HEALTH and WELLBEING IN THE YARRA RANGES 2017-2021
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OVERVIEW

The Yarra Ranges has strengths that help people have good health, including high levels of community connection and volunteering, beautiful natural environments and strong potential for further economic renewal and growth. Yarra Ranges is a place with similar health challenges to many other areas of Australia; diabetes and obesity are growing, mental health is reported as poor, and dementia is set to increase dramatically in coming decades.

Yarra Ranges Council has an important role in promoting a healthier community such as; creating liveable townships, advocating for resources and showing leadership on behalf of communities to support people to enjoy the best possible health.

The 2017 Health and Wellbeing Strategy examines the health of people living in the Yarra Ranges using evidence and engagement findings and presents priorities for how Council will work to improve health and wellbeing over four years. The Strategy has a focus on prevention, prioritising actions that will create environments that enable people to be healthy and increase their wellbeing.

The Strategy recognises the impacts of the social determinants of health and the influence on health of where people live. Social determinants include having access to education and employment, public transport that meets the needs of local communities, clean air and water and having ready access to services. It also refers to conditions such as children being able to walk to school and have access to nutritious foods.

The Strategy presents 17 high level goals and outlines strategic actions for reaching these goals and describes how Council will work with its partners and communities to create positive change for a healthier Yarra Ranges.
The built, economic, natural, and social & cultural environments for health are powerful areas of influence for Council in creating and promoting healthy communities.

Council works across all the environments for health to promote wellbeing; and will consider health and wellbeing when prioritising effort and allocating resources.
This Health and Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy) “recognises the complexity and inter-connection of the underlying causes of poor health and wellbeing. It identifies place-based approaches as a platform for change, and that the places people spend their time such as communities, schools, workplaces, sporting clubs and others, play an important role in shaping their health and wellbeing”.

(Vichealth - Local Government Guides to Action)
HEALTH ISSUES

Research and community engagement findings for Yarra Ranges (see Yarra Ranges Health Profile) show that to improve health and wellbeing, effort needs to be focused on the following areas.

Improving health and wellbeing must also consider the impact of inequity and disadvantage, as it has a significant impact on people’s health in parts of the municipality.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There are three inter-connected priority areas to build a healthier community and address the most pressing health needs in Yarra Ranges.

In addition to its prevention role to promote health and wellbeing, Council continues to have other long standing roles that keep people safe and healthy such as: the safety of food premises and food handling, maintenance of key infrastructure such as drains and roads, local laws that enhance amenity and a raft of services such as maternal and child health, recreation planning and services for older adults. While not the focus of this Strategy, they are acknowledged as important parts of Council’s work to maintain and support a healthy community.
## Table 1: Goals for health and wellbeing in Yarra Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Area</th>
<th>Goals for health and wellbeing in Yarra Ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected and healthy communities</strong></td>
<td><strong>In the Yarra Ranges:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 1</td>
<td>People are able to access, prepare and eat nutritious foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2</td>
<td>People enjoy good mental health throughout their lives</td>
</tr>
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<td>Goal 3</td>
<td>People who drink alcohol, do so in moderation and safety</td>
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<td>Goal 4</td>
<td>People participate in learning and education across life-stages</td>
</tr>
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<td>Goal 5</td>
<td>People are engaged in local decision making and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilient and liveable communities</strong></td>
<td><strong>In the Yarra Ranges:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 6</td>
<td>People are physically active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 7</td>
<td>People have access to active transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 8</td>
<td>People are able to contribute to and participate in their local economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 9</td>
<td>People have access to vibrant arts and heritage experiences that connect communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 10</td>
<td>People enjoy safe and sustainable natural and built environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 11</td>
<td>People have suitable, affordable and stable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 12</td>
<td>Every child and young person can thrive and reach their potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 13</td>
<td>Older people enjoy active and healthy lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Priority Area** | **Goals for health and wellbeing in Yarra Ranges**
---|---
**Equitable and inclusive communities** | **In the Yarra Ranges:**

**Goal 14** | People belong to and participate equally in inclusive communities

**Goal 15** | People can access appropriate health services

**Goal 16** | Women and children live free from abuse and violence through a culture of gender equity and respect

**Goal 17** | Indigenous residents:
- live free from discrimination and racism, connected to their culture & identity
- access culturally safe services in community controlled organisations
- are supported to have healthy pregnancies and thrive in early childhood

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**HOW WE DEVELOPED THE STRATEGY**

Council is required by the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to prepare a municipal public health and wellbeing plan that provides strategic leadership to support health and wellbeing in local communities, taking a prevention approach.

**Frameworks for health and wellbeing approach**

The Strategy is informed by evidence, engagement and principles of prevention and health promotion, as represented in this diagram.

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**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Strategy also incorporates the findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the specific recommendations for local governments that Councils report on the measures they propose to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims.

Council’s commitment to reducing family violence through a gender equality approach that seeks to change gender stereotypes and rigid gendered roles will continue. This work commenced in earnest in 2012 and includes a focus on organisational change. It was further strengthened through Council being a partner in the regional strategy Together for Equality and Respect.

Community awareness of this health issue has grown over recent years and is now informed by significant research - represented in the “Change the Story” framework. Council supports the evidence informed, change approach outlined in “Change the Story” and this is reflected in this Strategy.

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A significant amount of project work to prevent violence against women is underway in communities across the Yarra Ranges, led by both service providers and community groups.
CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

Council’s Adapting to a Changing Climate and Energy Future Strategy outlines a framework for responding to climate change including to:

- educate and build community resilience in responding to climate change
- build and maintain community infrastructure that is resilient to withstanding extreme climate events
- build organisational agility to adapt to climate change
- support local economies to adapt to changing climate
- demonstrate land management approaches that maximise adapting to climate change

The Department of Health and Human Services requires local governments to consider climate change in the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Department of Health 2012) and directs that:

1. Climate change issues should be included in the profile of public health issues facing the municipality.
2. The way in which climate change may impact on other … priorities should be established and actions or strategies to initiate adaptation to this should be identified.

A changing climate will have broad-reaching effects upon human health. It is recognised that the impact of climate change is considered the largest threat to global health this century (Costello et al., 2009) with many vulnerabilities yet to be identified (Campbell-Lendrum et al., 2009). The relationship between climate change and health was considered by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in Working Group II Assessment report: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability (Parry et al., 2007) and identified the impacts on human health through direct and indirect exposures and through altering the key determinants of health (the physical, economic and social conditions under which people live).

Figure 1: Schematic diagram of pathways by which climate change affects health

Source: Confalonieri et al. 2007
This Health and Wellbeing Strategy recognises the potential for impacts on health and wellbeing as a result of climate change. Yarra Ranges has been seriously affected in recent times by catastrophic bushfires, severe floods and wind storms with resultant impacts on people, homes and property. In Victoria the incidence of heatwaves is expected to increase. Heatwaves can cause more deaths and illness than many other climate events and emergencies.

A further environmental concern that emerged through consultation is the impact of wood-fire smoke on health. Attention to affordable sources of power to heat homes is potentially another area for health advocacy and would aim to improve air quality.

An assessment of the climate related risks to health for the Yarra Ranges, by ARUP in 2017 showed the highest risks to health include:

- Heatwave - premature deaths, illnesses
- Bushfires - injuries, death and mental health impacts, impacts on food supply and economy
- Extreme weather events - flood, rain and potential injuries and thunderstorm asthma

In the longer term, increasing temperatures may lead to higher incidence of vector borne diseases e.g. through mosquito bites, as currently seen in warmer climates, Ross River virus for example.

This Health and Wellbeing Strategy will assist communities to prepare for and respond to a changing climate through actions that:

- secure access to nutritious food
- support sustainable community infrastructure
- support community planning and build resilience in communities
- encourage civic engagement and leadership
- advocate for improved public transport
- support people in our communities experiencing vulnerability
CONNECTING EVIDENCE TO ACTION

A prevention approach to health and wellbeing for Council starts with some key questions:

• What evidence exists to guide action?
• How can Council best use its roles and responsibilities to support healthy communities?
• What are the most effective actions Council can take to improve health and wellbeing?

Prioritising Council’s responses to improving health and wellbeing are informed by:

• evidence on how people are faring through sources such as: the 2014 Victorian Population Health Survey, Census data, hospital and ambulance data
• particular localised factors relating to places and the environments people live in
• research and understanding of community health through partner organisations/services
• knowledge of local communities gathered through engagements and other regular interactions with communities and community leaders

Council works in a range of ways to improve health and wellbeing, including through:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role (what)</th>
<th>Examples (how)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy for systemic change to improve the underlying causes of poor health</td>
<td>Document and advocate on local needs e.g. • improve service access, increase employment options, remove transport barriers. Collective advocacy e.g. - Council is a member of the Eastern Transport Coalition and the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships - leveraging skills, resources, expertise and working together for collective impact</td>
<td>Commitment to regional effort e.g. • <em>Together for Equality and Respect</em> (strategy to prevent violence against women), • the Action on Alcohol Flagship and the Youth Round Table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering infrastructure, services, planning and facilities that support people to be healthier</td>
<td>Joint DHHS service planning, shared health planning with partner organisations, planning for footpaths, capital funding and new community facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning functions such as strategic land planning and regulatory functions such as statutory planning, building and health</td>
<td>Protecting agricultural land, developing Structure Plans to guide future land use and development, protecting public health through food regulation and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building capacity of communities e.g. through grants, community development, skills and training &amp; leadership development</td>
<td>Skills building programs, youth leadership, grants, capacity building, community planning, events and arts, heritage and cultural projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONNECTING EVIDENCE TO ACTION

A prevention approach to health and wellbeing for Yarra Ranges Council starts with key questions.
HEADLINE DATA

The 2014 Victorian Population Health Survey conducted by the State Government, provides local data. The survey asked residents about a range of health indicators that either; support their health or contribute to poor health. The survey results are summarised in the graph on the following page.

Modifiable health risk factors are potentially modifiable through changes in lifestyle and/or treatment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Yarra Ranges</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sedentary or insufficient exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Main physical activity at work: sitting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Main physical activity at work: walking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zero days cycled for transport, for trips longer than 10 minutes, in preceding week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zero days walked for transport, for trips longer than 10 minutes, in preceding week</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time spent sitting on an average weekend day: 6+ hours per day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Met both fruit and vegetable guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Met vegetable consumption guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Met fruit consumption guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eat take-away meals or snacks about once a week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumed sugar sweetened soft drinks daily</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overweight or obese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current smokers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion (%) of the adult population with lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion (%) of the adult population at risk of alcohol-related injury on a single occasion – increased risk: either yearly or monthly or weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High or very high levels of psychological distress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
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Share of adult residents (%)
KEY HEALTH ISSUES IN YARRA RANGES

What?
- Mental health, particularly for young people, men and in disadvantaged townships in the Valley area
- Chronic diseases, including diabetes and poor diabetes management, including type 1 diabetes amongst children and teenagers
- Dementia is increasing in all areas and forecast to be particularly high in the Monbulk area in future
- Dental health of teenagers and adults is poor
- Declining vision

Where?
- Health inequities particularly affect health in the Valley and urban Kilsyth; there are also growing indicators of disadvantage in other parts of the urban area

Why?
- Risk factors are: overweight and obesity; poor nutrition; lack of physical activity; risky alcohol consumption, smoking rates (in the Yarra Valley)
- Lack of access to services, including GPs, medical specialists, dental services, hospitals and ambulance transport. Affects all areas. Many residents are failing to use services such as GPs, health screening and dentists
- Social determinants of health, including income, education, housing and social supports, have a major impact on health
- Transport issues affect both service access and residents’ ability to use active travel

Who?
- Young people, who have worse health for a wide range of conditions
- Men, whose key health issues include poor mental health, suicide, dementia, poor nutrition and lack of exercise

HEALTH DATA - SUMMARY

Yarra Ranges fares better than the Victorian average
- 9% of residents in Yarra Ranges are current smokers, compared to 13% across Victoria.
- Yarra Ranges residents are more likely to have jobs which involve walking
- 24% have high blood pressure, slightly below the 26% average.

Yarra Ranges fares worse than the Victorian average
- 44% of residents meet fruit consumption guidelines, compared to 48% across Victoria.
- 82% consume takeaway meals or snacks about once a week, compared to 71% across Victoria.
- 33% are overweight, compared to 31% across Victoria.
- Residents are more likely to spend a lot of time sitting on weekends.
- Residents are unlikely to cycle or walk more than 10 minutes for transport.
- 45% of residents are at increased risk of alcohol-related harm on a single occasion compared to 42.5% across Victoria.
- 20% have high or very high levels of psychological distress. The second-highest in metropolitan Melbourne and fourth-highest across all Victorian LGAs. The Victorian average was 12.6%.

Yarra Ranges is similar to Victorian average
- 7.1% meet vegetable consumption guidelines, compared to 7.4% across Victoria.
- 11% of residents consume sugar sweetened soft drinks daily.

(Comprehensive health data for Yarra Ranges, from a range of sources, can be found on Council’s website).
THE MAJOR INITIATIVES

Council’s approach to improving health and wellbeing will include three transformational projects; each with evidence to show it can have a significant impact to improve health and wellbeing.

- **Water – everyone’s drink of choice**
- **Walking – the way to go**
- **Indigenous health – close the gap**

These three projects will involve many areas of Council plus external partners and communities. They are intended to:

- Support ongoing partnerships and demonstrate leadership, particularly in the area of Indigenous health where Council has a high level of commitment to creating positive change.
- More effectively allocate Council’s resources and responsibilities across the environments for health e.g. harnessing existing Council roles to promote walking and water as the drink of choice.

**Why focus on these three major initiatives?**

Worse than average survey results for the main risk factors for health in the Yarra Ranges underpin the focus on these major initiatives. Evidence shows the potential to have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of residents through these approaches:

- Reducing consumption of sugary drinks will help cut obesity and diabetes rates and improve oral health, improving overall health.
- Increasing walking, a free and accessible form of physical activity will improve health, reduce pollution and is protective for a range of health problems.
- Improving Indigenous health will address long standing health inequities that lead to lower life expectancy and higher rates of chronic illness. Ensuring access to culturally safe and community controlled health services is central to achieving this change.
Health outcomes from the three major initiatives can be measured through changes in the following health indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major initiative</th>
<th>Expected change (indicators that show improvement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**Water, everyone’s drink</td>
<td>Significant drop in the rates of childhood obesity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of choice**</td>
<td>Halt the rate of rise in Type 2 diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced hospital admissions from heart disease and kidney disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced general anesthesia for children needing dental treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Walking - the way to go!</strong></td>
<td>Decreased obesity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps to prevent or reduce dementia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced hospital admissions and risk of falls and injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Indigenous Health - close the</td>
<td>Increased life expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gap**</td>
<td>Reduced rates of diabetes and incidence of kidney disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased resilience, sense of belonging and improved mental health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ON PARTNERSHIPS**

Council maintains a range of partnerships and advisory groups that have had significant input to the development of this Strategy.

**Shared health planning**

Council worked with partner organisations that also have responsibility for preparing integrated health plans for the Yarra Ranges:

- the Outer East Health and Community Support Alliance, Women’s Health East, Inspiro Community Health and Eastern Health - Community Health.

Together these partners have identified shared priorities they will work collectively to address:
Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group for Yarra Ranges

The Yarra Ranges Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group provide advice to Council on the development, implementation and evaluation of this Strategy and include local health and community services and community representatives from the Hills, Urban and Valley areas of the municipality. Members contributing to the strategy are:

Cr Richard Higgins, Chair
Lisa Curry, Urban Area
Kristin Gillespie, Valley Area
John Coleman, Hills Area (retired)
Jacky Close, Laura Newstead, Jaime Edge, OEHCSA
Christine Farnan/ Liliana Bartolomeo DHHS
Jo Stanford, Josette O’Donnell, Eastern Health - Community Health
Danika Gasparini, Eastern Primary Health Network
Debbie Stanley, EACH
Sue Rosenhain, Kate Gibson, Women’s Health East
Barbara Dobson, Inspiro

Broader Collaborative Effort

Local not-for-profit service organisations such as HICSA, Each and Anchor, disability services such as Melba, Scope and Interchange, Neighbourhood Houses, Eastern Community Legal Centre, EDVOS and others deliver support and services across the Yarra Ranges and partner with Council. Regional partners bring further strength to local effort and include the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, the Outer East Health and Community Support Alliance and Women’s Health East.

Supporting Council’s partners

Council also fosters partnerships through:

- Funding projects and services through its grants
- Advocacy through partnerships and information sharing with and from: community groups, community health services and local agencies working directly with community members
- Seeking support from organisations with expertise in prevention, including with Women’s Health East and the Outer East Health and Community Support Alliance in work to prevent violence against women work to reduce the harms from alcohol
- Working in partnership in communities for example: the Youth Round Table, Upper Yarra Child and Family Partnership, OELLEN and many others.

Council recognises that partnerships can increase positive outcomes in the community. Council has an ongoing commitment to working with partners to promote health and wellbeing and recognises this approach enables greater impact on local communities.

Advocacy and Facilitation

Advocacy and facilitation to improve health and wellbeing are key roles of local government. Facilitation involves bringing people together to find solutions to problems in an area. Facilitating shared responses on local issues is also supported by Council grants that support addressing specific gaps, needs or community issues.

Council has an advocacy approach that recognises the value of community voices, and insights and which brings partners to the table when advocating for change. Advocacy seeks to generate support for projects, services and policies to better meet the needs of the community.

Advocating to State and Federal Governments on behalf of the community for change in matters outside Council’s remit or control is essential and a priority. Engaging and working with residents, community groups, business and stakeholders on advocacy, strengthens Council’s advocacy approach.
PRIORITY ONE - CONNECTED AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIES FOR A MORE CONNECTED AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

“... Deciding to be active, eating healthy foods, reducing stress, connecting with your neighbours, ... are just some of the little changes that can make a big difference to our health and wellbeing”. (Vichealth)

Council will promote better health, connect communities and create a sense of belonging so people can enjoy the best health possible throughout their lives. (Council Plan 2017)

Priority One actions have a focus on the social determinants of health and direct Council’s effort to the health issues that are the highest concerns for Yarra Ranges.

The 5 goals refer to the long term levers of change that Council can influence and the future we want to see.

Priority one includes a transformational project that if successful, will make a significant and measurable difference to the health and wellbeing of residents swapping water for sugary drinks.

GOALS for connected and healthy communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Yarra Ranges:</th>
<th>Goal 1</th>
<th>People are able to access, prepare and eat nutritious foods</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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Major initiative for Priority One | Water - everyone’s' drink of choice |
Goal 1

PEOPLE IN YARRA RANGES ARE ABLE TO ACCESS, PREPARE AND EAT NUTRITIOUS FOODS

Food that is nutritious and unprocessed has a positive impact on both mental and physical health and on peoples’ general wellbeing.

Increasing rates of diabetes and obesity in the Yarra Ranges and the prevalence of chronic illnesses, provide a compelling reason for Council to have a focus on increasing how much nutritious food people eat and how often. Healthy eating means:

- having plenty of vegetables and fruit, whole grains, pulses and sufficient protein daily
- minimising consumption of energy dense foods and sugary drinks.

Council is acutely aware that some townships in the Yarra Ranges have limited access to fresh and nutritious foods due to distance and affordability and that people have varying capacities related to food and nutrition.

Research indicates residents need support to improve access to, and knowledge of how to prepare and enjoy nutritious, healthy foods.

Success in other health promotion strategies such as anti-smoking campaigns has led to direct and measurable improvements in health and wellbeing over time. A similar approach is needed to improve access to, and availability of, nutritious and unprocessed food and increase skills in food preparation.

Local governments in different parts of the world have worked to reduce consumption of sugary drinks as a strategy with positive impacts on health. Significant, cross sector effort is required to realise this change.

Community Initiatives

Community efforts to support health include the work of the Upper Yarra Body Image Working Group which is a collaboration promoting body esteem and health. It aims to raise awareness, build capacity and engage community and empower individuals to make health-enhancing choices, supported by a community that celebrates body diversity and wellbeing. The group note:

“Public health messages that are free of weight focus also appear to be more acceptable to the public and more likely to encourage healthy behaviours than messages emphasising weight control or obesity prevention”. 


Local Community Health Services also strongly supported this aspect of promoting healthy eating during the development of the strategy and noted the multiple, serious health impacts resulting from eating disorders.

Hills Food Frontier, Koha Café and Menzies Creek Primary School are all examples where communities have taken collective approaches to improving access, knowledge and consumption of nutritious foods. These projects also connect people into their communities.

The Yarra Ranges is known for its fresh produce and businesses promoting great local foods.
Food for Life

*Food for Life* is a resource developed by Council in consultation with the community that aims to support services, businesses, farmers, communities and Council to increase and sustain nutritious eating. The plan also considers the environments for health and the social determinants affecting food.

*Food for Life* notes the influence of food systems such as the marketing of fast food and sugary drinks and how this can affect people’s choices in ways that contribute to poor mental and physical health. The Plan highlights preferred futures across three areas of influence that Council, partners and community can aspire to and work together on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of influence</th>
<th>Goals for our food future</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food System</strong></td>
<td>Yarra Ranges has a thriving, varied and sustainable food production industry, which provides a wide range of food choices to local residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Literacy</strong></td>
<td>People who live, work and study in Yarra Ranges have the knowledge, motivation and capacity to access and prepare nutritious food and make healthy choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Security</strong></td>
<td>All Yarra Ranges residents have financial and geographic access to sufficient nutritious and culturally appropriate food to meet their needs.</td>
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</table>

**Food and climate change**

Changes in weather can have negative impacts on food production and access. Council’s Environment Strategy 2015-2025 states:

“Climate change and associated extreme weather events can increase vulnerabilities both now and in the future, with easy access to local and affordable food production playing an important role in sustaining food access to the Yarra Ranges population”.

Through the Environment Strategy and Council’s statutory and strategic planning functions, sustaining and protecting the natural environments that are vital for health and wellbeing will continue.

Attention to active transport modes of getting to local shops to buy food i.e. walking, cycling and public transport, remain important areas for improvement.

The high level strategic actions identified to promote and support people to eat nutritious foods are:

- Council will lead the way by offering healthy food through its events, services and programs.
- Council’s grant programs will include criteria to encourage projects that develop food skills, increase access to fresh, nutritious foods and builds confidence in preparing nutritious food.
- Criteria for Council’s partnership grants to support community capacity building and skills development when responding to food insecurity.
- Harness leading practice and change initiatives such as the VicHealth Citizen’s Jury on Obesity, adopting findings where practicable.
- Protect agricultural land for food growing through Council’s planning controls.
Major Initiative – Water Everyone’s drink of choice

Reducing the consumption of sugary drinks will reduce obesity, cut diabetes rates and improve overall health. The Victorian Population Health Survey notes “the consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks has significantly contributed to the obesity epidemic, with a number of studies showing a link between consuming sugar sweetened drinks and increasing energy intake, leading to weight gain. It is also associated with increased risk of other health problems, including dental caries, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease”.

Through this major initiative Council will seek to shift behaviours through strategic action.

- Advocate for systemic change such as tax incentives to support replacing sugary drinks with water.
- Leverage opportunities to lead change through Council contracted services.
- Increase access to potable water in townships, recreation areas and facilities and on major walking and cycling trails.
- Lead by example, promoting and serving water instead of sugary drinks throughout Council.

Environments for Health and Food

Council has a range of roles in each of the environments for health relating to implementing this major initiative. Council actions to replace sugary drinks with water are represented below.

- install water bubblers and refill stations in activity centres, recreation facilities and premier trails
- protect water catchments through strong planning and environmental controls
- advocate for tax incentives
- promote water over sugary drinks
- partner with businesses in change
- partnerships to replace sugary drinks with water
- offer grants
- advocate for systemic changes
It’s all connected
Eating nutritious food and getting enough physical activity also supports good mental health. Council’s work to promote these behaviours will indirectly benefit residents’ mental health and wellbeing. Research shows that engaging with the natural environment also has a positive impact on mental health. Yarra Ranges is fortunate to have some of Melbourne’s most accessible and pristine state and national parks.

When it comes to mental health, Yarra Ranges has one of the worst survey results in Victoria making this an important local health issue. Both adults and young people in Yarra Ranges report poor mental health. This is measured in a number of ways, including by: the Victorian Population Health Survey, hospital admission data and surveys of young people.

Strengths to Foster
There are also strengths in Yarra Ranges (recent survey data) that support good mental health, like being connected to community. The third Victorian Population Health Survey (VHPS) had some positive results for mental health. For volunteering, Yarra Ranges had the highest level of people who responded “Yes, I definitely volunteer” across the metropolitan area, and the lowest level of people who never volunteered. Residents reported a high level of social contact and correspondingly, the lowest percentage of people who had no daily social contacts.

The VHPS report looks at predictors of poor mental health and found an association between social isolation, low trust and low perceived social support and poor mental health. For physical health, there was a stronger association between poor physical health and social isolation, low trust and very low perceived social support.

Stress and lifestyle factors such as parenting, work, financial worries, job security are additional contributing factors for mental health.

Research conducted by VicHealth identified ways Councils can work to improve mental health. This included that:

- people who are socially isolated and excluded are more likely to experience low self-esteem, depressive symptoms and have a higher risk of coronary heart disease
- more Australians are living alone compared to previous generations
- social cohesion may protect the mental health of people living in disadvantaged areas
- young people’s engagement with creative activities can lead to better academic outcomes, improved levels of self-esteem and a reduction in alcohol and drug consumption

These factors point to the important role Council has in supporting the development of cohesive and connected communities to support people to experience increased wellbeing.

Service Access
Responding early to anxiety, feelings of depression and other psychological distress is preferable, so service access is very important for mental health. Generally residents in Yarra Ranges have poor access to mental health services and also have low awareness of where and how to get help for mental illness or psychological distress. Awareness of how to get affordable support through referrals from a GP can be improved.

Improving the mental health of young people
Giving special attention to young people and supporting them as future leaders, parents and citizens is a wise investment and one that Council has a commitment to.
Young people in Yarra Ranges – a snapshot

Council funds a generalist youth counselling service in recognition of the value of early intervention and the challenges for young people in finding support. The main youth mental health service for young people needed more support is located in Wantirna South - that can be up to 4 hours return trip by public transport and for the majority of young people in Yarra Ranges this service is inaccessible.

Council also funds programs that build the resilience of young people, supporting them to develop skills and confidence and foster leadership skills including:

- L2P - a learner driver program, mentoring and leadership programs.

Leadership development for young people supports positive mental health and is protective against engaging in high risk behaviours. Supporting the mental health of young people through both prevention and early response is important.

**Carers**

When considering mental health the vulnerability of carers is important. Carers can be socially isolated, lack support and not access the services they need and continued attention to this vulnerable group is needed as they often experience poor mental health.
A prevention approach

A prevention approach to improving mental health includes promoting good nutrition and physical activity and supporting connection to neighbours and community activities including through the arts and cultural activities.

To build resilience and mental health, advocacy will also focus on improvements to the service system and public transport, as they have a role in creating environments that support good mental health.

Actions to improve the mental health service system - a particular challenge are outlined.

- Advocate for greater access to mental health services in Yarra Ranges.
- Increase knowledge of the service system, partnering with government and services to build community skills in navigating the mental health service system.
- Prioritise increased access for young people in the Valley region by working with partners and sector leaders on innovative and evidence based responses.
- Support resident advocates to have their experience and voices heard through participation in training and skills development programs.

Actions to improve mental health include working to increase social connection, a sense of belonging and active participation in community life.

- Support community planning and engagement in townships across Yarra Ranges.
- Promote and fund social inclusion projects delivered by community groups, through Council’s grant programs.
- Engage with older adults to support age friendly cities.
- Deliver programs that offer social connection and enable older adults to participate purposefully and respectfully in the community.
- Support activities that connect people in their communities for example: through dance, the arts, neighbourhood projects and walking groups.
- Support people living with a disability and their carers to participate fully in community life through a focus on building inclusive communities and facilitate access to the NDIS through information and referral.
- Support isolated people including those living in remote and rural areas.
- Facilitate nature based activities to improve and protect mental health.
Goal 3
PEOPLE WHO DRINK ALCOHOL, DO SO IN MODERATION AND SAFETY

“Every year in Victoria, alcohol causes over 1,200 deaths and nearly 40,000 hospitalisations.”
(Gao et al 2014)

The focus on alcohol in this Strategy is supported by evidence on alcohol related harms including:
anti-social behaviour, negative impacts on local amenity, injuries related to alcohol and the health harms.

Ongoing, high levels of alcohol consumption are associated with illness such as:
- Liver cirrhosis, dementia, other cognitive problems, various cancers and alcohol dependence.

The harmful community impacts of alcohol include;
- Drink driving, contributing to family violence, violence in the public realm and other forms of destructive behaviour.

While Yarra Ranges does not have highly visible negative impacts like high levels of public drunkenness, the data tells a story of significant alcohol related health harms.

Culture and alcohol
In 2016 VicHealth released its “Alcohol Cultures Framework” which describes how cultures around consumption of alcohol influence behaviours. Four kinds of intervention, representing settings in which to approach change are identified:
- societal, community settings, subcultures and the family or individual

VicHealth has a mandate to understand research and look at evidence based actions to prevent harms and offer guidance to Councils in their health and wellbeing roles. VicHealth describes a culture that would support reducing harms from alcohol as:
- People socially supporting one another to engage in low-risk drinking practices rather than high-risk drinking, resulting in reduced harm for the individual, their family, bystanders and the broader community.

Such a culture would include these features:
- supportive policy, physical and social environments where people do not feel pressure to drink
- when alcohol is consumed it is done with low risk
- social norms support low-risk drinking and discourage high-risk drinking
- reduced occurrences of drinking
- intoxication is socially rejected.

Understanding alcohol related harms
Lifetime harm from alcohol is currently assessed as drinking:
- more than two standard drinks per day
- more than four standard drinks on any single occasion.
Alcohol Facts

Some of the key facts about alcohol in Australia are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol is a widely used and available drug in Victoria, with 44.5 per cent of Victorians over the age of 14 years being daily or weekly drinkers</th>
<th>In the Yarra Ranges indicators of alcohol consumption and related future health impacts are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 45% of residents are at increased risk of alcohol-related harm on a single occasion (compared to 42.5% across Victoria)</td>
<td>Yarra Ranges was similar to the Victorian average for adults regarding their lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more likely to have an increased risk of alcohol related harm or injury</td>
<td>• 62% had an increased lifetime risk (compared to 59% across Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• above the state average for lifetime risk</td>
<td>• 15% had a reduced lifetime risk (compared to 18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males are:</td>
<td>• 21% were abstainers or no longer drank alcohol (same as the Victorian average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females are also:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• above the average for lifetime risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• well above average for risk of harm from a single drinking occasion</td>
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</table>

Influencing Alcohol Cultures

Council can contribute to the reduction of alcohol related harm through its advocacy, its planning decisions, by promoting safer drinking cultures and building local partnerships with sporting clubs, business groups, industry networks and Victoria Police. Council can also better understand the needs of more vulnerable communities.

As research into alcohol cultures is relatively new, a key challenge is to understand how alcohol cultures play out in local settings. This work requires coordination across the health promotion sector and communities.

Council is a member of the Eastern Region Action on Alcohol Flagship, which focuses on prevention including seeking changes to the planning context that would enable decisions on liquor licenses to account for health impacts. Council’s ability to protect communities at present is limited by the parameters of the State Planning Act.

Action to reduce harms from alcohol will need to be commensurate with Council resources which are limited, and partnerships will be vital to changing the culture and systems that support harmful levels of alcohol consumption.

• Continue Council’s membership of the Action on Alcohol Flagship which is a partnership approach to shared advocacy on prevention of alcohol related harms.

• Advocate for reduced harms from alcohol through changes to the State Planning Act that enable consideration of the health impacts of planning decisions on packaged liquor licenses.

• Implement Vichealth identified and evidence based actions for local governments that aim to reduce the harms from alcohol, specifically within local government roles and:
  – Research local policy and planning scheme provisions to reduce harms related to licensed premises
  – Make planning referrals to assess the potential harms of new liquor licenses.

• Promote safer drinking cultures and:
  – Build partnerships with local stakeholders
  – Understand local vulnerabilities and drinking cultures that can inform a prevention approach to reducing harms
  – Consider the role of grants to fund culture change projects led by community organisations.
Goal 4
PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING AND EDUCATION ACROSS LIFE-STAGES

Learning and Education
Participation in education, both formal and informal is a key determinant of health. The ability to engage in early learning and then pre-school establishes the foundations for lifelong health. Council supports early literacy and understands that a love of reading is one of the greatest gifts a child. ‘There are five simple activities that help children develop good brain connections for learning: reading, talking, singing, writing and playing together every day’.

For young people, completing VCE and going on to further study is a predictor of good health. Conversely young people who do not complete VCE are more vulnerable on a range of fronts. Council actively supports young people’s leadership and engagement with school and learning through evidence based and targeted programs and services. Council also works closely with agencies and schools to ensure the service system is designed to meet the needs of young people.

The Victorian Government’s Building the Education State focuses on education from early childhood through to tertiary education. The targets align with Council’s understanding of actions needed to improve educational outcomes for students in the Yarra Ranges:

- Learning for life, by ensuring more students are achieving excellence in reading, maths, science, and the arts
- Happy, healthy, and resilient kids, who are encouraged to be physically active and build resilience
- Breaking the link between disadvantage and educational outcomes and encouraging students to stay in school
- Pride and confidence in our schools fostered by ensuring that every community has access to excellence in every government school and classroom.

During the adult and parenting years, the ability to continue to learn, either for career progression, enjoyment or personal development is recognised as having a correlation with good mental and physical health. While time to pursue learning may be limited, continuing to learn new things is important and also protective against dementia in later life.

For older adults, learning offers both intellectual and physical challenges, greater social connection and is also a way to give back, such as through organisations like the U3A, neighborhood houses or through mentoring and volunteering opportunities.

Libraries
Council is a member of the Eastern Regional Library Corporation and residents can access libraries in seven locations in Yarra Ranges and in more places across the region. While once a place to visit to borrow and return books, library services are becoming more popular as places to relax, study and work, and to access modern technology including WiFi and multimedia spaces. Visitation, WiFi sessions and internet usage are all expected to continue to grow placing greater demand on existing infrastructure.

Council has recently upgraded and/or refurbished a number of Library branches, with the vision of creating vibrant, interactive and welcoming places; that strive to encourage the imagination and exchange of ideas and celebrate knowledge and learning.

Grants
Grants help local community groups to develop projects that engage people in learning new skills and to enjoy the social connections that also come from learning. Examples include the U3As, early learning and literacy programs funded by Council grants.
Neighbourhood Houses

Based in 12 locations across the Yarra Ranges, the Neighbourhood Houses offer learning programs and social activities that respond to local needs. From craft and arts to vocational training, the Houses are able to cater to local learning needs and have a focus on inclusion. Council offers partnership funding to the Neighbourhood Houses.

Council will continue to support increased participation in learning and education in a number of ways.

• Support learning and access to education by funding:
  – Libraries, Neighbourhood Houses and grant projects that support learning and development across life stages and at all levels of learning.

• Partnering with schools, tertiary institutions and learning organisations to increase access to education and learning.

• Enable families and communities to provide learning environments that foster positive early childhood development.

• Foster vibrant, interactive and welcoming Library spaces that encourage the imagination and foster knowledge and learning.

• Advocate to the Victorian Government to increase the government’s contribution to library services funding.
Goal 5
PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED IN LOCAL DECISION MAKING AND LEADERSHIP

Decision making and leadership
“...Facilitating participation can help safeguard equity... Besides participation in governance, other aspects of participation, such as individual participation in taking up services or participation of communities in service delivery, are also important for reducing health inequities.

... The participation of communities and civil society groups in the design of public policies, in the monitoring of their implementation, and in their evaluation is essential to action on social determinants”. (Source: http://www.who.int/social_determinants/action_sdh/en/)

The ability to have a say and make a civic contribution is recognised as a determinant of health. Influencing decisions that affect individuals and communities can have an empowering and positive health impact. Across the Yarra Ranges people engage in their communities in many ways: they may lead others, volunteer, advocate for local needs and opportunities or have input into decisions that affect their community.

Volunteering
Yarra Ranges has significant levels of volunteering and is home to one of Australia’s largest community based projects, the Yarra Valley Railway which has 60,000 volunteer hours contributed per year. Other volunteer opportunities are varied with people making important contributions to services, sporting clubs, school and kinder committees, environment groups and mentoring.

Council engages volunteers in programs like Meals on Wheels, L2P and mentoring programs for young people. It also offers skills development programs across the year to support volunteers in all aspects of their roles from governance to project planning and attracting new volunteers.

Council actively supports young people to contribute to local decision making through its Youth Reference Group and also has a focus on developing women’s leadership. Examples include hosting workshops to provide women with the information, skills and capacity to have the confidence to consider standing for Council.
Council has an enduring commitment to fostering community leadership and supporting communities to engage and plan for their shared future. A place based team in Council takes a community development approach to supporting local communities to achieve their visions and aspirations. In 2017 there were 9 community plans for places across the Yarra Ranges, with 3 more communities developing their plans.

The Yarra Glen People’s Panel was a deliberative forum where a representative group of residents came together to consider evidence and inform a major Council decision.

To support participation in decision making Council has dedicated resources to build skills and confidence in the community. Council also uses an engagement framework to inform decisions, making sure it has a depth of understanding of local views, issues, needs, opportunities and aspirations.

To foster strong local democracy, participation in local decision making and leadership, Council will build and strengthen its activity in the following areas:

- Engage with the community, employing a range of methods to reach our diverse community members and inform Council decisions.
- Support community planning, taking a community development approach and assist local communities to have a greater say in their futures, drawing on their many strengths and skills.
- Deliver skills development and training programs to support existing leaders and foster emerging leaders.
- Collaborate to support women’s leadership and develop a more representative leadership and participation in local democracy.
- Foster the leadership skills of young people, recognising and nurturing them as citizens and leaders of the future.
- Support and enable volunteering in all its forms through skills development, grants, volunteering in service delivery and partnerships with volunteer support organisations.
DECISION MAKING AND LEADERSHIP

Across the Yarra Ranges people engage in their communities in many ways: they may lead others, volunteer, advocate for local needs and opportunities or have input into decisions that affect their community.
PRIORITY AREA 2: RESILIENT AND LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING RESILIENT AND LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

“Health is closely linked to the conditions in which we raise our children, the education we get, the neighbourhoods in which we live, the work we do, whether we have the money to make ends meet, our social relationships…”

(Sir Michael Marmot WHO, Boyer Lectures 2016)

8 GOALS for Resilient and Liveable Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Yarra Ranges:</th>
<th>Goal 6</th>
<th>People are physically active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal 7</td>
<td>People have access to active transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal 8</td>
<td>People are able to contribute to and participate in their local economy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Goal 9</td>
<td>People have access to vibrant arts and heritage experiences that connect communities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Goal 10</td>
<td>People enjoy safe, sustainable natural and built environments</td>
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<td>Goal 11</td>
<td>People have suitable, affordable and stable housing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Goal 12</td>
<td>Every child and young person can thrive and reach their potential</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal 13</td>
<td>Older people enjoy active and healthy lives</td>
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Major initiative for Priority Two

Walking – the way to go!
Resilient and Liveable Communities

The impact of the kind of world we are born into - the social determinants of health has been extensively researched by the World Health Organisation. This social research on how our environments affect health is relevant for the Yarra Ranges, as place based factors have a significant influence on health and wellbeing are significant.

- People living in the outer regions of the Yarra Ranges have; less access to education, fewer employment options, less access to health and other services and public transport. This significantly affects their health.

The goals of this priority, Resilient and Liveable Communities, are focused on these underlying causal factors for poor health outcomes (the determinants). Advocacy to the other levels of government is often important in seeking to change the determinants of health and Council has an important advocacy role - this is outlined in Council's Advocacy Framework. Working with communities and in partnership is fundamental to achieving improvements to some of these entrenched causal factors for poor health.

Place based approaches

A place-based approach recognises that people and places are inter-dependent and the places people live in have an important role in shaping their health and wellbeing.

A place-based approach focuses on local needs and local priorities, engages communities as active partners in developing solutions and maximises value by leveraging multiple networks, investments and activities to deliver the best outcomes for communities.

(DHHS – Delivering place based primary prevention in Victoria 2016).

Council has taken a place based approach for many years and will continue this way of working to enable specific and relevant local responses to issues and opportunities and to draw on the experience, knowledge, ingenuity and skills of local residents.

Health inequities

Along with an understanding of the influence of place, the concept of health equity and inequity comes into play with some residents experiencing significant health inequities in parts of Yarra Ranges. Health inequalities are the differences in health between population groups, largely socio-economic, that are avoidable. Most health risk factors i.e. the absence of everyday things to maintain good health, such as physical activity and getting sufficient fresh fruits and vegetables, are higher for disadvantaged households.

Equitable approaches

Equitable approaches aim to reduce or eliminate the gap in outcomes for different population groups. This may mean providing additional support for people experiencing disadvantage in order to achieve more equal outcomes (see Section Two for more detail on the determinants and health inequity).
Goal 6
PEOPLE IN YARRA RANGES ARE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Regular physical activity is essential for health, improving mental wellbeing and preventing chronic disease. Unfortunately less than a third of Australians get adequate physical activity to benefit their health. To be more active, physical activity needs to be part of everyday living.

Council supports physical activity in a variety of ways: building infrastructure such as pavilions, playgrounds and sports grounds, walk to school initiatives, school crossing supervisors, offering grants to community organisations and facilitating participation in sport through grants. VicHealth has identified that regular physical activity helps people to have:

- better mental wellbeing and social connections
- reduced chances of chronic disease
- increased energy and productivity
- environmental benefits e.g. reduced traffic, safer neighbourhoods

VicHealth also notes that Councils can make it easier for all residents to be physically active through:

- Policy and planning to enable everyone in the community to engage in both active recreation and active travel e.g. through its planning for parks, street amenities, paths, trails and open spaces
- Support for increased participation in sport and leisure activities for all residents through the provision of safe, affordable, clean and accessible sport and recreation facilities
- Actively working to increase the participation of girls and women, people with a disability, those on low incomes and people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Encouraging less sitting and more movement every day within workplaces (including the built environments Council has responsibility to design and build).

There are environmental, economic and social benefits of physical activity. Active travel to work is an example - it has numerous benefits including reducing emissions, pollution and energy use, reduced costs to households of: transport, road infrastructure and traffic congestion and increased social connections, improved neighbourhood trust and safety and reduced crime.

(Source: VicHealth, 2010, Community attitudes survey: Healthy community sporting environments)

“Research into participation in physical activity shows growth in non-organised activities compared to traditional club-based or organised sport. This research highlights the importance of investing resources and infrastructure for passive recreation”.

(Source: Department of Sport & Recreation, 2008, Benefits of physical activity, Government of Western Australia)

Physical inactivity has been estimated to cost Australia more than $719 million a year accounting for:

- 6.6 percent of the burden of disease and injury in Australia, rating second after smoking
- 22 percent of heart disease and 11 per cent of stroke
- 14 percent of diabetes and 10 per cent of breast cancer
- 16,178 premature deaths per year in Australia.

Major Initiative – Walking the way to go!

Walking continues to be the most popular form of physical activity in Victoria as it is suitable for all ages and fitness levels, is inexpensive and can be done almost anywhere. Emerging evidence indicates walking helps compensate for the negative effects of long hours of sitting. While exactly how much physical activity is required each day is not conclusive, being more active has many health benefits.

Some simple ways to make walking part of everyday life include walking to the shops, walking during breaks at work and walking to work, walking to public transport and around the neighbourhood and walking the many trails in Yarra Ranges. It is important to acknowledge that walking can be more challenging in some places in the Yarra Ranges where there are limitations due to topography and poor infrastructure. This strengthens the case for Council to promote and encourage a range of ways to get people walking.

Strategies to increase walking will include to:

- Encourage high quality urban design to create spaces with good surveillance, safe pedestrian access, walking paths, trees for shade and accessible public amenities and:
  - build more footpaths and trails in places people need them
  - use Township Reviews (audits of infrastructure) and the Principle Pedestrian Network Plan, to direct decisions on walking infrastructure
  - promote walkable neighbourhoods through good design and work with developers to achieve “next practice” walking infrastructure.
- Advocate for, plan and construct new iconic walking trails including:
  - Dandenong Ranges Ridge Walk, Yarra Valley Trail, Yarra Glen River Walk
  - seek funding for significant walking and riding trails.
- Promote walking to school, building on the “Free Range Kids” project (1a).
- Lead the way by promoting walking in our organisation.
- Offer grants to support walking groups and innovative participation projects.
- Support carers through “Pathways for Carers” walks combining social connection and access to support from services while walking.
- Make sure people of all abilities can use paths, trails and walking infrastructure by meeting accessibility standards for people with less mobility and low vision.
- Promote and implement the World Health Organisation’s Age Friendly Cities.

(1a) Free Range Kids was a program to increase children’s walking to and from school with the ultimate goal of increasing their independent mobility within their community. The program used behavioural insights or nudges, to test methods of encouraging people to increase their walking. An evaluation by VicHealth of Walk to School programs shows councils play a key role with positive results in communities.
Environments for Health to increase walking

- build strategically located footpaths and trails
- increase wayfinding
- advocate for better public transport

- trails are accessible in our natural environments
- wayfinding signage assists people to be confident to walk bushland trails

- walkable activity centres
- pathways are legible and people can find their way around

- support independent walking for all ages
- influence neighbourhood development to create walkable communities

Built Economic

Natural Social and cultural
Goal 7

PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORT SUCH AS WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

“Active transport includes non-motorised forms of transport involving physical activity, such as walking and cycling. It also includes public transport for longer distance trips, as public transport trips generally include walking or cycling components as part of the whole journey.

Active transport requires the urban structure to be designed so that walking and cycling trips are convenient, pleasant and safe.”

(Source Healthy Spaces and Places: http://www.healthyplaces.org.au)

Council has a role in creating environments for safe, convenient and enjoyable active transport and encourages more walking, cycling and other modes of active transport. Council has a vital planning function. Barriers to active transport can often be overcome with innovative design solutions and infrastructure treatments. The nature and topography of the Yarra Ranges presents unique challenges that require the three levels of government to work closely together, as each has a responsibility for different parts of the transport network.

Vichealth research

“In recent decades, substantial changes in Australian lifestyles, urban environments and transportation systems have led to changed physical activity patterns among children. Active transport, in particular, has declined dramatically in countries, including Australia, where car travel has become the predominant form of personal mobility.

In countries with high rates of walking and cycling for transport, active travel tends to be a ‘habit of daily life’ (Garrard 2008). There are some indications that this is also the case in Australia (see below), suggesting that fostering active transport may be a more equitable and inclusive form of physical activity than organised sport and exercise programs”.

The prevalence of health inequities in the Yarra Ranges would indicate active transport has additional value, improving the ability to get to school, jobs and services. A 2009 report by Dr Jan Garrard states “soft infrastructure like: reduced speed limits, traffic calming, reduced car parking, and fostering safe, driving and respect for all road users requires community support and political leadership”.

To promote active transport Council leverages these existing roles:

• Planning for walking, cycling and related infrastructure.
• Advocating for better transport infrastructure and public transport.
• Leading and supporting behaviour change initiatives in partnership with key agencies such as VicHealth and local schools.
Goal 8

PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Economic factors are one of the most influential of the social determinants of health. Strong local economies enable people to work and have the ability to afford health care, housing, education and recreation. The economy is a pillar on which health and wellbeing is built and increasing employment is a priority for developing a vibrant economy in the Yarra Ranges.


A recent SGS Economics workshop “Positioning Australian Communities for City Deals” highlighted the impact of investment in infrastructure, a key role for all levels of government, in promoting economic productivity. The following extract speaks directly to elements of creating environments for health and wellbeing such as: housing, active transport and sustainable built environments.

“There is a wide body of evidence that links infrastructure investment with improved economic productivity…”

Infrastructure investment and benefits to the economy and health can include the following:

• “Transport infrastructure can alleviate congestion costs, effectively bringing businesses closer to their workforce, suppliers and customers; improving the competitiveness of a region’s industry base…

• Tourism infrastructure can open up new tourism markets and provide better opportunities for a region’s businesses to generate yields from tourists …

• Affordable housing can increase the supply of well-located housing, better enabling lower paid segments of the labour force to participate in the workforce …

• Education infrastructure enables a region to build the skills required in its existing and future labour force, and

• Health infrastructure ensures that a region’s labour force is best positioned to contribute value when at work because of improved physical and mental health outcomes”.

(Source SGS website 2017)

To build the resilience of our local economies as key environments for health and wellbeing, Council will continue to work with local businesses and industry and governments, to deliver the outcomes of its Economic Development Strategy.

Young People

Council will also support the economic participation of young people by prioritising education and access to employment. Council will work closely with partners including educational institutions, community organisations, schools, businesses and industry groups, to focus on enhancing educational pathways and employment opportunities for young people.

Electronic Gaming Machines (EGM) gambling

Yarra Ranges Council’s EGM Gambling Policy 2013, identifies the potential for harmful impacts from EGM gambling and outlines Council’s role to protect the health and wellbeing of its community, including protecting vulnerable community members against any detrimental impacts of EGM gambling, through a health and wellbeing approach to conducting social and economic impact assessments.

EGMs have significant economic impacts both positive and negative. Positives may include jobs, recreational activity and some community benefits through donations or improvements. Economic harms include the financial losses sustained that could go to other economic activity, or reduce the ability to pay for day to day living expenses. There are also potential harms to mental health, general health, relationships and employment. Harms to families and those close to problem gamblers are documented.
Council acknowledges that EGM gambling is a legal recreational activity in Victoria and also that some people experience significant harms from gambling, with personal, family and financial impacts resulting. Any negative impacts of EGM gambling on individuals, also impact the broader community.

While overall, Yarra Ranges has a lower ratio than the state average for the number of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) per adult, in some parts of the municipality it has much higher rates which means a potential for increased harms. In 2016-17 the daily losses from EGM gambling in Yarra Ranges were around $79,000.

The peak body for local government, the MAV notes the following:

“The current regulatory framework for gambling provides little protection to Victoria’s most vulnerable community members. Research suggests that EGMs are implicated in around 85 per cent of gambling problems.

While the Gambling Regulation Act provides councils with the right to raise their concerns with the VCGLR (regulator) about the social and economic impacts of proposed new or additional EGMs in their municipal district, experience has shown that these submissions, which are extremely costly and time consuming to prepare, are given little weight by decision makers”.

This is an important function for Council in protecting and strengthening the economic and social wellbeing and health of communities in Yarra Ranges.

**Participation in vibrant and inclusive local economies**

Strategies to increase peoples’ capabilities to participate in and contribute to the local economy will focus on improving access and facilitating environments that promote positive economic participation and connection. Council works in partnership with business, local institutions, governments and the community in seeking to improve the economic outcomes for the area. Key strategic areas for action follow.

- Deliver outcomes of the Economic Development Strategy and Youth Strategic Action Plan, particularly those focused on increasing employment.
- Support local businesses to thrive and innovate, with a focus on business mentoring, networking and increasing business to business interactions.
- Lead the Lilydale Project in partnership with the Victorian government and business and community sectors to increase the sense of belonging through an activated and high quality, public realm including:
  - improved sense of safety and community connection; walkability; diverse and accessible housing, businesses and open spaces.
- Promote accessible businesses to capture the all-abilities market share, with a focus on the tourism sector.
- Continue to support more vibrant activity centres and places that are catalytic for new jobs and opportunities for people to participate in their local economy.
- Advocate for funding for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination and Yarra Valley Trail to bring new employment opportunities to the Valley area and for young people.
- Facilitate partnerships with the outer east councils to benefit the region, with a focus on the Bayswater Business Precinct.
- Support initiatives relating to commercial agriculture, a key sector for local employment.
- Advocate on behalf of communities to limit any economic and social harms from electronic gaming machines.
Goal 9

YARRA RANGES HAS VIBRANT ARTS AND HERITAGE EXPERIENCES THAT CONNECT COMMUNITIES

Arts, Culture and Heritage

Council recognises the value of creative communities and is committed to shaping Yarra Ranges as a place where arts, culture and heritage are part of our daily lives and integrated into the way we live. Arts, culture and heritage engage local communities in and create a sense of local identity as well as social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

Council’s current Cultural Policy 2013 (https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Lists/Policy-directory/Cultural-policy-and-action-plan) outlines the value of arts and heritage in creating and sustaining communities. Yarra Ranges will have a new Creative Communities Strategy in 2018 to guide the realisation of culturally rich, vibrant and creative communities. Council will support the aspiration for Yarra Ranges to be valued and recognised as a place which:

- celebrates and supports creative communities
- offers arts, cultural and heritage services across the region
- fosters cultural partnerships.

VicHealth research on the value of the arts and culture in promoting wellbeing describes some simple benefits of being involved in cultural activities:

- meeting like-minded people, making connections and break down social isolation
- activities like dance, circus skills and getting moving are good for health and can develop new skills, confidence and self-esteem

Arts and cultural industries also offer an array of employment opportunities and this is one of the employment sectors expected to grow in the coming decade. To promote vibrant arts and heritage experiences that connect communities, provide opportunities for creative industries and express our diverse identities, Council will have a range of roles.

- Deliver quality cultural programming and encourage participation in the arts and heritage at Council’s premier venues:

- Nurture cultural development through Council’s grant programs by supporting groups and individuals to deliver projects that develop, explore and express our diverse cultural heritage, creative practice and through opportunities for community to experience and participate.
Goal 10

PEOPLE ENJOY SAFE, SUSTAINABLE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Sustainable natural environments
The important inter-relationship between natural environments and human health is well researched. Council values the importance of connecting with natural environments for the benefits to mental health.

Council’s work to advance Reconciliation acknowledges the role that Country plays as the source of health and wellbeing for Indigenous Australians. This connection and recognition of Country is strongly held by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Yarra Ranges. There is much that this perspective offers to support sustainable natural environments.

Council’s Environment Strategy details actions to protect and sustain the environments of the Yarra Ranges and can be sourced at the website: https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Council is supported by the Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Group which provides advice, input and support on environment sustainability issues and initiatives related to the stewardship of the natural environments of the Yarra Ranges.

Sustainable built environments
“Creating Places for People: An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities” sets out principles for achieving well designed, sustainable and health promoting environments to create productive and liveable places for people.

Quality urban design supports the goals of this Health and Wellbeing Strategy and:

- enhances economic productivity and affordable living
- fosters environmental responsibility
- cultivates healthy, cohesive and inclusive communities

The 12 design principles in the Urban Design Protocol will help guide Council’s decisions and ensure safe and sustainable built environments with positive impacts on health and wellbeing. These are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design principles</th>
<th>Effect on Places</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Place: productivity and sustainability | 1. Enhances the local economy, environment and community  
2. Connects - physically and socially  
3. Offers diversity of options and experiences  
4. Sustainable, enduring and resilient places |
| People: liveability | 5. Comfortable and welcoming  
6. Vibrant, with people around  
7. Safe and feels safe  
8. Walkable - enjoyable, easy to walk and cycle around |
| Leadership and governance | 9. Context - works within the planning, physical and social context  
10. Engagement - engages with relevant stakeholders  
11. Excellence - innovation and leadership  
12. Custodianship and maintenance over time |
To sustain our natural environments and create more sustainable built environments Council acts in the following ways.

- Protect and enhance our natural environments as outlined in the vision for Council’s Environment Strategy
  
  “We are dedicated to making Yarra Ranges a place of thriving communities, at home in healthy landscapes”.

- Work with partners including Parks Vic, Melbourne Water and community groups to enhance access to and care for bushland, waterways and parks.

- Continue to work with the Indigenous Advisory Group to understand connection to Country and how this can inform caring for and enhancing our natural environments.

- Support initiatives through Council’s grant programs that connect people with their natural environments.

- Apply the Urban Design Protocol when planning for places across Yarra Ranges.

- Apply the Municipal Strategic Statement to protect and guide sustainable land uses.

- Advocate for funding to increase the accessibility of built infrastructure for all.

**Safer communities**

Creating safer communities through built environments includes having the ability to safely navigate through public spaces. This is underpinned by safe, accessible walking infrastructure, safe public transport (including improved perceptions of public transport safety), safe and vibrant activity centres and ensuring sporting and recreation facilities are safe and inclusive for everyone.

The design principles, ‘Crime Prevention through Environmental Design’ support community safety. This approach is described as follows:

“The design of streets and places can reduce crime and anti-social behaviours making places and spaces feel safer, which in turn can enhance the physical, mental and social well-being of community members. The presence of pedestrians, the thoughtful design of housing, other buildings and public spaces has the potential to increase natural surveillance, which improves safety and feelings of safety.

Adequate infrastructure supporting safety such as signage and lighting, as well as seating, shade and shelter encourages people to use facilities, thereby supporting activity and social interaction. These features contribute to the physical and mental health of the community”. (www.healthyplaces.org.au)

To improve safety in our built and natural environments, Council will continue to deliver on its responsibilities for emergency planning, response and recovery. Preparing for and responding to climate induced health and community risks such as bushfires, floods and extreme weather events is also an important role for Council.

Supporting vulnerable residents by raising awareness of the impacts of heatwaves and building resilience through community development, capacity building and supporting communities to plan for their shared future through developing community plans, will continue to be a role for Council.
Council services

Council can contribute to creating safer communities through a prevention approach to the regulatory services it provides. These Council functions ensure neighbourhoods are peaceful and safe. They include:

- local laws that provide the foundations for community standards and behaviours
- supporting local business to produce safe and healthy food
- the care and management of animals
- emergency management.

Council can leverage these roles to make valuable and measurable contributions to long term health and wellbeing through influencing positive community behaviours. This new approach to a range of traditional functions of Council will need to be further developed.

Actions to achieve a greater focus on prevention to create safer communities will encompass the following areas.

- Develop Guiding Principles for Safer Communities to embed prevention practice into Council's regulatory services and:
  - Engage with communities to promote this approach, seeking insights and input into the Safer Communities process
  - Understand best practice and research on prevention approaches for regulatory services.
- Promote strategies to community members experiencing vulnerability to support them to stay well during Heatwaves.
- Ensure Council facilities such as Libraries are fully accessible and welcoming for the community during Heatwaves.
Goal 11

PEOPLE IN YARRA RANGES HAVE SUITABLE, AFFORDABLE AND STABLE HOUSING

“The right to housing is not merely ‘having a roof over one’s head’… rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity”. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

Housing provides the foundations for positive relationships, schooling, employment, participation in community life and offers both emotional and physical security. Housing located near services, transport and other facilities is fundamental to promoting good health.

At present, Yarra Ranges does not have enough affordable housing to meet the future needs of the community. In 2014, there was a shortfall of 920 dwellings that were suitable for affordable social housing in Yarra Ranges i.e. housing for households in the lowest 10% of incomes. More generally, the social housing supply for the Eastern Metropolitan Region is significantly below the metropolitan average.

Homelessness

There is compelling evidence of a range of links between housing and health… Adequate housing or the prevention of precarious housing must be considered a key component of health promotion or disease prevention. (Vichealth 2011)

Low income, mortgage stress and high rental costs increase the potential for a person to become homeless. Some areas of Yarra Ranges are considered at high risk of home loan defaults. The Census data for 2016 showed that Yarra Ranges had an above average level of households affected by mortgage stress, despite below average housing costs. The level of households affected by either rental or mortgage stress was highest in the most disadvantaged areas, and in some parts of the hills and the urban area.

In 2016, local housing agency ANCHOR supported 1,682 people in Yarra Ranges at risk of becoming homeless. ANCHOR CEO describes the human face of homelessness:

“For everyone that is homeless, their lives are put on hold; without a home to live in, life as we expect it to be, is impossible.”

Research commissioned by the University of Melbourne has found it is significantly cheaper for governments to provide last-resort housing than to have people continuing to sleep on the streets.

The research conducted by SGS Economics and Planning found that homelessness in Melbourne costs around $25,615 per person per year, covering health, crime and other costs. With 7,800 Victorians living on the streets, this is an annual cost of $194 million.

Despite projected one-off costs of $60,000 to create an emergency accommodation bed, SGS economists calculated that this kind of investment would result in savings of $10,800 per year when calculated over 20 years. (Issues Paper - prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute at the University of Melbourne as part of the Transforming Housing Research Network.)

The Face of Homelessness in Yarra Ranges

In the Yarra Ranges there is a visible increase in people sleeping rough and living in other forms of homelessness. This includes people living in tents in bushland and open spaces and sleeping in cars. Women and children escaping family violence, older women and young people are just some of the people who live in these vulnerable circumstances.

Council developed its own Homelessness Protocol in 2016 to guide how it interacts with people experiencing homelessness. This protocol was prepared to ensure that homeless people, and people at risk of homelessness, are responded to quickly and appropriately, and offered relevant support services. The protocol was developed with the assistance of housing and social support agencies based in Yarra Ranges.
The accepted definitions of homelessness in Australia were developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2001) as follows:

**Primary homeless:** People without conventional accommodation – living on the streets, in deserted buildings, in cars, under bridges, and in improvised dwellings.

**Secondary homeless:** People with no secure accommodation moving between various forms of temporary shelter, including friends, relatives, emergency accommodation and boarding houses.

**Tertiary homeless:** People living in single rooms in private boarding houses on a long-term basis – without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure, and people who are living as ’marginal residents’ in caravan parks where no person in the household is in full-time employment.

**Sleeping rough** is a term that can be used to describe someone who spends the night in the open; without a home or without shelter.

In addition, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provides the following definition of someone at risk of being homeless:

“… A person may be at risk of homelessness if they are experiencing one or more of a range of factors or triggers that can contribute to homelessness.

Risk factors include:

- **Financial stress** (including due to loss of income, low income, gambling, change of family circumstances).
- **Housing affordability stress and housing crises** (pending evictions/foreclosures, rental and/or mortgage arrears).
- **Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions**, including accommodation which is unsafe, unsuitable or overcrowded…”

A range of other risk factors also contribute to being at risk of homelessness.

**Older residents**

Yarra Ranges also has insufficient housing for older people wanting to age in place. This is further complicated in areas of Yarra Ranges that are not suitable for establishing accommodation for older adults, particularly more frail people, due to high bushfire risk, such as the Dandenong Ranges. Council will continue to plan for more diverse housing options, using its planning, partnership and advocacy roles.

Council recognises it has a potential role through partnerships with housing associations and housing providers and through advocacy to the State and Federal Governments.

**Advocacy**

The primary vehicle for advocacy to improve affordable housing is through Council’s membership of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance. The alliance of 6 Councils in the eastern region seek to increase the availability of affordable housing in the region to meet the needs of their communities for safe, secure and affordable housing now and in the future.

The focus of Council’s effort to improve access to affordable housing is outlined below.

- Advocate for increased affordable and social housing in Yarra Ranges:
  - as a member of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance
  - to all levels of government, drawing on evidence of the social housing shortfall
  - promote successful interventions that increase affordable housing
  - facilitate multi-sector and partnership effort.
- Leverage Council land for social housing development.
- Plan for a diversity of housing types e.g. accessible housing, retirement and sole person housing and in areas with good amenity (i.e. access to transport & services) and encourage high quality, sustainable design.
- Use grant funding criteria to encourage projects that support wellbeing for people experiencing homelessness.
Goal 12
EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON CAN THRIVE AND REACH THEIR POTENTIAL

The majority of children and young people who grow up in the Yarra Ranges do well, however, evidence informing Council’s Child & Youth Strategy, indicates that a number of communities within Yarra Ranges have higher proportions of children who are developmentally vulnerable than both the rest of Yarra Ranges and the state. Council’s leadership in improving outcomes for children and young people focuses on the following areas:

1. **Deliver and coordinate services** - coordinate services and identify needs
2. **Plan and advocate** - work with service providers, young people and families to advocate to other levels of government, plan for coherent and integrated services and identify service issues and gaps based on research and evidence
3. **Profile and engage** - promote the positive contribution of children, young people and families and ensure that they are involved and engaged in decision making processes
4. **Build service capacity and quality** - strengthen the sector, improve access, flexibility, build skills and develop resources.

Council needs to ensure that the right services are provided to families, children and young people, particularly those most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Services are based on the following priorities and principles:

- raising awareness of the importance of early childhood health, learning and development
- driving better outcomes for children and young people through evidence and evaluation
- a more coherent and empowering system that is more consistent, capable and connected
- stronger place-based governance and planning by understanding and responding to the needs of local communities.

Council currently provides a range of services to improve outcomes for children and young people:

- Universal & Enhanced Maternal Child Health Services in 20 locations and in-home
- Early Childhood education and care
- Support for the inclusion of children with additional needs into preschools
- Immunisation program for babies & children
- Child and Youth Network coordination and professional development
- Early and Middle Years planning and advocacy - ensure current and future needs of the community, including those most vulnerable, are identified and supported
- More inclusive services through improving early identification and support for all children and young people.

- Enabling improved access to services and facilities for the community through 38 preschool facilities and early years venues
- Parent support and education through high quality community playgroups, parent information sessions, professional development opportunities, targeted programs for vulnerable parents
- Youth programs and development: (mentoring, L2P, Freeza, ENGAGE)
- Interventions to maintain young people’s engagement and participation in school
- Facilitation of the Best Start Action Plan
- A service quality system that supports all
**Place based projects**

The Upper Yarra Partnership project is a key platform for action for achieving this goal and aims to strengthen the Upper Yarra community by enabling all children to thrive and reach their potential. The partnership leads, engages, activates and connects services, stakeholders, schools and families to improve outcomes for children 0-14 years. This approach demonstrates a commitment to prevention and links families to services, learning, community and local supports. The project is led by state and local government partners and local health and community partners in a collaborative approach.

- Implement Council’s Child and Youth Strategy and the vision that:
  “Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making.”
- Develop a Middle Years Plan to guide work by Council and its partners for this vulnerable cohort of children aged 8 to 14 years.
- Implement actions to address the three priority areas of the Youth Strategic Action Plan:
  - health, employment and relationships.
- Support resilient young people through a range of leadership and developmental activities and programs including the Youth Reference Group.
- Continue to respond to family violence through delivery of universal and targeted services for young families.
- Work in partnership with schools, services and communities to deliver well designed programs that support young people to stay engaged with education (School Focused Youth Services - funded by the Victorian Government).

To support children and young people, their families and carers and enable them to thrive Council works in partnership particularly with service providers and schools. In addition Council has a commitment to making sure the voices of children and young people are heard. Areas of ongoing action and advocacy follow.
Goal 13
OLDER PEOPLE ENJOY AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY LIFE, IN AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Council is a signatory to the WHO Age-Friendly Cities project. The features of Age Friendly cities have much in common with achieving universal access and child friendly urban design principles. They also directly relate to the social determinants of health such as having access to services, the ability to participate in community and having economic opportunities. Many of the environments for health and the social determinants also contribute to age friendly communities as represented below.

Council has a role in the built, social and economic domains such as advocating for improvements to service access and working with communities to attract funding and investment for the region. Council engages with older residents to hear their aspirations, and empower them to influence local decision making.

The Age Friendly Cities initiative also “recognises the integral role of older people in achieving an age friendly Victoria” and “endorses the importance of partnerships between governments, the community and business sectors working together”.

(Victorian Government and MAV Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration)

As in other life stages, older people’s health and wellbeing is affected by their nutrition, levels of physical activity, social participation, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, mental health, violence and injury and sexual health. The goals of this Strategy support healthy and active ageing, for example by supporting: walkable communities, inclusive communities that value diversity, increasing access to nutritious food, having appropriate services and engaging in cultural activities. For this reason actions related to Age Friendly Cities are also embedded in other goals of this strategy. Additional actions to support active and healthy ageing are:

- Implement Council’s commitment in signing the Age Friendly Cities initiative.
- Ensure Council Structure Plans support older residents to age in place.
- Deliver programs that support healthy and active ageing e.g. activity groups, meals on wheels and offer grant funding for programs for older adults.
Elder abuse

Elder abuse is the mistreatment of an older person by someone who the older person has a relationship of trust such as a partner, family member, friend or carer. It may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual abuse. Sometimes family, friends and carers may not know that their actions amount to elder abuse. Elder abuse violates an older person’s basic right to feel safe.

The latest figures by the National Ageing Research Institute based on Seniors Rights Victoria data; show that financial abuse and psychological/emotional abuse together are the most common forms of the abuse that is reported by older Victorians (Source: Seniors Rights Victoria website 2017). Other research found that up to five per cent of Australians over 65 have experienced financial abuse, that older women over the age of 80 are most at risk and that their children are the most common perpetrators.

Characteristics of older people who are vulnerable to financial abuse include those with:

- diminished capacity due to dementia and other related illnesses
- isolation and dependence on others
- reliance on others for translation, undertaking transactions and services relating to the management of their finances, particularly if they are of a culturally and linguistically diverse background


The Victorian Government’s prevention response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence supports the establishment of networks linked to local organisations such as health centres, council home carers, and seniors clubs to raise awareness of Elder abuse and implement local prevention strategies. Prevention initiatives are needed to raise community awareness and empower older people to know their rights and how to seek information and advice. Access to free legal advice, information and educational and advocacy activities are also important. (Source: Health.vic)

As the incidence of dementia rises in Yarra Ranges, there is potential for Elder abuse to also increase. Limited access to dementia services in the Yarra Ranges may exacerbate the potential for Elder abuse related to stress and caring and support for carers is also important. Council works to raise awareness of Elder abuse and services for anyone experiencing this form of abuse. To prevent Elder abuse Council can play a key role in advocating for additional services and raise awareness within the community.

End of Life Care

The importance of end of life planning and commitment to improving end of life and palliative care for all Victorians is supported by a new state government end-of-life and palliative care framework. The framework redefines end-of-life care and guides improvements for providers across all sectors, to re-design services to be responsive and effective.

The government has set out its vision for end of life care as follows:

All Victorians and their families receive the best possible end of life care that places them at the centre where preferences, values, dignity and comfort are respected and quality of life matters most.

Council’s potential role in end of life care will be explored with community members and the Department of Health and Human Services during the four years of this Strategy. As a new policy area there are limited details now, but the role for local government will be explored over this time. It may include awareness raising, support for community groups via grant programs and co-design of innovative community led responses that enable people to determine how they wish to spend their final days.

Council’s role in preventing Elder Abuse and promoting the best possible end of life care will include to:

- Raise public awareness and target opportunities for community education to make this form of domestic violence better known and understood.
- Promote World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June each year to people across communities in Yarra Ranges.
- Continue to work with and support the Eastern Community Legal Centre to:
  - deliver an Elder abuse program/network
  - advocate with Council, for the retention and expansion of community legal services in Yarra Ranges that offer advice and assistance to those experiencing Elder abuse.
- Promote access to the best possible end of life care and track service developments in this emerging field.
PRIORITY AREA 3
EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

COUNCIL CAN INCREASE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BY SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE, OPEN AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES. COUNCIL EXPRESSES ITS COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN A SUITE OF STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS WITH DIRECT LINKS TO THIS HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY. THESE INCLUDE:

- Equity Access and Inclusion Strategy
- Cultural Policy and Framework
- Reconciliation Policy & Framework for Action
- Safer Communities Strategy
- Recreation and Open Space Strategy and related recreation plans

COUNCIL’S INTERNALLY FOCUSED POLICIES AND PLANS:
- Gender Equity Action Plan
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Goals to build equitable and inclusive communities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the Yarra Ranges:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 14  People belong to and participate equally in inclusive communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 15  People can access appropriate health services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 16  Women and children live free from abuse and violence through a culture of gender equity and respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 17  Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander residents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• live free from discrimination and racism, connected to their culture &amp; identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• access culturally safe services in community controlled organisations</td>
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<td>• are supported to have healthy pregnancies and thrive in early childhood</td>
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<th>Major initiative for Priority Three</th>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous health – Close the Gap</td>
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**Council has a variety of roles to create equitable and inclusive communities**

Council is directly involved in creating a better future for all people in the community through:

- Council’s Disability Advisory Group which advises Council on the needs and views of people with a disability and has oversight of the Equity, Access, Inclusion Strategy
- a commitment to best practice in accessible communications and buildings and facilities to encourage access and inclusion for people with a disability
- an organisational change project to increase gender equity and breakdown gender stereotypes
- grant programs that support:
  - arts, culture and heritage projects and practice
  - community development projects developed by and for communities
  - projects that increase participation of:
- supporting and facilitating inclusion of people living with a disability, emerging cultural communities, LGBTIQ community members and Indigenous residents
- research - preparation of a detailed profile of the health needs and status of the community, including understanding the significant disadvantage experienced by people living in the Valley area. The profile informs service planning, advocacy and shared projects with partners.
Goal 14

PEOPLE BELONG TO AND PARTICIPATE EQUALLY IN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

The health and wellbeing benefits of socially inclusive communities and belonging to communities that value and respect diversity are evidenced in research. Council’s commitments to this are expressed in the following Council policy and strategies:

- Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy, and the Reconciliation Policy and Cultural Policy

Culture is all around us and the diversity of communities across the Yarra Ranges can be seen in:

- cultural expression through the arts and local heritage
- participation of people living with a disability in everyday life
- cultural and linguistic diversity, in both emerging and established multicultural communities
- LGBTIQ communities
- cultural expression of Australia’s first peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Council recognises the value and contribution of residents who migrated here and the importance of supporting them in the settlement phase of their migration experience and as they progress through life. Older residents from backgrounds where English is not their first language may need additional support as they age to continue participating in community life and in accessing services.

People living with a disability

Council has a legislated role to support people living with a disability to fully access their communities. These roles are detailed in the Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy: [https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Lists/Policy-directory/Equity-access-inclusion-strategy](https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Lists/Policy-directory/Equity-access-inclusion-strategy)

The introduction of the NDIS brings transformational change to people living with a disability, their carers and service providers. Council has a commitment to supporting this transition, linking, providing information and working to enable community members to have the best possible life.

Council’s own role to create and support accessible communities, businesses and places will continue. In the past this has included the construction of four Changing Places facilities, accessible playgrounds and improving access to natural environment through two All Terrain Wheelchairs. Council also has a commitment to making sure its own services are accessible to all and training its workforce to achieve this.

Gender Diverse Communities

Residents identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) may be overlooked or excluded in ways that have negative effects on their health. Additional diversity within LGBTIQ community includes: disability, older people, including those living in aged care, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Council is increasing attention to the inclusion of people in the LGBTIQ community in all their diversity, with a focus on support for young people.

Victorians who face discrimination can experience poorer health outcomes. The effects of exclusion and isolation can include on mental health, general health and in alcohol and drug use.

(Source Vichealth website 2015)

Council will support people to express their culture and identity in all its forms in the following ways.
• Implement the vision of the Equity Access and Inclusion Strategy that:
  – Yarra Ranges is an accessible, inclusive and equitable society that enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.
• Monitor the impacts of the NDIS and facilitate access through information and referral.
• Develop a cultural diversity policy to guide Council in how people from all cultural backgrounds can access services, participate in their community and live free from discrimination and barriers.
• Implement the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities as they apply to local government.
• Support LGBTIQ young people through inclusive programming that promotes wellbeing and mental health.
• Offer grants for festivals, events and projects that celebrate diversity and connect people with the places and cultures they live in.
Goal 15
PEOPLE CAN ACCESS APPROPRIATE HEALTH SERVICES IN A TIMELY WAY

Poor access to services, including to GPs, medical specialists, dental services, hospitals and ambulances in all areas of Yarra Ranges has a negative effect on health. Primary health services are central to good health management and staying well. Primary care is provided in community settings by a number of different health professionals. Primary care refers to medical care provided by general practitioners, but it can also refer to care provided by nurses, dentists, pharmacists, allied health and mental health providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. Primary care is often the first point of contact people have with the health system and is an important gateway to other services.

Screening rates for the most prevalent diseases remain at low rates in Yarra Ranges and present an opportunity to improve health. Screening enables early treatment and better chance of recovery.

As a result of failing to use existing services such as GPs, health screening and dentists, many treatable conditions can worsen; causing hospitalisations and illnesses that are avoidable. A lack of asthma management plans is an example of under-management of a health condition that can lead to increased health risks.

Not all residents have access to the internet and web based resources. This represents a further barrier to service access. Council is aware that this is a particular concern for residents living in outlying areas, areas of poor NBN access and for those living on low incomes and some carers.

Transport
Transport issues affect residents’ ability to get the care they need to stay healthy. Service access is worse in the Yarra Valley area, with people having poorer health and are even dying earlier when compared to nearby urban areas. This is a direct example of the effect of health inequities. Transport improvements are a focus of advocacy in partnership with communities.

Life Stages
Healthy pregnancy and early childhood provide the foundations for lifelong health. Access to GPs, antenatal care, maternal and child health and pediatric specialists are part of a comprehensive service system during pregnancy and early childhood. These services are often difficult for residents to access or non-existent for example, in areas such as the Yarra Valley.

Young people often have poorer access to health services. This includes general health services such as finding GPs who are youth friendly, as well as access to specialist health services such mental health services and sexual and reproductive health screening. The initiative of the state government to place GPs in schools as a strategy to address this, is welcome.

A lens on preventative action for responding to the rates of STI infections in young women led to an action to address the way gender stereotypes and power imbalances that can contribute to risky sexual behaviours. This will be led by Council’s youth teams with partner organisations and GPs.

Service access becomes more of a concern as people age, with demand for health services generally increasing during this stage of life. Access to higher levels of care can be difficult to get and complex health care management also becomes more of a priority for older people. Dementia care services in the Yarra Ranges will need to increase to meet anticipated growth in demand. A focus on preventing dementia is also needed.
Advocacy challenges

The challenges of service access in the Yarra Ranges include the large geographic area (2,500 square kms) and the relatively low population. Furthermore, the rural communities of the Yarra Ranges are not recognised as such and consequently do not receive rural health funding.

Council has advocated for service improvements over time with some successes (NBN, mobile black spots, a new health hub in Belgrave) and will continue to make this a priority. Council is also proactive in working with partners to use existing resources to deliver better services in outlying areas. Examples of this work are the Upper Yarra Partnership and an emerging sector initiative to develop “wrap around” services for young people in the Yarra Valley area.

Council understands how poor service access can negatively affect health, and will continue to push for better access and work in partnership to improve service breadth and coordination.

Council will work to improve service access particularly to outer areas of the Yarra Ranges through a range of actions and advocacy.

- Complete and operationalise the Belgrave Community Hub which will offer comprehensive health and community services to the Hills communities.
- Advocate for improved service access in the Yarra Valley including for young people and facilitate partnerships to identify solutions.
- Explore evidence informed strategies to increase health literacy i.e. people having the skills to navigate and use health services effectively.
- Advocate for better public transport and support community efforts to identify innovative responses to transport issues.
- Work to decrease the rate of STIs among young women in Yarra Ranges by:
  - recognising the role that the objectification of young women has in enabling risky sexual behaviours, and
  - partnering, including with young people, to co-design strategies to reduce STI rates.
Council is proud of its work to prevent violence against women and its leadership in a prevention approach that challenges gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles.

The conversation about preventing violence against women (PVAW) is now front and centre in the public discourse. This is a significant change since 2012 when Council began this work in earnest.

Despite this, in 2015 Yarra Ranges had the second highest rate of reported family violence incidents amongst the seven local government areas in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. Police recorded 1,119 cases of family violence cases against women, with children present in many instances.

Throughout its gender equity journey Council has worked in partnership, in particular with Women’s Health East through the regional strategy, Together for Equality and Respect (TFER). This partnership has delivered many benefits including building knowledge and capacity, having access to gendered data and communication resources.

Council’s work to date includes: an organisational change project to prevent violence against women, grants to community groups and participation in a three year Victorian government funded project with Knox and Maroondah Councils, events for White Ribbon and 16 Days of Activism and the appointment of a Gender Equity Officer to drive delivery of Council’s Gender Equity Action Plan. In 2016 an organisational gender audit was conducted to provide direction for future action.

Council also has a role in supporting women who experience family violence through active referral and advice. This vital work is with EDVOS, Boorndawan Willem Aboriginal Healing Service and the Eastern Community Legal Centre.

Violence against women is far too common

Violence against women has serious consequences for individuals and society and it occurs regardless of location, socio-economic and health status, age, culture, gender, sexual identity, disability, ethnicity or religion. Eliminating violence against women has been the driver for Council to address gender inequality. The data is compelling:

- on average, at least one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia
- one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, since the age of 15
- women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation as a result of intimate partner violence, and five times more likely to report fearing for their lives
- of those women who experience violence, more than half have children in their care
- there is growing evidence that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience both far higher rates and more severe forms of violence compared to other women

The national framework Our Watch provides an evidenced approach to changing the story on violence against women and offers important guidance to the next phase of this work for Council. The framework acknowledges the need to tackle structural or systemic causes of violence against women as represented in the following graphic.
Council will continue work to prevent violence against women, largely taking a prevention approach, and through referral, early identification and a focus on achieving systemic change.

- Council continues to progress a workplace that is equitable for all through a commitment to organisational change, informed by the Gender Equity Action Plan and the findings of the 2016 gender audit.
- Facilitate the Yarra Ranges Gender Equity Network and focus on shared work for greater impact collectively e.g. women’s leadership.
- Support an increase in participation in sports by women and girls through:
  - upgrades to pavilions and sporting facilities
  - facilitating club cultures that are inclusive of women in all aspects of the club.
- Continue Council’s commitment to the regional strategy Together for Equality and Respect and contribute to shared evidence, new work and evaluation.
Goal 17

INDIGENOUS RESIDENTS IN YARRA RANGES

- live free from discrimination and racism, connected to their culture & identity
- access culturally safe services in community controlled organisations
- are supported to have healthy pregnancies and thrive in early childhood

Council has an enduring commitment to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous* (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) residents. Guided by its 2013 Reconciliation Policy, Council’s role encompasses:

- recognition and support of traditional owners, the Wurundjeri Tribe, as custodians of the land and local cultural heritage
- funding for a range of Indigenous community development projects
- partnership funding for the Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA)
- partnering with HICSA and other partners to realise the goal of establishing a Belonging Place to meet the health needs of Indigenous residents in Yarra Ranges and the Outer East
- supporting capacity building initiatives led by the Indigenous community such as the renewal of Coranderrk, youth programs and leadership development
- celebrating and profiling Aboriginal culture during Reconciliation and NAIDOC weeks

Indigenous Advisory Committee

Council engages through its Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) to provide advice on local matters. The Reconciliation Policy was developed through close engagement with the IAC and is based on three core values underpinned by Indigenous ways of understanding the world - ways of knowing and being:

- Respect
- Caring
- Sharing

Local data is difficult to access, however the following statistics give a platform for the change Council wishes to see in Indigenous health and wellbeing.

The critical social factors contributing to health outcomes for Indigenous people include:

- poor nutrition - an important factor contributing to overweight and obesity and malnutrition
- in 2012/13 around 20% of Indigenous people living in non-remote areas reported having run out of food at some time in the past 12 months
- 61% of Indigenous people living in non-remote areas reported they were not physically active
- smoking is twice as common when compared with other Australians, with tobacco use responsible for one in five Aboriginal deaths in 2003
- Indigenous people are more likely not to drink alcohol when compared to Australian rates however, for those who do drink; many are more likely to drink at harmful levels.

(* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are also represented by the word Indigenous – which is also the preferred language of the local advisory group which comprises Elders and other local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the IAC.)
State Government – Draft Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan

The Victorian Government is developing a strategy which has 5 draft priority areas that align with the focus of Council’s strategies.

Priority Area 1  Aboriginal community leadership
Priority Area 2  Prioritising Aboriginal culture and community
Priority Area 3  System reform across the health and human services sector
Priority Area 4  Safe, secure, strong families and individuals
Priority Area 5  Physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities

MAJOR INITIATIVE 3 INDIGENOUS HEALTH – CLOSE THE GAP

The primary project to improve Indigenous health is the achievement of a community controlled health and service hub in Healesville - named the Belonging Place. A Belonging Place managed by the Indigenous community will make significant inroads towards ‘Closing the Gap’ in Yarra Ranges and Melbourne’s East, providing a culturally appropriate and safe place for the delivery of a range of integrated services and programs.

Council’s supports Indigenous health being firmly in Indigenous hands, and has confidence in the governance and service delivery capacity of the Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA) to deliver this model. Council supports the proposal to develop a Belonging Place as an evidence-based model to substantially improve service access and increase cultural competency and safety to improve Indigenous health and wellbeing across the region.

Partners in this project include Eastern Health, EACH, Eastern Community Legal Centre, DHHS, the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network and Inspiro. The partners committed to investing time, organisational effort and resources towards realising the Belonging Place through a business planning process in 2016. Importantly, an agreement with the traditional owners, the Wurundjeri will be developed and underpin the Belonging Place.

Environments for health to Close the Indigenous health Gap

Council can work across the Environments for Health in a range of roles to have direct influence on closing the health gap; this includes building the cultural capacity and safety of Council services.
LIVING FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM, CONNECTED TO CULTURE & IDENTITY

Racism and discrimination – impacts on health

Racism and discrimination have powerful impacts on the mental health of those who are on the receiving end. (Vichealth)

Council has a strong commitment to ending racism in all its forms, including where it affects Indigenous community members. A signatory to the “Racism it Stops with Me” campaign, Council recognises its leadership role in stopping the impacts of racism on residents of Yarra Ranges. Vichealth has conducted research into this area to inform the work of Councils across Victoria. The relationship between racism and poor health outcomes are explained as follows.

“The link between poorer physical and mental health and self reported perceptions or experiences of racism has been well documented. There is strong evidence that the targets of racism are at greater risk of developing a range of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

... More subtle forms of racial discrimination, such as bias or exclusion, can also be very stressful. They can restrict people’s access to resources required for good health, such as information, employment and housing. People who become worried about being racially discriminated against may become anxious and socially isolated – conditions that can contribute to more serious mental disorders.

A number of studies that have examined racism as a determinant of ill health have concluded that there is a correlation between the experience of racism and poorer mental and physical health outcomes for Aboriginal Australians.”

(Vichealth Report - Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Victorian Aboriginal communities).

Council’s actions to promote belonging, connection and inclusion are focused on the many assets and strengths of Indigenous communities, support for self determination and a commitment to cultural strengthening approaches.

- Support the self-determination of Indigenous communities in the Yarra Ranges.
- Strengthen identity and wellbeing by continuing to support the service and governance capacity of Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association.
- Harness the Reconciliation aspirations of the wider Yarra Ranges community in celebrating and honouring Indigenous cultures.
CULTURALLY SAFE SERVICES IN COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

Yarra Ranges Council understands that cultural safety, respect and community control are vital to developing effective strategies to close the health gap for Indigenous Australians.

Evidence that community controlled health services are the best way to lead improvements in Indigenous health has led Council to support local organisation HICSA in its aspiration to develop an integrated health service called the Belonging Place.

This project has multi-partner support and will be a major focus for Council over the coming four years with the intention to reduce the health gap for Indigenous Australians living in the Yarra Ranges and the outer east region.

A comprehensive business planning process in 2016 directs action in this goal.

- Support the establishment of a Belonging Place through implementation of the 2016 business plan actions:
  - Consolidate organisational capability and the integrated service model in partnership with key stakeholder organisations
  - Foster regional partnerships with the key Indigenous organisations
  - Secure resources to identify, map and analyse regional health and service needs
  - Invest in options for service development through HICSA and partners
  - Build formal intake and service referral capability - people, systems and infrastructure

- In Stage Two of the business plan - Consolidating Program and Service Delivery, a key action will be the:
  - Development of a Belonging Place Concept Plan and securing capital and program funding commitments.
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RESIDENTS ARE SUPPORTED TO HAVE HEALTHY PREGNANCIES AND THRIVE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

In line with Council’s commitment to cultural strengthening and respect for self determination by Indigenous residents, an emerging model for building resilient children and families is supported.

The First 1,000 Days was developed by Indigenous people to foster resilience, leadership and innovation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families through focusing on the period from (pre) conception to the age of two. The underlying premise of First 1,000 Days Australia is that the role of protecting children is best undertaken by the family, a multi-generational, non-biological and traditional model of family that includes mothers, fathers and/or care givers, grandparents and other relatives and using strengths-based approaches to raise resilient and confident children. Strategies will include family strengthening through stories, Country and kin and developing therapeutic cultural supports.

Council delivers universal services for families. To support healthy pregnancies and children thriving in early childhood, Council will continue to grow relationships with Indigenous services and communities, strengthen cultural competency within its own services and support local partners as they explore this new model to strengthen Aboriginal families.

Statement from Professor Kerry Arabena on the importance of First 1,000 Days Australia

“A radical change is required in how we think about and enhance the early outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia. Too many children and young people do not have the start in life they need. As our understanding of developmental science improves, it becomes clearer and clearer that adverse events in a child’s life lead to structural changes in brain development that have life-long and societal ramifications. We now also know these ramifications are intergenerational.

Not intervening will affect not only this generation of children, but also the next. Those who suffer adverse childhood events achieve less educationally earn less and have worse health outcomes - all of which makes it more likely that the cycle of harm is perpetuated in the following generation”.

Australian Human Rights Commission 2015, National Children’s Commissioner Children’s Rights Report

Actions to advance healthy pregnancies and support children to thrive include:

- Explore the First 1,000 Days initiative with the University of Melbourne and local Indigenous partners to scope and understand its application locally.
- Deliver culturally safe maternal and child health and early childhood services.
- Build cultural competency through cultural respect training for officers.
- Explore strategies to strengthen the Wurun Child and Family Place Healesville, implementing recommendations from the 2017 Evaluation Report.
A DEFINITION OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The World Health Organisation’s definition of health suggests that health is a continuum, and extends the idea of health to include states of positive wellbeing. Health is ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.

(Dimensions of Health 31 July 2006)

This definition stands for Yarra Ranges.
SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The social determinants of health are important when considering how to improve health in Yarra Ranges. The municipality is made up of very different places with distinct needs. Our 55 townships include tiny rural villages and growing urban areas and the municipality also has agricultural and forest regions that are unique and valued assets.

The impact of the kind of world we are born into (the social determinants), has been extensively researched by Sir Michael Marmot of the World Health Organisation. This social research on how environments affect health is relevant for the Yarra Ranges municipality because of the poor health many people experience and the role that place based factors play in this.

The following extract from the 2016 Boyer Lectures explain simply the concept of the determinants of health. This provides a very different approach to a medical model of health and responds to Victorian legislation that requires Councils to develop health and wellbeing plans that take into account the environments for health and preventive approaches.

Michael Marmot 2016 Boyer Lectures

"Health and inequalities in health are closely linked to the conditions in which we raise our children, the education we get, the neighbourhoods in which we live, the work we do, whether we have the money to make ends meet, our social relationships and our care for the elderly.

In short, all the things that matter to us day to day and in the arc of our lives, influence health. And these conditions of life … are strongly influenced by the decisions that societies make and, indeed, global decisions that influence our social environment. The social conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age are strongly determinant both of risk of ill-health and likelihood of engaging in civil disorder.

The link between deprivations of social conditions and ill-health … is all too obvious in Australia. The life expectancy gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations of Australia is about 11 years... Australian Aboriginal men are six times more likely and Aboriginal women eleven times more likely, to die of ischemic heart disease than non-Indigenous men and women. The diabetes differences are more alarming. The diabetes death rate is nineteen times higher in Aboriginal men, and twenty-seven times higher in Aboriginal women, than in the non-Indigenous population."

(Boyer Lectures 2016, Sir Michael Marmot - Fair Australia – Social Justice and the Health Gap)

HEALTH EQUITY

Equity and inequity are important concepts underpinning Council's approach to promoting health and wellbeing. Residents experience health inequity in many parts of Yarra Ranges. This inequity includes poor access to health services and other social determinants that have a strong, negative impact on health.

Health inequities are the differences in health between population groups which are largely socio-economic and avoidable. For example in the Yarra Ranges there is a higher rate of avoidable deaths in the Valley area and young people show poorer health across a range of indicators. Underlying causes include socio-economic disadvantage. Most health risk factors i.e. the absence of everyday things that help maintain good health, such as physical activity and getting sufficient fresh fruits and vegetables, are higher for disadvantaged households.

Equitable approaches are those aimed at closing the growing gap in outcomes for different population groups. This may mean providing additional support for people experiencing disadvantage in order to achieve equal outcomes.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Research by Deakin University in 2016 identified building social inclusion as an effective strategy for improving wellbeing. Council encourages social inclusion through programs such as Small Grants Program and community planning. Council's facilitation of community planning by local communities builds social inclusion across Yarra Ranges. The Australian Social Inclusion Board defines social inclusion as having the resources, opportunities and capabilities to:

- learn e.g. participate in education and training;
- work e.g. participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities;
- engage e.g. connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities; and
- have a voice influence decisions.
Social exclusion refers to social experiences and perceptions of isolation and rejection that reduce the quality of life of individuals and community cohesion, through a lack of meaningful and constructive social and economic participation (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009). Across Australia, some specific groups are more at risk of social exclusion, particularly:

- females
- elderly persons, especially those living alone
- those with limited English proficiency
- Indigenous Australians
- those with long term ill health or disabilities
- single parents
- residents of public or social housing
- those with limited education (Year 11 or less)
- carers and disengaged young people are at increased risk of exclusion”.

(Preventing and responding to violence and promoting social inclusion and community connection: A research project for the EMSIC 2016 : E. Clancy, B. Marshall and J. Toumbourou, Deakin University)

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY INDICATES SOCIAL DETERMINANTS ARE KEY TO CHANGE

Health and wellbeing issues raised during community consultations in 2016 showed community concern about some of the key determinants of health. There were 12 themes related to health and wellbeing coming from four community conferences. The order below reflects how many people identified these as issues with 1 being the highest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top health related issues identified by resident of Yarra Ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Better public transport, community buses</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Support for homeless people and affordable housing to prevent homelessness, provide a range of appropriate housing options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Support for aged and/or disabled residents and better aged care facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Community connectedness and participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Better facilities and infrastructure, especially sport and recreation facilities and facilities for young people;</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Better health services</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Good local education, training and employment opportunities, especially for young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Better roads and footpaths, good walkability</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Better food access, growing your own food, access to local fresh food, food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Family violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Advocacy for health and wellbeing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRIORITY POPULATIONS

In Yarra Ranges there are many people experiencing poor health and wellbeing. There are also vulnerable times in people’s lives where support is important to prevent negative impacts on health. These life stages and vulnerabilities are outlined below and inform decisions about where Council invests in creating healthier communities.

Early Childhood

Early childhood is one of the life stages when actions to prevent poor health later in life can be most effective. Support for parents and children is a high priority for Council because of this and Council has a number of important roles in supporting early childhood. The First 1,000 Days is an approach being considered in Victoria that aims to ensure healthy pregnancies and early life as a powerful way to ensure the best possible health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Young People

Young people in Yarra Ranges have been surveyed and their responses combined with an analysis of hospital and other health data tell us that young people have particular health challenges. Along with other groups experiencing vulnerability, young people are affected by locational disadvantage, for example, having limited access to mental health services and transport. As the future leaders of our community, investing in the health and wellbeing of young people is important and sensible. Council offers a range of services to support young people including generalist counselling, leadership and mentoring, and support for those at risk of leaving school. Grants offer support for leadership development and projects led by young people.

Older Adults

Council is committed to supporting healthy and active ageing. Older adults are an important population group in this strategy. They are a growing demographic, contribute significantly to community organisations and volunteering, have wisdom and experience to share and they are significant users of health and other community services. The most pressing health needs to be addressed for older adults include: increasing rates of dementia, injuries and death from falls and living with chronic (and often preventable) diseases. Sustaining secure and affordable housing is also a priority for older people.

Men and Boys

Men and teenage boys in Yarra Ranges experience vulnerability across a range of health issues. Men in Yarra Ranges are less likely to eat well, less likely to get enough exercise, much more likely to suffer from mental health issues, are more likely to commit suicide and more likely to die from dementia.

Male primary school students report faring worse than females in measures including: a sense of belonging at school and in their community. Male high school students in Yarra Ranges do worse in a range of areas, compared to both females in Yarra Ranges and males nationally. These are issues that specifically affect males living in the Yarra Ranges who:

- have less engagement, belonging and connectedness at school and connectedness with their family and community
- have lower boundaries and expectations
- are more likely to drink alcohol and use drugs
- are less likely to feel safe.

Women

The health needs of women are included in this Strategy, particularly preventing violence against women through creating a more gender equitable society. STIs in the Yarra Ranges have serious impacts on women’s health and wellbeing. Women are also subject to the effects of key determinants where they do worse such as: lower retirement incomes, insecure housing and the pay gap. The health needs of women living on low incomes, parenting alone and managing long commutes are also a consideration.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Yarra Ranges is home to a significant and valued Indigenous community. The health needs of Indigenous people are higher than the non Indigenous population due to the impacts of colonisation, loss and cultural dispossession. Racism continues to affect the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The majority (80%) of the Yarra Ranges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community live in or around Healesville.
HealthInfoNet overview of ATSI health included the following commentary:

“Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s health continues to improve slowly although they are still not as healthy as non-Indigenous people overall. The reasons why the health of Indigenous people is worse than for non-Indigenous people are complex, but represent a combination of general factors (like education, employment, income and socioeconomic status) and health sector factors (like not having access to culturally appropriate services or support)”.


**People Living with a Disability**

People living with a disability and their families and carers make up around 20% of the community of Yarra Ranges. People living with a disability:

- contribute to the community and have aspirations to participate in all aspects of community life
- often need assistance with day to day living in order to participate in activities/pursuits/work
- may be socially isolated, relying heavily on carers who may also experience isolation and poor health as a result of their caring role
- have higher incidence of abuse than other groups in the community
- will be able to access the NDIS after November 2017 and this will have significant impact

**Homeless Persons**

Council has ongoing concerns about the impact of homelessness on individuals and the community.

Yarra Ranges experienced a 19 per cent (349) increase in the number of very low income households between 2006 and 2011. At the same time the availability of affordable rental properties for the lowest income bracket was very low (about 10 per cent of all properties in 2014). This sets up greater risk of homelessness for these households. In 2016, local agency ANCHOR supported 1,682 people in the Yarra Ranges through the various programs they offer to people at risk of becoming homeless.

**LGBTIQ**

The National LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people) Health Alliance recognises that people’s genders, bodies, relationships, and sexualities affect their health and wellbeing in every domain of their life. Australians of diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity may account for up to 11 per cent of the Australian population. In 2013, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 was amended to make discrimination on the basis of a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status against the law.

The Australian Human Rights Commission notes: Despite this important step forward, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people in Australia still experience discrimination, harassment and hostility in many parts of everyday life; in public, at work and study, accessing health and other services and securing proper recognition of their sex in official documents.
**Emerging Communities**

While only 8% of our residents were from countries where English is not their first language at the 2016 Census, the urban areas of Yarra Ranges are now home to growing multicultural communities. Parts of Yarra Ranges have long established residents who migrated here last century and have contributed significantly to the local culture and economy. The largest of these are of Dutch, Italian and German heritage. The other largest non English speaking migrant groups include people from India, China and the Myanmar. People who come here from other countries often have additional and specific needs during the time when they first settle in Australia and again as they age. It is vital that people can access culturally responsive services, get support to acquire a new language and maintain their cultural connections. Of note is the recent arrival of people escaping trauma in their home country and being accepted as refugees or asylum seekers, who are settling in the Yarra Ranges.

**STATE GOVERNMENT POLICY DIRECTIONS**

**Strategic leadership for prevention in local communities**

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 require Council to prepare a municipal public health and wellbeing plan to provide strategic leadership for prevention in local communities. Delivering better health for all Victorians places prevention at the heart of strategies to improve health outcomes and health equity.

A focus on prevention is highlighted in a range of leading government policies and initiatives aiming to strengthen families, education and Aboriginal health and prevent violence against women and family violence. These initiatives suggest new ways of working that recognise and build on the strengths of people and place based approaches to deliver solutions that are relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable.

An example of a prevention approach is Council’s effort around promoting gender equity to reduce violence against women and family violence. Rates of family violence are high in Yarra Ranges and Council understands and has chosen to act on the underlying causes. It is clear that rigid gender stereotypes create
an environment where violence towards women is tolerated. Council has worked with its partners and within our organisation over the past 5 years using a prevention approach. This approach includes promoting gender equity and changing systems and environments that condone or support violence against women.

This commitment over time will change the incidence of violence against women and family violence. The value of this way of working is evidenced in countries where gender equity is high and correspondingly, the rates of violence against women are low.

**Place based approaches**

As with the social determinants framework, a place-based approach recognises that people and places are inter-dependent and the places people live in have an important role in shaping health and wellbeing. A place-based approach focuses on local needs and local priorities, engages the community as an active partner in developing solutions, and maximises value by leveraging multiple networks, investments and activities to deliver the best outcomes for communities. (DHHS – Delivering place based primary prevention in Victoria 2016).

Council has been working in a place based way for many years and will continue this way of working with communities to enable specific and relevant local responses to issues and opportunities.

**Collective Impact**

As well as having clear priorities which inform Council’s health and wellbeing strategy, the State health and wellbeing plan supports a systems approach to tackle the determinants of poor health and health inequity, and advocates a collective effort by stakeholders to address the complex issues facing communities.

There is strong alignment between the Council’s approach and understanding of how to improve health and wellbeing in communities across Yarra Ranges and the State plan.

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### State Health and wellbeing priorities 2015 - 2019

The Victorian government health and wellbeing priorities inform Council’s work. They are:

- healthier eating and active living
- tobacco-free living
- reducing harmful alcohol and drug use
- improving mental health
- preventing violence and injury
- improving sexual and reproductive health

The Victorian plan also identifies the importance of addressing climate change and the impact of climate change on people’s health and wellbeing.

**Royal Commission into Family Violence**

Importantly the findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence have specific recommendations for local governments in the context of health and wellbeing plans. This includes that councils report on the measures they propose to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims in their health and wellbeing plans. This is incorporated in this draft Strategy.
ROLE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES

Victoria’s community health organisations and health services also play a leadership role in prevention. In particular, Integrated Health Promotion provided primarily via community health and health services offers a significant investment in local areas. Integrated Health Promotion and municipal planning cycles are aligned to support local health and wellbeing action. In developing this draft strategy, Council worked with organisations with an integrated health planning role for Yarra Ranges to align effort and impact. These are: Yarra Valley Community Health, Inspiro Community Health Service, Women’s Health East and the Outer East Primary Care Partnership.

Victorian Health Outcomes Framework
The Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015–2019 proposes a bold vision for the state: a Victoria free of the avoidable burden of disease and injury so that all Victorians can enjoy the highest attainable standards of health, wellbeing and participation at every age. The outcomes framework translates this vision into a quantifiable set of outcomes, indicators, measures and targets. There are five domains in the Outcomes Framework that have informed Council’s draft strategy.

Health Profile for Yarra Ranges
The Yarra Ranges Health Profile sets out the health status in detail and is a resource for others in planning and understanding the health of our communities.

The data in the profile shows clear priority areas that are used to build a strategic approach to health and wellbeing. The Health Profile is a resource that can be used by everyone in the community and Council encourages its use for advocacy, to understand health needs, to inform the design of responses and for funding bids.

See Council’s website for the complete Yarra Ranges Health Profile

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter) is a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. It is about the relationship between government and the people it serves.

The Charter requires public authorities, such as Victorian state and local government departments and agencies, and people delivering services on behalf of government, to act consistently with the human rights in the Charter.

The key principles of civic and political rights outlined in the Charter are:
• Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity

These principles are to be considered across Council’s roles including for example: policy, local laws, service delivery, access to participation, how Council engages with the community, governance and handling of complaints and more.

This draft strategy addresses human rights in a range of ways such as, promoting inclusive communities, equal participation, valuing diversity and reducing discrimination.
REFERENCES

Data sources informing this strategy include:

- Victorian Population Health Survey 2016
- Hospital admissions data for the EMR
- ABS Census data (2011 and 2016)
- Ambulance data
- AEDC Survey
- Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, births and deaths data, and population estimates
- Centrelink data
- National Health Performance Authority data health costs
- Australian Early Development Census AEDC
- Dental Health Victoria
- Heart Foundation
- Sport and Recreation Victoria
- Alzheimer’s Australia
- Department of Health and Human Services Yarra Ranges Service Plan 2017
- Department of Health and Human Services data including Victorian Population Health Survey, hospital admissions, emergency department presentations, infectious diseases, service usage, housing costs
- Ambulance Victoria
- Victoria Police data on crime rates and family violence
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data on cancer and cause of death
- Department of Education data on education and young people
- VicHealth indicators data
- Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations data on employment
- National Diabetes Services System
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs data on new arrivals

NB: Qualitative data is from engagements undertaken by Council and community groups

Sources of the research, policy and papers informing and referenced in the strategy are:

- Victorian public health and wellbeing outcomes framework 2016
- Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015-2019
- Vichealth research reports
- Vichealth guides for local governments
- Victorian Government policy (DET, DHHS)
- Royal Commission into Family Violence - Victorian Government
- WHO website: the social determinants of health

References

- Integrating positive body image principles into the Yarra Ranges Council Health & Wellbeing Strategic Plan 2017-2021- Upper Yarra Body Image Working Group submission
• Gao C, Ogeil RP & Lloyd B 2014, Alcohol’s burden of disease in Australia, Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education (FARE) and VicHealth in collaboration with Turning Point, Canberra.
• DHHS – Delivering place based primary prevention in Victoria 2016
• Department of Sport & Recreation, 2008, Benefits of physical activity, Government of Western Australia
• Healthy Spaces and Places: http://www.healthyplaces.org.au
• VicHealth Report: Active Transport: Children and Young People (an Overview), Dr Jan Garrard 2009
• Victoria Walks (2017). Change to Walking, Using ‘nudge’ interventions to get more people walking, Victoria Walks@Inc, Melbourne.
• SGS Economics workshop - “Positioning Australian Communities for City Deals”
• “Creating Places for People: An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities” urbandesign.org.au
• www.healthyplaces.org.au
• Issues Paper - prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute at the University of Melbourne as part of the Transforming Housing Research Network.
• Homelessness a definition – Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2001
• Victorian Government and MAV Age - Friendly Victoria Declaration
• State Trustees website 2017 - Protecting Elders Assets Study (PEAS): Ethical Management of Older Persons’ Financial Assets 2009-2011.)
• Together for Equality and Respect – a strategy to prevent violence against women in Melbourne’s East
• Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015) Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.
• VicHealth Report - Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Victorian Aboriginal communities Experiences of Racism survey: a summary
• First 1,000 Days Australia – http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/ Article: Professor Kerry Arabena, Chair of Indigenous Health at the University of Melbourne
• Business Plan, a Belonging Place 2016 – Mach 2 for Yarra Ranges Council
• Australian Human Rights Commission 2015, National Children’s Commissioner Children’s Rights Report
• Preventing and responding to violence and promoting social inclusion and community connection: A research project for the EMSIC 2016 : E. Clancy, B. Marshall and J. Toumbourou, Deakin University
APPLYING DATA, THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS AND THE ENVIRONMENTS OF HEALTH TO ACTION PLANNING

The development of actions will be informed by: the priority health issues, the impact of the social conditions people live in, the four environments of health Council works in to influence health, evidence on what works and prevention approaches. The following table takes one determinant of health, housing, and gives an overview of how Council and partners can work to achieve positive change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Area (Systemic Issue)</th>
<th>Vulnerable community members</th>
<th>Environments for Health</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Alignment with State Plan, VicHealth</th>
<th>Council Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>People living with a disability Women over 50 Women and children escaping family violence Individuals and families living on low incomes</td>
<td>Built Social</td>
<td>Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA) Yarra Ranges Housing Action Group Holy Fools ANCHOR, EACH Disability housing providers Housing Associations Housing Providers Other stakeholders</td>
<td>Victorian government health outcomes framework Homes for Victorians – a Housing Strategy (Vic)</td>
<td>Advocate to State &amp; Federal Governments for more funding for affordable and social housing. Increase understanding of the need for and benefits of secure and affordable housing. Support local community organisations working to address homelessness through facilitating action and grants. Consider sale of Council land to increase affordable housing. Research innovative responses to homelessness &amp; affordability. Negotiate inclusion of affordable housing in large developments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 1 VICHEALTH – EVIDENCED ACTIONS TO SUPPORT HEALTH

Vichealth works to improve the health and wellbeing of Victorians. Examples of successful health promotion campaigns include quit smoking campaigns, which resulted in significant decline in smoking rates in Victoria. Vichealth outlines common sense approaches based on the latest research about how to be healthier. The Vichealth website notes:

"Choosing better health does not have to be difficult. Deciding to be active, eating healthy foods, reducing stress, connecting with your neighbours, ... are just some of the little changes that can make a big difference to our health and wellbeing".

Vichealth suggest 10 areas or strategies to improve health and wellbeing. These are consistent with Council’s understanding of how to improve health in Yarra Ranges and informed Council’s goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vichealth strategies</th>
<th>What to do</th>
<th>Health benefits/impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be active each day</strong></td>
<td>Take a walk whenever you can. Count your steps and try to do more every day. Join a lunchtime walking group at work. Take the stairs instead of the lift. Cycle to work or walk kids to school.</td>
<td>Regular physical activity will mean: • better mental wellbeing and social connections • reduced chance of chronic disease • increased energy and productivity • changes the environments we live and play in: reduced traffic congestion, safer neighbourhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be active at Work</strong></td>
<td>Walk over to a colleague instead of emailing. Stand up when on the phone. Get up every couple of hours – rest your eyes, drink water, stand &amp; stretch. Organise walking/standing meetings. Take a break for a glass of water. Take the stairs instead of the lift, take lunch outside and go for a walk.</td>
<td>Reduced risk of: • Type 2 diabetes • Heart disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choose healthy foods</strong></td>
<td>Reduce salt and sugary food intake. Replace sugary drinks with water. Choose healthy foods: • plan shopping so you’re not distracted by unhealthy choices. • keep fresh, healthy snacks at hand: fruit, veggie sticks, low fat cheese. • pack in veggies with a hearty soup. • know your local green grocer or famers’ market - eat seasonal. • take the time to enjoy your meals, switch off social media &amp; screens.</td>
<td>Reduced risk of: • Type 2 diabetes • Heart disease. Protects against other disease such as cancer, stroke and dementia. Supports good mental health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VicHealth strategies</td>
<td>What to do</td>
<td>Health benefits/impacts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Get enough sleep   | Ideas for getting a good night’s sleep:  
  • make sure your bedroom is restful and comfortable.  
  • avoid cigarettes, alcohol & sleeping pills.  
  • avoid electronic devices within an hour of going to bed.  
  • exercise regularly, but not within two hours of going to bed.  
  • relax the mind – learn to meditate. | Sleep is critical for maintaining good health and wellbeing.  
Insufficient sleep is linked to the development of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity and depression.                                                                                                                                 |
| Drink in moderation| To not damage health, it is recommended that adults who drink alcohol have:  
  • no more than two standard drinks a day (for healthy adults) over their lifetime.  
  • no more than four drinks per occasion. | Consuming alcohol within low-risk drinking guidelines can improve physical and mental wellbeing, social connection and reduce the risk of injury and chronic diseases.                                                                                                                                 |
| Join a cultural activity | Joining an arts or cultural activity, meet like-minded people, make connections. Activities like dance and circus skills getting moving is extra good for health. | Social isolation puts people at risk of poor physical and mental health.  
Having fun being creative can develop new skills, confidence and self-esteem.                                                                                                                                                                |
| Quit smoking       | Giving up smoking is the best way to improve health and save money:  
  • understand one’s smoking – triggers or routines that contribute  
  • work out why to quit (health, money, role model, pregnancy)  
  • prepare – choose how and when to quit, plan alternative activity to counter temptation and withdrawal symptoms and get support. | Research shows smokers who quit at age 50 halve their risk of death caused by smoking, while quitting by age 30 avoids almost all of the excess risk associated with smoking.                                                                                                               |
| Make new friends   | Social connections include the people we know; friends we confide in, the family we belong to and the community we live in:  
  • be part of a sporting team, volunteer effort or regular social activity.  
  • get involved in new activities that provide fun and social ways to improve health and wellbeing. | Belonging and being part of a group are intrinsic to better mental health and wellbeing.  
Social isolation can have a negative effects health.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VicHealth strategies</th>
<th>What to do</th>
<th>Health benefits/impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Reduce stress at work** | Ideas for employers to reduce work-related stress:  
• make sure employees have a balanced workload and support to do their job well, check in.  
• understand workplace stress and how to make workplaces safe.  
Ideas for workers:  
• learn to recognise signs of stress - they can include fatigue, irritability, depression, disturbed sleep.  
• speak with employers about what’s generating stress and how to work together to help manage it. | Some job stress can help us be productive, but prolonged or severe stress can have a negative effect on mental and physical wellbeing, as well as performance and social relationships at work. |
| **Be an active bystander against discrimination** | Bystanders play important role in ending discrimination:  
• Next time you see someone being harassed because of their gender or race, say something or report it. | Violence against women and racism both have powerful impacts on the mental health of those who are on the receiving end. |