Equity is the process required to achieve equality, where everyone is treated the same or has the same life opportunities. We must first ensure equity before we can enjoy equality, which only works if everyone starts from the same place. By taking an equity stance, Council recognises that affirmative measures must be put in place for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, to overcome structural barriers and discrimination that prevent inclusion, participation and access to resources and opportunities.

Gender

Council recognises that within all communities, women, men, and gender diverse people have diverse needs, benefits, access to power, resources and responsibilities. Council is committed to gender equity, that is, the process of being fair to women, men, and gender diverse individuals by recognising diversity and disadvantage and directing resources and services towards those most in need to ensure equal outcomes for all.

Evidence informed

Council is committed to using evidence to design, implement and improve planning, programs, and service delivery. Learning from the successes and failures of previous actions and programs increases understanding of best practice. Evidence helps us to best meet the needs of our community, best focus our resources, choose the most effective approaches, continuously improve our efforts and services, and provide successful and positive outcomes for our community.

Community engagement

Council is committed to engaging with the Maroondah community in a meaningful, accountable, responsive, and equitable way. Our community and stakeholders play a vital role in shaping the City of Maroondah. Through community engagement, Council gains a strong understanding of our community's wants and needs to ensure we are achieving the best possible outcomes for our community.

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Environmental sustainability

Council understands that environmental sustainability and the impacts of climate change are closely related to community health and wellbeing. The importance of building resilience in communities to reduce climate change impacts is particularly important.

Interconnected

It is recognised at the outset that all the focus areas, topics, population groups and issues considered by this strategy are interconnected, interdependent and have complex relationships with each other. The six focus areas identified in this strategy are strongly interconnected and impact each other. For example, Safe Communities influence Liveable Neighbourhoods, both of which can facilitate Healthy Lifestyles. Within each of the six focus areas, there are key topics. These also have strong connections and influence each other. For example, research demonstrates that problem gambling (topic area within Social Harms) is associated with family violence (topic area within Safe Communities).

Measuring our progress

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031* (October Update 2025) highlights a broad range of priorities for enhancing the health, wellbeing, liveability, and resilience of the Maroondah community from 2021-2031.

The associated action plans highlight the short to medium priorities of Council in working towards the priorities of the Strategy. Meaningful change often occurs gradually, and it is easy to overlook progress unless this is measured. To measure progress toward achieving the preferred future outcomes outlined in this strategy, a number of key indicators have been selected linked to each of the six Themes.

Over time, these indicators will be used to identify how successful the initiatives of Council and its community partners have been in working towards the future outcomes outlined in the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031(Update 2025)*. Council will periodically report on the broader outcomes achieved relating to these indicators along with some of the activities undertaken in progressing towards the overall vision statements highlighted in the strategy.

Council Advisory Committees will also be engaged to inform and provide direction on priorities in the Strategy, along with receiving regular reports on the implementation of initiatives. In addition, Council will report on progress made on key action plans that are linked to strategy on an annual basis. Service delivery activities to support the priorities of this Strategy will also be captured in *Council's Annual Report*.

Achievements associated with this strategy will be incorporated into the State of Maroondah Report that is currently prepared every two years. The State of Maroondah Report is intended to celebrate achievements, recognise efforts, monitor trends, and identify areas for future improvement in working towards the Maroondah 2050 Community Vision.

A full review of this Strategy will be undertaken in 2029/30.

Glossary

Activity Centres: Areas that provide a focus for services, employment, housing, transport, and social interaction. They range in size and intensity of use from smaller neighbourhood centres to major suburban centres and larger metropolitan centres. Croydon is a designated Major Activity Centre and Ringwood is a higher order designated Metropolitan Activity Centre.

Affordable housing: Housing where the cost (whether of mortgage repayments or rent) is no more than 30 per cent of the household's income, for households in the bottom two quintiles (lowest 40%) of median incomes for a defined area.

Biodiversity: The term given to the variety of all forms of life. It is the variety within and between all species of plants, animals and micro-organisms and the ecosystems within which they live and interact. Biodiversity spans organisms from the smallest virus to the largest trees.

Canopy cover: The fraction of ground area covered by the vertical projection of tree crown perimeters.

Carbon Neutral Certification: Endorsement that entity that has meet the requirements of the National Carbon Neutral Standard.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006: Victorian Government legislation created to protect and promote human rights. It sets out freedoms, rights, and responsibilities.

Climate change: Changes in the state of the climate, including an increase in extreme weather events, long-term changes in weather patterns and sea level rise, attributed directly or indirectly to human activity.

Community Vision: Description of the municipal community's aspirations for the future of the municipality for at least the next 10 fiscal years. The *Maroondah 2050 Community Vision* represents the strategic direction of Council as required by section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020.

Council Plan: A four-year plan which provides the medium-term framework for Council operations by outlining: the strategic direction of Council (Community Vision); strategic objectives for achieving the strategic direction (future outcomes); strategies for achieving the objectives for a period of at least the next four financial years (key directions); strategic indicators for monitoring the achievement of objectives (Council Plan indicators); and a description of Council's initiatives and priorities for service, infrastructure and amenity (priority actions).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD): A broad term used to describe communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures, and religions; widely used to refer to people born overseas, in non-English speaking countries.

Digital literacy: Having the skills you need to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information is increasingly provided through digital technologies such as internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices.

Digital safety: Involves protecting and safeguarding the privacy of individuals in online settings, protecting people from predatory and harmful online behaviours such as cyberbullying, and preventing people being exposed to inappropriate content and material.

Elder abuse: A single or repeated act, or lack of action, which causes harm or distress to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust such as carers, family members or friends. Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological, or emotional, sexual, and financial abuse.

Equity: Providing impartiality, fairness, and justice for all people. This involves recognising that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

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Environmentally Sustainable Design: Building design that seeks to improve building performance, reduce environmental impacts, resource use and waste and create healthy environments for occupants. The aim is to create comfortable and healthy indoor environments while reducing resource use (including energy and water consumption), waste, and operating costs.

First Peoples A person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent

Food security: All people, always, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Gender-based violence: Refers to harassment, harmful or violent acts directed at an individual based on their sex or gender.

Gender Equality Action Plan: Strategies and measures for promoting gender equality in the workplace. Under the Gender Equality Act 2020, Council is required to develop a Gender Equality Action Plan every four years.

Gender identity: How one perceives their gender, show or express their gender to others and how one wants others to treat them. See also Sexual Identity.

Gendered health outcomes: There are different health and social needs experienced by specific genders. Consideration of a gender lens helps to address the health issues and challenges experienced by specific gender to overcome the health and wellbeing disparities experienced by different genders.

Governance: How Council operates as a decision-making body, its relationship with the administration and the ways that Council engages with their community.

Habitat corridor: A linear strip of vegetation that provides a continuous (or near continuous) pathway between two habitats where a species can find the food, shelter, protection, and mates for reproduction it needs.

Healthy masculinity: Involves men using their physical and emotional strengths to champion healthy behaviours and communities. It seeks to remove harmful behaviours associated with gendered stereotypes and focus on positive qualities without being restricted by gender expectations.

Household stress: Experienced when housing costs are high (more than 30%) relative to income and these housing costs are likely to reduce a household's ability to afford other essential living costs such as food, clothing, transport, and utilities.

Human rights: The 20 basic rights identified in the United Nations Charter of Human Rights that promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, equality, and dignity.

Indicators of progress: Selected indicators that will be used to identify how successful the initiatives of Council, businesses, community groups and individuals have been in working towards the future outcomes outlined in the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031*.

Intersectionality: A theoretical approach that understands the interconnected nature of social factors – such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ability, or age – which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage for either an individual or group.

LGBTIQA+: Acronym used to refer to people associated with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse communities. There is no single LGBTIQA+ community, rather a plurality of identities and experiences.

Marginalised, disadvantaged, and vulnerable groups: Individuals or groups of people who do not have access to the same opportunities, rights, tools, and/or resources that are available to the majority of people in society.

Medium density housing: A category of residential development that falls between detached housing and multi-story apartments. The category includes duplex, semi-detached, terrace and townhouse dwelling types.

Municipal Emergency Management Plan: Addresses the prevention of, response to, and recovery from emergencies within the municipality of Maroondah.

Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS): The MPS is part of the Maroondah Planning Scheme. It sets out the vision for future use and development and provides an overview of important planning issues in Maroondah. It includes thematic strategic directions relating to how Maroondah is expected to change through the application of the policy and controls in the planning scheme. Council must consider and give effect to the MPS when making planning decisions.

Plan Melbourne: The metropolitan planning strategy prepared in 2016 by the Victorian Government to provide direction for the growth and future development of Greater Melbourne over the next 35 years. It sets the strategy for supporting jobs, housing, and transport, whilst building upon distinctiveness, liveability, and sustainability.

Planning scheme: A legal document prepared by Council and approved by the Minister. It contains policies and provisions that control land use and development within a municipality.

Positive Psychology: A scientific approach to studying human thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, with a focus on strengths instead of weaknesses. Positive psychology focuses on the positive events and influences in life to help people flourish and live their best lives.

Reconciliation: Involves strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians. Reconciliation cannot be seen as a single issue rather the inter-related dimensions of historical acceptance; race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity and unity.

Refugee: A person who has fled their country of origin and is unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Safer culture: An environment that is safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. Safer cultures involve shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and people being able to learn, live and working together with dignity.

Service Delivery Plan: A detailed four-year work plan to guide how a particular Council service area will support the achievement of relevant Maroondah 2050 Community Vision future outcomes and key directions as outlined in the Council Plan.

Social housing: Short and long-term rental housing that is owned and run by the government or not-for-profit agencies. Social housing is an overarching term that covers both public housing (government managed) and community housing (not-for-profit housing association managed).

Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage: The relative level of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society.

Structure Plan: A means to provide precinct-specific direction on the extent, form and location of land use and development.

Subjective wellbeing: Relates to an individual's perspective on their own wellbeing along with how they experience and evaluate their lives. It is based on their self-reported evaluation of quality of life, quality of relationships, meanings, achievements, and individual values.

Subjective Wellbeing Index: Self-reported ratings of personal wellbeing across the domains of standard of living, health, achievements in life, community connection, personal relationships, safety, and future security; converted into an index score with a range of 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 100 (completely satisfied).

Sustainability: The principle of providing for the needs of the present community without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The principle seeks to achieve long-term health and wellbeing across social, economic, environmental, and cultural domains.

Wards: A geographical area which provides a fair and equitable division of a local government area. There are nine Wards in Maroondah, with one elected Councillor per Ward.

To contact Council

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Translating and Interpreter Service
13 14 50

National Relay Service (NRS)
13 36 77

- MaroondahCityCouncil
- maroondahcitycouncil
- Maroondah City Council
- CityofMaroondah
- Maroondah City Council

Background Report

Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience
in Maroondah - Update 2025

Contents

Introduction

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (*Update 2025) (the Strategy) is Maroondah's long term strategic plan that holistically outlines a vision for the future social environment of the municipality supporting the desired outcomes within *Maroondah 2050 Our future together* It also serves as *Maroondah's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 25-29* (MPHWP). Through this Strategy and supporting action plans, Council and its partners will continue to strive towards enhancing the liveability, wellbeing and resilience of our community.

The role of local government in community health and wellbeing

Local government is uniquely placed to play a particularly important role in enhancing community health and wellbeing, liveability and resilience.

Historically local governments have had responsibility for delivering community services such as immunisation, early years and childcare services, youth and aged care services; regulating behaviour in public places and the handling of food; disposing of waste; building community facilities; and maintaining our public places and spaces.

Over the past 20 years, Council's role has expanded to incorporate additional functions including community development, health promotion, economic development, community advocacy, emergency management and sustainability education. These roles are increasingly more dynamic and require councils to work collaboratively with partner agencies from various sectors to collectively shape community wellbeing, liveability and resilience at individual, neighbourhood, municipal and regional levels.

Maroondah City Council has had a series of community health and wellbeing planning documents in place since 2007 that shape and influence the role of Council service delivery in meeting the needs and aspirations of the local community.

Meeting requirements of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

The *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* has been prepared in accordance with requirements set out in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (the Act). This Act requires Council to prepare a health and wellbeing planning document every four years, within 12 months of general council elections.

The Act requires that the health and wellbeing planning document articulate how Council and its partners will work towards achieving maximum health and wellbeing for our community over the next four years.

The Act requires that the document must:
1. Include an examination of the data about health status and health determinants in the municipal district.
2. Identify goals and strategies based on evidence for creating a local community in which people can achieve maximum health.
3. Provide for involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health plan.
4. Specify how Council will work in partnership with the Department of Health and other agencies undertaking public health initiatives, projects, and programs to achieve the goals identified in the plan.
5. Be consistent with the Council Plan and the Municipal Strategic Statement.

The *Strategy* along with this *Background Report* meets these statutory requirements.

BACKGROUND REPORT - MAROONDAH LIVEABILITY WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE STRATEGY **| 3**

The intersection of community wellbeing, liveability and resilience

In developing and updating this Strategy, background research and community engagement has led to an expanded perspective of community health that incorporates the broad domains of community health and wellbeing, liveability and resilience. These domains are aligned, integrated, and interconnected; Each domain brings its own areas of focus and together they present a holistic perspective of how to enhance the social environment for our community.

Whilst historical health planning in local government has focused primarily on the social determinants of health, it is increasingly recognised that wellbeing, liveability and resilience all play key roles that incorporate the social determinants of health in enabling people to live their best lives.

A snapshot of just some of the services provided by Council to facilitate and enhance community wellbeing, liveability and resilience are highlighted in the table below:

Wellbeing	Liveability	Resilience
• Providing access to sport and recreation facilities • Delivering maternal and child health services • Enabling early childhood education • Providing services to aged and vulnerable residents through the Commonwealth Home Support Program • Empowering and supporting youth and young adults • Supporting vulnerable residents • Promoting lifelong learning and social connection through community houses • Delivering and supporting wellbeing programs, activities and events.	• Enhancing and maintaining open space, bushland and reserves • Providing and enhancing shared trails, footpaths and roads • Planning for changes to land use • Promoting and activating 20 minute neighbourhoods • Supporting local businesses and shopping strips • Facilitating community gardens • Providing public art, access to galleries and community involvement in cultural activities • Encouraging connection to First Peoples' culture	• Leading emergency management preparation, response, relief and recovery • Providing community grants to support local groups and organisations • Mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change • Planning for the future housing needs of the community • Promoting investment by industry and other levels of government in Maroondah • Ensuring a financially sustainable approach to service delivery

Further information on the domains of wellbeing, liveability and resilience can be found on pages 9-17 of this Report.

Relationship to other Council strategic documents

The *Maroondah Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* is the strategic document currently in operation that describes how Council and partners will work together to achieve improved health and wellbeing for our local community. The Strategy was first completed in late 2021 and involved input from local community members, partners and key stakeholders from the health and community services sectors. This current version has been updated with more recent community consultation, data and research.

The Strategy is guided by the community vision for Maroondah as outlined in Maroondah 2050-Our future together. The Maroondah 2050 Community Vision was adopted in 2025 following extensive research and community and stakeholder consultation. The Vision is the foundation from which Council shapes all of its long-term plans for the municipality.

In addition, Council also has a range of other supporting strategic documents that guide service delivery for particular population cohorts, age groups, enabling activities and community issues. These include strategic documents in relation to children and families, youth, ageing residents, people with a disability, gender equity, arts and culture, reconciliation, physical activity, affordable housing and gambling.

Developing the Strategy (Update 2025)

Development of the *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* has involved considerable background research and accompanying analysis as well as engagement input from Maroondah community members, local partners and agencies.

The key stages of this process are outlined below:

Stage 1 - Seeking input from the Maroondah community and stakeholders
The first stage involved a range of community engagement activities to seek the views of community members and key stakeholders on community health, wellbeing and liveability needs and aspirations in Maroondah. This included consideration of how Council and its partners could leverage strengths, address issues, and work in partnership to enhance outcomes for the community. A dedicated community survey was undertaken from 15 October 2019 to 14 March 2020. A series of survey questions sought community input on both liveability and wellbeing in Maroondah. The survey involved face to face interviews conducted by Council staff at key events and forums and an online survey distributed through Council networks, schools, and Council events. The distribution methodology included a range of activities aimed to engage with people beyond those groups who usually interact with Council.

For the development of *Maroondah 2050-Our future together* an extensive broad community and stakeholder engagement process was undertaken between August 2023 and December 2024. The aim of the engagement was to provide all Maroondah community members with opportunities to share their thoughts, aspirations and ideas for the future of Maroondah on a number of domains including health and wellbeing.
In addition, a series of other engagement activities were also undertaken between March 2023 and December 2024 involving consultation with Council's 7 community advisory committees, community groups and engagement activations at Council events. Different questions were asked depending on the interests and expertise of stakeholder groups and the nature of the community events held.

Stage 2 – Building an evidence base

Council has reviewed and updated the data and research in this background report to reflect the most up-to-date information about the health and wellbeing and liveability of the Maroondah community.

To inform the Strategy, this background research has integrated a social and health profile to meet the requirements of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.*

Stage 3 - Consideration of issues and options

During this phase, Council distilled the key messages and priorities arising from the background research, community engagement and council staff input to consider whether the Focus Areas and Strategic priorities of the 2021 Strategy were still current. to be included in the Strategy.

Stage 4 - Update of the Strategy

The Strategy was updated based on the strategic framework established during Stage 4 and the identified priorities for future action and partnership work. Following the update of the Strategy, it was released to the Maroondah community for public exhibition and community feedback.

Stage 6 - Adoption of the Strategy

Following consideration of feedback received during the public exhibition phase, the final *Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)* will be presented for Council adoption and sent to the Victorian Government in accordance with the requirements of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.

Stage 7 - Implementation of the Strategy

This stage involves implementing the strategic priorities in the Strategy through the development of associated action plans that include the Health & Wellbeing Action Plan 2025-2027. These associated action plans will highlight the short-medium priorities of Council in working towards the Strategy and be reviewed regularly during the lifespan of the Strategy to ensure they are responsive to community needs.

Partnerships between a wide range of community service agencies, community organisations and groups, State government departments, and community members will be vital in implementing the Strategy and its associated action plans.

Stage 8 - Monitoring and Evaluation

To evaluate progress towards achieving the preferred future outcomes outlined in this Strategy, a number of key tactical outcome-based indicators will be monitored during Strategy implementation. Council will periodically report on these indicators along with some of the activities undertaken. Council advisory committees will also inform and provide direction on priorities, along with receiving regular reports on the implementation of initiatives. A full review of this Strategy will be undertaken in 2029/30.

Background Research

Council has undertaken significant background research into a range of topics, issues and population health needs impacting the municipality. Research has particularly focused on the impacts on the Maroondah community where data has been available but has also sought to understand the broader national/international context through a literature review.

From the background research and community engagement undertaken, three outcome domains and six focus areas have been identified.

The three outcome domains highlight what is sought for the Maroondah community into the future. In particular, the Strategy is seeking to enhance the health and **wellbeing**, **liveability** and **resilience** of the Maroondah community in the future.

To support the efforts towards these community outcomes, a set of six focus areas are identified:
1. Healthy lifestyles
2. Liveable neighbourhoods
3. Safe communities
4. Social inclusion
5. Embracing diversity
6. Social harms

By focusing efforts on these areas, it is hoped that the Strategy will enable progress to be made towards the community outcomes and ultimately support the community vision outlined in Maroondah 2050-Our future together.

A summary of background research on these three domains and six focus areas has been compiled in this Report to provide a consolidated evidence base. This research has been further summarised in the Strategy document.

Outcome Domain: Liveability

Liveability links the importance of place to community health and wellbeing, sustainability and productivity through consideration of how natural and built environments, including availability and access to amenities, can support people living their best life.

The liveability of a place is experienced differently by various population groups and liveability varies over time. At an individual level, liveability can be the extent to which we enjoy the quality of life afforded by the place we reside; whilst at a community level it can reflect the degree to which a city offers opportunities to enjoy its attributes.

Where we live has a direct impact on our health. By creating well-designed walkable neighbourhoods that are connected through a mix of land-uses, housing types and access to quality public transport, we can create more healthy, liveable communities.

The Australian Government has defined liveability as:

"the degree to which a place supports quality of life, health and wellbeing. In broad terms, liveable cities are healthy, safe, harmonious, attractive and affordable. They have high amenity, provide good accessibility and are environmentally sustainable."[i]

Council's research for this Strategy has identified key factors that contribute to the liveability of a community. These include: the shared physical features of the natural built and economic environment; the availability of healthy environments for home, work and play; the services provided to support people in their daily lives; the socio-cultural features of a place including social cohesion and safety; and the perceived reputation of an area. Examples of key contributors to community liveability include employment, food, housing, public open space, transport, walkability, and social infrastructure.

The liveability of a place contributes to the desirability and attractiveness of that place and has both a direct and indirect influence on community health and wellbeing. Liveable communities create conditions that can optimise health and wellbeing outcomes for people by influencing the social determinants of health.

There are a broad range of liveability frameworks in place across the background literature. One example from the Australian Prevention Partnership Centre identifies the following domains of liveability that contribute to the health and wellbeing of a community: crime and safety; education; employment and income; health and social services; housing; leisure and culture; local food and other goods; natural environments; public open space; transport; and social cohesion and local democracy.

The Victorian Government has promoted the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods as a driver of liveability in Melbourne. The 20-minute neighbourhood concept is all about 'living locally'—giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute return walk from home, with access to safe cycling and local transport options. These connected and walkable places are where people can live, work and play; buy their bread and milk, work from home or local business, access services and meet their neighbours at the central gathering places.[ii]

Key features of a 20-minute neighbourhood are shown in following diagram.

Features of a 20-Minute Neighbourhood

To enable liveability in Maroondah, there are six areas which have been identified as a focus through research analysis and community engagement. These are: alcohol environments, food environments, connected neighbourhoods, employment, open space and housing.

Alcohol environments

Excessive alcohol abuse can cause liver disease, stroke, depression and many types of cancers and is often linked to broader social issues including family violence, assault and homicide.[iii]

Studies have shown a positive association between number of liquor outlets within a one-kilometre network area and short term and long-term harm.[iv] Weekly short-term harm was associated with three to four outlets within a one-kilometre radius whereas five or more outlets were associated with monthly short-term harm. Close proximity to licensed outlets is also associated with hazardous drinking, increased incidents of common assault, non-aggravated/ aggravated sexual assault and tobacco and liquor offences.[v]

According to the VCGLR, Maroondah has 30 packaged liquor outlets with more than half located in the lower socioeconomic areas of Ringwood and Croydon.[vi]

In addition, Maroondah had the highest rate per 100,000 people in the Eastern Metropolitan Region for incidents of family violence attributed to definite or possible alcohol consumption in 2020/21 See diagram below:

Food environments

Access to affordable healthy food sources can promote healthy diets which may lower the risk of overweight and obesity. Conversely, high access to fast foods and high caloric foods can contribute to excessive weight gain.[vii] In 2021, over 32% of the adult population in Maroondah were pre-obese while 24% were obese.. Over 72% of the adult population in Maroondah consumed take away meals once a week, higher than the Eastern Region and Victoria. Only 1.7% met the fruit and vegetable consumption guidelines.[viii]

Recent studies have shown that on average, people are less likely to travel any further than 800m-1km to destinations such as shops and services.[ix] The average distance from residential properties to supermarkets across Maroondah is 1,661 metres.[x]

Connected neighbourhoods

Environments that facilitate pedestrian/cycling friendly neighbourhoods promote social capital and less marginalisation of vulnerable groups.[xi] Research has also shown that active transport including walking, cycling, and using public transport is linked to health benefits including reduced risk of type 2 diabetes.[xii]

Vehicle generated greenhouse gas emissions significantly contribute to global warming and climate change. On a global scale in 2004, it was estimated that 17% of carbon emissions was attributed to road transport.[xiii] Maroondah is a car dominated municipality with over 70% of Maroondah residents travelling to work by car whilst only 1.2% walk to work and 0.4% cycle to work.[xiv] The high rate of car dependence has the potential to impact physical health of residents as well as climate emissions and social connections in local neighbourhoods. In 2021, 52.2% of people travelled to work in a private car, 3.5% took public transport and 1.4% rode a bike or walked. 28.7% worked at home. These statistics should be read with some caution as Census Day in 2021 was during COVID-19 lockdowns.[xv]

Employment

Access to stable employment supports individual health and wellbeing through both financial and psychological benefits. Stable employment increases household income and decreases economic hardship which enables individuals to access basic life necessities including heating and cooling, nutritious food, health care and safe housing, all of which impact health direction.[xvi]

Open space

Local open space has an important role in supporting liveability, health, and wellbeing providing an opportunity for individuals to enhance their wellbeing through exercise, social connection, quiet reflection or connection with nature.[xvii] More than 11% of land in Maroondah is allocated for open space including 430 reserves, with approximately 70,000 street trees planted along roads within the municipality.[xviii]

Housing

Housing that is deemed affordable has the potential to improve health and liveability outcomes. When an individual pays more than 30% of their income on household costs, they are considered to be in housing stress. Affordable housing helps alleviate housing stress and may allow homeowners to allocate greater resources towards healthy foods and other health care related expenditures.[xix] In 2021, 13.8% of the Maroondah population experienced housing stress with the greatest proportion of households in stress found in Kilsyth (18.3%) and Croydon Major Activity Centre (20%).[xx] In 2021, 33.6% of rental households experienced rental stress with the highest areas being Kilsyth South (39.6%), Croydon Major Activity Centre (37.4%) and Ringwood Metropolitan Activity Centre (37.4%).

Outcome Domain: Wellbeing

Wellbeing encompasses social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions that are key for people to flourish and fulfil their potential. Whilst there are many definitions and models of wellbeing, the World Health Organisation (WHO) considers wellbeing as:

> *"a state in which every individual realises their potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community."*

The existing literature shows that the concept of wellbeing has been widely debated since the Third Century BC when the philosopher Aristotle came up with the concept of 'Eudaimonia' – the contented state of feeling healthy, happy and prosperous.[xxi]

Most studies into wellbeing have historically taken one of two different approaches to define wellbeing which has created a confusing and contradicting research base. These two main approaches to wellbeing include the 'hedonic' approach (i.e. predominately covering happiness, positive affect, low negative affect and satisfaction with life), and the 'eudaimonic' approach (i.e. positive psychological functioning and human development).[xxii]

The recurring themes throughout the literature show that wellbeing should be assessed for both its subjective and objective qualities. A 'one-size fits all' approach should not be taken with wellbeing, but instead should be tailored to an individual or community. The research also tends to agree that wellbeing is a complex concept that must consider numerous aspects of an individual and/or community life including physical and mental health, social connectedness, economic and environmental mastery, and positive psychology including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement.

At a community level, wellbeing should go beyond the narrow economic measures of growth and consumption, but instead be broadened out to include a full range of the social, economic, environmental, cultural and political concerns that matter to most citizens of the community.[xxiii]

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The background research has highlighted a range of theories and contributors to individual and collective wellbeing. All of these aspects are considered to contribute to an understanding of wellbeing.

Improving mental health

Mental health is considered "a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".[xxiv]

High levels of mental health can be associated with positive wellbeing outcomes such as increased learning, creativity and productivity, pro-social behavior and positive relationships, improved physical health and life expectancy. Poor mental health can result in a decrease of an individual's health and wellbeing resulting in mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety causing distress, negatively affected day to day function and relationships, poor physical health, and premature death.

Ultimately, mental health is about being cognitively, emotionally and socially healthy – the way we think, feel and develop relationships - and not merely the absence of a mental health condition.[xxv]

Thriving, not just surviving

The traditional focus of psychology has focused on relieving human suffering through understanding and treatment of mental health issues. The model of positive psychology created by Martin Seligman is framed on the premise people want to thrive and flourish, not just survive.

Positive psychology aims to broaden the understanding of human functioning, rather than narrow it, and explores the full gamut of human experience to maximise human potential. Positive psychology turns its focus to the 'average person' exploring what goes well in life, and to appreciating and maximising human potential, motivation and capacity.[xxvi] When introduced effectively, positive psychology provides strong scientific evidence about what works to improve well-being at both an individual and community level.

The PERMAH model is described as the scientific theory of happiness. The consists of six elements that in theory, can help a person to have fulfillment, happiness and meaning in life hence contributing to positive wellbeing.[xxvii] (Pasha 2020).

The five elements of PERMAH are briefly described below:
- 'Positive emotion' relates to the ability to remain and maintain an optimistic mindset and positive outlook.
- 'Engagement' refers to participation in activities, which is known to produce positive neurotransmitters and hormones that elevate our wellbeing.
- 'Relationships' relates to our social interaction, inclusion and connections with friends, family, peers, co-workers and any other forms of social interaction.
- 'Meaning' encompasses religion, feeling of purpose, spirituality and spiritual wellbeing.
- Achievement' involves goal setting associated with personal time, effort and resources to accomplish a desired outcome or task.
- 'Health' highlights the importance of eating well, moving regularly and sleeping deeply to support optimal person health outcomes.

By working towards these six elements at individual and community levels, the model suggests people can not just survive in life but grow in their resilience and be positioned to flourish.

Since 2014, Council has partnered with Communities of Wellbeing Inc (formerly the Maroondah City of Wellbeing Project) to improve the wellbeing of the Maroondah community. A range of projects, engagement

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activities, training and advocacy has been undertaken through this initiative supporting the application of positive psychology in local schools, businesses, sporting clubs, and community groups.

Being socially connected

Humans have evolved as inherently social creatures that rely on effective relationships as a key contributor to both personal and collective wellbeing. Social connectedness can be defined as:

> *the degree to which a person has and perceives a sufficient number and diversity of relationships that: allow them to give and receive information, emotional support, and material aid; create a sense of belonging and value; and foster growth.*[xxviii]

There is growing research that suggests social connections, and participation in community groups and group activities, can assist with good mental health, reduce psychological distress and help to maintain overall health and wellbeing.[xxix]

Community members are considered at a high risk of social isolation/exclusion when they are experiencing a 'combination of problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown'.

In contrast, being socially connected to our family, friends, community and society allows people to create and share connections, create positive emotions, share emotional and physical interactions, learn and share new skills and resources, improve their sense of identity, self-worth and belonging, and create additional meaning and purpose in life.[xxx] Social connectedness also reduces our risk of experiencing loneliness or becoming socially isolated and excluded from our relationships and community.

Feeling safe and secure

The feeling of safety and security is considered a fundamental human right which strongly influences our health, wellbeing and productivity.[xxxi] Our perception of safety is often based on and affected by the level of control we have over our lives and the environments within our homes, workplaces and communities.

When we feel safe within our spaces and environments, we tend to find it easier to relax and be comfortable as well as focus on daily work and study to ensure our stability. In contrast, the perception and concern of unsafe environments and insecurity can affect our wellbeing through heightened stress, depression and anxiety, a decline in mental health, physical health and social connectivity.

Our sense of safety and security in everyday life is strongly influenced by a broad range of factors including the development and maintenance of infrastructure, public and open spaces, financial and job security, surveillance and lighting, fear of crime, human presence and activity, violence, graffiti and cleanliness, drug and alcohol use, social and anti-social behaviour.[xxxii] Similarly, global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, depleting natural resources, racism and discrimination, inequity, recurring economic and financial crises, along with the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are all factors that are playing an increasing role in a feeling of insecurity and unsustainability within communities.

Feeling safe and secure within a home, neighbourhood, workplace and community can affect sense of freedom, levels of stress and overall mental health, physical health, trust, social habits and lifestyle behavior, social connections, work and study productivity, and participation in leisure, community and physical activities (Department of Health 2019). In many cases, a community's perception of safety and concerns at home and in public are often related to fear of crime, domestic and family violence rates, road safety, workplace safety, responsiveness of emergency services and the community's resilience to disasters.

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Having access to resources

Access and management of economic resources can play an important role in the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and households.[xxxiii] The ability to access and manage economic resources provides the opportunity for individuals to acquire goods and services to meet and maintain an acceptable standard of living through the ability to provide food, clothing, housing, education and leisure activities for themselves, their families and/or their households.[xxxiv]

Whilst money does not necessarily determine happiness, the ability to access and maintain economic resources can positively impact wellbeing through sense of achievement, reduced financial stress, life satisfaction and security.

Economic resources can adversely be affected by hardship due to changes in life circumstances. Examples include loss of income, unexpected expenses, unsuccessful investments, lifestyle choices, and family and life events. These life events can result in financial stress which can significantly impact individual or family wellbeing. Financial stress can have a flow on affect causing financial difficulties such as inappropriate housing, limited access to transport, education and services, lowering mental health and physical health.

People suffering from low mental health and mental health illness are particularly at risk of financial stress as their illness can reduce financial capacity often through an inability to sustain full-time paid employment, or dependence on disability support pensions and illness benefits.[xxxv]

Being able to cope with challenges

The degree to which an individual feels as though they are in control of their life and the decisions and actions they make is considered to have an important impact on wellbeing.[xxxvi] In the literature, this is described as 'environment mastery' or the psychological degree to which someone feels they have the ability to deal with both their current situation along with any unexpected changes to their relationships, workplace, community, mental and physical health. The impacts of sudden change and challenges can often result in ripple effects that impact and disturb the balance of an individual's wellbeing.

Individuals high in environmental mastery feel they have the resources and capacities to cope, adjust and adapt to problems, and are not overwhelmed by changing situations. Those with a low level of environmental mastery may feel powerless to change aspects of their environment which they are unsatisfied with, feel they lack the resources to cope, and are frequently overwhelmed.[xxxvii]

Maintaining a state of equilibrium

One model of wellbeing framed as 'equilibrium' theory proposes that overall wellbeing is based on the combined state of physical wellbeing, resources, psychological wellbeing, relationships, freedom and effectiveness in action. Where people experience a deviation to their 'equilibrium' pattern, they will experience changes to their wellbeing. The theory identifies that any definition of wellbeing should centre on a state of 'equilibrium' or balance that can be affected by life events or challenges. When someone experiences change to their resources or challenges, the see-saw is tipped affecting the equilibrium and state of wellbeing. The model as shown in the diagram below shows a set point of wellbeing in the centre when resources and challenges are at equilibrium.[xxxviii]

Figure 1. Equilibrium model of wellbeing

Outcome Domain: Resilience

Resilience has emerged over the last decade to describe a desired state to cope effectively with challenging events for individuals, households, communities and organisations. Individual resilience refers to the ability to cope with whatever life throws at you; whilst collective community resilience relates to how you can adapt, survive and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks are experienced.

The Resilient Melbourne Strategy defines resilience as:

> "the capacity of individuals, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to adapt, survive and thrive no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience"[xxxix]

Resilience is a concept that can help us to understand how people and communities cope in the face of change and uncertainty. It is referred to as a strength or quality that can be learned and developed in order to respond or behave in a certain way.[xl]

The Victorian Government's community resilience framework notes that resilience can be measured against seven community resilience characteristics:

- safe and well;
- connected, included and empowered;
- a dynamic and diverse local economy;
- sustainable built and natural environment,
- culturally rich and vibrant;
- democratic and engaged; and
- reflective and aware.[xli]

These characteristics are closely aligned to community outcome areas identified in Maroondah 2050: our future together and the Maroondah Council Plan 2025-2029.

Communities that are resilient typically have a strong economy, good access to services and infrastructure, ample quality open space environments, low rates of crime, positive social interaction and inclusion, strong institutions and governance, and positive leadership.

Resilience can be built by reducing vulnerability and exposure, and empowering people so they are resourced and enabled. Strengthening our wellbeing (e.g. physical and mental health), connection (e.g. personal networks and relationships to the neighbourhood), knowledge (e.g. local and shared knowledge) and security (e.g. adequate shelter and personal safety) can increase our resilience.

Principles of resilience

Theoretical literature on resilience highlight some key principles that underpin an understanding of its role in shaping individual and collective health and wellbeing.

1. An acceptance of the reality that disasters, shocks and stresses will occur in life. Some result from the natural environment, others are human induced.
2. The cost of recovery from stressors can be minimised by limiting the impact of hazards on economic, built, social and natural environments
3. Resilience brings positive benefits to individuals, households, communities, businesses, organisations
4. Investing in building resilience across the four main environments (social, economic, natural and built) helps to speed up recovery from stress events.
5. The process of building resilience is strongly linked to community development principles of participation, empowerment, building capacity, engagement, skills development, partnerships and inclusion

6. Local government plays a key role in reducing vulnerability through its role in community development, land-use planning, management of the environment, promoting inclusion and facilitating social connectedness

Relationship between liveability, wellbeing and resilience

The three concepts of wellbeing, liveability and resilience are heavily inter-related with interventions or issues in one area often having corresponding impacts on the others.

From the background research

- Wellbeing is considered to have a more individual focus on physical, mental and emotional health with an emphasis on how we as people respond to external influences on our lives;
- Liveability is a more outwardly focused way of considering how we collectively relate to our physical and social spaces where we live; and
- Resilience is the process of developing both of wellbeing and liveability, and therefore becoming more adaptable to our changing lives and world

Focus Area: Healthy Lifestyles

A person's health depends on determinants (factors that influence health) and interventions (actions taken to improve health, and the resources required for those interventions)'.[xlii] Enabling people to have control over their health and its determinants also strengthens communities and improves lives.[xliii]

Healthy lifestyles are directly influenced by physical health, personal and mental wellbeing, activity and social interaction, along with consumption of food and drinks. Our personal wellbeing and the choices we make can help to improve or lower our physical health, mental health, eating behaviours and overall public health.

Healthy lifestyles play an important part in our wellbeing. They refer to positive outcomes achieved through our decision making, choices, participation and behaviours. When we focus on our holistic health, we reduce the risk of chronic illness and disease and improve our overall physical and mental wellbeing. Healthy lifestyles can help to improve happiness and satisfaction in our lives, reduce our risk of chronic illness and disease, improve our life expectancy and assist with maintaining good mental health.

The importance of healthy lifestyles has been very evident through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The restrictions disrupted residents' social infrastructure, economic livelihoods, normal routines and community activities. The community's ability to lead a healthy lifestyle was dependant on a variety of factors. A focus on mental health ranked highly in the Maroondah community's response to needs following the pandemic.

Physical health and activity

An individual's physical health has a significant impact on their mental health, general health and overall wellbeing. Regular physical activity has been shown to relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety while improving mental health and wellbeing. Benefits from physical activity occur through increasing energy levels, facilitating social contact, decreasing stress hormone levels, maintaining health and reducing risks of health problems and improving sleep.[xliv]

Physical activity or exercise can improve mental and musculoskeletal health and reduces other risk factors such as being overweight or obese, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol[xlv]. Being physically active can improve health and reduce the risk of developing several diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. Physical activity and exercise can have immediate and long-term health benefits and improve quality of life. Health professionals recommend a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days[xlvi]. However, 69.9%% of Maroondah

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residents are not meeting daily physical activity guidelines. This is one of the highest percentages in the EMR and higher than the Victorian average [xlvii]

As seen in Table 1, well over half (60.4%) of Maroondah adults are either overweight or obese,
Table 1. Proportion of Maroondah adults who were overweight and obese[xlviii]

	Overweight	Obese	Overweight and obese
Maroondah	34.4	26.0	60.4

Men (66%) have consistently higher rates than women (54%).

Gendered health outcomes

The importance of recognising and responding to the differences in health outcomes between genders is identified nationally.[xlix] Different genders have distinct health and welfare needs and concerns. Some health differences between men and women are biologically based, most notably in the area of sexual and reproductive health[l]. Some causes of death are related to sex. For example, a man cannot die during childbirth. Similarly, a woman cannot die from prostate cancer, because only men have a prostate gland[li]. The following information highlights some key data on health outcomes for men, women and the LGBTIQA+ community.

Men's health
Australian men are more likely than Australian women to get sick from serious health problems. Many Australian men experience poor health outcomes across a variety of measures, including rates of overweight and obesity (20% more likely to be overweight or obese than females), diabetes and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Males experience a greater share of the total fatal and non-fatal burden of disease, dying at younger ages than females and more often from preventable causes.[lii] Overall, for every two women who die, three men die. This figure holds true among children, with boys accounting for two out of three deaths due to accidents or drowning. Compared to women, men visit the doctor less frequently, have shorter visits and only attend when their illness is in its later stages.[liii]

Men outnumber women in many causes of non-gender-related deaths including suicide (75% of deaths are male), trachea and lung cancers (60%), blood and lymph cancers (58%), ischaemic heart disease (57%) and colon and rectum cancers (55%).[liv] Despite declines in mortality, prostate cancer remains one of the leading causes of death in males[lv].

One out of every six Australian men suffers from depression at any given time, with teenagers and the elderly particularly at risk. Men of all ages suicide at a higher rate than women. Male depression is associated with an increased risk of health disorders such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Depressed men are twice as likely as depressed women to abuse alcohol and drugs.[lvi]

The priority areas identified in the National Men's Health Strategy 2020-2030 are mental health, chronic conditions, sexual and reproductive health and conditions where men are over-represented, injuries and risk taking and healthy ageing. The Strategy advocates for a life-course approach in tailoring interventions to engage and support Australia's diverse men and boys across all stages of their lives.

Women's health
As identified in the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030[lvii], women are overrepresented in incontinence (80% of people with incontinence) and dementia (61% of people living with dementia). One in four (25%) women have pelvic floor issues. Overweight and obesity rates are increasing for all women, and particularly in younger generations[lviii]. An estimated 82% of women aged 65+ have more than one long-term chronic condition. The timing of menarche and menopause are linked with adverse health outcomes in later life, including breast cancer, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and mortality[lix]. Around one in ten (11%) Australian women suffer from endometriosis at some point in their life[lx] and a similar proportion (10%) of mothers of children aged 24 months or less, experience perinatal depression[lxi].

Mental health disorders represent the leading cause of disability for women in Australia and two in five (43%) women have experienced mental illness at some time. Women who experience family and intimate partner violence are more likely to report poor mental health, physical function and general health than other women.

The priority areas identified in the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 to drive change and improve health outcomes are maternal, sexual and reproductive health, healthy ageing, chronic conditions and preventive health, mental health, as well as health impacts of violence against women and girls.

In the City of Maroondah, a higher proportion of women than men have a need for assistance due to disability. In absolute terms, there are 3,834 women and 3,008 men with a need for assistance due to disability. Compared to women in Greater Melbourne, a slightly higher proportion of City of Maroondah women have a need for assistance due to disability.
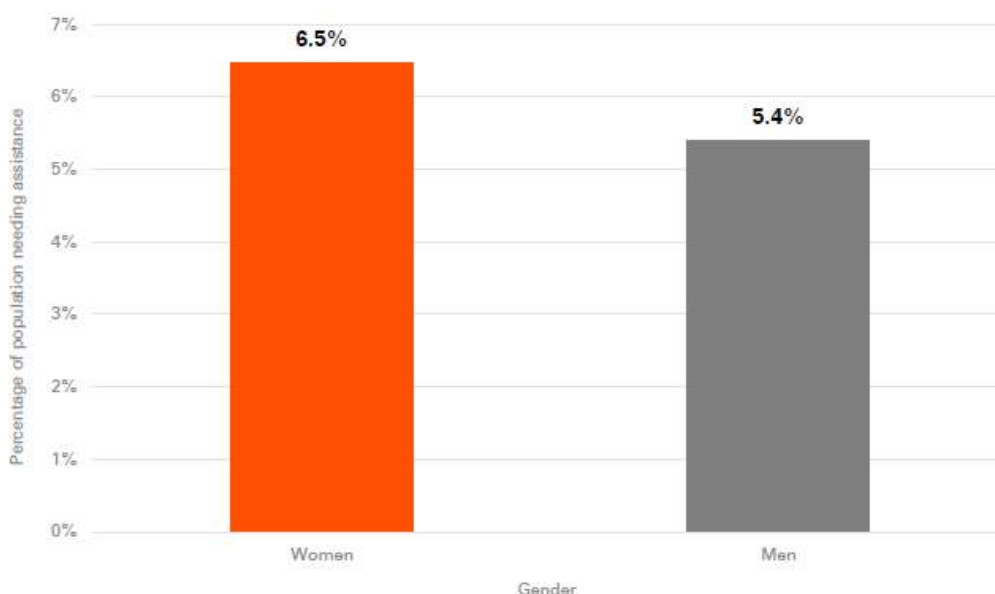
In the City of Maroondah, 36.7% of women and 31.5% of men reported at least one long-term health condition. In absolute terms, this was 21,771 women and 17,544 men. A higher proportion of women than men reported one or more long-term health conditions in almost all age groups.

A lower proportion of Greater Melbourne women have one or more long-term health conditions (31.6%) compared to women in the City of Maroondah (36.7%). Comparison of health conditions by age shows a higher proportion of younger City of Maroondah women with long-term health conditions and more similar rates in age groups beyond the age of 55 years.[lxii]

LGBTIQA+ community

Mental and physical health rates are poorer for Victorian LGBTIQA+ adults compared with non-LGBTIQA+ adults.[lxiii] Research shows higher rates of two or more chronic illnesses, daily smoking, psychological distress as well as anxiety or depression amongst LGBTIQA+ adults, compared to non-LGBTIQA+ adults (see Table 2). They are also less likely to report an excellent or very good health status. Bisexual, pansexual and/or queer respondents were more likely than heterosexual or lesbian/gay respondents to

have poorer self-reported health, low satisfaction with life, feeling life is not worthwhile, higher psychological distress and higher rates of family violence.

Table 2. Selection of key differences between LGBTIQA+ adults and non-LGBTIQA+ adults in the Victorian Population Health Survey 2017

	LGBTIQA+ adults	Non-LGBTIQA+ adults
Two or more chronic illnesses	36%	25%
Daily smoking	18%	12%
Excellent or very good health status	36%	43%
High or very high psychological distress	24%	15%
Anxiety or depression diagnosis	45%	27%

The Victorian Public Health Survey 2023 reveals that 7.4% of Maroondah residents surveyed identify as LGBTQIA+ and 5% did not wish to say or did not know.

According to data published by the Victorian Government in the past 12 months:[lxiv]

- 58 per cent of LGBTQ+ Victorians have faced unfair treatment based on sexual orientation
- 78 per cent of trans and gender diverse Victorians have faced unfair treatment based on their gender identity
- 33 per cent of LGBTQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds feel they have faced unfair treatment based on their ethnicity, cultural identity or heritage.

Discrimination and harassment targeted at LGBTQ+ Victorians takes on several forms. In the last 12 months:

- 36.4 per cent faced social exclusion
- This is higher for Victorians located in outer suburban, regional and rural areas
- 32.7 per cent faced verbal abuse
- This increases to 37.3 - 44.5 per cent for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities
- 22.6 per cent faced harassment such as being spat at or offensive gestures
- This increases to 26.6 per cent for LGBTQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds
- 10.3 per cent experienced sexual assault
- This increases to 13.6 per cent for LGBTQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds and 13.0 - 19.0 per cent for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities
- 3.4 per cent suffered a physical attack or assault with a weapon

Mental health and wellbeing

Nearly half of all Australians will develop a mental illness at some point in their lives.[lxv] One in five (20%) Australians had a mental or behavioural condition in 2017/18, with these conditions more common in females compared to males[lxvi]. Poor mental health typically presents a significant impact on the health, wellbeing and resilience of an individual and community resulting in an increased risk of mental and chronic illness. Mental illness is also closely linked to social isolation, in which a person can become disconnected from society, family and friends. These impacts can affect relationships and emotional health, increase fatigue and affect sleep, affect self-care and personal hygiene, and in an extreme case result in premature death due to disease or suicide.

The suicide rate in First Peoples is twice that of their non-Indigenous counterparts. In Maroondah in 2021 the most prevalent long-term health condition of First Peoples was a mental health condition with the percentage of 20.1% being almost double that of the general Maroondah population at 10.4% and higher than Greater Melbourne First Peoples at 18.6%. The LGBTIQA+ community experience significantly higher

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rates of suicide than the rest of the population. Males are more likely to die by suicide compared to females, and suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians between the ages of 15 and 44.[lxvii] In Maroondah, males are less likely to have sought professional help for a mental health problem (7%), compared to females (22%). Comparative statistics for males in the outer eastern metropolitan area are 16% and 14% for males in Victoria.[lxviii]

Mental health and physical health are inextricably linked. People who reported having a mental illness were much more likely to report having a chronic medical condition, and vice versa.[lxix] There is also a strong association between the use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs and mental illnesses[lxx]. People who have been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition have higher rates of illicit drug use, daily tobacco use and alcohol use (both single occasion risk or lifetime risk).

As outlined earlier, whilst the identification and treatment of mental health problems is critically important for those facing mental illness, it provides an incomplete picture of mental health.[lxxi] Positive psychology is an approach that shifts the focus from what is clinically wrong, to the promotion of wellbeing and the creation of a satisfying life filled with meaning, pleasure, engagement, positive relationships, accomplishment and health[lxxii]. The components of PERMA+ (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment PLUS Optimism, Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Sleep), are viewed to serve as the building blocks for wellbeing[lxxiii]. Research has shown that there are some preventative strategies and skills that allow people to navigate the challenges of life more effectively and enjoy life despite the upsets.[lxxiv]

Healthy eating

Food and beverage consumption play an important contributing factor to an individual's health and wellbeing. Most Victorians do not meet the minimum recommended number of daily vegetables serves and similarly, only 5% of Maroondah residents met daily vegetable consumption guidelines (5% in Victoria). Half of the Maroondah population (49%) met fruit and vegetable consumption guidelines every day (48% in Victoria), and 13% consume sugar-sweetened soft drinks daily (10% in Victoria). These findings could be contributing factors towards Maroondah's obesity rates, where 66% of the municipality's population is pre-obese or obese.[lxxv]

The issue of food security, which is also a cost-of-living issue, has been a concern for Maroondah where the percentage of people who ran out of food and could not afford to buy more increased by almost 42% from 4.1% in 2020 to 5.8% in 2023. See table below for EMR and Greater Melbourne comparison[lxxvi]:

Local Government	% of population ran out of food and could not afford to buy more	% of population worried about running out of food	% of population sometimes worried about running out of food.
Boroondara	4.9	5.5	9.1
Knox	7.7	10.6	17.6
Manningham	4.8	8.8	8.5
Maroondah	**5.8 (third highest)**	**8.4**	**16 (second highest)**
Monash	5.3	5.9	14.7
Whitehorse	7.7	8.2	9.9
Yarra Ranges	8.9	10.5	13.7
Greater Melbourne	7,7		15.6

In addition, the Eastern Emergency Relief Network reports the following

〉 25% increase in the amount of items EERN gave out (last year 8,368 items were provided, this year it was 10,462)
〉 15% increase in numbers of clients (last year 1337 clients visited the warehouse, this year it was 1533 clients)
〉 220% increase in the need for non-perishable food, toiletries

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⟩   38% increase in the need for bedding, sheets, pillows.

Public health

Public health issues can emerge and change over time. At present, drug resistant infections also known as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), are a major public health issue that can bring a variety of health, economic and social impacts. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of certain bacteria, viruses and some parasites to develop resistance to antimicrobial medication making a disease or infection difficult to treat and increasing the risk of spread. These microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are often referred to as 'superbugs'. Whilst AMR does naturally occur over time due to genetic changes, the misuse and/or overuse of antimicrobic pharmaceuticals can result in the acceleration of the process. The emergence and spread of resistant microorganisms are driven by human and non-human antimicrobial drug usage in Australia and overseas.[lxxvii]

The outcomes of AMR have serious health impacts on an individual including prolonged ill health, poorer quality of life, higher risk of spreading illness and may require more expensive / different antibiotics that can cause more harmful side effects.[lxxviii] Similar to COVID-19, AMR is highly transmissible. Whilst AMR currently is not as severe as COVID-19, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has demonstrated the affects that an uncontrollable, transmissible disease can have on our wellbeing and liveability through forced lockdowns, unemployment, social disconnection, economic instability, mental and physical health.

Our health is dependent on the health of our environment which faces significant consequences due to climate change There are future public health, wellbeing and safety implications which are already being felt. The direct and indirect impacts of climate change are exacerbating existing public health risks and present a high risk to human health.[lxxix] Direct impacts, caused by exposure to more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves, include heat stress, injury, trauma and death. Indirect impacts of climate change, mediated through natural and human systems affected by climate change, include water and food borne diseases as well as impacts on the micro and macro nutritional quality of food. Existing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases can also be exacerbated because of higher temperatures, poorer air quality and airborne pollen.[lxxx]

Aside from its effects on physical health, climate change can also adversely affect mental health.[lxxxi] Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and bushfires can lead to psychological distress due to trauma, illness, loss of loved ones, destruction of property and displacement, and disruption of communities, goods and services. As with other health impacts, marginalised and vulnerable populations tend to be the most affected by the mental health impacts of climate change and reduced access to health services.[lxxxii] Vulnerable groups include the elderly, children, people on low incomes, people experiencing homelessness, recent arrivals and those with pre-existing medical conditions.[lxxxiii] Within affected communities, layers of vulnerability can intersect and cause further disadvantage and exposure. The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on vulnerable groups also experiencing extreme weather events compounds their vulnerability. This can be through economic implications, greater pressure on emergency relief systems and coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions that need to be enforced during emergencies, such as density requirements in temporary shelters.[lxxxiv]

Connection to nature

Spending time in nature has been shown to have many positive effects on physical, social and mental health.[lxxxv] Visual and physical contact with nature helps reduce stress, anxiety, blood pressure and muscle tension, improves self-esteem, encourages positive feelings, and helps us recover from mental illness.[lxxxvi] Getting into nature has been shown to have positive impacts on concentration, learning, problem solving, critical thinking capacity, strength resilience and coping skills and creativity as well as enhance mental health and wellbeing through encouraging physical fitness and social engagement.[lxxxvii]

Cultural participation

Participating in arts and cultural activities also has multiple benefits for health and wellbeing including strengthening community connection, reducing social isolation, providing platforms for less prominent voices, and opportunities for bringing people together to develop creative solutions to health promotion challenges.[lxxxviii] The arts provide an important community setting for health promotion, a partnership model for the co-design and delivery of initiatives, a unique participatory experience with the potential to build connection and a vehicle to inform and create behavioural change.[lxxxix]

Focus Area: Liveable Neighbourhoods

Liveable neighbourhoods can shape the way we live, feel, enjoy and experience our community and are important for our liveability, health and wellbeing. Liveable cities have been conceptualised as a city or neighbourhood that is safe, attractive, socially cohesive and inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. Some key elements of a liveable neighbourhood consist of affordable and diverse housing linked to employment, education, public open space, vibrant local activity centres, health and community services, leisure and cultural opportunities, convenient public transport, along with walking and cycling infrastructure.[xc]

During coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions, Maroondah residents spent more time in their local neighbourhood, with 5km travel restrictions in place and work from home directives. This provided opportunities for increased community connection to places and spaces, as local locations became destinations for exercise, socialising, outdoor activities and respite from staying at home. Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions also meant residents were limited to shopping for necessities with 5km of their residence, highlighting the visibility of local businesses as well as gaps in local markets. This revitalised connection has the potential to enable a greater understanding of the concept of living within a 20-minute neighbourhood where everyone can live, work, and play.

Living Locally -

Neighbourhoods are the places we live, connect and build communities. Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 is a long-term strategy to accommodate Melbourne's future growth in population, and the 20-minute neighbourhood concept is a key principle. In Plan Melbourne, the 20-minute neighbourhood is all about 'living locally' - giving people the ability to meet most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk from home, with access to safe cycling and local public transport options. Research shows that 20-minutes is the maximum time people are willing to walk to meet their daily needs locally. [xci]

The places we live have a direct impact on our health. By creating well-designed walkable neighbourhoods that are connected through a mix of land-uses, housing types and access to quality public transport, more healthy, liveable communities can be created. Features of living locally include having local health facilities and schools, employment opportunities, green streets and spaces and affordable housing options a short distance from home. Neighbourhood activity centres are an integral part of the city's vibrant community life and are critical to the aspiration of "living locally". Neighbourhood activity centres provide retail services and goods (newsagent, bakery, supermarket), local entertainment facilities (cafes and restaurants) and local health services and facilities to meet daily needs. [xcii] They also provide opportunities for social interaction and community participation.

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Neighbourhood activity centres within Maroondah include Heathmont village, McAdams Square, Railway Avenue in Ringwood East and Main Street in Croydon. The average distance to an activity centre in Maroondah is 1517m, compared to 1539m in Monash, 1580m in Manningham, 1685m in Whitehorse,1721m in Knox and 2819m in the Yarra Ranges.[xciii] This shows that on average, Maroondah residents are slightly closer to activity centres than neighbouring local government areas.

Place Planning for Liveable Neighbourhoods

The Place Planning for Liveable Neighbourhoods project (the 'Project') focuses on better planning of our local activity centres to create places that are more liveable, where people can connect with their community, attract investment, and support local resilience. Council is seeking community input to ensure that local aspirations are included in future planning.

Croydon South and Ringwood North have been chosen as the first focus areas for the Project due to their potential to improve the quality of life for local communities within a walkable area and to build on previous community projects. The Project aims to identify opportunities to bring social, economic, and environmental benefits to local neighbourhoods. The Project aligns with the 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' focus area of this Strategy.

 Liveable neighbourhoods can shape the way we live, feel, enjoy, and experience our community and are important for health and wellbeing. Liveable neighbourhoods are safe, attractive, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. They aim to support 'living locally' by planning for walkable, well-serviced places where Maroondah residents can meet their needs. The outcomes of the Project seek to improve Council's approach to planning for liveable neighbourhoods and are intended to be replicated across the municipality.

Climate change

Council's operations, assets and service delivery provided to the community is vulnerable to a range of climate hazards (potentially damaging events) such as heatwaves and flooding. As the intensity, severity and duration of extreme weather events increases, enhancing the resilience of operations, assets and service delivery will become more important. Adaptation is action taken to prepare for actual or expected changes in the climate, in order to minimise harm, act on opportunities or cope with the consequences. Climate change adaptation means taking practical actions to manage risks from climate impacts, protect communities and strengthen the resilience of the economy.[xciv]

Open spaces

Liveable neighbourhoods are strongly influenced by the places and spaces within the community. Open spaces include green space, parks, playgrounds, walking/bicycle trails, reserves, golf courses and public sporting/recreation areas. These spaces can be used for both passive and active recreation. Open spaces increase the attractiveness of an area along with providing social and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors[xcv]. In Maroondah, open and green space is a vital component of liveability, providing opportunities for individuals to enhance their wellbeing through exercise, quiet reflection and connection with nature, family and friends. Maroondah's open space includes 430 reserves.

Vegetation and nature are important for wellbeing. Visual and physical contact with nature helps reduce stress, anxiety, blood pressure and muscle tension, improves self-esteem, encourages positive feelings, and helps us recover from mental illness. A network of safe walking and cycling routes that provide access to green spaces in an urban environment also encourages physical activity. In an increasingly urbanised setting like Maroondah, vegetation makes the places we live, more liveable. Plants provide pleasure for our senses, not only to look at, but also smell, feel and taste. Trees provide shade and vegetation improves the air we breathe and cools our urban areas. Natural green spaces encourage social interaction, provide tranquil places for relaxation, calm traffic on streets and improve walkability of neighbourhoods. Exposure to natural environments can also assist mental health, wellbeing, and childhood development.[xcvi]

Residents living in neighbourhoods with good access to public open space are more likely to use such spaces and gain the associated physical activity, and mental and physical health benefits. There is considerable evidence that living within walking distance of parks and in neighbourhoods with more green

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public open space is linked to greater use of these areas and positive health outcomes.[xcvii] An estimated 72% of Maroondah dwellings are within 400 metres of public open space. This is slightly higher than both Knox (69%) and Yarra Ranges (53%), and similar to Manningham (72%) and Whitehorse (76%).[xcviii]

Transport network

Access to public transport is a key ingredient for liveability. Efficient and accessible public transport reduces inequities by facilitating access to services, education and jobs for those who cannot or choose not to, travel by car. Additionally, living close to public transport supports community health by encouraging walking and reducing people's dependence on cars.[xcix] Cars are a major source of greenhouse gas pollution in Australia cities. Providing viable alternatives to driving, such as expanding access to reliable, comfortable public transport, cycling and walking alternatives, will help to drive down transport emissions.[c]

People who live within walking distance of public transport stops, that is, 400m or approximately a 5-minute walk, are more likely to use public transport, and in turn achieve daily recommended exercise targets. However, public transport use is also influenced by other factors including comfort, overcrowding, cost, service route and frequency. A public transport stop is considered to have regular transport if there is at least one scheduled service every 30 minutes between 7am and 7pm on a normal weekday.[ci] In 2024, an estimated 54.5% of dwellings in Maroondah were located within 400 metres of regular public transport, compared to 74.7% in Whitehorse, 65.7% in Manningham, 48.5% in Knox and 29.4% in Yarra Ranges.[cii]

Working arrangements have been significantly affected during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and are likely to have longer-term implications. Research conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has indicated fewer people will use public transport long term and instead use cars, with predictions it could take five to ten years to return public transport use to pre-COVID-19 levels.[ciii] Moving to work from home was the most significant change to employment due to the pandemic[civ] and this is expected to continue.[cv] In 2021, around two in three (68.5%) Maroondah working residents travelled outside of the municipality to work, whilst 26.5% both lived and worked locally in Maroondah[cvi].

Walkability / bike-friendly

Active travel involves walking, cycling, scooting or other active ways of getting to a destination for the whole journey, or as part of the journey along with other travel modes, such as public transport. Active transport is linked to health benefits and reduces private vehicle use and road congestion.

Research shows that city design has a profound impact on the willingness and ability of residents to walk for transport. Higher density, mixed use developments with connected street networks, encourage more local walking for transport. Encouraging active forms of transportation is beneficial for traffic management, the environment and the health and wellbeing of residents.[cvii] Highly-walkable neighbourhoods can lead to more physical activity and lower obesity prevalence amongst residents compared to low-walkability neighbourhoods.[cviii]

Ringwood, Ringwood East, Croydon and Heathmont were rated as the most walkable suburbs in Maroondah, where some errands can be accomplished on foot. All other Maroondah suburbs, including Croydon South, Croydon Hills and Ringwood North were rated 'car-dependent', where most errands require a car.[cix]

Employment pathways

Almost half (48%) of working-age (aged 15-64) people with a disability are employed, compared with 80% without disability.[cx] Whilst some people with a disability need specific arrangements to work, such as working part-time, specific leave arrangements or other supports such as being allocated different duties, the majority do not. Most employed (88%) and unemployed (82%) working-age people with a disability do not require specific arrangements from their employer to work.[cxi]

Women were significantly impacted by the pandemic, experiencing a higher number of job losses and taking on additional carer and home-schooling responsibilities. Women are underemployed in some sectors hardest hit by lockdowns such as hospitality and retail, but the demand for women's labour on the frontline-response sectors such as nursing and aged care increased. Women also comprise most essential service

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workers, including health and social assistance, aged, disability and mental health care, early childhood education, teaching, cleaning and retail services. Many of the service industries, food service, tourism and accommodation, may suffer long term structural declines due to the economic shocks of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, even after economies reopen.[cxii]

Employment status, 2021

Total persons in the labour force

■ City of Maroondah ■ Greater Melbourne
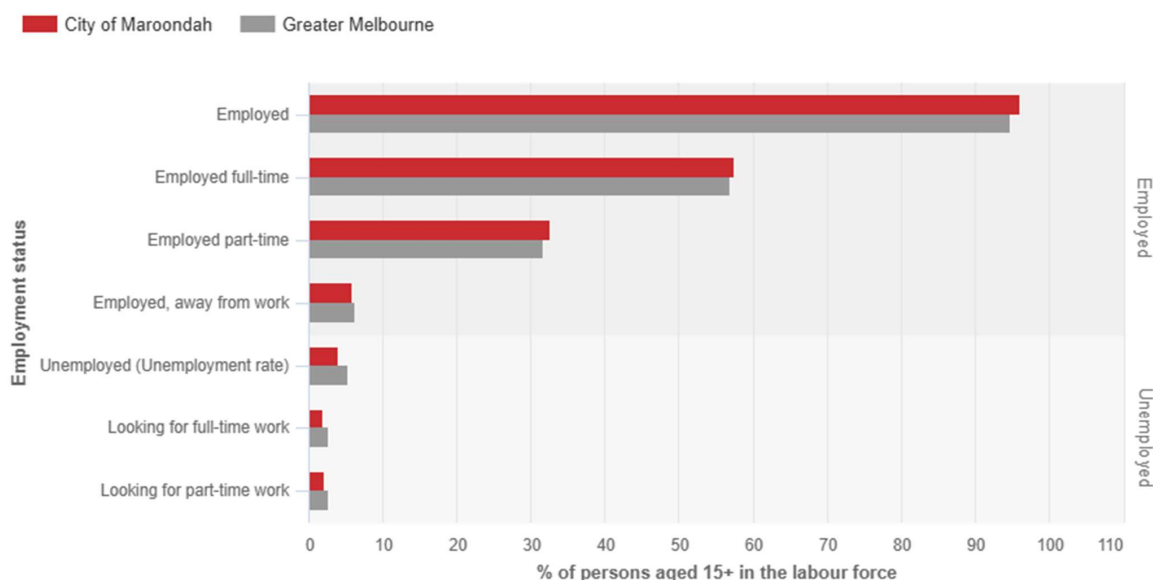
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021 (Usual residence data). Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id (informed decisions).

Continuous learning

Continuous learning, also referred to as life-long learning, is all purposeful, planned education, formal or informal, from early childhood to old age.[cxiii] Continuous learning is the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons[cxiv]. It enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, self-sustainability and employability.[cxv]

Compared to the EMR, Maroondah has fewer residents attending an educational institution (71.7% compared to 70.0o%), including university (4.2% compared to 6.4%), fewer residents that have completed Year 12 (61.% compared to 67%), and fewer with a bachelor or higher degree qualification (30% compared to 37%). Educational qualifications are one of the most important indicators of socio-economic status.[cxvi]

Learning across the lifespan in Maroondah is supported by childcare and early education centres, kindergartens, government and non-government schools at both primary and secondary levels, trade and higher education offered by Swinburne University, Maroondah's five community houses/centres, and two U3A centres.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing measures the cost of housing (renting or purchasing) relative to household income. Whilst affordability can vary from household to household, housing that is deemed affordable has the potential to assist and improve liveability outcomes. In contrast, a lack of affordable housing in an area can have a detrimental impact on liveability, wellbeing, affordability and homelessness within the municipality.[cxvii] Affordable housing can help reduce poverty and enhance equality of opportunity, social inclusion and mobility.[cxviii] Affordable housing is commonly defined as housing which does not cost (in rent

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or mortgage payments) more than 30% of gross household income for households in the bottom two quintiles (40%) of median incomes for a defined area.[cxix] Housing stress is defined as households in the lowest 40% of incomes who are paying more than 30% of their usual gross weekly income on housing costs.[cxx]

In 2021, 33% of renters were experiencing rental stress and 14% of homeowners were in mortgage stress. The percentage of households experiencing housing stress is unevenly distributed throughout the municipality, with higher proportions of housing stress (24.4-32.7%) coming from the Ringwood Metropolitan Activity Centre and Croydon Major Activity Centre.[cxxi]

Research shows that as of June 2024, private rental affordability rates in Maroondah for a 3 bedroom home have declined to just 4% where only 8 lettings were deemed affordable as opposed to 61.6%% or 151 affordable lettings in June 2005[cxxii]. The significant decrease demonstrates the change in private rental affordable housing over the past 20 years.

Social and Community Housing

Social housing represents a subset of affordable housing and is owned by the Victorian Government or registered not-for-profit community housing providers and is permanently dedicated to affordable rental. Maroondah has been identified as needing a greater supply of social housing with very high waiting lists in place. Maroondah's level of social housing stock is 2.5%, far below the 5% average across Victorian and well below the 10% target.

The accessibility of public housing is a significant issue for Maroondah, due to the uneven distribution of both state-owned public housing and community housing. The uneven distribution makes it difficult for people living in certain areas to access social housing because of low housing stock.[cxxiii] Priority groups for social housing include people experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness, low-income families, those experiencing trauma, disadvantage and/or financial instability.[cxxiv]

Focus Area: Safe Communities

Safety is a fundamental component of wellbeing, liveability and resilience. The degree to which someone feels safe within a home, workplace or community has a significant impact on how and where they live, work and play. Feeling safe and secure within a home, neighbourhood, workplace and community can affect one's sense of freedom, levels of stress and overall mental health, physical health, trust, social habits and lifestyle behaviours, social connections, work and study productivity, and participation in leisure, community and physical activities. Achieving safer communities reflects addressing local concerns and perceptions of risk within a community and the place in which they live.[cxxv]

Feelings of neighbourhood safety and security are important determinants of the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. When individuals feel safe within their community, they are more likely to experience greater levels of social connection and trust and become engaged with the community[cxxvi]. Perceptions of neighbourhood safety are also linked with health outcomes. When individuals perceive their neighbourhood as unsafe, they are less likely to engage with outdoor activities and exercise, experience increased anxiety, poor health outcomes and poor self-rated health.[cxxvii]

Community safety / perception of safety

A community's perception of safety, real or perceived, will influence how people go about their daily lives and how they engage within their local community[cxxviii]. These perceptions are often related to fear of crime, family violence rates, drug and alcohol use, development and maintenance of infrastructure, vandalism and cleanliness, surveillance and lighting, human presence and activity, public and open spaces, finance and job security, social and anti-social behaviours, responsiveness of emergency services and the community's resilience to disasters. Similarly, global challenges such as climate change, the depletion of natural resources, health and financial crises are all factors that are playing an increasing role in feelings of insecurity and unsustainability within communities.

Factors such as age, socioeconomic status, cultural identity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, education levels and personal experiences of crime can all affect how safe or unsafe a person feels. Media and

stereotypes can also affect perceptions of road and community safety[cxxix]. People who live in regions, suburbs or places that the media has negatively portrayed or have negative stereotypes attached to them are more likely to feel unsafe in those areas – regardless of their personal experiences or the actual levels of crime[cxxx]. Well-designed, maintained, appropriately lit, effectively utilised and activated roads, public places and spaces contribute to improved perceptions of community safety and reduce the opportunity for crime to occur. Societal factors including access to and types of employment, education and training opportunities, income, transport routes and availability, housing options and status as well as social connections can influence perceptions of safety. Social capital, including community connection, local leadership and civic participation, can help communities remain resilient during change and uncertainly.[cxxxi]

Access to public open space and pedestrian connectivity creates shared spaces within a community that promote active lifestyles and enhanced social capital. A neighbourhood that has strong walkability and provides safe open spaces to be used by the broader community can encourage people to use active and public transport methods, provide social interaction opportunities and create a sense of safety. Women's perceptions of safety in Australia are the lowest of any developed country in the world, with over half of Australian women feeling unsafe when walking alone at night[cxxxii]. In Victoria, results indicate women feel 80% less safe than men to walk alone at night in their neighbourhood[cxxxiii]. Specifically, in Maroondah 27% of women felt safe when walking alone at night compared to 68.5% of men. For women this is the lowest percentage in the EMR.[cxxxiv] Most (91%) Maroondah residents agreed that they felt safe walking alone during the day, which is similar to the Victorian estimate (93%). However, just under half (47%) of Maroondah residents agreed that they felt safe walking alone in their local area after dark, which is significantly less than the Victorian estimate (55%).[cxxxv]

The key to safer places is to improve the quality of the environment, minimise the opportunity for crime and promote accessible and liveable places that encourage a feeling of safety and community participation. Principles for safer design include maximizing visibility and natural surveillance of the public environment, providing safe movement, good connections and access, maximising activity in public spaces, and managing public space to ensure that it is attractive and well used.[cxxxvi]

Promoting gender equality and preventing family and gender-based violence

Family, domestic and sexual violence are all major health and welfare issues in Australia that stem from a range of underlying issues centred around gender inequality[cxxxvii]. Although it is acknowledged that family violence and abuse can be experienced by all social and demographic groups, young women, children, people with a disability, LGBTIQA+ community, First Peoples women and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are particularly vulnerable.[cxxxviii][cxxxix] Problem gambling[cxl], personal or financial stress and poor social networks[cxli] have been associated with family violence and intimate partner violence.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, research and agency reports revealed an increased risk of violence against women in current domestic relationships, most likely from a combination of economic stress and social isolation.[cxlii] For many women experiencing violence during this period, there was a reduction in the ability to seek help, due to the many challenges experienced by organisations in providing supports, undertaking effective risk assessment and carrying out safety planning.[cxliii]
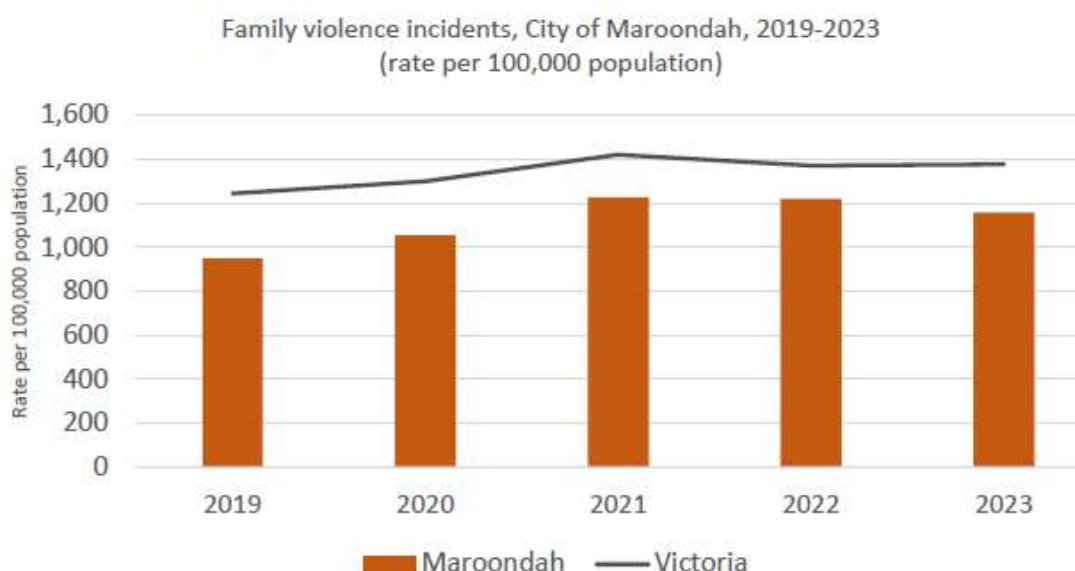
Since the age of 15, one in three (34%) Australian women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by a man.[cxliv] One in four Australian women (23%) and one in thirteen men (8%) has experienced physical or sexual violence by current or former intimate partner since age 15.[cxlv] Young women (18–24 years) experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups.[cxlvi] Women are more likely to experience violence from a known person, such as a family member, current or former partner within in their home. Men are more likely to experience violence from a stranger and in public spaces.[cxlvii]

Violence against women has profound, wide ranging, long term impacts on the health and wellbeing of women and children, families and communities.[cxlviii] On average in Australia, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner[cxlix] and almost 10 women a day are hospitalised for assault injuries perpetrated by a spouse or domestic partner.[cl] Female victims are more likely to be killed during a period of intended or actual separation.[cli] Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of death, disability

and illness in Australian women aged 18-44 years.[clii] Women who experience family and intimate partner violence are more likely to report poor mental health, physical function and general health than other women.[cliii] Women are at greater risk of experiencing domestic violence from their partner during pregnancy as well as up to one month after the birth[cliv]. Family violence is a leading driver of homelessness for women.[clv]

Of those who had experienced violence from a previous partner, 68% of women and 60% of men reported that children had seen or heard the violence.[clvi] For children and adolescents, the impact of experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence can affect their physical, psychological, emotional, behavioural, and social development, including interpersonal relationship issues, learning and development difficulties, mental and physical health issues, alcohol and other drug use, as well as aggressive, violent and criminal activities.[clvii]

Local data demonstrates that violence against women in the EMR and the City of Maroondah remains very high. Maroondah has the amongst the highest rates of family violence incidents in the EMR.[clviii] Maroondah has the highest rate per 100,000 population of domestic/family/sexual violence related ambulance call outs in the EMR.[clix]

Family violence incidents, City of Maroondah, 2019-2023 (rate per 100,000 population)

Source: Crime Statistics Agency, https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-crime-data-by-area

Elder abuse

Elder abuse is a serious public health problem[clx]. Elder abuse often occurs via family members, friends or professionals (i.e. paid carers) who are known by the victim. Elder abuse can come in many forms including neglect, psychological, physical, financial or sexual abuse. People who commit elder abuse are often in a position of trust, such as family members or health care workers. Elder abuse has physical effects, such as injuries and disabilities, as well as psychological effects, such as anxiety, loneliness and loss of dignity, trust and hope. The prevalence of elder abuse is under-reported, as the victim may fear retaliation, shame or embarrassment, or have mental incapacity.[clxi] Female victims outnumbered male victims and the proportion of victims generally rose with age. Emotional and financial abuse were the most common types of elder abuse reported.[clxii]

Crime reduction

Crime has a significant influence on community safety and perceptions of safety in a public place. Personal experiences of crime, high-profile incidences of violent crime, terrorist threats, road trauma, and an

increasing crime rate can make communities feel less safe.[clxiii] The harm associated with crime can be experienced in many ways. It can range from inconvenience and economic loss to physical and psychological injury and distress, to trauma and grief. Harm can be experienced directly, by victims of crime and their families. It can also be experienced indirectly by creating fear and decreasing feelings of safety and trust within the community. Harm arising from criminal acts can involve a direct impact on an individual, impacts on families and communities, as well as system and opportunity costs in responding to harm. 'Reducing harm' by identifying threats and preventing crime is one of the Victorian Government's five priorities to make Victoria safer. [clxiv]

In 2024, the crime rates were lower than the Victorian rate (5527.2 per 100,000, compared with 6550.6)[clxv]. Most incidents occurred in Ringwood and Croydon and the major locations where incidents occurred were in homes and streets/lanes/footpaths. The top five offences were stealing from a motor vehicle, stealing from a retail store, other theft, criminal damage, and breaching family violence intervention orders.[clxvi]

Child protection

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children are required by law to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm. These aim to promote the safety of children, prevent child abuse and ensure organisations and businesses have effective processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse. Child Safe Standards work by driving changes in organisational culture – embedding child safety in everyday thinking and practice, providing a minimum standard of child safety across all organisations and highlighting that all have a role to keep children safe from abuse.[clxvii]

Road safety

Victoria has led the world in road safety interventions – introducing mandatory seat belts, random breath testing, bike helmet laws, safety cameras, and running public behaviour change campaigns around dangerous driving activities such as drink and drug driving. This has seen significant reductions in deaths on Victorian roads from 1,061 deaths in 1970 to 266 in 2019. Even so, in 2019, 266 people lost their lives on Victoria's roads, around 8000 Victorians were hospitalised with serious injuries and a further 12,000 were injured.[clxviii]

Survivors and families affected by road crashes have a range of physical, psychological and legal needs. Outcomes of crashes may include physical injuries and resulting disability, psychological trauma that can impair reintegration into work and family life, and a range of economic and legal consequences. While deaths have been steadily declining, serious injuries have been increasing – with current data indicating that for every death on Victorian roads around 30 people are seriously injured.[clxix]

Road safety is complex, requiring a bold, innovative and future focused approach. Road safety can be improved through safer vehicles, safer travel speeds, infrastructure improvements, enforcement, innovation and technology, public information campaigns and education programs.[clxx]

Emergency management

Emergency management contributes to community safety through reducing the impact of emergency related events, and assists the community to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency events.[clxxi]

The ability of a community to respond to, and recover from, an emergency will depend greatly on the level of resilience of the people affected. Preparedness focuses on ensuring the risks and management strategies identified in prevention planning are utilised to assist and facilitate the local community to be aware of the risks and the potential consequences of a resulting emergency event, to inform and equip them with tools to implement resilience strategies for their own homes and families.[clxxii] Disaster risk reduction refers to the actions taken before a hazard or disaster occurs to reduce the impact of such an event. Examples include implementing infrastructure building codes, measures to divert flood water or increasing water storage capacity in order to maintain water supply in times of drought. Disaster risk reduction work aims to reduce disaster risk and increase the resilience of a population.[clxxiii]

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Climate change has caused more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves,[clxxiv] and significant impacts from more gradual changes. The greatest related risks to Maroondah include: heatwaves, floods, storms, bushfires, gas and electricity service disruptions, residential fires, and epidemics / pandemics.[clxxv]

The impact of extreme weather events has been significantly exacerbated by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic also placed strain on emergency relief. For instance, evacuations for storms are more difficult during a lockdown, requiring people to be spread over a larger number of shelters and ensuring provision of protection.[clxxvi]

Digital safety

Digital safety refers to the act of staying safe online. It is also known as online safety, e-safety and cyber safety. It encompasses all technological devices which have access to the internet. Being safe online means individuals are protecting themselves and others from online harms and risks which may jeopardise their personal information, lead to unsafe communications or even effect their mental health and wellbeing.

There are a range of harms that are associated with the internet such as anonymity and identity shielding (users hide or disguise their identifying information), online harmful sexual behaviours, sextortion, cyber bullying, unwanted or unsafe contact, fake news, illegal content and online scams. Another form of online harm is technology-facilitated domestic violence which is becoming increasingly common in Australia. The conduct might include monitoring, tracking, surveillance, or the use and distribution of another's personal information for the purposes of intimidating or harassing both online or in the physical environment. Harmful interactions or influences on social media have also been shown to have a significant impact on individual wellbeing. Algorithms used by companies can expose Australians to dangerous or harmful content while also controlling which influencers and political movements are shown on user accounts.[clxxvii] Although an integral part of modern society, the cyber environment can also cause harm and has increasingly played a role in criminal activity.[clxxviii]

Initiatives to minimise online harms are largely targeted towards children, parents and carers as young people are heavy users of devices and the internet. In 2016, 97% of Australian households with children aged under 15 years had access to the internet, with an average number of seven devices per household.[clxxix]

Focus Area: Social Inclusion

A socially inclusive community enables all members of the community to fully participate and contribute to social, economic and cultural life in a welcoming and safe manner. This includes participation in community events and activities, employment, education, enjoyment of public spaces and facilities, health services, housing and democratic processes.

Being socially included means that people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to participate in education and training (learn); participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities (work); connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities (engage); and influence decisions that affect them (have a voice).[clxxx]

The concept of social inclusion paves the way for improving and positively changing society's behaviours and attitudes towards people from different backgrounds and perspectives, where all Australians are valued, recognised, feel a sense of belonging rather than being excluded from society.[clxxxi] Being socially inclusive is about the deliberate actions taken to remove or reduce barriers to inclusion and to create opportunities that facilitate and encourage full participation.[clxxxii]

Research has found that social connection and participation can assist with good mental health, reduce psychological distress and help to maintain overall health and wellbeing. However, social isolation and loneliness can be harmful to both mental and physical health. Social isolation has been linked to mental illness, emotional distress, suicide, dementia, premature death, poor health behaviours, smoking, physical

inactivity, poor sleep, high blood pressure and poorer immune function[clxxxiii]. Social isolation is seen as the state of having minimal contact with others. It differs from loneliness, which is a subjective state of negative feelings about having a lower level of social contact than desired. A person may be socially isolated but not lonely, or socially connected but feel lonely.[clxxxiv]

One in four Australian adults are lonely[clxxxv]. Some situations are more likely to be associated with loneliness than others, including people who are living alone and not being in a relationship with a partner. Young adults and males tend to report higher levels of loneliness. Recently separated men experience higher levels of loneliness than married men, and single parents also experience higher levels of loneliness than singles adults without children, or couples with or without children. Disconnection from community, unemployment and receiving income support are risk factors for developing loneliness. [clxxxvi] In Maroondah, 22% of the adult population report experiencing loneliness. This is the second highest percentage in the EMR.[clxxxvii]

Lone person households comprise one in four Maroondah households (24%). One parent families make up 11%. These results are consistent with Greater Melbourne. Couples with and without children make three in five households (58%) in Maroondah. Across Maroondah, there is variation in household composition. For example, lone person households comprise 40% in the Croydon MAC and 34% in Ringwood MAC, compared to 11% in Croydon Hills.[clxxxviii]

Table 3. Maroondah's household composition[clxxxix]

	Maroondah 2021	Greater Melbourne 2021
Couples with children	34%	33%
Couples without children	24%	23%
Lone person	24%	24%
One parent families	11%	10%
Group households	3%	4%

Sense of belonging

People have a strong desire to belong and it necessary for our survival. Belonging comes from a perception of quality, meaning and satisfaction with social connections. It may also relate to a sense of belonging to a place or event an event. Belonging is essential for our psychological and physical health and can play a role in the way we think and interact with the world.[cxc] Having strong social networks and a strong sense of social identity (through belonging to groups) is associated with better health, reduced levels of depression and anxiety, and improved overall wellbeing.[cxci] Belonging helps us feel valued, needed, and accepted by others, that our beliefs are valid, our efforts worthwhile, and comforted by being with others who share our interests and values. Without a strong sense of belonging, we can feel anxious, isolated, unsupported. We are also less likely to interact with others, weather tough times with hope for a positive future and take healthy risks and do things that might help us feel good. [cxcii]

Community participation

Community connection occurs when individuals are connected with, contribute to, feel included in and valued by their community beyond their family and friends. An important aspect of this relationship is reciprocity, where people both give to and receive from the community.[cxciii] One of the greatest influences on disaster resilience is social connection. Research shows that contact between people of different groups is important for building social inclusion. Many Australians have little contact with certain minority groups, and lack of contact is associated with higher prejudice.[cxciv]

The Victorian Public Health Survey 2023 revealed that the percentage of people not feeling valued by society in Maroondah was 15.2% which is the third highest in the EMR while 45.4% reported that they did feel valued by society which is the lowest in the EMR.

Volunteering

Being able to volunteer is one of the key components of social inclusion.[cxcv] Volunteering provides an opportunity for new social experiences and connections,[cxcvi] and the opportunity to practice and develop social skills. It can strengthen ties to the community and expose you to people with similar interests.[cxcvii] Volunteering can be very meaningful and enjoyable, and research shows volunteering can promote better physical and mental health. [cxcviii] It can also help combat stress, loneliness and social isolation.[cxcix]

Volunteering has many potential benefits. It provides the opportunity to experience a sense of achievement and purpose,[cc] act on values, passions and interests, build confidence, challenge oneself in a supportive environment and make a difference[cci]. Volunteering is also an important pathway to employment especially for those facing barriers in the job market. [ccii] It can provide the opportunity to gain work experience, transferable skills and build professional networks.[cciii] In Maroondah 14.8% of the population report that they volunteer.[cciv]

Community Infrastructure

Community infrastructure refers to public places and spaces that accommodate community facilities and services and support individuals, families and groups to meet their social needs, maximise their potential and enhance community wellbeing. Well-located, activated and fit-for-purpose community infrastructure has a broader role in shaping the physical layout and look of a new development/renewal area, helping to define its identity and character.[ccv]

Equity

Equality means everyone is treated the same or has the same life opportunities. However, equality can only be achieved if people start from the same position. Treating people the same does not take into account systemic barriers. Multiple forms of inequality and disadvantage such as gender, Aboriginality, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, education and power can exacerbate unequal outcomes.

Equity is the process required to achieve equality, by ensuring affirmative measures are put in place to overcome structural barriers and discrimination that prevent inclusion, participation and access to resources and opportunities.[ccvi]

Homelessness

Homeless is a problem that goes beyond 'rooflessness' and a lack of access to safe shelter. The experience of homelessness includes vulnerable people living in refuges, crisis accommodation or in temporary housing.[ccvii] Every night, more than 116,000 people in Australia experience homelessness.[ccviii] The most visible experience of homelessness involves sleeping rough on the streets, however, this type of homelessness only represents 7% of the homeless population. Other forms of homelessness include couch surfing, living in cars or other temporary accommodation, severely crowded dwellings or inadequate forms of shelter that fall below adequate standards, such as boarding housing and caravan parks.[ccix]

Homelessness can be the result of many social, economic and health–related factors. Individual factors, such as low educational attainment, experience of family and domestic violence, physical and mental health, disability, trauma and substance misuse may make a person more at risk of becoming homeless.[ccx] Structural factors, including lack of adequate income and limited access to affordable and available housing, also contribute to risk of homelessness.[ccxi] People of all ages and backgrounds are at risk of homelessness, but First Peoples, children and older women are more vulnerable to homelessness than other groups in society. Domestic and family violence is one of the main reasons people seek support from specialist homelessness services[ccxii].

Community members experiencing homelessness are unevenly distributed throughout Maroondah, with the most recent data indicating the highest number of homeless persons are located in Ringwood, Ringwood East and Croydon. Lower numbers of homeless persons were recorded in the areas of Ringwood North, Croydon Hills and Warranwood. Increasing private rental prices are considered a key factor leading to the increase of homelessness in suburbs such as Ringwood and Croydon. Proportionally, the suburb of Croydon is identified as having the largest proportion of individuals living in social housing or without a

home.[ccxiii] Overall Maroondah has 474 people who are homeless with a rate of 42.1% per 10,000 residents. Both of these figures are third highest in the EMR.

Vulnerable Communities

Parts of Australia's population routinely experience forms of discrimination and exclusion as they go about their daily lives. Women and cultural minorities remain underrepresented in the leadership positions of Australian organisations. People with disabilities continue to face discrimination from employers. LGBTIQA+ people suffer from significantly higher levels of depression (and more attempted suicides) than the general population.[ccxiv]

Research shows that prejudice in Australia has been generally highest against religious minorities, racial minorities, First Peoples, and LGBTIQ+ people. Prejudice refers to negative attitudes, discrimination refers to the 'acting out' of those negative attitudes. Approximately one in five people were highly prejudiced against racial minorities (21%), religious minorities (19%), LGBTIQ+ people (20%), or First Peoples (21%). One in six were highly prejudiced against young people (16%) and one in seven against women (14%). In contrast, fewer people hold highly prejudiced views against people with a disability (7%), or older people (7%).[ccxv]

Discrimination occurs when there is 'unequal treatment of people based on the groups or categories to which they belong. Discrimination can be major, such as being unfairly denied a promotion or job, or discouraged from continuing education. In contrast, everyday discrimination refers to 'more chronic, routine, and relatively minor experiences of unfair treatment'[ccxvi], such as being treated with less respect and courtesy, receiving poorer service than others at restaurants or stores, or being called names. One in five (20%) Australians report having experienced a major form of discrimination in the last 2 years. The groups that report experiencing the most discrimination are young people (aged 18 to 24), First Peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, religious minorities, and people with disability. [ccxvii]

Local data, from the Victorian Public Health Survey 2023, reveals that 16.4% of Maroondah's population have experienced discrimination and this is the second highest percentage in the EMR.

Accessibility

An inclusive community by providing equal opportunities to access resources and share power among different people, fosters connectedness and interdependence among the community members[ccxviii]. Accessibility refers to providing an individual ability to access a place or type of infrastructure, providing mobility access to people with disability, enabling people to engage or fully participate in community activities, supporting engagement in the digital environment and empowering people to achieve their full potential.[ccxix] Accessibility, therefore, minimises inequalities, promotes social participation and helps in achieving social inclusion through greater equity, fairness and justice.[ccxx]

Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion means having the skills you need to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information is increasingly through digital technologies like internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices.[ccxxi] Digital technologies are used in education settings, work settings and personal lives. Learning to identify authentic and reliable information, managing your online identity, personal security and privacy, are integral skills of digital literacy.[ccxxii]

Digital inclusion includes access, affordability and digital ability. Research has found that building digital confidence to safely and securely use the internet is important for enhancing digital inclusion. In general, Australians with lower levels of income, employment, and education are significantly less digitally included. Low-income family households lack access to technology options and suitable devices and have lower digital skills. Low levels of digital inclusion for older Australians increase the risks of social isolation and loneliness.[ccxxiii]

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has underlined the critical importance of digital inclusion. With the shutdown of schools, businesses, services, shops and meeting places, the digital transformation of education, government, business and community services has accelerated. However, the rapid

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acceleration of the digital economy and society is emerging at a time when some members of the community still face real barriers to online participation. Older people, families without adequate internet access, and vulnerable Australians are among those who have been especially isolated during the pandemic.[ccxxiv]

Focus Area: Embracing diversity

Diversity plays a major contributing factor on liveability, health, and wellbeing. Diversity can be defined as understanding what makes each person unique. Diversity relates to different characteristics that can include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, or other ideologies. Embracing diversity is the exploration and respect of these differences in a safe, positive, and fostering environment, moving beyond simple tolerance and embracing and understanding the rich dimensions of diversity within everyone.[ccxxv]

Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment; practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.[ccxxvi] Therefore, building alliances across these differences can contribute to a socially cohesive community where all individuals and groups have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, and recognition.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is used to illustrate the interplay between kinds of discrimination[ccxxvii] as individuals can identify with multiple intersecting groups at the same time[ccxxviii]. Intersectionality describes how different parts of a person's identity or circumstances – such as age, race, culture, disability, gender, socioeconomic status or religion – intersect and combine to shape people's life experiences, including unequal outcomes, privilege and discrimination.[ccxxix]

People with a disability

The disability population is diverse and encompasses people with varying types and levels of disability. Research indicates that 1 in 6 Australians have some form of disability.[ccxxx] The prevalence of disability increases with age, meaning the longer people live, the more likely they are to experience some form of disability. Around one in eight people aged 15-64 have some level of disability, rising to one in two for those aged 65 and over.[ccxxxi] In line with the EMR, 5% of Maroondah's population need help in their day-to-day lives due to a disability. This rises to one in two Maroondah residents aged over 85 (48%). [ccxxxii]

Many people with disability experience a high quality of life through access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. However, some people with disability also face challenges in accessing and obtaining these areas. This is influenced by factors such as the nature of the opportunities, services and assistance available to them, the accessibility of their environment, and their experiences of discrimination. These factors can often lead to poorer health outcomes and as a result, poorer quality of life.

Research indicates that people with a disability compared to those without disability are more likely to be overweight or obese (72% compared to 55%)[ccxxxiii], smoke daily (18% compared to 12%)[ccxxxiv], less likely to complete year 12 (34% compared to 66%)[ccxxxv] and more likely to be unemployed (48% compared to 79%)[ccxxxvi]. Whilst some people with disability need specific arrangements to work, such as working part-time, specific leave arrangements or other supports such as being allocated different duties, the majority do not. Most employed (88%) and unemployed (82%) working-age people with disability do not require specific arrangements from their employer to work. Most (93%) working-age people with disability who are unemployed report at least one difficulty finding work, compared with 83% without disability. Own ill health or disability is the most common reason for those with disability, followed by lacked necessary skills or education, considered too old by employers, too many applicants for available jobs and insufficient work experience.[ccxxxvii]

People with a disability are considered one of the greatest at-risk groups in relation to violence. Adults with a disability are more likely to experience violence than those without a disability. Of adults with a disability,

- 1 in 2 (47%) have experienced violence after the age of 15, compared with 1 in 3 (36%) without a disability
- 1 in 5 (20%) have experienced abuse before the age of 15, compared with 1 in 10 (11%)
- 3 in 4 (74%) of those who experienced violence have experienced multiple incidents of violence, compared with 6 in 10 (62%)[ccxxxviii]

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

Culture is a significant contributor to diversity and encompasses many components such as values, behavioural styles, languages, non-verbal communications, and perspectives. The celebration of diversity, including local indigenous culture, will encourage community resilience and harmony. In 2016, 45% of Australians were either born overseas (26%) or had one or both parents who were born overseas (19%). One in five (20%) Australians speak a language other than English at home.[ccxxxix] In Maroondah, cultural diversity continues to increase over time. In 2016,

- 20% in Maroondah indicated that they speak a language other than English at home. Whilst lower than the proportion in Greater Melbourne (34%) this is higher than in 2016 (17%).
- Similarly, the proportion of residents who were born overseas was higher in 2021 (25%) than 2016 (23%).[ccxl]
- The Ringwood MAC has the highest proportion of people born overseas (42%), recent arrivals (37%) and who speak a language other than English at home (40%).

Communities that embrace and respect multiculturalism allows for positive interactions between multicultural groups. This in turn enables the development of a foundation for social cohesion and cultural exchanges across a community. Migrants also make a significant contribution to Australia's economy and provide an estimated financial benefit of over 10 billion dollars in their first ten years of settlement.[ccxli] Furthermore, cultural diversity has been found to enable increased tolerance and to challenge cultural stereotypes among individuals. A multicultural society provides the necessary conditions to promote tolerance and understanding cultures, this is achieved through exposure to different faiths, ethnicities, and languages.[ccxlii]

People from CALD communities often face some challenges when integrating into society. Some challenges range from language and cultural barriers, to the unique and often traumatic experience of migration. Newly arrived migrants and refugees have been found to have high rates of poor mental health. Contributing factors include trauma as well as discrimination and racism that people from CALD backgrounds may experience. [ccxliii] Almost two-thirds of people from CALD backgrounds have experienced racism and this in turn is associated with increased psychological distress.[ccxliv] Newly arrived migrants and refugees may also have difficulties obtaining employment opportunities for reasons including language barriers, recognition of educational qualifications or lack of Australian work experience.[ccxlv] Migrant and refugee women are also at greater risk of suffering poorer maternal and child health outcomes than other women.[ccxlvi]

Many CALD backgrounds are reluctant to voluntarily access both hospital and community-based health services. This is largely due to the difficulties in understanding and accessing mainstream systems of care and lack of access to services that are culturally safe and appropriate. The stigma of mental illness is also a contributing factor in some cultures and is a significant barrier to effective access to services.[ccxlvii]

Studies have shown that people from CALD backgrounds are likely to experience social isolation due to the process of acculturation, that is, migrants adapting to the host culture. The process of acculturation can lead to stress, boredom, social isolation and loneliness. All of which are risk factors for problem gambling, excessive alcohol consumption and poor mental health.[ccxlviii]

First Peoples

Australia is home to the oldest continuing living culture in the world, full of richness and diversity. [ccxlix] Reconciliation is about strengthening relationships, unity and respect between First Peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.[ccl] Reconciliation is unity and respect between First Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. It is about respect for First Peoples heritage and valuing justice and equity for all Australians[ccli]. Reconciliation includes race relations, institutional integrity, equality and equity, unity and historical acceptance.[cclii] In 2021, approximately 1% of the Victorian population and 0.6%

of Maroondah residents identified themselves as First Peoples.[ccliii] This equates to 734 in Maroondah, an increase from 560 in 2016.[ccliv]

Since the colonisation of Australia by European settlers, First Peoples have experienced extreme hardships, ranging from the loss of traditional culture and homelands to the forced removal of children and denial of citizenship rights.[cclv] Colonisation has led to many negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of First Peoples. Impacts included, discrimination, loss of identity, language, culture and land.[cclvi]

On average, First Peoples have a life expectancy that is 10-17 years shorter than other Australians. They suffer chronic disease, such as heart disease, at much higher rates than non-Indigenous populations. First Peoples infants die at twice the rate of other Australians. [cclvii] The suicide rate in First Peoples is twice that of their non-Indigenous counterparts.[cclviii] First Peoples women experience higher rates of comorbid conditions, including diabetes, breast, cervical and ovarian cancers than non-indigenous women.[cclix] First Peoples have higher rates of smoking[cclx] and single occasion risk and risky alcohol consumption. However, they are more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol compared to non-Indigenous Australians.[cclxi]

Access to health services is widely accepted as key to improving health outcomes. Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are often prevented from accessing these services due to barriers including high costs, experiences of past discrimination, racism, and poor communication with health care professionals.[cclxii]

People with Year 12 qualifications are more likely to continue further study, participate in higher education, and to enter the workforce. The Year 12 retention rate among First Peoples students has increased from 47% in 2010, to 60% in 2016. However, this is still lower than the non-Indigenous rate at 79% in 2010 and 86% in 2016.[cclxiii] In Maroondah, 41% of First Peoples have finished Year 12 or equivalent. This is higher than the proportion of First Peoples in Victoria (34%). The majority (92%) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in Maroondah are employed. This is higher than the proportion of First Peoples in Victoria (86%).[cclxiv] However, in 2021 the unemployment rate for First Peoples in Maroondah was 6.9% compared with 4.0% for non-First Peoples.

LGBTIQA+ and gender identity

LGBTIQA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual plus other terms that are used to describe an individual's gender and sexuality.[cclxv] The LGBTIQA+ community in Australia still experience discrimination, harassment and hostility in many parts of everyday life and may hide their sexuality or gender identity due to discrimination and harassment. [cclxvi]

Mental health and general physical health outcomes are poorer for Victorian LGBTIQ+ adults compared with non- LGBTIQ+ adults.[cclxvii] The discrimination and societal stigma experienced by people identifying as LGBTIQA+ can have a significant impact on their mental health, with significantly higher rates of suicide than the rest of the population.[cclxviii] People identifying as LGBTIQA+ have higher rates of recent illicit drug use and lifetime and risky drinking[cclxix] Research shows higher rates of two or more chronic illnesses, daily smoking, psychological distress as well as anxiety or depression amongst LGBTIQA+ adults (36%, 18%, 24% and 45%), compared to non-LGBTIQA+ adults (25%, 12%, 15% and 27%). They are also less likely to report an excellent or very good health status (36% compared to 43%). [cclxx]

Age groups

The life experiences and circumstances of a child and young person impacts significantly on how the brain develops and on their health, social and education outcomes. Central to healthy brain development are supportive family relationships and positive learning experiences, along with universal access to services, and additional support where families are faced with stressful circumstances and lower levels of resilience. The environments in which children live and learn, and the quality of their relationships with adults and caregivers, have a significant impact on their cognitive, emotional and social development. Significant adversity such as poverty, abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse or mental illness, and exposure to violence in early childhood can lead to lifelong problems.[cclxxi]

The middle years (8-12 years) is a time of great opportunity and risk in the development of children, with major transitions such as moving from primary to secondary school and moving from childhood to

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adolescence. It involves substantial physiological, neurological, cognitive and psychosocial change, and is accompanied by a number of risk factors in relation to school engagement, peer relations, and identity formation regarding culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Growth in the availability and influence of social media is also an emergent issue that this cohort is dealing with. [cclxxii]

It is during the ages of 12-25 years that the decision-making part of the brain is fully developed. Providing guidance and support for adolescents and young adults is as critical as intervention in the early years. [cclxxiii] Young people in Victoria have never been better educated or more strongly connected. They're the most diverse generation in our state's history, and as leaders in our schools, workplaces and communities they are making Victoria stronger, fairer and more sustainable. At the same time, many young people are anxious about their future. Young people have been significantly impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, with education opportunities, employment prospects, housing security, mental health and connection to community, family and friends affected. [cclxxiv] Research shows that suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians between the ages of 15 and 44. [cclxxv]

Our population is ageing. People over 85 years old are the fastest growing population group in Australia. Older Victorians are willing and able to continue to contribute to society in a positive way and fostering the conditions that enable them to age well will enable them to be able to do so. Ageism can lead older people to unnecessarily delay reaching out for assistance when its needed due to the stigma associated with using mobility aids or needing additional support or care. There is also a fear of loss of control and independence. The loss of meaningful relationships and social networks leading to social isolation and loneliness can pose a significant risk to ageing well. Key attributes of Victorians ageing well include a positive attitude, a purposeful and meaningful life, being respected and respectful, being connected to family, friends and society, in touch with a changing world, safe and secure at home and financially, being able to manage health issues including mental health and being able to get around. [cclxxvi]

As can be seen in Table 3, almost half of Maroondah residents were aged between 25-59 (48% compared to 49% of Greater Melbourne residents). Similar proportions exist across most age groups, however, there are fewer 18-34 year olds in Maroondah (22%) and more 50-84 year olds in Maroondah (32%) compared to Greater Melbourne (26% and 29% respectively). Between 2016 and 2031, the age structure forecasts for Maroondah indicate a 30% increase in the retirement age population. [cclxxvii]

Table 4. Maroondah's age group profile[cclxxviii]

	Maroondah 2021	Greater Melbourne 2021
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	6%	6%
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	9%	9%
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	7%	7%
Tertiary education and independence (18 to 24)	8%	9%
Young workforce (25 to 34)	13%	16%
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	21%	21%
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	13%	12%
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	10%	9%
Seniors (70 to 84)	10%	8%
Elderly aged (85 and over)	2%	2%

Focus Area: Social harms

There are a range of social influences that can result in disruptive and negative impacts on individual and community wellbeing. Whilst many of these influences have potential positive aspects, their overuse and/or misuse can result in significant harms. Lifestyle behaviours such as tobacco, drug, alcohol abuse, problem gambling and screen addiction are noted as contributing factors to poor mental and physical health.

The impact of addiction causes harm far beyond physical and psychological health. It also causes harm to the wellbeing and health of others. The health burden of alcohol and other drug use is considerable and includes hospitalisation from injury and other disease, mental illness, pregnancy complications, injections-relate harms, overdose and mortality[cclxxix]. The consumption of alcohol and other drugs may influence people to engage in risky or criminal activities such as driving a motor vehicle, offensive conduct and verbal or physical violence.

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The use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs has several economic impacts relating to household expenditure, decreased productivity, increase risk of unemployment, business reputation[cclxxx], healthcare and law enforcement costs.

Priority populations that are affected by alcohol, tobacco and other drugs include:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, with higher rates of smoking[cclxxxi] and single occasion risk and risky alcohol consumption[cclxxxii]. However, they are more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol compared to non-Indigenous Australians.
- People experiencing homelessness, with high rates of alcohol and other drug use, smoking[cclxxxiii] and alcohol consumption[cclxxxiv].
- Older people / seniors, with higher rates of smoking daily[cclxxxv]
- People identifying as LGBTIQA+, with higher rates of daily smoking, recent illicit drug use and lifetime and risky drinking[cclxxxvi]
- Younger people, whilst they have higher rates of illicit drug use and the potential for longer-term effects. Younger people are showing lower rates of smoking and over time, trying alcohol later and abstaining from drinking as teenagers[cclxxxvii]. However, they were more likely to engage in risky drinking[cclxxxviii]

Alcohol

The consumption of alcohol is widespread within Australia and often associated with social and cultural activities. Yet harmful levels of consumption present major health issues as they are associated with an increased risk of chronic disease, injury and premature death. Alcoholic products fuel violence, accidents and illnesses[cclxxxix].
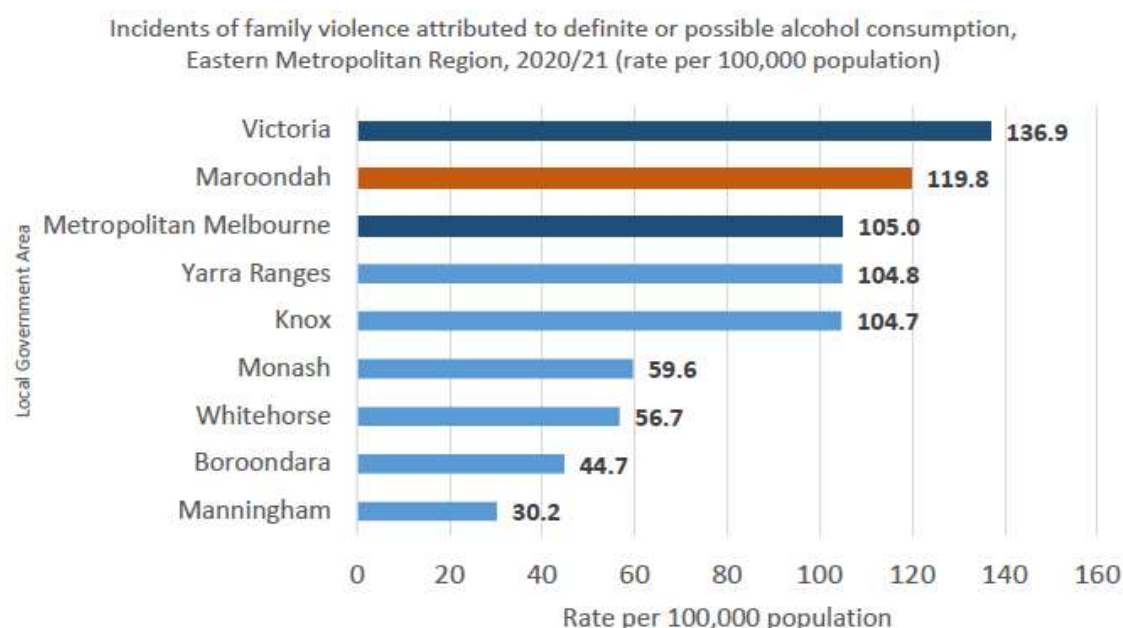
On a single occasion of drinking (consuming more than four standard drinks), the risk of alcohol-related injury increases with the amount consumed. More than 42% of Australian adults exceed the single occasion risk guidelines of four standard drinks, and men (54%) are more likely to exceed the single occasion risk guideline than women (31%). Young adults (aged 18-24 years) were more likely to exceed the single occasion risk guideline than any other age group with three in five (61%) engaging in risky drinking, with young adult males (67%) engaging in this behaviour more regularly than young adult females (55%).[ccxc]

In terms of longer-term risk, one in six (16%) Australians consume more than two standard drinks per day on average, placing them at lifetime risk of an alcohol related disease or injury.[ccxci] Men were more than twice as likely to exceed the lifetime guideline as women (24% of men and 9% of women). Older adults were more likely to exceed the lifetime risk guideline (18% aged 35-74) compared with younger adults (10% aged 18-24 years).

Alcohol related harms can also impact close contacts of individual who drink to excess. Alcohol is involved in up to 65% of family violence incidences reported to the police and up to 47% of child abuse cases each year across Australia.[ccxcii] Data shows that 22% of Australians had ever been verbally or physically abused or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol.[ccxciii] Females were more likely than males to report their abuser being a current or former spouse or partner while males were more likely to report their abuser was a stranger.

The vast majority of alcohol sold in Australia is through packaged liquor outlets. Research shows that areas with high accessibility of alcohol are subject to higher levels of community harm[ccxciv], as are areas of lower socio-economic status. According to the VCGLR, Maroondah has 30 packaged liquor outlets with more than half located in the lower socioeconomic areas of Ringwood and Croydon.[ccxcv]

The most recent available data indicated that Maroondah has the highest rate of alcohol assaults during high alcohol consumption hours (Friday and Saturday nights) in the EMR.[ccxcvi] Over the past decade, Maroondah has higher ambulance attendances due to alcohol in the EMR.[ccxcvii]

In addition, Maroondah had the highest rate per 100,000 people in the Eastern Metropolitan Region for incidents of family violence attributed to definite or possible alcohol consumption in 2020/21 See diagram below:

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Incidents of family violence attributed to definite or possible alcohol consumption, Eastern Metropolitan Region, 2020/21 (rate per 100,000 population)

Local Government Area	Rate per 100,000 population
Victoria	136.9
Maroondah	119.8
Metropolitan Melbourne	105.0
Yarra Ranges	104.8
Knox	104.7
Monash	59.6
Whitehorse	56.7
Boroondara	44.7
Manningham	30.2

Source: Crime Statistics Agency (CSA), Compiled by Turning Point https://aodstats.org.au/explore-data/family-violence/

Illicit drugs

The illicit use of drugs in the community can result in both death and disability, whilst being a risk factor for many diseases. Drug use is also associated with risks to users' family and friends and to the community. Illicit use of drugs includes use of illegal drugs, misuse or non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs, or inappropriate use of other substances. Illicit drug use is associated with many risks of harm to the user and to their family and friends. It has both short-term and long-term health effects, which can be severe, including poisoning, heart damage, mental illness, self-harm, suicide and death[ccxcviii]. More than two in five (43%) Australians aged 14 and over have illicitly used a drug in their life and 16% have used one in the past 12 months.[ccxcix]

Tobacco and Vaping

Smoking tobacco is considered the single most important preventable cause of ill health and death in Australia[ccc]. In addition, smoking is a leading risk factor for chronic disease and death, including many types of cancer, respiratory disease and heart disease.

Longitudinal data shows that there is a downward trend in tobacco consumption, as the proportion of persons aged 14 or older smoking daily halved from 24% in 1991 to 12% in 2019. In Maroondah, 14% of the adult population smoke daily, which is in line with OEMA (13%) and Victoria (12%)[ccci]. Nationally, there has also been an increase in the number of people choosing to never take up smoking (63% in 2019, up from 29% in 1991)[cccii]. Furthermore, research shows that the proportion of households with dependent children where someone smoked inside the home has fallen from 31% in 1995 to just 2% in 2019[ccciii].

Maroondah has the highest percentage of population smoking or vaping at 18.5% in the EMR and equal to Greater Melbourne.[ccciv]

Excessive screen use

Screens are used for work, education, communication and leisure. However, engagement with technology, particularly at excessive levels, can lead to broad-ranging harms with significant physical, mental, social, and economic costs for individuals and communities. Technology is impacting social interactions and aggression, cyber-bullying, sexual behaviours, impulsive behaviours, and crime[cccv]. Technology is changing the nature of addictive behaviours and online activities have unique risks including losing track of time and

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money, disrupted sleep and eating as well as poor mental health.[cccvi] Internet addiction is when a person has a compulsive need to spend a great deal of time on the internet, to the point where other areas of life (such as relationships, work or health) can suffer. Categories of internet addiction can include pornography, relationships, gaming, social networking.[cccvii]

Excessive use of technology has many implications including for neuropsychological and cognitive impairments, sleep disruptions, mental health, financial wellbeing, child and youth development[cccviii]. The time spent in front of a screen, and the quality of the content on screen, has been linked to a number of negative health outcomes in children. These include weight gain, disrupted sleep, exposure to potentially harmful information, reduced communication skills and poor eye health.[cccix]

Gambling-related harm

Harms associated with gambling are understood to often result in decreased health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population.[cccx] To cause harm, losses must exceed the individual's personal threshold of affordability, either in respect to time money or time.[cccxi] Gambling can take the form of pokies, lotto, card games, racing or other forms of betting. Each year, 70% of Australians participate in some type of gambling and for some, gambling can quickly become a problem.[cccxii]

Research indicates that Australia experiences the biggest gaming losses in the world with electronic gaming machines, casinos and lotteries accounting for 81% of Australia's total gambling expenditure[cccxiii]. Sports betting losses are still low compared to other gambling products, however these figures continue to increase significantly each year.[cccxiv]

Gambling addiction includes both economic and social impacts, including financial, mental, physical and community[cccxv]. It has been estimated that on average, people with a gambling problem/addiction lose around $21,000 per year[cccxvi]. Problem gambling has been linked to poor employment outcomes, with those affected by problem gambling taking time off work to gamble, losing their jobs due to gambling, or using their workplace to commit crimes to fund their gambling[cccxvii].

There is substantial evidence regarding the relationship between problem gambling and its impact on mental and physical wellbeing. People experiencing any level of gambling related harm have a significantly higher rate hypertension, liver problems and diabetes[cccxviii]. Mental wellbeing and suicide ideation have also been associated with gambling related harm.[cccxix] Nearly three out of four people with a gambling problem are at risk of developing depression[cccxx]. Problem gambling has been associated with family violence and intimate partner violence[cccxxi]. Over half of people with gambling problems (56%) report perpetrating physical violence against their children[cccxxii]. Children of problem gambling parents are also more likely to experience gambling problems and/or other risk factors themselves.[cccxxiii]

Risk factors that have been associated with problem gambling include loneliness,[cccxxiv] young males aged between 18 to 34, living close to gambling venues, shift workers, lower levels of education and income as well as unemployment[cccxxv].

As at May 2021, Maroondah had 640 Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) located at venues, which is below the maximum legal cap within the municipality of 759 as defined by the Victorian Government.[cccxxvi] As research indicates above, people who experience lower levels of education and lower income are also at risk of problem gambling. The locations of the EGMs in Maroondah are East Ringwood, Bayswater North, Ringwood, Croydon and Kilsyth. Together with Croydon South, the EGM suburbs are the most disadvantaged areas in Maroondah, with the lowest SEIFA ratings.[cccxxvii] A total of $64million was spent on pokies in Maroondah during 2023/24 which is a significant increase from 2019/20 of $45.2 million..[cccxxviii]

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Background

Since August 2019 and through to December 2024, Council has undertaken significant research and engagement with the Maroondah community to see where Council should focus its efforts to achieve the greatest impact on community health, wellbeing, liveability and resilience.

The comprehensive engagement process included input from Maroondah community members, local partners and community agencies. Input was sought through engagement activities conducted face-to-face, via telephone and online.

The engagement process also identified:

- community priorities;
- areas of community need;
- the role of Council and role of partner agencies;
- how community needs and priorities have shifted in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and helped to position and align Council's future direction,
- resources and services to support community wellbeing, liveability and resilience over the next 5-10 years.

Seeking input from the Maroondah community and stakeholders

The first stage of the process involved a range of community engagement activities to seek the views of community members and key stakeholders on community health, wellbeing and liveability needs and aspirations in Maroondah. This included consideration of how Council and its partners could leverage strengths, address issues, and work in partnership to enhance outcomes for the community.

Activities included:

- On online community survey with more than 1000 responses
- An Appreciative Inquiry Workshop delivered in partnership with Communities of Wellbeing Inc
- Face-to-face engagement activities at the Maroondah Festival in Croydon, Realm in Ringwood, local Farmers Markets and Celebrating Maroondah events;
- Engagement with four Council advisory committees

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Maroondah Liveability and Wellbeing Survey

A survey was developed to gauge community feelings around how liveable the Maroondah municipality is, and to determine how factors such as safety, sustainability, healthy lifestyles, learning, celebrating diversity, social inclusion, liveable neighbourhoods and social influences affect liveability.

The survey was in field from 15 October 2019 to 14 March 2020 and included face-to-face interviews conducted by Council staff at key events and forums; an online survey distributed through Council networks; attendance at a local school; and paper surveys distributed at Council events. The distribution methodology included a range of activities aimed to engage with people beyond those groups who usually interact with Council. Through this consultation process, 965 responses from across the community were collected, including recommendations and opportunities given to increase liveability in Maroondah.

Adjustment to consider the COVID-19 pandemic

The presence of COVID-19 was first confirmed in Australia in late January 2020. The onset of this pandemic in Australia resulted in considerable challenges for the Maroondah community. A rise in cases, a declared State of Emergency and subsequent staged restrictions disrupted our social infrastructure, economic livelihoods, normal routines and community activities.

During this period, activities included:
- Undertaking research to understand the social impacts on the Maroondah community
- Engaging over 3000 people within the Maroondah community via an online survey
- Engaging with a wide range of key agency stakeholders to understand community impacts,
- Engaging with volunteer led community organisations and groups to understand local needs and impacts
- Delivering a broad range of emergency response, relief and community recovery activities to meet local needs, as articulated in the Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

Whilst this stage of the project was unplanned, it has helped to significantly shape the key focus areas of the Strategy, embed resilience as a key pillar of focus for this Strategy, and identify short-medium term priorities to support community recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 in Maroondah.

Maroondah COVID-19 Community Consultation

Consultation with stakeholders was undertaken between March and May 2020 and included over 50 phone calls to community services and organisations, 17 calls to education institutions, over 300 calls to Maroondah businesses, and a survey via Melbourne East Regional Economic Development Group which received 823 responses (Total: 1190+).

Consultation with community members was undertaken between July and October 2020 (Total: 2814). The online Maroondah COVID-19 Community Survey on Your Say received 2382 responses whilst the hard copy survey was distributed to:
- vulnerable people, including Aged and Disability Services clients and residents receiving support from Eastern Volunteers (700+ distributed)
- mailed on request (90 responses)
- translated surveys for CALD communities (9 languages and 208 responses)
- Zoom focus group with Karen community members in partnership with Migrant Information Centre (29 participants)
- outreach telephone survey to vulnerable residents who had not completed the online survey (88 completed)
- adapted surveys with primary school aged children via schools (20 responses)
- in-person surveys with vulnerable residents at community meals programs (11 conducted)

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Consideration of issues and options

During this phase, Council sought to distil the key messages and priorities arising from the background research, community engagement and COVID-19 inputs to identify key themes and future strategic directions to be included in the Strategy.

Activities during this phase included:
- Engaging with five Council Advisory Committees to seek their input
- Engaging with Council service areas to identify services, priority projects and potential new initiatives for inclusion in the action plan associated with the Strategy
- Deliberative engagement input from a Community Panel to seek their input on healthy and wellbeing, liveable communities and the environment
- Formulating the strategic framework for the Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy
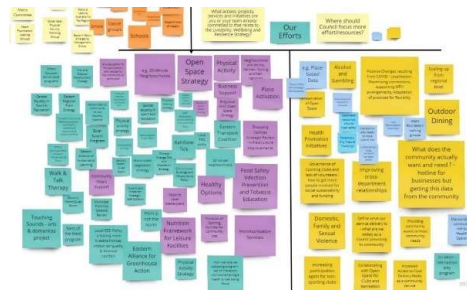
Deliberative Engagement Panel

To comply with new requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, Council established a Deliberative Panel to inform key council planning documents, including the Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031. Council engaged an external consultant, who facilitated Deliberative Panel workshops and produced a final report with findings and recommendations in April 2021.

Throughout January 2021 Council recruited 40 Maroondah community members to form the Deliberative Panel. Applications to join the Panel were promoted through Council's past and present Advisory Committees and to over 3,000 community members who completed the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Community Survey. To ensure a representative sample of the Maroondah community were selected, Council enlisted the support of key community agencies to help access cohorts that were harder to reach.

A briefing session for the Panel was held on 10 February 2021 where members were introduced to the remits for each of the Vision Sessions and the working group themes, as well as the Menti-polling software which would be used through the sessions. In addition to this, they were provided with an overview and live-orientation of their private online Panel Workspace.

The deliberative panel process was facilitated over 11 sessions with the final session held on Sunday 28 March 2021. At this session, the final panel recommendations were identified and documented to conclude the panel process.

Engagement with Council Advisory Committees

From April to June 2021, Council engaged approximately 70 members of Council advisory committees comprising of Councillors, council officers, community representatives and agency representatives through online and face-to-face sessions.

These committees included: the Maroondah Community Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee, Maroondah Access, Inclusion and Equity Advisory Committee, Maroondah Liveability, Safety and Amenity Advisory Committee and Maroondah Environment Advisory Committee Working Group Advisory Committees.

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In each of the four sessions, a PowerPoint presentation was delivered to introduce the Strategy, explore background research and statistics on key topics, and highlight key learnings from previous consultations. Each advisory committee was allocated two focus areas from the Strategy to allow for more in-depth exploration and input into selected topics. Through facilitated discussions in small groups, input was given into what ways Council could make significant differences under certain focus areas in Maroondah, and how Council could work with organisations to achieve these outcomes.

Internal Engagement

Four internal engagement sessions were run in May and June 2021 to seek feedback and input from relevant service areas within Council, (approximately 51 council staff members) including the Council and Community Planning Team, Community Services team and Leisure team. Within these sessions, participants were introduced to the Strategy, presented with background research and statistics on all focus areas, as well as key learnings from previous consultations.

A range of interactive activities were facilitated to gauge understanding of the key focus areas, prioritise key directions for the next four years (over the initial action plan), list Council's current commitments and partnerships, and present opportunities for future partnerships and areas of focus. Sessions were held both online and face-to-face at Realm due to the circuit breaker lockdown in Melbourne between May and June. An online session was also held to clarify and confirm use particular terminology in the Strategy.

Community consultation for Maroondah 2050-Our future together

In addition to the above, an extensive broad community and stakeholder engagement process was undertaken between August 2023 and December 2024. The aim of the engagement was to provide all Maroondah community members with opportunities to share their thoughts, aspirations and ideas for the future of Maroondah.

The engagement process focused on obtaining local community, stakeholder and Maroondah City Council employee input across four key areas:

• **Values** – what does the community believe makes Maroondah great?
• **Aspirations** – what are the community's hopes and dreams for the future of Maroondah?
• **Priorities** – what should Council, its partners, and the Maroondah community focus on in the future?
• **Actions** – what should Council, its partners, and the Maroondah community do to achieve the aspirations and priorities?

The program for this engagement stage was designed so that there was an extensive range of activities available – both online and face to face – that people could participate in and that these activities were delivered to a range of community cohorts across the municipality. A range of communication mechanisms were implemented to promote the engagement and encourage participation.

How Council engaged with the Maroondah community

- Your Say website
- Over 2000 postcards distributed

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- Direct emails to over 1000 registered Your Say Maroondah residents
- Maroondah News (44,000 households and businesses)
- Social media posts
- Neighbourhood Pop-ups and pop-up at numerous Maroondah events
- Workshops with community leaders, advisory committees and Council staff

How the Maroondah community participated

- Over 8900 responses from over 2500 participants.
- 386 surveys completed
- Over 4600 votes in the voting tubes at community and employee pop-up events
- Over 500 vision board contributions at community sand Council employee pop-up events
- Over 100 responses to the online ideas board and quick poll
- 250 participants in workshop activities.

What were the key findings?

Through the findings of the Liveability and Wellbeing Survey, it was highlighted that the average rating of liveability in Maroondah is quite high, showing current Council procedures and programs are working quite well. However, through the findings there were some clear opportunities identified for each of the key focus areas.

There was an overwhelming response from community members, agencies and other key stakeholders that due to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19), mental and physical health as well as social connection and inclusion are more important than ever.

It was identified that Council can play a key role in providing opportunities for the community to connect as well as provide supports to address issues faced by different community members.

There is also strong support to increase the visibility of available services, supports and initiatives to the community through widely accessible sources of information.

Healthy Lifestyles

Our community values exercise, healthy eating, access to health services, good mental health and have an understanding that healthy lifestyles lead to improved wellbeing and reduced illness.

Findings show that there is desire for community groups/ houses, sporting clubs and local businesses to play a role in providing healthy options to the community throughs initiatives like community gardens, food swaps, meal plans and health and wellbeing focused events. Guest speakers at events are highly valued, especially those with lived experience who can share stories and tips relating

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to health and wellbeing. The link between healthy lifestyles and improved happiness / satisfaction with life is acknowledged, thus recommendations to promote the effectiveness of this message was identified as a health promotion opportunity.

Our community highlighted the relationship between physical and mental health and the opportunities to facilitate and support social connection. There were many suggestions to provide social sporting, or low impact activities for those wanting to be active and socialise. The promotion of activities such as walking groups, multicultural exercise practices and twilight events were also desired, to increase awareness of available activities. The community would appreciate more affordable facilities, free outdoor recreation options as well as active and passive activities that promote health and wellbeing for all. Opportunities to connect with nature were also highly valued and are seen to provide a multitude of health and wellbeing benefits. Connection to nature has proven especially relevant to residents during COVID-19. There is also an acknowledgement of the future health risks caused by climate change that will see the need for adaptable or increased support and services.

Health and wellbeing facilities, spaces, services, programs and events provided by Council, and local partners, are highly regarded. It was highlighted that Council could raise awareness of these offerings within the Maroondah community as well as prioritise accessibility, to increase participation levels. The community expressed that programs should be co-designed with user groups and relevant community organisations for suitability and success. Partnering with community groups on health and wellbeing initiatives could increase funding opportunities, greater advocacy and enable greater delivery of initiatives.

Placing a greater focus on mental health including: access to support, prevention activities and targeted services was another key learning through consultations. Mental health and wellbeing are an increasing challenge especially in COVID-19 and the community desire a greater focus on mental health in Council's future service delivery, programs and events. It was also highlighted there could be a greater focus on general wellbeing opportunities for the community including education around mindfulness, resilience and how to support family and friends. Suggestions for wellbeing activities included passive activities, social connection with a neighbourhood focus, guided walks, pet therapy, wellness forums, targeted initiatives for at-risk groups (such as lone person households or new parents) and wellness literacy resources.

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Our community value the liveability of Maroondah and are supportive of the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods within Maroondah. Strong relationships between liveability, safety and sustainability were identified. Facilities, community services, parks and playgrounds, shops and businesses, amenities, open space and green space, public transport and walkability all contribute to liveability in Maroondah. Affordability, accessibility and places to connect are highly valued.

Liveable neighbourhoods

During COVID-19 restrictions, Maroondah residents spent more time in their local neighbourhood, with increased community connection to places and spaces, opportunities for exercise, socialising and outdoor activities. This provided an opportunity for greater understanding of living within a local area where all people can live, work, and play. There is a desire to foster local community and create inviting places of belonging within neighbourhoods. Our community would like to see the creation and activation of local innovative spaces and places that provide the potential for passive recreation and social connections.

Open and green spaces are clearly highly valued by the community. There is a strong desire for current green spaces and tree coverage to be maintained in the wake of increased development. It was emphasised that planning policies for new developments could be sensitive to the strong connection that the Maroondah community has with local open space and the green leafy environment.

The community would like to see public spaces and places made safer after dark, be provided with adequate and appropriate parking, see improved public transport frequency and connectivity as well as enhanced walkability and active transport options. There was a call for improvement of paths to support active transport and exercise including footpaths in some residential areas; better lighting of paths so they

can be used at night or early in the morning; improved surfaces to make them more accessible; better connectivity and separation of bike and walking paths. Consulting with active transport users on future planning and design of features such as cycling facilities is supported.

Some felt liveability was being reduced by medium density developments in unsuitable locations. The resulting increase in population, without adequate supporting infrastructure, is seen as having impacts on transport congestion and loss of open space. There is a strong desire to protect and enhance green open space, native vegetation and bushland reserves, especially as housing density increases and the need for affordable housing continues to increase.

Our community understand the impacts of climate change and recognise the importance of action for our future, with a strong sense that the green space and environment in Maroondah should be protected. There is a desire for stronger action to address climate change and shifts in community behaviours/ practices that will reduce environmental impact.

Our community would also like to see proactive partnerships with organisations to boost local employment opportunities for young people and people with disability in the workforce. Capacity building through community education and more training opportunities was also raised as an option to boost employment opportunities. Having access to lifelong learning opportunities (including great schools) is important for capacity building and increasing knowledge/ skills. Supporting and promoting small businesses and neighbourhood shopping strips was also important and seen as beneficial to community connection and local resilience.

Safe Communities

Our community view safety as the foundation of liveability and see feeling safe in their local area as fundamental to all other desired liveability outcomes. Key aspects of community safety identified by the community include children, after dark (lighting and fear of others), walking routes, outdoor spaces, shops, public transport, and exercise spaces.

Safe communities

The community identified that people presence leads to increased participation and ultimately raises perceptions of safety. Being provided with options to connect in diverse safe places and spaces is highly valued. Raising awareness of available services and avenues to access services is important as well as advocacy work through Council.

There are suggestions for Council to work with community safety partners, such as Victoria Police, to address antisocial behaviours and patterns seen in the community. To further improve safety in Maroondah, our community recommend addressing and improving infrastructure in the community that impact perceptions of safety. This includes street lighting, lighting public places and spaces, building design as well as maintenance of footpaths. Options to increase public safety also include addressing alcohol and drug use in at-risk communities. Our community would also like to see innovative methods to engage vulnerable people and young people in the design of spaces, places and buildings to improve liveability and safety for all. Options to work with sporting clubs on changing cultures and raising awareness of issues such as violence or aggression was also suggested.

The community also acknowledge the serious need to address domestic violence including through educating the community about family violence, including what it is, what can be done and where to go for help. Council is seen to play a major role in supporting those at risk of family violence and identifying ways for them to discretely seek assistance. Social inclusion was highlighted as highly important in addressing the causes of domestic violence.

Our community are also aware of the need for education around screen use and communications around potential safety implications to be shared. Dedicated resources around road safety are also seen as beneficial to increase community safety.

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There is a desire for Council to support residents during emergencies and an understanding that climate change is likely to increase these events. Responsiveness and reaction time are noted as crucial to support residents (particularly vulnerable residents) during emergencies. The community also see value in learning from the experiences of COVID-19 and extreme weather events in emergency planning and management. Continuing existing COVID recovery activities will also support liveability, wellbeing and resilience building in the community.

Social Inclusion

Maroondah is seen as a friendly and inclusive community. The community's understanding of social inclusion covered a recognition of the health and wellbeing benefits, as well as a focus on rights, not just needs. Social Inclusion is seen as currently supporting health and wellbeing needs in the community through acceptance, opportunities, belonging and support. Specifically, having a community with friendship, reduced social isolation, more contact with likeminded people, feeling valued and appreciated and volunteering is seen as beneficial.

Social inclusion

Social relationships are understood to be important in preventing family violence and critical to survival in an emergency, as people who aren't connected are more vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen the need for social inclusion prioritised by the community. Key areas of need included support for the elderly and people with a disability, children, youth and families, increasing community connectedness and support for people who are vulnerable or living alone. The community also highlighted the need to support residents to re-engage in activities and participate in community events following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The role of Council and its partners in promoting and facilitating social inclusion within the community was commended. Social inclusion does not need to have 'its own program' but is facilitated through initiatives, activities, programs, events and volunteering, that bring people together and provide the opportunity for social connection and community participation. There is an opportunity for Council to promote opportunities for social inclusion and connection, use community leaders to act as community connectors, create opportunities for volunteers and support local volunteer-led organisations. Tapping into existing community resources and interests was also suggested as a way to promote what is being done and connect those interested in participating. Building strong partnerships between Council and community groups, schools and service providers is also seen as crucial for improving understanding and practice of social inclusion.

The community identified that raising awareness of the importance and benefits of inclusion is highly important and could commence at a young age. The importance of bringing people together to create a shared purpose, foster community connection and create networks using inviting places and spaces that create a sense of belonging was expressed. There is a strong desire to ensure that all community members have access to services, facilities and community connection opportunities where everyone can feel valued and empowered. Council could consult with community groups and embed lived experiences into planning service delivery. Partnerships may also extend to organisations working with vulnerable residents that require targeted support.

It was suggested that Council diversify methods of communication to the community including the use of social media, printed material and translation services, to ensure all people have access to information and 'what's on' in Maroondah. Technology is acknowledged as a suitable platform to gain social connection amongst some population groups, but not all. The community would like to hear good news stories and connect through positive news coming from local residents.

Engaging with vulnerable groups on costs of living, affordable housing, homelessness, and access to services and safety was seen as important to improve social inclusion and liveability for all in Maroondah. Addressing homelessness and providing support for disadvantaged community members is also considered a key future priority.

It is clear that Maroondah has some widely recognised and used features that support liveability and health and wellbeing. However, a clear approach to communication would help raise awareness of these features

and activities within the municipality, which in turn could improve accessibility and participation levels. In particular, the community highlighted that it would be helpful to promote: events and activities; free public facilities; walking tracks, exercise equipment and skate facilities in local parks; and active transport networks to define key walking and cycling routes. It has been suggested that Council communications also could involve health promotion messages, to educate the community on the benefits of social activities, exercise and healthy eating; and should encourage participation.

Embracing Diversity

Our community value the celebration of diversity, with an expectation that it can increase community harmony and promote acceptance. With increasing diversity of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, there is continued desire to see this diversity celebrated and embraced. There was a focus on support required for specific groups, including the LGBTIQA+ community, people with a disability and their carers, people who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, young people, children, seniors, people from CALD backgrounds as well as First Peoples.

Embracing diversity

There is an opportunity for Council to lead by example through diversity being visible, normalised and celebrated in Council services and activities. There is strong support for Council to raise awareness of issues faced by some population cohorts through participating in, and promoting campaigns such as Harmony Day, Mental Health month, International Day of Disability, amongst others. Embracing diversity through using positive, strength-based language and utilising the skills and knowledge of specific groups is seen as highly beneficial. Council could also promote community groups, initiatives and inclusion champions whilst strengthening partnerships to foster more collaborative work. Tapping into the lived experience of individuals and groups is seen as highly important as intersectional layers of disadvantage create nuanced challenges in the diversity space. Intersectionality needs were identified as important considerations in developing supports for community members.

Consulting with particular groups (such as young people) in the design of places, spaces and buildings, and utilising a human point of view in planning is seen as a potential opportunity to incorporate community needs into creating safer and more inclusive environments. Supporting older residents who experience loneliness to access social groups, resources and active and healthy ageing tips is acknowledged as very important. In general, there is strong support to provide safe and inclusive spaces for all members of the community that cater to wide varieties of needs and interests.

There is also an opportunity for community leaders of diverse groups to be engaged in service planning and delivery, as well as those with lived experience. Educating the community about embracing diversity and learning about diverse groups also provides an opportunity to share stories and promote inclusion. Examples include utilising the culture and wisdom of First Peoples to connect and learn about the natural environment. Our community also see the importance of welcoming environments for diverse groups, such as cultural references and gender-neutral changerooms. Council is encouraged to communicate with, and ensure communication channels reach, all diverse population groups. It was suggested that this may require tailored, simplified or translated communication.

The community strongly value public art, art installations and how these can be used to provide visible learning opportunities in the community that relate to more diverse groups (such as cultural focal points, murals and signage). There is an opportunity for Council to further support reconciliation through arts, cultural activities, partnerships with indigenous organisations, recruitment and through community education. Working closely with CALD groups is also seen as important to embracing diversity and increasing social inclusion. Community events that showcase and celebrate diversity are encouraged by the community, with a particular focus on inclusion and accessibility for all.

Social Harms

The community understand there is a continued need to proactively address the harms and safety issues around gambling, alcohol, tobacco, drugs and excessive screen use. It is viewed that addressing these characteristics will strengthen the community atmosphere and perceived safety of Maroondah.

Our community are aware of the need to promote positive coping mechanisms and healthier alternatives to drugs and alcohol. Opportunities to achieve this included encouraging positive networks and connecting people through various platforms such as social media. It was suggested that re-engagement options could be targeted and use a range of channels to reach different groups, particularly those at-risk. Examples highlighted were connecting with walking groups, sporting clubs, social groups, U3A, community houses and online forums - noting each will reach different demographics. Engagement could be focused to meet the needs of different age and population groups to encourage healthier attitudes and choices.

There is an opportunity for Council to be a source of accurate and educational information regarding the implications of social harms and the supports available. The connection between poor mental health and increased use of substances is acknowledged, as well as the need to identify the root causes of risky behaviours.

The use of technology and its impact on mental wellbeing was identified as an important area for exploration to ensure harm minimisation. Our community highlighted the substantial increase in screen use and dependence on devices, particularly among young people, during the coronavirus (COVID-19 pandemic). Community education was suggested as an option to ensure the community are aware of the risks of excessive screen use.

The community also highlighted the importance of positive social connections and the benefits of local support groups. There is an opportunity for work to be done in shifting unhealthy and harmful attitudes surrounding alcohol and other drugs, particularly in community sport and certain age groups. Suggestions included introducing more targeted alcohol policies at sporting events, as well as at community events.

Educating the community on how alcohol, drugs and problem gambling are linked to family violence was also desired and seen as highly important. In general, there was an acknowledgment that more effort could be placed on improving public safety through addressing excessive gambling, alcohol and drug use.

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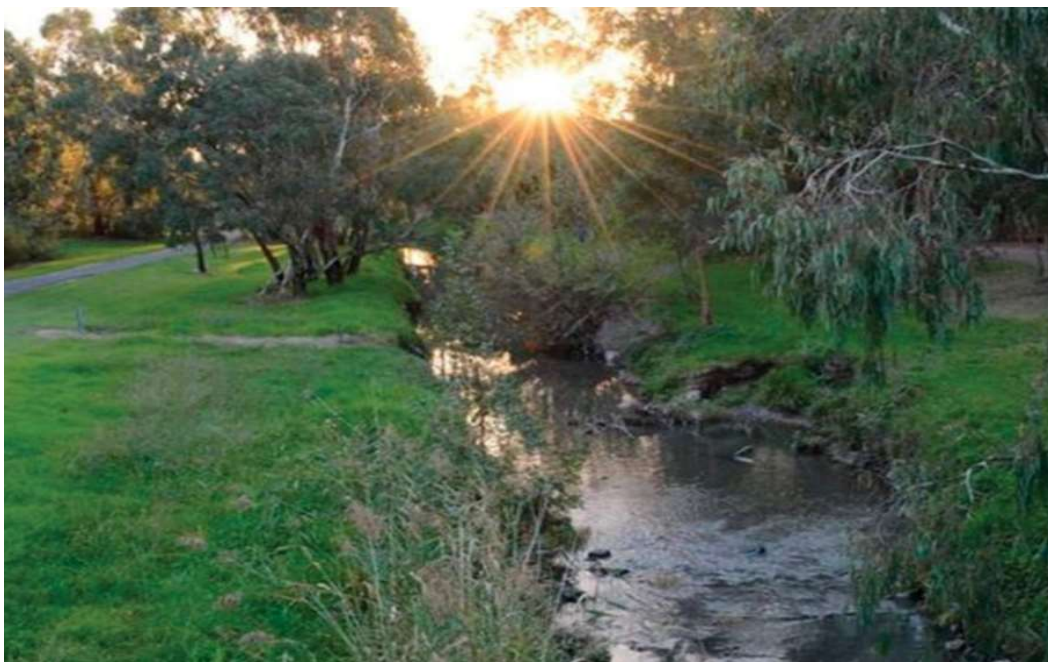
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Draft Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy 2025-2030

Community Consultation Report

August 2025

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1.0 Background

Household wastewater from toilets, showers, sinks etc, generally leaves a property through the local water authorities sewerage network.

Reticulated sewer is available to most households and businesses within Maroondah, however, there are several small pockets (136 known occupied properties) that are not currently serviced by reticulated sewer. Most of these properties contain the treated wastewater onsite with a septic tank system (Onsite Wastewater Management System (OWMS)). Some of the systems have historically been permitted to discharge treated effluent offsite to the stormwater drain. This is no longer permitted.

A breakdown of the OWMS located per suburb is outlined below:

Suburb	Ward	OWMS in use
Bayswater North	Bungalook	8
Kilsyth South	Bungalook	63
Croydon	Wicklow	6
Croydon Hills	Yarrunga	1
Warranwood	Yarrunga	33
Heathmont	Jubilee	5
Park Orchards	Wonga	4
Ringwood	Wonga	3
Ringwood North	Wonga	22
Total		145*

*9 properties have 2 systems operating

As a requirement of State legislation, Maroondah City Council has had a *Domestic Wastewater Management Plan* in place since 2017 and has undertaken inspections and education/compliance visits to ensure we know about the systems operating in Maroondah. Council has also provided a variety of education programs on maintenance and correct use.

The Environment Protection Act 2017 now sets out Obligations for Managers of Land and Infrastructure that are enforced by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and came that into effect in May 2024. The OMLI sets our responsibilities for Councils to manage the risks posed to health and the environment from the use of OWMS (septic tank systems).

Council has undertaken a review and updated the Domestic Wastewater Management Strategy to meet the new requirements of the OMLI. These included:

- Including a risk assessment of the management of onsite domestic wastewater and the risks posed to human health and environment;

- Council's approach to compliance; and

- An action plan to continue to address the identified risks from the use of onsite wastewater management systems (septic tank systems) in Maroondah.

2.0 Community Consultation

In accordance with Council's community engagement policy, the draft Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy (the Strategy) was made available for consultation from 10 June until 8 July 2025.

2.1 Communication Channels

To promote the consultation opportunity, in this instance, communication channels were targeted to occupants of properties with an Onsite Wastewater Management System, relevant external authorities, Council's Open Space Operational Interest Group members and Maroondah's Environmental Advisory Committee.

Communications Channel	Reach Statistics
Your Say Maroondah online engagement portal	A letter was sent to occupiers of the 136 households/businesses with OWMS, outlining the Domestic Wastewater Management review. A link to a targeted survey on Maroondah's Your Say page was included where a copy of the draft OWM Strategy was made available with the survey. 77 visitors to the Maroondah Your Say page.
Online Survey	An online Open Forms survey link with the draft Strategy attached, was sent in an email to 5 key external authorities and Council's Open Space Operational Interest Group members. The 5 external authorities included: The Environment Protection Authority Yarra Valley Water Melbourne Water Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action Department of Health
In person	A presentation on the draft Strategy was given to Maroondah's Environmental Advisory Committee on 20 May 2025, outlining the use of OWMS in Maroondah and the risk assessment undertaken around the impacts of OWMS use on health and the environment. A workshop to gather feedback from the committee was undertaken.

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2.2 Consultation tools

Consultation tools	Description	Outcomes
Online	Your Say Maroondah	77 visits 19 survey responses
Online	Open forms online survey	3 external authority responses (2 from same authority) 1 internal Open Space Operational Interest Group response
Workshop	Workshop questions	2 group responses

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3.0 Community Feedback

3.1 OWMS Households

During the consultation period 10 June 2025 to 08 July 2025, there were 77 visitors to Maroondah's Your Say page.

Thirty- eight (38) visitors (30%) downloaded the Strategy.

There were 28 visitors to the survey tool and 18 contributors (14%) submitted a survey response.

The below image is a summary of the visitors to the page during the four-week period.

The visitor summary shows how many visitors are **Engaged**, **Informed** or **Aware**. These terms refer to:

An **Aware Visitor** is someone who has made one single visit to the site.
An **Informed Visitor** is someone who has visited the site and sought more information by clicking on certain page content such as a widget document or key date. An **Informed visitor** is also counted as an **Aware visitor**.
An **Engaged Visitor** is someone who has visited the site and contributed to an activity or active tool on the project page. **Engaged Visitors** are also both **Aware** and **Informed Visitors.**

3.2 External Authorities

Two of the five external authorities, approached for feedback on the Strategy, submitted a response. Three (3) responses were received altogether (2 from the same authority).

3.3 Maroondah Internal Open Space Operational Interest Group

One response was received from an internal team at Council.

3.4 Maroondah Environment Advisory Committee (MEAC)

A workshop was held with two groups in the committee and responses provided by both groups.

4.0 Summary of responses

4.1 OWMS Households

There were 19 contributions made to the survey by 18 households with OWMS.

- 90% of the survey contributors owned the property with the OWMS.

- 16% of the survey contributors speak a language other than English at home.

- Only 2 of the survey contributors indicated they have or have had issues with their own or their neighbours OWMS. These issues consisted of wet, soggy land, odours and expensive maintenance.

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- When asked about the main challenges with managing their OWWS, the survey contributors responded as below, with one "Other" stating: Cost of pump outs

What are the main challenges in managing your OWMS? (select all that apply)

Question options
- Cost of maintenance
- Restrictions on what can go down the drain
- Keeping the system functioning well
- None
- Other (please specify)
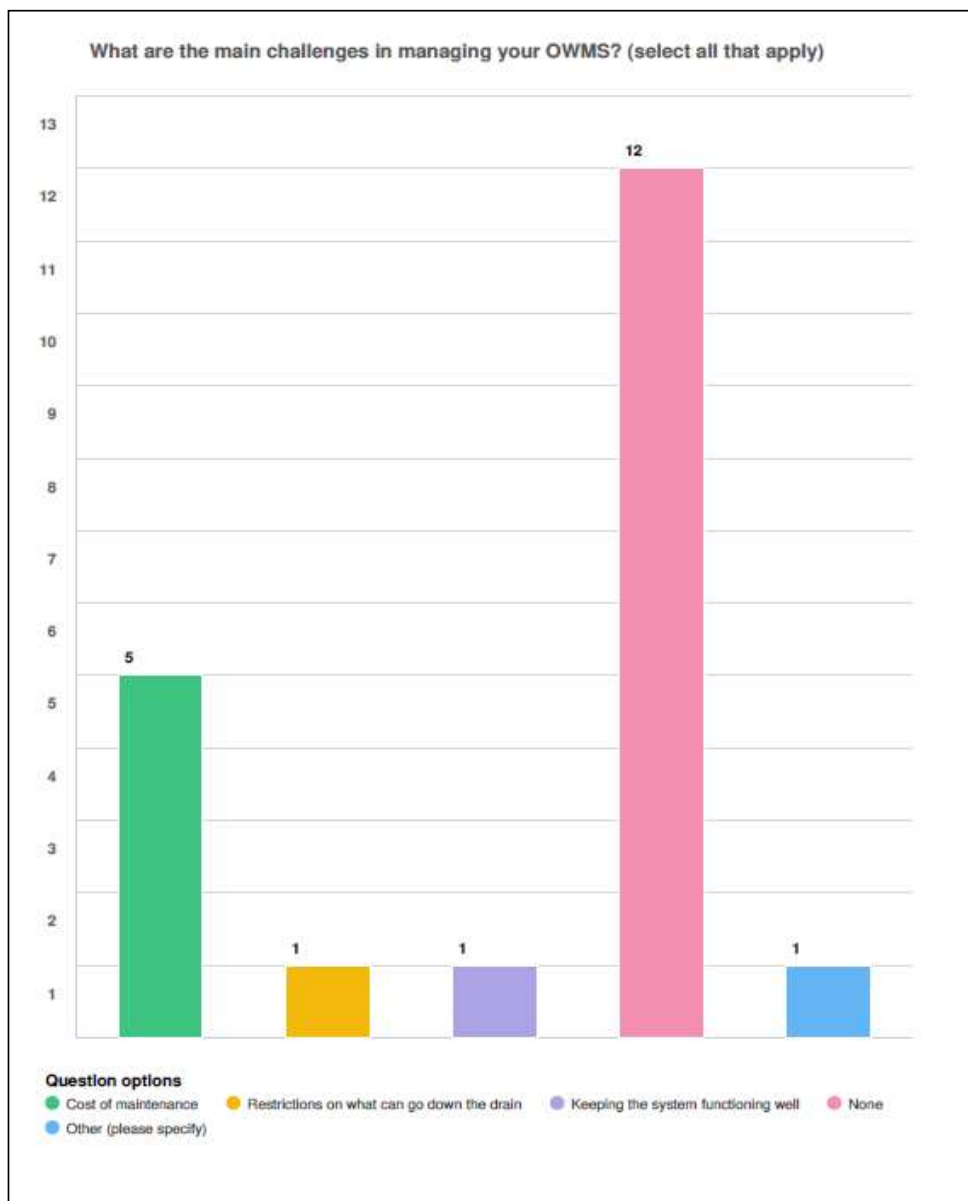
- 84% of survey participants indicated cost of maintenance was a challenge.

- 90% of survey participants indicated they did not have any challenges with their own or neighbouring OWMS.

- 63% of survey participants had received a visit from a Council about their OWMS.

- 11% preferred not to say.

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Of the 63% who did have Council officer visit them about their OWMS, 75 % found it helpful. No additional information was provided about what could have been done in the visit to make the visit more useful

- The table below outlines to the participants responses when asked what other actions or specific information could be helpful in managing domestic wastewater
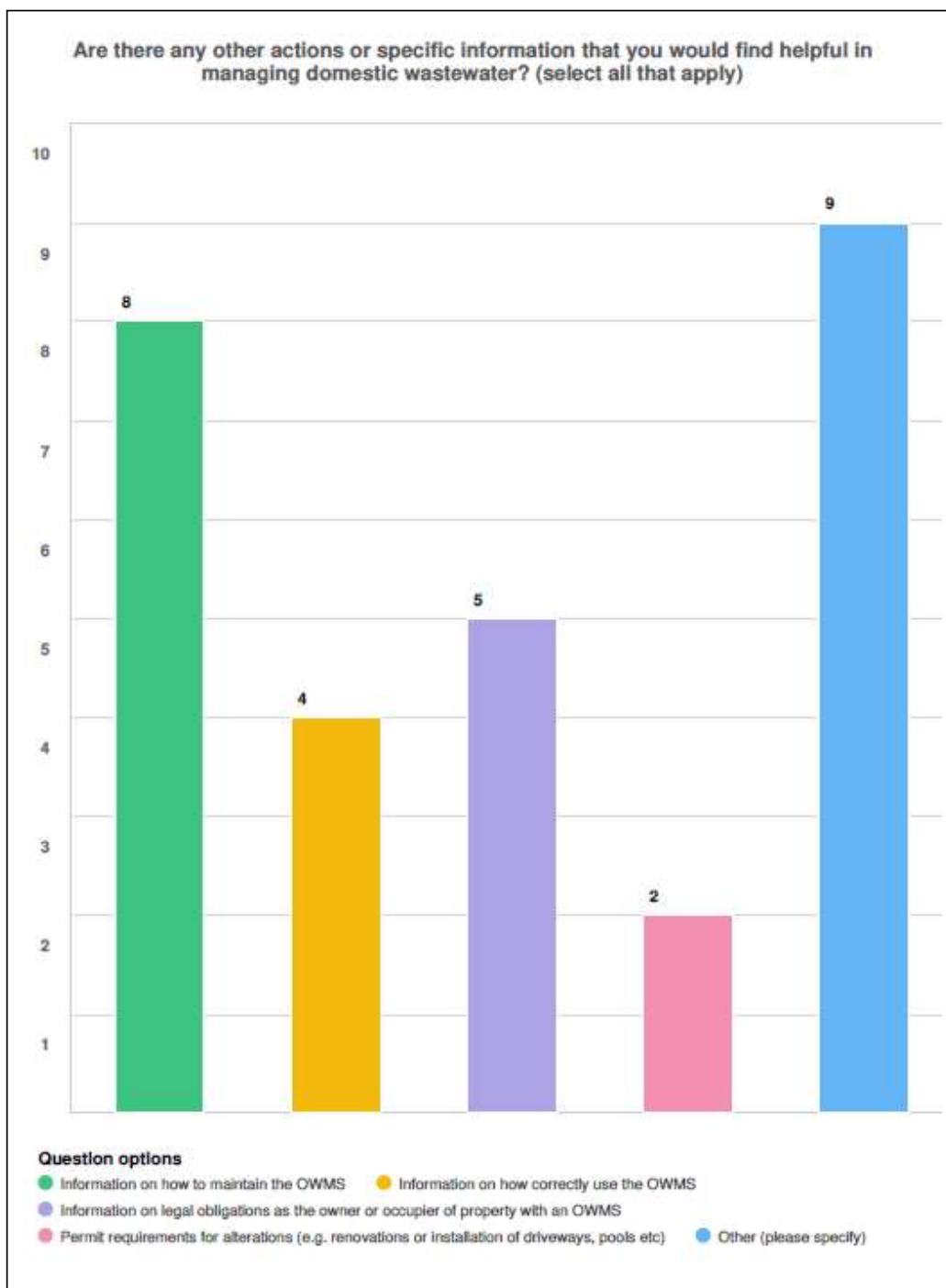
- There were 6 of the "Other" responses that indicated nothing was required and 3 "Other" actions or information that were stated as being helpful in managing domestic wastewater outlined below.
    - ○ "*Information on connection sewer point on our property*".
    - ○ "*Information on how to optimise the performance of an OWMS and reduce sludge reducing maintenance costs*".
    - ○ "*Provide information on safe use of greywater*".

- The table below indicates the extent to which the survey participants agreed or disagreed that domestic wastewater causes environmental or health impacts. Majority 68% were unsure.

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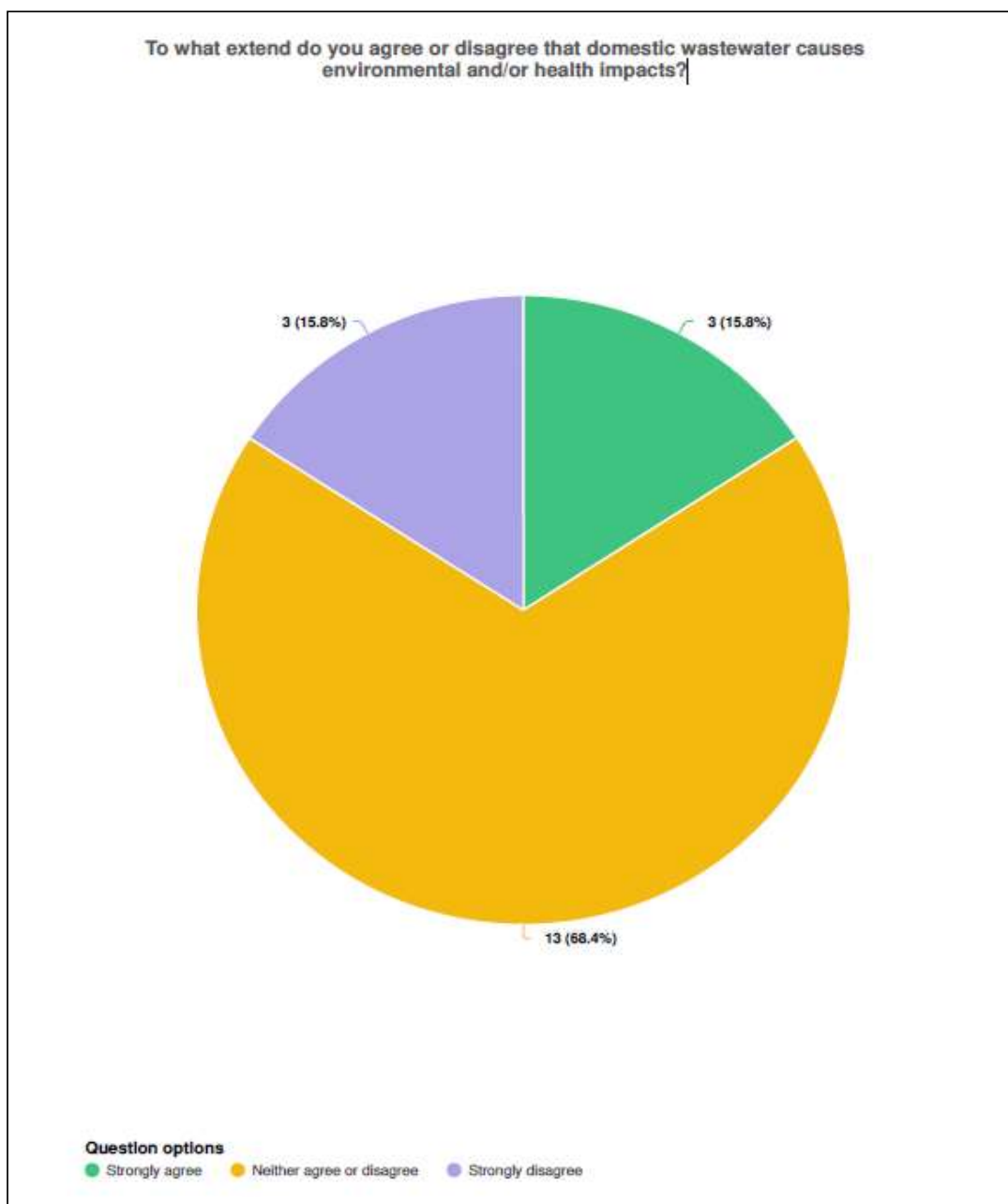
Survey participants also provided the following ideas that Council could consider when managing domestic wastewater in Maroondah.

Ideas Council could consider when managing domestic wastewater in Maroondah	
Theme	**Comments**
Council funding or assistance with OWMS upgrades and sewer connection	*"Consider financial support to connect to sewer."* *"Perhaps if connection to mains sewerage is not possible for some properties. Council could provide grants to households with original septic tanks to upgrade to a modern system. Often the issues are around access and cost and the fact that Yarra Valley water does not provide access to mains sewerage in all areas."* *"Council could seek grants or lobby for grants from the state government/Water boards to provide to OWMS to help them upgrade their system or to link to sewer where it is not immediately available but is in the local area E.g. setting up a pumping system to sewer which a number of houses could connect to and therefore not needing sewer in the future."* *"Let us subdivide so we can connect to sewer."*
Advocate to prioritise sewerage infrastructure	*"Properties that are closest to waterways should be prioritised no matter the size. Commercially, larger clusters make more sense for YVW to proceed with, however some lobbying from Council based on environmental factors for properties closest to waterways makes environmental sense. Further, given the need for housing, I feel Council should do more in lobbying YVW to sewer areas fit for development/sub-division. There's significant land in the Maroondah area suitable for extra housing that is being restricted by lack of connection to sewer."* *"Connect to sewer"*
Provision of further information to assist effective OWMS use.	*"The Strategy implies that there is/will be a requirement to pump-out systems every 5 years. Pump-outs are expensive, so they should be done when required, not on a calendar basis."* *"Council could promote information on products like Septic clean which treats the wastewater and drains."* *"Information on how to change a system from discharge to stormwater to onsite should be provided to owners."* *"Have a hotline if owners have a concern."*

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4.2 Internal and External Stakeholder feedback

All responses indicated:

- The Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy adequately manages the environmental and health risks from OWMS over the next 5 years and that there are no parts that require change.
- The risk assessment of the identified risk relating to existing and future OWMS was considered reasonable and the actions outlined address the risks of managing domestic wastewater. There were no further actions offered for Council to consider including into the Strategy.
- The Strategy's approach to compliance was considered reasonable.

Some suggestions were offered for Council to consider included:

- Confirm accuracy of data including property numbers in Table 1 to ensure YVW and Council are working to the same numbers.
- Refer to Servicing Strategies rather than YVW Management Plans
- Referring higher risk properties to YVW would be beneficial particularly split systems.
- Consider local waterway monitoring.

Maroondah Environmental Advisory Committee (MEAC) also provided feedback consistent with some of the key themes provided by the community.

Ideas Council could consider when managing domestic wastewater in Maroondah	
Theme	**Comments**
Council funding or assistance with OWMS upgrades and sewer connection	*"Council to consider a loan scheme to assist septic tank properties to connect to sewer (as and when available)."*
Advocate to prioritise sewerage infrastructure	*"Water quality monitoring with EPA partnership to trace offending properties - Melbourne Water/ Yarra Valley Water partnership."*
Provision of further information to assist effective OWMS use.	*"English as a second language."* *"Onsite visit, engagement."* *"Keep the focus on being educated first."*

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5.0 Conclusion

Feedback from the consultation indicates generally households with OWMS do not feel they pose too much risk to health or the environment if maintained well and are interested in more information on how to use and maintain OWMS and owner and occupier legal obligations.

There is some concern about the cost of maintaining OWMS and some interest in connecting to sewer and upgrading the OWMS to maintain wastewater onsite and most have not have any issues with their own system or that of their neighbours.

Some suggestions were offered for consideration to include into the OWM Strategy action plan.

Stakeholders indicated the Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy adequately assessed and addressed the risks to health and the environment from OWMS use, now and over the next 5 years and that the approach to compliance was reasonable.

Draft Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy 2025-2030

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |2

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ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY **|3**

Purpose of the Strategy

The Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy (the Strategy) is Maroondah City Council's strategic plan to enhance the management of onsite wastewater management systems by not only improving the current situation but by ensuring processes are improved to guarantee environmentally sustainable and best practice decisions are made in the future.

This Strategy identifies and assess the risks and ensures the necessary actions to ensure that existing onsite wastewater management systems (OWMS) and any new installations or alterations are installed, maintained, and monitored, as to protect the health of the community and the surrounding physical environment.

This Strategy has the following purposes:

- To protect public health and the physical environment from the impacts of domestic wastewater.
- Identify the risks to human health and the environment from unsewered allotments.
- Assess the risks to human health and the environment from existing and future onsite wastewater management systems, including the management of existing systems discharging beyond the boundaries of the allotment or those OWMS that may have the risks of impacting on groundwater or surface water.
- To identify onsite wastewater management system priorities and develop short and long term strategies with timelines for the implementation of these priorities.
- To provide a mechanism for coordinated onsite wastewater management system planning, community education and compliance monitoring by Council and other stakeholders including the local water corporation.
- To promote environmental sustainability by reducing the impacts of onsite wastewater management systems on the local receiving environments.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |4

Background

The Domestic Wastewater Management Strategy (DWMS) was developed in 2017 and highlighted a number of key issues relating to domestic wastewater management at Maroondah. These included:

- Inconsistencies in relation to domestic wastewater data;
- A need to ensure ongoing strategic alliances with the Yarra Valley Water and ensuring the DWMS aligns with future sewerage servicing strategies developed by the water authority;
- Decisions concerning domestic wastewater management at Maroondah were not supported by an over-arching wastewater operational management strategy or decision making framework;
- The need for regional land capability mapping system to assist in the decision making process regarding individual septic tank installations;
- The number of failing wastewater systems in operation within the municipality was unknown;
- The need for internal referral processes for developments within unsewered areas within the municipality;
- The need to develop a wastewater community education program to assist in improving the community's knowledge of the risks associated with the poor maintenance of wastewater systems;
- The need for a greywater reuse policy and an associated community education program to ensure greywater is managed appropriately; and
- The legislative framework in Victoria was complex and outdated.

To address these issues, an action plan and the DWMS 2017-2021 was developed to provide a framework for the management of domestic wastewater in Maroondah.

The DWMS underwent an administrative review in 2021, aligning it with the Environment Protection Act 2017, Environment Protection Regulations 2021 and Environment Protection (Transitional) Regulations 2021.

A summary of achievements from this strategy is outlined in *Our Journey so far.*

Legislative Context

There are several key pieces of legislation, policies and guidelines that assist Council and other stakeholders to aim for best practice management of domestic wastewater. These include:

- Environment Protection Act 2017 (EP Act)
- Environment Protection Regulations 2021
- Environment Protection Transitional Regulations 2021
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (PHWB Act)
- Local Government Act 2020
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Water Act 1989
- Victorian Government Gazette - EPA Obligations of Managers of Land and Infrastructure (Urban Stormwater Management and On-site wastewater management - May 2024
- Regulating on-site wastewater management systems: local government toolkit (EPA publication #1974)

- EPA Guideline for onsite wastewater management (for councils, water corporations and installers)
- EPA Guideline for onsite wastewater effluent dispersal and recycling systems
- Requirements for owners and occupiers with on-site wastewater (for community)
- Victorian Guideline for irrigation with recycled water (EPA publication 168) (for irrigation designers and operators)
- Victorian Land Capability Assessment Framework (MAV)
- AS/NZS 1546.1: 2008, On-site domestic wastewater treatment units, Part 1: Septic tanks
- AS/NZS 1546.2: 2008, On-site domestic wastewater treatment units, Part 2: Waterless composting toilets
- AS 1546.3:2017, On-site domestic wastewater treatment units, Part 3: Secondary treatment systems
- AS 1546.4:2016 On-site domestic wastewater treatment units, Part 4: Domestic greywater treatment systems

Roles and Responsibilities

Environment Protection Authority

The Environment Protection Act 2017 and the Environment Protection Regulations 2021 are the primary legislation that regulates and controls domestic wastewater management. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has the overall responsibility for legislation, policy and standards for wastewater management systems. All domestic onsite wastewater management systems need to be issued with a Certificate of Conformance by an accredited conformity assessment body under an Australian Standard, before they are permitted to be installed in Victoria.

The EPA is responsible for any wastewater treatment system that discharges capacities of 5,000 litres or more of wastewater daily. Generally, these are commercial and industrial applications. Domestic wastewater management in Victoria is one of the environmental health responsibilities delegated to local government. Council acts as the permitting authority, approves the installation of wastewater systems and regulates appropriate maintenance and use of the systems.

Local Government

Under the Environment Protection Act 2017 and Environmental Protection Regulations 2021, local government is the primary agency responsible for the management of domestic wastewater, including systems that have a capacity to treat less than 5,000 litres. Under this Act, a property owner cannot construct, alter or install a wastewater system without a permit from Council.

Councils use permits to regulate the installation and alteration of wastewater systems within their municipal boundaries under the Environment Protection Act 2017. Councils are also responsible for identifying failing wastewater systems that are causing environmental, public health and amenity risks and ensuring owners and operators of onsite wastewater management systems are meeting their obligations under the Regulations and the Act.

Obligations of Managers of Land or Infrastructure (OMLI)

In May 2024, the Victorian Government approved the OMLI (Urban stormwater management and Onsite wastewater management). This Order is made under section 156 of the Environment Protection Act 2017 and requires Local Government to develop an onsite wastewater management plan.

The OMLI also sets out the requirements for Council to implement and review an Onsite Wastewater Management Plan (this document) for their municipality.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |6

Owners and Operators of OWMS

The cornerstone of the Environment Protection Act includes a General Environmental Duty which states that: *A person who is engaged in an activity that may give rise to risk of harm to human health or the environment from pollution or waste must minimise those risks, so far as reasonably practicable.*

Under delegation from the Environment Protection Authority, Council can now consider management of onsite wastewater management systems that give rise to risk of harm to human health or the environment.

The Regulations also place obligations on owners and operators of onsite wastewater management systems to ensure they are:

- Maintaining the system in good working order
- Ensuring those operating the system have the information they need to maintain and operate it effectively and;
- Responding to any failures

Council has a duty to exercise its enforcement powers where it knows there is a breach of legislation and there is the likelihood of impact to public health and the environment.

Yarra Valley Water

Yarra Valley Water (YVW) provides reticulated sewerage services to properties located within Maroondah.

A limited number of properties can be connected to piped sewerage each year. Based on information about the environmental and public health risks posed by poorly performing OWMS, the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan developed by Local Government and in consultation with the EPA, Melbourne Water, Councils and the State government, Yarra Valley Water submit a 5 yearly plan to the Essential Services Commission (ESC) and to Council outlining the preferred method and plan for sewerage management.

YVW have set a Community Sewerage Program (CSP) and Community Sewerage Areas (CSAs) which aim to provide sewerage to identified areas in all municipalities within their catchment. Within their current plan reprioritised between 2021 - 2024, YVW have properties within Maroondah to be connected to sewer between 2033 to 2042, with 11 properties allocated for connection in 2025 as part of the Park Orchards CSP.

Properties in Maroondah currently included in the Yarra Valley Water Community Sewerage Program can be obtained by contacting Yarra Valley Water https://www.yvw.com.au/contact-us or via their website: https://www.yvw.com.au/faults-works/community-sewerage-program/connect-sewer.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |7

Our journey so far

*Council is working to reduce the risks associated with domestic wastewater
management.*

Some of the actions Council is undertaking are outlined below:

- Information through Council's communication outlets including website and social media has
  been provided to the community. This includes information on the correct use and
  maintenance of their OWMS.

- Information on Maroondah's website is updated to include Environment Protection legislative
  framework and providing information to operators and owners of OWMSs about their
  legislative responsibilities and is also intended to increase the community's understanding of
  the importance of managing wastewater systems appropriately.

- The OWMS education and compliance program was initiated in 2023 reaching 67% of
  properties to assess the current condition of their OWMS and to provide education, including
  a written report and education material to owner/operators on their legal obligations under
  the Environment Protection legislative framework. It also included information on how to
  effectively use and maintain their OWMS. Corrective actions have been required for 23% of
  property owners.

- New owners of OWMS, when purchasing unsewered dwellings is Maroondah, are provided
  with information about their OWMS and their legislative obligations and they are offered an
  onsite OWMS education visit.

- All *Certificates for Use* of an OWMS issued when an OWMS is installed and approved for
  use, contain information on effective use and maintenance of an OWMS and owner and
  operator legal obligations under the Environment Protection Act 2017 and Environment
  Protection Regulations 2021.

- Council is encouraging OWMS owners to connect to sewer when it becomes available.

- Council is monitoring and responding to aerated wastewater treatment system maintenance
  reports provided to Council by wastewater servicing agents to ensure defects are repaired.

- Council works with Yarra Valley Water (YVW) on the Community Sewerage program to
  advocate for sewer infrastructure to unsewered properties within Maroondah into the future.
  YVW has released its reprioritised Community sewerage program (CSP), indicating
  additional properties in Maroondah that will have access to sewer between 2033 - 2042.

- Council undertook work on the Community Sewerage Program reprioritisation in 2021 and
  supported YVW to plan the piped sewerage infrastructure, based on risk, across pockets of
  Maroondah.

- A dedicated OWMS portfolio is established and is seen as a key priority area in Community
  Health.

- Council officers have participated in stakeholder discussions to inform the Environment
  Protection legislative framework pertaining to the management of onsite wastewater
  management systems. Council's Community Health team continue meet regularly with the
  EPA around OWMS matters.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |8

Our journey so far continued...

- Relationships between Community Health, Planning and Building have been strengthened, including automated referral systems and regular team information sessions to ensure all new developments, subdivisions and alterations to existing properties that are serviced by an OWMS, are managed appropriately.

- Council maintains an information management system ensuring all information relating to OWMS is stored appropriately and current owners are linked.

- Procedures are prepared to underpin consistency and legal requirements in processes that relate to OWMS and the legislative framework. This includes procedures for the assessment of new or altering OWMS applications, OWMS education, monitoring and compliance procedures, sewered properties and decommissioning processes.

- Information on sewered properties and sewerage infrastructure from Yarra Valley Water is being updated on an annual basis and integrated into Council's geographical information system (GIS).

Images: Environmental Health Officer undertaking OWMS education visit and observations of a poorly functioning OWMS.

Maroondah in Context

The City of Maroondah is located within the eastern suburbs of Melbourne and covers an area of approximately 61.4 square kilometres. The area is a substantially developed peri-urban residential municipality, with an estimated population of 119,354residents and 44,167 households with an average of 2.53 people per household.

Map of Maroondah

Maroondah is well known for its leafy streets, broad areas of open space, bushland reserves, parks and playgrounds. Sustainable transport links include on-road cycling paths and shared path links to the Mullum Mullum Creek Trail, the EastLink Trail, Tarralla Creek Trail and the Dandenong Creek Trail.

Maroondah's natural environment is highly valued and our green character is treasured by locals. There is a strong desire for our green open spaces and bushland reserves to be enhanced and protected.

Mullum Mullum Creek and Dandenong Creek are the major waterways in the Maroondah area, with established recreational routes that are well utilised. The waterways within Maroondah also drain to two of Melbourne Water's main catchments - Dandenong Creek and Yarra River which are enjoyed by a broader community and therefore need to be carefully managed.

Strategic context

Maroondah 2050

Council uses an Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework to strategically connect the long-term aspirations, priorities and needs of the Maroondah community to the long, medium, and short-term strategies, plans, policies and resources of Council.

The Framework ensures alignment between Council's planning, service delivery and performance monitoring and reporting activities.

The Framework also enables our organisation, our community and our partners to adapt and prioritise initiatives, activities and actions to respond to community needs as well as legislative changes as they emerge and change over time.

The Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy is one of a broad range of strategies, policies and plans - both legislated and Council initiated - that have a significant influence on Council planning and service delivery and contribute to working towards the Maroondah 2050: Our future together Community Vision.

Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

Community Vision

The Community Vision is developed in partnership with the Maroondah community and describes long-term aspirations for the future of Maroondah.

The *Maroondah 2050: Our future together* Community Vision provides a 'roadmap' for the community, Council, organisations and businesses, as well as other levels of government, to partner to create a future that enhances Maroondah as a great place to live, work, play and visit.

The Maroondah 2050 Community Vision describes our community's aspirations for the future of Maroondah looking ahead to the year 2050. It is a vision that is unique to Maroondah. It speaks to the way our community wants to feel - safe and included, how they want the municipality to be - vibrant and green, and what they want to strive for - a prosperous and sustainable future for all.

The *Maroondah 2050: Our future together* Community Vison identifies five future outcome areas which establish the broad community aspirations and priorities for Council and the community to work together. The *Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy* is working towards four of these outcome areas.

A healthy, inclusive and connected community
Everyone in Maroondah feels valued, welcome and respected, and has opportunities to thrive regardless of their background, identity or circumstances. Community members experiencing vulnerability, marginalisation or disadvantage have access to the support they need. Opportunities for social connection, and to enhance health and wellbeing, are encouraged.

A safe and liveable community
Everyone in Maroondah feels physically and emotionally safe. Local neighbourhoods and activity centres are easy to move around. There are the housing options, amenities and services people need to live, work, learn and play locally. The unique attributes of Maroondah, and our local history and heritage, are valued and promoted.

A green and sustainable community
Maroondah's green, leafy natural environment and landscape continues to be preserved and enhanced, with biodiversity and habitat corridors progressively restored and maintained. Our community is supported to make sustainable choices and is actively working to reduce emissions and waste, as well as adapt to climate change.

A well governed and empowered community
Council continues to be a transparent, accountable, and future-focused leader that collaborates locally and regionally and actively champions local needs. Everyone in Maroondah is informed about matters that affect them and are provided with opportunities to meaningfully engage regarding Council decision making.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY **|12**

Domestic Wastewater Management Profile

There are 136 known properties operating onsite wastewater management systems within the municipality. There are nine properties that operate two OWM systems. An overview of the pocket areas of wastewater systems in Maroondah can be seen in the figure below.
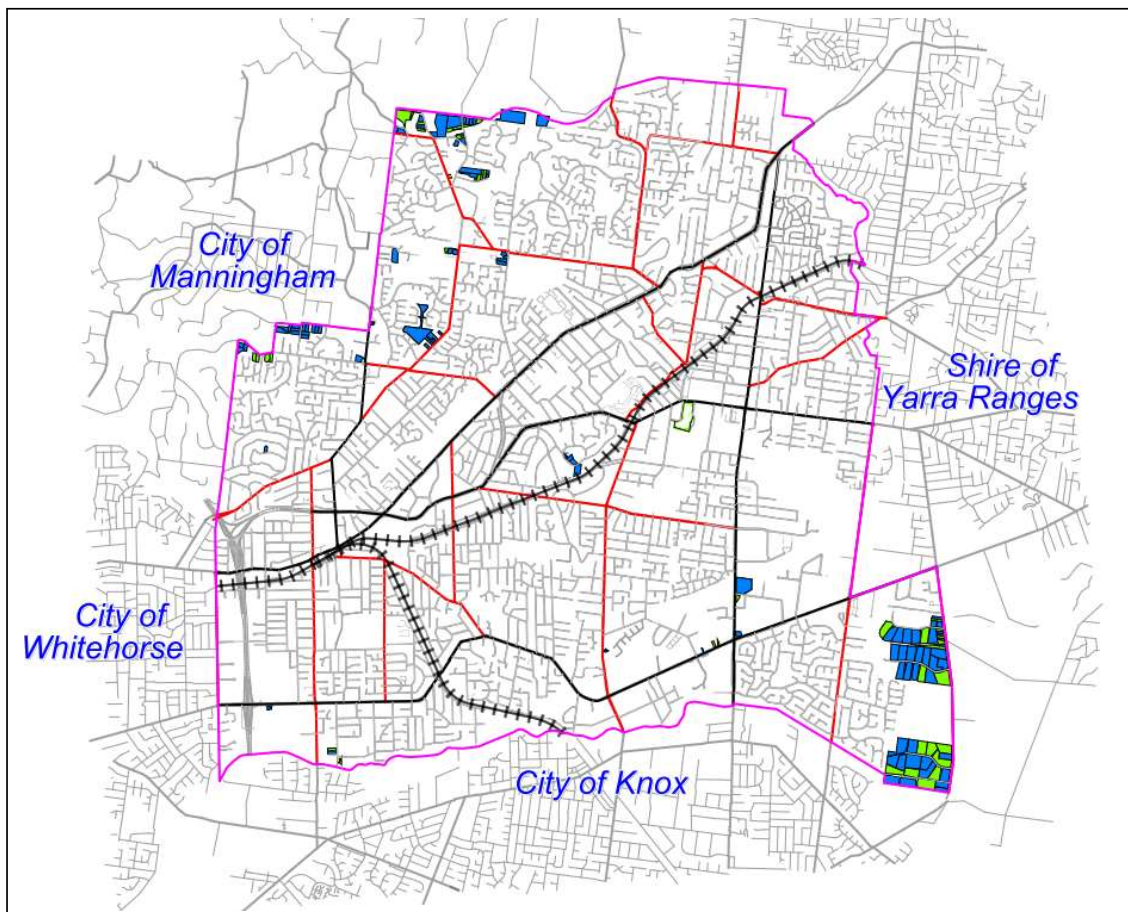

Figure 1: Overview of wastewater systems located throughout Maroondah

■ *Aerated Wastewater treatment system*
■ *Primary treatment system*

The following table provides a breakdown of the number of properties with wastewater systems for each suburb in Maroondah and the number of properties discharging to storm water. It also provides an indication of the known number properties connected to sewer.

Suburb	OWMS in use (9 properties have 2 systems operating)	Discharging to stormwater	Connected to sewer in last 9 years
Bayswater North	8	2	0
Croydon	6	0	0
Croydon Hills	1	0	0
Heathmont	5	1	1
Kilsyth South	63	4	0
Park Orchards	4	2	1
Ringwood	3	0	1
Ringwood North	22	5	12
Warranwood	33	4	1
Total	**145**	**18**	**16**

Table 1: Number of wastewater systems per suburb in Maroondah

These systems include septic tanks, aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS), sand filters, greywater treatment systems and worm farms disposing to underground trenches, subsurface irrigation and discharging to stormwater (Figure 2). Council has no records for some properties. This may be due to installation occurring prior to Council's record keeping or due to amalgamations[1]. There is no sewer currently available for these properties.
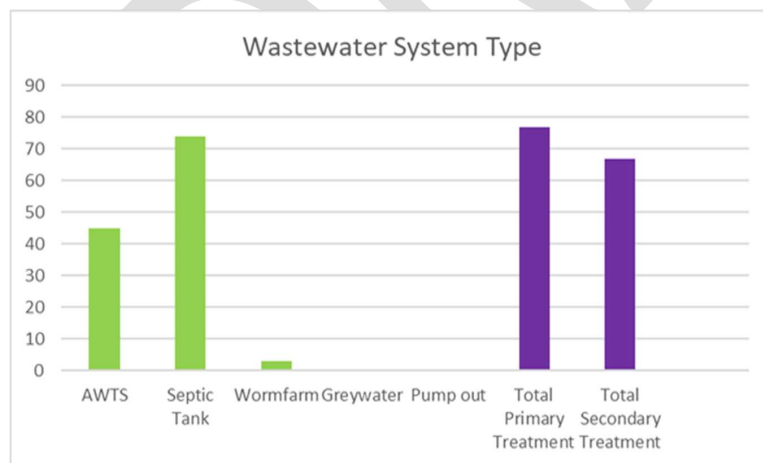
Figure 2: Wastewater system types servicing properties within Maroondah

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[1] This is consistent with the findings of the Victorian Auditor General (2006) report.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY **|14**

Figure 3 shows the percentage of properties discharging wastewater to the stormwater system. These properties were granted consent to carry out this activity under their Permit issued by Council at the time. This method of disposing wastewater is no longer permitted in Victoria.

The General Environmental Duty (GED) now makes it possible for Council to require a property owner to upgrade their OWMS to retain wastewater onsite or to connect to sewer where this is available. Council will consider the use of this legislation on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the Organisational Compliance Policy principles, where the current OWMS system discharging wastewater offsite is found to be defective or is not being maintained.
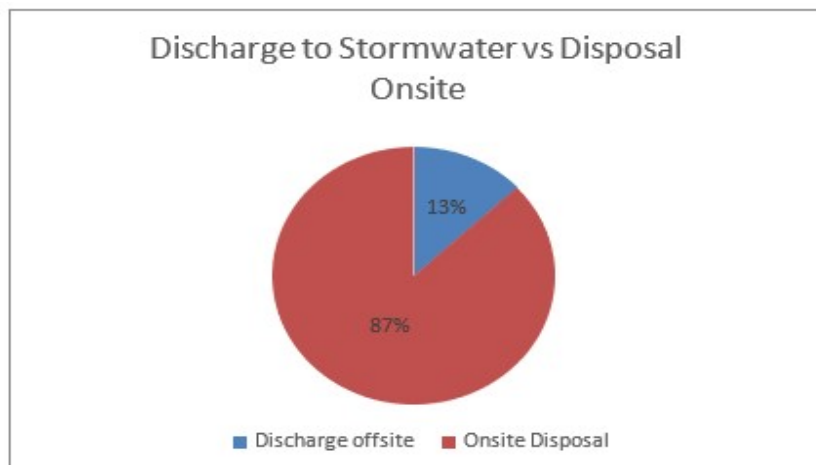
Figure 3: Percentage of properties permitted to discharge wastewater offsite to stormwater.

Education and compliance program

During 2023, Council Environmental Health Officers contacted all owners of OWMS to offer a free onsite education visit to provide information on:
- The type of onsite wastewater management system operating on the property;
- How the system should be effectively used;
- How to maintain the system and;
- What their new obligations were as owners or occupiers operating an OWMS under the Environment Protection Act 2017 and Regulations 2021.

Officers also assessed the current operation of the OWMS and made an overall assessment of the risk the system poses to health and the environment as a result of:
- How effectively it was operating;
- How well it was being maintained;
- Whether wastewater was contained onsite or discharged offsite and;
- The knowledge the operators/owners had about their system and how to use and effectively maintain the system.

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The overall risk rating was determined by the following:

Overall OWMS Risk Rating	
High (Critical)	• The operator has limited knowledge on how to use the system properly and/or • There is a physical issue noticeable. E.g., Broken parts and or odour and or wet soggy ground and/or • The system is not being maintained at all and effluent is being discharged offsite or running outside the property boundaries.
Medium (Major)	• The system is discharging effluent offsite, but it is being maintained well and no odour detected or discoloured water offsite. AND • The occupiers are aware of how to use the system properly. • There is no physical issue noticeable, no broken parts, no odour or wet, soggy ground but some of the maintenance is overdue or never undertaken. AND • The operator is aware of how to use the system properly.
Low (Minor or satisfactory)	• System appears to be operating well. • System is being maintained as required. • Operator is aware of how to use the system properly. • Effluent is discharged onsite.

Of 136 properties:
- 97 education visits were conducted and;
- 39 declined or could not be contacted.
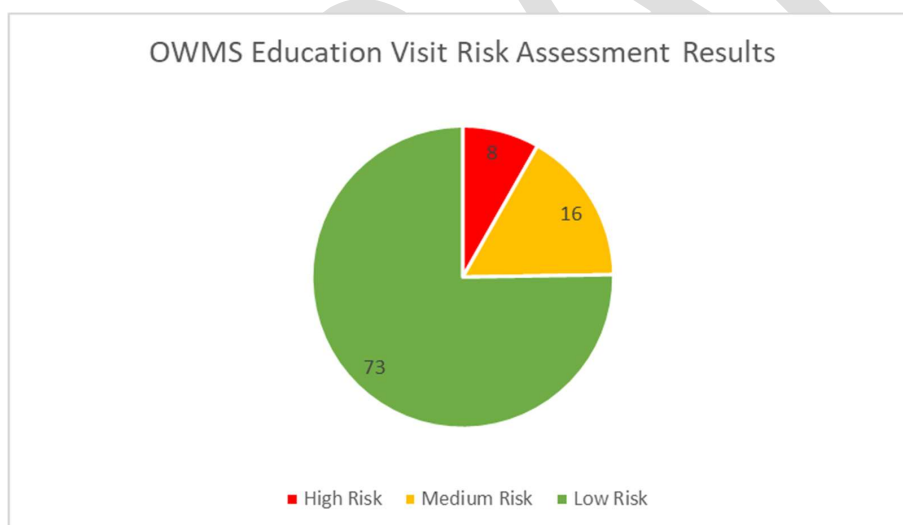
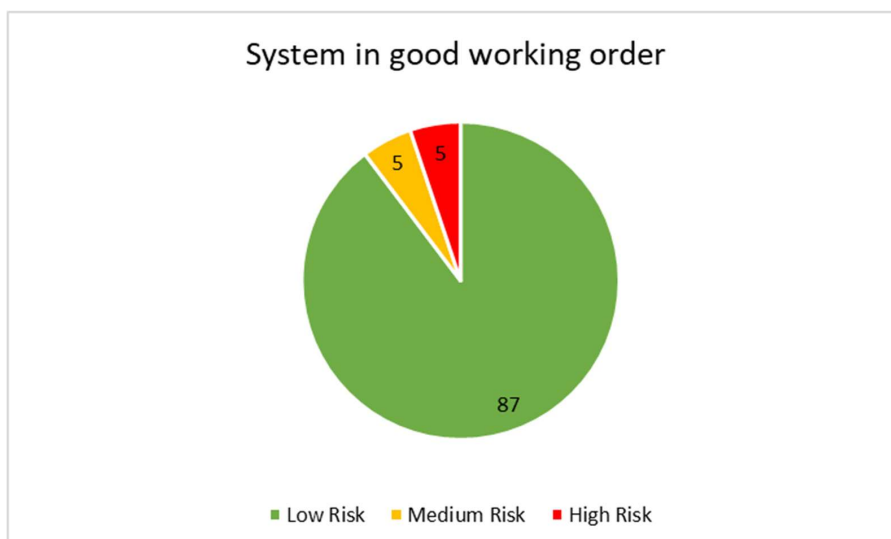*Figure 4: The overall risk rating for the 97 OWMS assessed.*

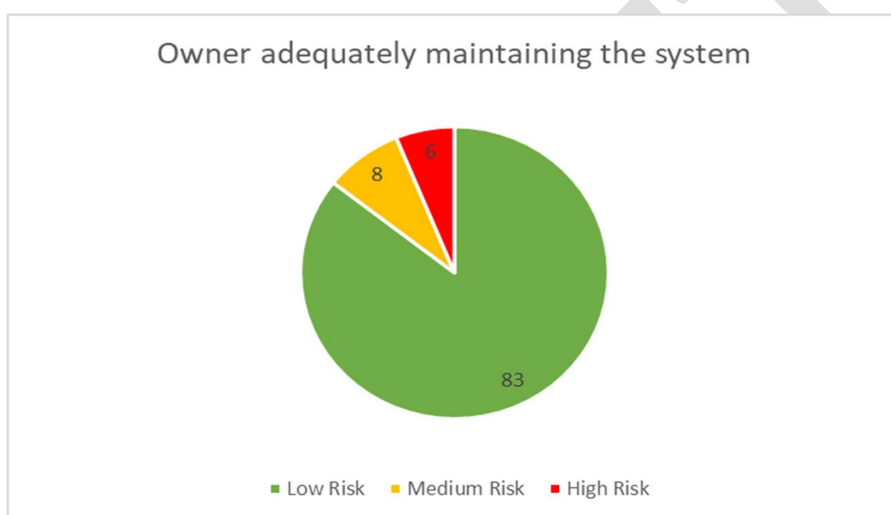*Figure 5: Environmental Health Officer assessment of OWMS functioning.*

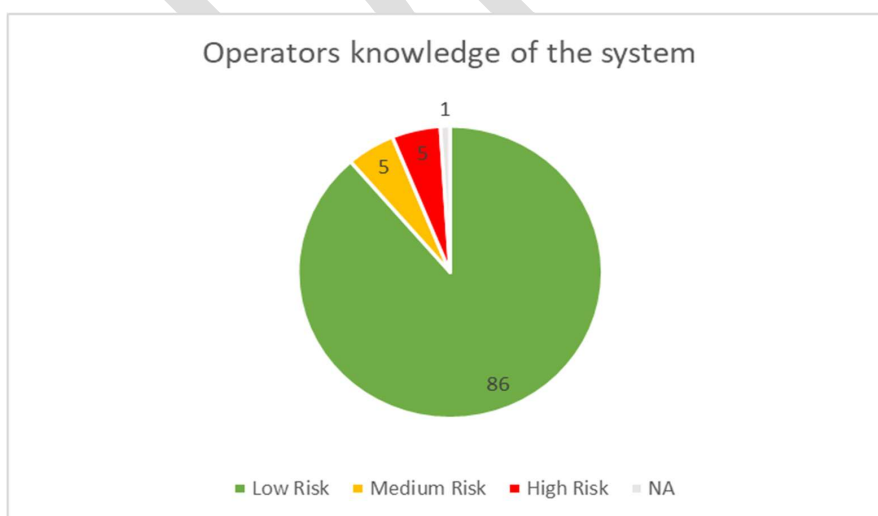*Figure 6: Indication of how well the owner is maintaining the OWMS*

Figure 7: Indication of the Operator's knowledge of the system

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Outcome Education and Compliance program

The OWMS education visit indicated that 75% of OWMS were assessed overall as low risk. 7% were assessed as critical with corrective action required immediately and 16% were assessed as moderate risk with some corrective action required.

The majority of OWMS were operating effectively, well maintained and the operators understood how to use them effectively.

Identifying risks associated with domestic wastewater

From the 1950s, wastewater systems were used and continue to be used extensively throughout Victoria in areas not serviced by reticulated sewerage. Wastewater systems are an acceptable solution to treat domestic wastewater provided the wastewater is contained and disposed of effectively onsite.

In the past, wastewater systems were a key contributor to the increasing pollution of Melbourne's rivers and creeks that threatened the health of Port Phillip Bay. Wastewater from onsite wastewater management systems, seeps into stormwater drains, waterways and groundwater, whilst also polluting soils and increasing the risks to public health, environmental health and creating detrimental effects to the local amenity.

Maroondah City Council has a responsibility in ensuring the risks associated with domestic wastewater are appropriately managed. From the workings undertaken as part of the domestic wastewater management project and recent education/compliance visits, the risks identified for Maroondah include:

Public Health Risks

Domestic wastewater poses a potential public health risk such as:
- Human diseases such as gastroenteritis, caused from contaminated water bodies; and
- Increased capacity of mosquito breeding as a result of pooling, stagnant wastewater resulting in a vector of disease.

Environmental Health Risks

Domestic wastewater poses a potential risk to the natural environment:
- Contamination of groundwater by nitrates and faecal pathogens;
- Seepage can raise the groundwater table causing salinity;
- Domestic wastewater discharge into water catchments stimulates algal growth and land degradation;
- Domestic wastewater carries suspended solids, ammonia and organic matter, which can affect fish, aquatic plants and micro-organisms; and
- Domestic wastewater can be carried into other water bodies and cause further pollution.

Legal Risks

Under the *Environment Protection Act 2017* and the *Environment Protection Regulations 2021*, local government is the primary agency responsible for the management of onsite wastewater management systems. In addition to the approval of the installation of wastewater systems within the municipality, Maroondah City Council is also responsible for identifying failing wastewater systems that are causing environmental, public health and amenity risks.

The 2006 Auditor General's report *Protecting Our Environment and Community from Failing Septic Tanks,* found that most local governments have not allocated adequate resources to effectively carry out their legislative responsibilities for domestic wastewater management.

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Council is bound to implement the Environment Protection legislation and ensure owners and occupiers of onsite wastewater management systems are meeting their responsibilities to maintain the system in good working order, ensuring those operating the system have the information they need and respond appropriately to any failures.

Economic and Amenity Risks

The impacts of failing wastewater systems and the associated risks to public health and the health of our natural environment are easy to obtain in comparison to the long term effects on the local economy and local amenity. Domestic wastewater can affect the local economy and amenity of Maroondah in the following ways:

- Poor septic tank management decreases land amenity and economic value;
- Contaminated water bodies can negatively impact on aquaculture and agriculture using recreational water bodies;
- Possibility of increased maintenance to stormwater drains which receive wastewater due to poor system maintenance.

Assessing the Risks

Risk is assessed with an understanding of the likelihood of the event occurring versus the consequences of that event occurring, relative to the scenario.

In the context of domestic wastewater, likelihood and consequences are defined in Table 2 & 3.

Likelihood Rating Table		
1	Rare	Not likely to occur. Less than 25% chance of occurring.
2	Unlikely	Could occur at sometime within the next 5 years. 25% chance of occurring.
3	Possible	May occur at some time in the next 3 years. 25-40% of occurring.
4	Likely	Will probably occur at sometime within the next 2 years. 40-70% chance of occurring.
5	Almost certain	Will probably occur at sometime within the next 1 year. Greater than 70% chance of occurring.

Table 2 - Likelihood Rating Table

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Consequence Rating Table					
		Public Health	Environmental Health	Legal	Economic and Amenity
1	Insignificant	No illness. Some minor exposure.	Minimal land/water contamination.	Meeting legal obligations.	No impact to land amenity and economic value.
2	Minor	No illness, but there is exposure to untreated wastewater contamination	Minor wastewater contamination of land on primary private property.	Council has failed to meet a minor part of their obligations under EP Act and/or PHWB Act.	Minor impact to land amenity and economic value.
3	Moderate	Less than 2 people unwell with exposure to wastewater contamination	Minor wastewater contamination of land and/or waterways on secondary private properties.	Council has failed to meet its obligations to ensure compliance with EP Act and or PHWB Act and is subject to investigation or litigation.	Impact to amenity and or water ways moderately reducing their usability and economic value. Stormwater maintenance is moderately impacted.
4	Major	2 - 5 people unwell with exposure to wastewater contamination.	Large wastewater contamination of land and/or waterways extending to secondary properties and or waterways	Council has major failings in meeting its obligations under EP Act and/or PHWB Act and is subject to prosecution and/or litigation.	Major impact to amenity and or water ways reducing their usability and economic value. Major impact to stormwater maintenance.
5	Extreme	Significant number of people unwell with exposure to wastewater contamination. Single or multiple deaths with exposure to wastewater contamination.	Extensive untreated wastewater contamination of waterways, ground water and land on public and/or private properties.	Council has significant failings in meeting its obligations under the EP Act and/or PHWB as is subject to significant prosecution/fines and or serious litigation including class actions.	Significant impact to amenity and or water ways significantly reducing their usability and economic value. Stormwater system maintenance is significantly impacted.

Table 3 Consequence Rating Table

Table 4 provides the risk matrix that establishes the overall risk rating, based on the outcome of the likelihood and consequences assessed for the current situation.

Risk Matrix					
Likelihood	**Consequence**				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Almost certain	Moderate	Significant	Significant	High	High
Likely	Moderate	Moderate	Significant	Significant	High
Possible	Low	Moderate	Significant	Significant	Significant
Unlikely	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Significant
Rare	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

Table 4: Likelihood and consequence risk matrix

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Table 5 outlines how Council has assessed the current risk level associated with Domestic Wastewater in Maroondah.

Domestic Wastewater Risk Assessment					
Risk	**Risk Description**	**Untreated Risk**	**Current condition and actions achieved**	**Residual Risk Rating**	**Desired Risk Rating**
PH-01 Public Health	Impact to the health of the public from poorly functioning or defective OWMS	Significant Likely Major	**Partially effective** - 145 operating OWMS in Maroondah - 87% contain wastewater onsite and only 13% discharge wastewater offsite. - Education visits conducted to 67% of OWMS operators in 2023. 75% assessed as low risk. - Permits issued for new/altering OWMS, must be contained onsite. - Work progressing with YVW to provide further access to sewerage infrastructure. - Responsibilities of OWMS operators communicated broadly, including new owners. - Environment Protection regulatory framework provides powers to Council to address poor performing systems, require records and in some cases require connection to sewer.	Moderate Likely Minor	Low
EH-02 Environmental Health	Impact to the health of the environment from poorly functioning or defective OWMS	Significant Likely Major	**Partially effective** - 145 operating OWMS in Maroondah - 87% contain wastewater onsite and only 13% discharge wastewater offsite. - High cost of connection to sewer - Work progressing with YVW to provide further access to sewerage infrastructure. - Education visits conducted to 67% of OWMS operators in 2023. 75% assessed as low risk. - Permits issued for new/altering OWMS, must be contained onsite. - Responsibilities of OWMS operators communicated broadly including new owners. - Environment Protection regulatory framework provides powers to Council to address poor performing systems, require records and in some case require connection to sewer.	Significant Likely Moderate	Moderate

Risk	Risk Description	Untreated Risk	Current condition and actions achieved	Residual Risk Rating	Desired Risk Rating
LEG-03 Legal	Legal implications for Council from the negative impacts on community health and environmental health from unmanaged OWMS	Significant Possible Major	**Effective** - Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy with operational action plan. - Environment Protection legislative framework imbedded in procedures for new/alteration permits, education/compliance visits, complaint response. - Compliance tools available to use in accordance with Maroondah Compliance Policy. - Environmental Health Officer training in Land Capability Assessments and OWMS operation and installation. - Proactive education visits being undertaken ongoing with OWMS operators.	Moderate Unlikely Moderate	Low
ECON-04 Economic and Amenity	Economic impact to Council from the negative effects on the amenity from unmanaged OWMS	Significant Possible Moderate	**Partially Effective** - 145 operating OWMS in Maroondah - 87% contain wastewater onsite and only 13% discharge wastewater offsite - High cost of connection to sewer - Work progressing with YVW to provide further access to sewerage infrastructure. - Education visits conducted to 67% of OWMS operators in 2023. - Permits issued for new/altering OWMS, must be contained onsite - Responsibilities of OWMS operators communicated broadly - Environment Protection regulatory framework provides powers to Council to address poor performing systems, require records and in some case require connection to sewer.	Moderate Likely Minor	Low

Table 5: Assessment of risks associated with Domestic Wastewater in Maroondah

Approach to Compliance

Council's approach to compliance primarily starts with the provision of education and increasing the state of knowledge around OWMS. Owners and operators of OWMS, are provided with information on how to manage their OWMS effectively and meet their legislative obligations.

Council works closely with OWMS installation services and plumbers to ensure appropriate permits are obtained, EPA guidelines and permit conditions are met.

Through the OWMS education and compliance program, Council will monitor compliance and assist owners to ensure their OWMS is used and maintained effectively.

Council may use a range of legislative tools within the Environment Protection Act, the Environment Protection Regulations and Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, where deemed appropriate to address risks and encourage compliance.

In some cases, where an existing OWMS is discharging offsite and is found to be defective or not maintained, it may be appropriate for Council to use its compliance tools to require the system to be connected to sewer (if available and reasonably practicable) or upgraded to maintain the wastewater onsite.

Council will manage compliance in line with the following principles.ch.

Figure 8: Maroondah Organisational Compliance Policy principles

Our strategic response: the way forward

The Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy forms part of Council's response to delivering on Maroondah 2050: Our future together Community Vision. It will be implemented with an integrated whole-of-Council approach to promoting environmental best practice in domestic wastewater management.

Our vision

The vision of this Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy is to:

"Protect public health, the natural environment and the amenity of the municipality by promoting environmental best practice in the management of domestic wastewater"

Future outcomes

To achieve this vision, we will work towards three key outcomes in order to promote environmental best practice in the management of domestic wastewater. The key outcome areas are:

The Strategy outlines actions to be undertaken to work toward three outcome areas which support the overall vision for domestic wastewater management in Maroondah. Additional actions and projects that support this vision and adapt to the changing needs of the Maroondah community may be identified and resourced over the period of the Strategy.

Key Direction indicators have been identified to monitor progress. Over time, these measures will be used to identify how successful Council and its partners have been in working towards the outcomes and key directions outlined in this Strategy. These indicators are not intended to form a definitive list, rather they will be helpful in revealing progress over time.

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Outcome 1 - Healthy Environments

Appropriate and effective wastewater management aids in protecting public health and the environment. Domestic wastewater poses a potential public health and environmental risk.

Key Directions

1.1 Work in partnership to reduce wastewater pollution and encourage healthy waterways
Prior to 1997, wastewater systems in Victoria were permitted to discharge to stormwater. There are now legislative mechanisms that enable Council to enforce property owners to ensure wastewater does not enter the stormwater system from these previously approved systems. For water quality to improve, the quantity of wastewater permitted to discharge into stormwater systems must be reduced. Preventing and minimising failing systems is also required to protect our waterways.

1.2 Proactively educate and build community awareness of environmental health issues
Education and awareness is an important mechanism to support homeowners and occupiers to maintain their systems appropriately.
Monitoring of unsewered properties in accordance with relevant legislation and current standards is required by Council Environmental Health Officers.

1.3 Build engaged and responsible communities in the effective maintenance of wastewater systems
Ensuring owners are aware of their responsibilities in maintaining their wastewater system and how this can be achieved is a key strategy in minimising health risks and possible financial implications of poorly functioning systems. There are numerous educational publications and materials available to use.

Outcome 2 - Collaborative Cultures

Encourage community participation and partnerships with key stakeholders for greater involvement in wastewater issues.

Key Directions

2.1 Work in partnership to ensure integrated planning for sewerage connection services
Yarra Valley Water's Community Sewerage Program aims to eliminate environmental, public health and amenity risks caused by failing wastewater systems. It is critically important that both YVW and Maroondah City Council continue to work together to ensure that this Strategy and future sewerage servicing strategies are aligned. This will provide sewerage connection in areas of environmental or public health concern.

2.2 Facilitate a collaborative approach to the management of domestic wastewater
The successful management of domestic wastewater is not the responsibility of one agency. An integrated approach to approving new developments, managing complex issues relating to wastewater complaints is integral.

2.3 Advocate for the consistent application of the new legislation across Local Governments and to ensure it meets future wastewater management requirements.
The Environment Protection Act 1970 has undergone substantial amendments to form the Environment Protection Act 2017, the Environment Protection Regulations 2021 and the Onsite Wastewater Management Toolkit guidance for Local Government, in consultation with relevant stakeholders including Council, to provide an effective legislation and guidance to assist with the installation, alteration and maintenance of all onsite wastewater management systems. Council will continue to work with the EPA and Yarra Valley Water to ensure the legislation remains relevant and is applied consistently across Local Government.

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Outcome 3 - Information Management

By having complete and accurate information Council is better able to plan for sewer and sustainable development.

Key Directions

3.1 Ensure the accuracy of information relating to wastewater systems in Maroondah

Without complete and accurate information about wastewater systems, it is not possible to fully understand the magnitude of environmental, public health and amenity risks or the likely emerging risks. A sustainable strategy to treat the risks and the likely cost of doing so would also not be possible.

3.2 Apply a continuous improvement approach to domestic wastewater management

Clear and precise policies and procedures for the management of onsite wastewater management systems is important to assist in consistent and transparent decision making to support the Environmental Health Officers in undertaking their statutory responsibilities under the Environment Protection Act 2017 and Environment Protection Regulations 2021.

Action plan

Council has outlined actions that aim to reduce the identified risks associated with onsite domestic wastewater.

Outcome 1 - Healthy Environments

Key Directions	Actions 2025-2030	Timeframe	Key Direction Indicators	Risk reduced
1.1 1.2 1.3	Develop a communication strategy to ensure key wastewater messages below are provided through website, social media channels and are received by the community on an ongoing basis. Key messages include: - correct use of OWMS - importance of OWMS maintenance - management of OWMS during emergencies such as power outage and floods - importance of managing wastewater systems appropriately - sustainable re-use of greywater - benefits of connecting to sewer when it becomes available.	30 June 2026 and ongoing	• OWMS communication strategy is developed and implemented. • Increased number of owners and operators with good knowledge on the effective use and maintenance of their OWMS. • Reduced number of incidents/complaints or treatment plant servicing reports of poorly functioning OWMS.	EH-01 PH-02 ECON-04
1.1 1.2 1.3	Communicate with owners of OWMS that discharge effluent offsite and have access to sewer to connect, about the benefits of connecting to sewer. When an OWMS discharging offsite becomes unsustainable or defective, require connection to sewer when it is available and reasonably practicable to do so.	Ongoing	• Communication material encouraging connection to available sewer is distributed to OWMS owners. • Increased number of unsewered properties connect to sewer. • Reduced number of properties discharging domestic wastewater offsite.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03 ECON-04

Key Directions	Actions 2025-2030	Timeframe	Key Direction Indicators	Risk reduced
1.1 1.2 1.3	Undertake OWMS education/compliance program visits, educating OWMS operators and owners and monitoring system effectiveness and maintenance. Follow up poor performing systems in line with the current legislative framework.	30 June 2026 and ongoing	• 100% education/compliance program visits have been undertaken. • Owner and operator knowledge on the effective use and maintenance of their OWMS is improved. • Reduced number of incidents/complaints or treatment plant servicing reports of poorly functioning OWMS.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03 ECON-04
1.1 1.2	Implement a 5 yearly reminder system to OWMS owners about OWMS pump out requirement. Follow up owners of OWMS that have not pumped out the system in line with the current legislative framework.	30 June 2026 and ongoing	• Reduced number of incidents/complaints or treatment plant servicing reports of poorly functioning OWMS. • 5 yearly reminder system for OWMS pump out is implemented.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03 ECON-04
1.1 1.2	Review of all aerated wastewater treatment system maintenance reports provided to Council by wastewater servicing agents. Follow up owners of OWMS that are required to undertake work to repair the aerated treatment plant system in line with the current legislative framework.	Ongoing	• Reduced number of incidents/complaints or treatment plant servicing reports of poorly functioning OWMS. • Aerated treatment plant systems service reports are received and are follow up by EHO as required.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03 ECON-04

Outcome 2 - Collaborative Cultures

Key Directions	Actions 2025-2030	Timeframe	Key Direction Indicators	Risk reduced
2.1	Work with Yarra Valley Water and advocate for all high-risk properties (E.g. commercial, offsite discharge, close to waterways etc) serviced by an OWMS to be included in the Community Sewerage Program. Meet with Yarra Valley Water at least once per year to discuss promoting connection to sewer and provide information on properties of higher risk requiring sewer access.	Ongoing	• More unsewered properties are included in the Yarra Valley Water Community Sewerage Program. • Meeting with Yarra Valley Water and Maroondah undertaken annually to discuss sewer prioritisation.	EH-01 PH-02 ECON-04
2.2 2.3	Build partnerships with other Councils and peak associations including Environmental Health Professionals Australia to advocate to the State Government to accelerate the community sewerage program.	Ongoing	• More unsewered properties are included in the Yarra Valley Water Community Sewerage Program.	EH-01 PH-02 ECON-04
2.1 2.2	Investigate funding opportunities for programs to improve domestic wastewater management (including where possible ways for community to be supported to upgrade their OWMS or connect to sewer).	30 June 2027	• Funding is sourced for new programs to improve the management of domestic wastewater.	EH-01 PH-02 ECON-04

Key Directions	Actions 2025-2030	Timeframe	Key Direction Indicators	Risk reduced
2.2	Provide technical expertise and strengthen the relationship between Community Health, Planning and Building to ensure all new developments and alterations to existing properties that are serviced by an OWMS, are managed appropriately. Meet with Planning and Building on an annual basis to discuss management of OWMS and ensure this is addressed in the application process for modifications to properties that require a permit.	Ongoing	• All new or altering OWMS are installed in accordance with EPA requirements and guidelines and wastewater is maintained onsite. • All permits to approve multi-dwellings or apartment complexes have access to sewer. • Permits for subdivisions in unsewered areas require access to sewer if available or must ensure all OWMS are installed in accordance with EPA requirements and guidelines and wastewater is maintained onsite.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03 ECON-04
2.2	Provide website information and one on one guidance to plumbers, installers, servicing agents and consultants to outline Council expectations, including the requirement to maintain domestic wastewater onsite and to improve standards in the industry.	Ongoing	• All new or altering OWMS are installed in accordance with EPA requirements and guidelines and wastewater is maintained onsite.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03

Outcome 3 - Information Management

Key Directions	Actions 2025-2030	Timeframe	Key Direction Indicators	Risk reduced
3.1	Maintain the information management system to ensure all information relating to a wastewater system is stored appropriately and remains current.	Ongoing	• Effective information maintenance is supporting the management of OWMS and OWMS programs run in Maroondah. • Database information on OWMS licences is current.	EH-01 PH-02 LEG-03
3.1	Ensure property information from YVW is updated on an annual basis and integrated into Council's GIS system.	30 June 2026 & ongoing annually	• Effective information maintenance is supporting the management of OWMS and OWMS programs run in Maroondah. • Access to accurate information on YVW sewerage infrastructure is available to Council teams.	LEG-03
3.2	Undertake regular training for Environmental Health Officers (EHO) to ensure skills and knowledge in OWMS and application assessment is kept current and can be applied practically.	30 June 2026 & ongoing annually	• All new or altering OWMS are installed in accordance with EPA requirements and guidelines and wastewater is maintained onsite. • EHO skills and knowledge in OWMS is current and has been applied correctly.	LEG-03
3.2	Review Council's Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy action plan every two years and update as necessary.	30 June 2026 & ongoing annually	• The action plan is current, activities are completed on time and regular reporting is undertaken.	LEG-03

References

Victorian Auditor General, 2006, Protecting our environment and community from failing septic tanks, Victoria

VAGO, 2018, Managing the Environmental Impacts of Domestic Wastewater

Environment Protection Act 2017.

Environment Protection Regulations 2021

Environment Protection Authority, 2024, Obligations of managers of land or infrastructure (Urban Stormwater Management and On-site Wastewater Management) Order made under section 156 of the Environment Protection Act 2017

Environment Protection Authority, 2024, Regulating on-site wastewater management systems: local government toolkit (EPA publication 1974)

Environment Protection Authority, 2024, Guideline for onsite wastewater management (for councils, water corporations and installers)

Environment Protection Authority, 2024, Guideline for onsite wastewater effluent dispersal and recycling systems (for councils, water corporations and installers)

Environment Protection Authority, 2024, Requirements for owners and occupiers with on-site wastewater (for community)

Environment Protection Authority, 2024, Victorian Guideline for irrigation with recycled water (EPA publication 168) (for irrigation designers and operators)

Maroondah City Council, Water Sensitive City Strategy.

Maroondah City Council, , Maroondah 2040 – Our Future Together

Yarra Valley Water, 2025, Yarra Valley Water 2030 Strategy.

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY **|34**

Glossary

Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems Aerated wastewater treatment systems treat all household wastewater and have several treatment compartments. They comprise of a septic tank, aeration chamber, settling chamber and chlorination tank. They are a secondary treatment system.

Blackwater Wastewater from toilets containing faeces and urine.

Community Sewerage Program Water Authorities develop sewerage services strategies and every 5 years, review the prioritisation of properties and areas and develop servicing strategies for upcoming areas.

Domestic Wastewater Wastewater arising from a domestic dwelling. Domestic wastewater can comprise of blackwater or greywater (from bathrooms, laundry and kitchen) or a combination of both.

Disposal Area An area of land specifically designated for the disposal of wastewater.

Effluent Wastewater discharging from a wastewater management system.

Environmental Health Officer An individual who has the qualifications and/or experience necessary to be appointed as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) and be authorised to undertake responsibilities of relevant Acts such as the *Environment Protection Act 2017 and Environmental Health Regulations 2021.*

Environment Protection Authority The Victorian Environment Protection Authority administers the *Environment Protection Act 2017 and Environment Protection Regulation 2021 and* is responsible for producing guidance for onsite wastewater management, including the Code of Practice and other documents, and issuing Certificates of Conformity for particular onsite wastewater treatment systems.

Greywater Domestic wastewater from sources other than the toilet, urinal or bidet (showers, baths, hand basins, laundry, dishwashers and kitchen sinks). Greywater may still contain pathogens, nutrients and potentially harmful chemicals. Also known as sullage.

Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy A planning and management document to minimise the impact of domestic wastewater on public health and the local environment using a risk management approach.

Onsite Wastewater Management System or Wastewater Management System A system for the bacterial, biological, chemical or physical treatment of sewage includes all tanks, beds, sewers, drains, pipes, fittings, appliances and land used in connection with the system. An on-site wastewater treatment plant with a design or actual flow rate of sewage not exceeding 5000 litres on any day and includes all beds, sewers, drains, pipes, fittings, appliances and land used in connection with the treatment plant. Include septic tanks, aerated wastewater treatment systems, composting toilets, sand filters, reed beds and wetlands that treat wastewater produced by households or businesses generating up to 5000 litres of wastewater per day.

Primary Property Property where the OWMS is located.

Secondary Property Property or properties adjacent to the primary property.

Sand Filter A secondary treatment method.

Septic Tank A conventional septic tank that temporarily holds wastewater. The septic tank provides primary treatment of wastewater.

Sewage Any waste containing human excreta or domestic wastewater (Environment Protection Act 2017).

Sewer Pipe used to transfer sewage from one location to another.

Sewerage The infrastructure used to carry, treat and dispose of sewage.

Subsurface Irrigation The disposal of wastewater through a series of pressure-compensating pipes and emitters at a depth of 100 mm to 150 mm below ground surface level.

Trenches A disposal area which uses the principle of absorption where wastewater is distributed via underground trenches.

Wastewater is defined, within the Environment Protection Regulations 2021, as '*waste principally consisting of water and includes sewage or other human-derived wastewater*'. This means any wastewater from the toilet, bathroom, kitchen or laundry of any premises**.**

Waterway River, creek, stream, watercourses, natural channel in which water regularly flows, lake, lagoon, swamp, marsh or dam.

Yarra Valley Water Local Water Authority

To contact Council telephone 1300 88
22 33 visit our website at:
www.maroondah.vic.gov.au or call in to
one of our service centres:

Realm Service
Centre Maroondah
Highway Ringwood

Croydon Service
Centre Civic Square
Croydon

Translating and Interpreter
Service 13 14 50

National Relay Service
(NRS) 13 36 77

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DOMESTIC WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |37

Urge Maroondah Council to Reassess Banning Right Turns at Greenwood Ave, Ringwood

The issue

Maroondah Council is in the final stages of building the Ringwood Activity Centre Car Park at 1 Bedford Rd, Ringwood. In order to access the car parking spaces, Council is planning to build a new access / road opposite Greenwood Ave.

To allow this, **Council will permanently ban right turns into and out of Greenwood Ave.** Please sign this petition to ask Council to review and reassess alternative options for the car park access.

Unfortunately, it feels as if the Council did not adequately plan this project. A private developer would be required to carry out traffic modelling, yet council has indicated they approved plans for the car park without a final design for the access or traffic modelling of this. They did not adequately inform the community when the plans changed (dated February 2025).

As road safety and traffic engineer, and local residents, we are concerned that this project is not achieving the best outcomes for the community.

Key facts:

o   Greenwood Ave in an important Collector road, servicing Ringwood Uniting Church and kinder, Greenwood Park kinder, Our Lady's primary school, Swim Like a Fish, Ringwood Football and Netball Club, Ringwood City Soccer Club, Aquanation, Ringwood Central Tennis Club, Ringwood Croquet Club, Federation Estate and local residents.

o   Early plans showed a roundabout at the intersection. We've since been informed this was concept/artists impression only.

o   Council does not appear to have adequately planned this project and did not conduct traffic modelling until after the project commenced. No route survey has been conducted to understand where traffic that turns right out of Greenwood Ave is heading to (north or east), and there is no modelling of the impact on other local streets.

o   According to Council, approximately 1,000 vehicles per day currently turn right out of Greenwood Ave, in addition to an unknown number of vehicles that turn right into Greenwood Ave. These movements, are being banned to solve the problem which has been created by Council in building the 324 space car park (i.e. 324 vehicles per day assuming long-term parking).

o   As engineers, and one of us having built in Maroondah, we know that commencing work without due diligence and final plans, lack of modelling and impact to existing traffic would not have been acceptable to Council if this was a private development or local resident.

o   Council did not inform the community of this until 11 days prior to the intersection being closed, and the message around the permanent banning of turns is provided as secondary information in notices.

o   The proposed detour route will add additional traffic along Wilana Street outside of Our Lady's Primary School, increasing risk to primary school students where there is no school crossing or supervisor. The school was not advised of the works and found out from parents.

o   Council has not considered alternative solutions which may have included left in/out for the car park (rather than Greenwood Ave), an exit only to Warrandyte Road, or time-based turn bans on right turn out of Greenwood Avenue.

We ask you to join in urging the Maroondah Council to review and reassess alternative options for the car park access and ensure all impacts are modelled and understood.

By signing this petition, you're advocating for better traffic planning in our community. You are calling on the Maroondah Council to pause the current construction and conduct a thorough review of alternative access designs to prioritise both efficiency and safety, ensuring the current needs of the community are not compromised to provide access to a new 324 space car park. Our goal is a well-planned, thoughtfully designed access that supports the growing needs of our community without compromising safety.

Please sign this petition to ask Council to review and reassess alternative options for the car park access.

For more information on the project visit Council's website.

Your support for this will be presented to the Mayor of Maroondah City Council - Kylie Spears.