Shire of Yarra Ranges

Vision 2020

Community Plan
Vision 2020 is a vision of the Yarra Ranges community. In looking forward into the future, we also look back into the past to understand and respect the history, culture and heritage that informs both who we are and where we have come from. We recognise the unique diversity of our indigenous Australian community. We also recognise the significant contribution of all other past communities and peoples of this region whose lives, interests, decisions and innovation have shaped our diverse communities. We are proud to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the original custodians of this land and their rich cultural heritage and spiritual connection to land.

We are committed to the ongoing process of Reconciliation and the strengthening of relationships between our Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Listening to the stories about people and places in Yarra Ranges gives an insight to our history - an important part of our future.

This document is available in different formats at www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Acknowledgement of photographers: Emma Campbell and Marty White.
Vision 2020 is a shared vision of the Yarra Ranges community. It is an optimistic statement by our community of what we hope for and aspire to for the future, for both people and places.

It is based on the simple idea that if we as a community decide on where we are going, the chances are that we will get there.

It provides the Yarra Ranges community with a framework to guide the decisions and actions of today to ensure a healthy and sustainable future and provides an opportunity to make a difference for both current and future generations.

By expressing a shared vision for the future, our community understands the importance of shared responsibility and opportunity to make the vision a reality. We acknowledge that we as individuals, organisations and governments, can make a positive difference to the future. Only through the concerted effort of the whole community will Vision 2020 be realised.

This revised edition updates Vision 2020 to reflect the changes and emerging issues highlighted by the community in 2008/09. It includes an overall vision for Yarra Ranges, a list of priorities to be focused on over the coming years, as well as a detailed description of the seven themes that make up the vision.
The original **Vision 2020** was developed in 1999 and reviewed in 2003 and 2006 to ensure it continued to represent the values, needs and aspirations of our diverse community.

The 2008 review of **Vision 2020** went one step further. In this review, the Yarra Ranges community considered the current and emerging challenges facing the Shire and developed a list of key priorities to be focused on in working towards the achievement of the vision.

The Yarra Ranges community was involved in the review in a number of ways and supported by Council and a Community Reference Group. The views and ideas of a cross-section of our community were brought together through submissions to a discussion paper, youth interviews, a children’s survey program through local schools, and a children’s workshop. The outcomes were then fed into a Community Forum held over two days where key community priorities were debated and discussed.

As well as reflecting the outcomes of the Community Forum in this revised Vision 2020 document, Council, for its part, has fed the outcomes into the preparation of the Council Plan 2009-2013, the document that guides its activities over the next four years.
The Vision for 2020

In 2020, Yarra Ranges is one of the special places in Australia. It offers a unique experience for those who live here and the millions who visit each year. It is a rich mosaic of urban settlements, productive rural holdings, healthy waterways, native bushland and forest.

It is one of the most beautiful natural environments in the nation and has some of the most environmentally important areas. Yarra Ranges’ national parks, state forests and private gardens all combine to make the area unique in its natural, cultural and amenity values.

It is also exceptional because it has a strong human dimension. The spirit of the people is as evident as the beauty of the surroundings. Each local community is strong, and the individuals in each are respected. Age and racial differences are valued, and people live in respectful harmony with their environment, indigenous heritage and each other.

Yarra Ranges is also the home of a thriving business sector. Increasing business opportunities has led to steady economic growth in the Shire. This growth has brought with it increased local employment and economic prosperity, which is enjoyed by all sections of the community.

There are high levels of employment - in the traditional workplace, for those who telecommute, and for those self-employed working at home. Within the industrial areas of the Shire, manufacturing and research and development have continued to operate successfully, and provide supporting services and employment for local communities.

By 2020, climate change has created a far greater awareness of the importance of ecological sustainability within Yarra Ranges, particularly the protection of the natural environment, water conservation and responsible resource use. The significant biodiversity of the Shire has been actively conserved and protected through the efforts of governments, landholders and community groups.

People in Yarra Ranges connect with others in their community and the community is healthy and active. Its members participate regularly in a range of team and individual recreational activities. A huge variety of active and passive recreation opportunities are available. Volunteering is also strong with many people volunteering across all sectors of the local community and providing a wide variety of services and programs.

The atmosphere is peaceful and at the same time productive. A sense of security pervades the place. People are confident about their own safety and that of other members of their community.
The built environment within the Shire creates a strong sense of community identity and meets the needs of diverse communities. A wide range of conveniently located housing options are available for people of all ages. The physical infrastructure in and around townships is appropriate and supports the continued sustainability of the town and broader community.

In 2020, Yarra Ranges is home to some of Australia’s most famous rural produce. Each day its fresh flowers, fruit and market garden produce are flown out to markets in the Asia - Pacific Region. Its wines, cheeses and other food products are in demand both locally and around the world.

The community has embraced the concept of ‘lifelong learning’, and Yarra Ranges is recognised as a ‘learning community’. Learning, in its widest sense, is valued as well as the ability of various learning providers to meet the needs of this local community and economy.

Its people have numerous opportunities to express their creativity and to enjoy the heritage of those who have contributed to our cultural, built and artistic history. This has been achieved partially through a process of consulting and learning from the Indigenous Australians who are recognised as an important part of our community.

Yarra Ranges is known beyond its boundaries because it has become a model of modern living to many communities. It is a model of how a community can live, work and play in harmony with the environment. This is its greatest attraction.

Vision 2020 themes

The community’s aspirations have been grouped under the seven themes listed below and described in further detail in subsequent sections of this document. In doing this, we recognise the natural overlap of many of the issues and the close relationship across the themes.

- Strong, Healthy & Connected Communities
- Environmental Stewardship
- Built Environment
- Local Economy & Tourism
- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- A Living & Learning Community
- A Safe & Accessible Shire
Our place

The Shire of Yarra Ranges is located on metropolitan Melbourne’s eastern fringe. Yarra Ranges’ population is currently estimated at 146,886 people and it covers an area of almost 2,500 square kilometres (ABS, Estimated Resident Population, June 2008). Yarra Ranges is the seventh largest local government area in Melbourne in terms of population size and the largest in area.

The Shire balances a mixture of urban and rural communities. Around 70% of Yarra Ranges’ population live in the ‘urban’ areas of the municipality that represent approximately 3% of its landmass. The rest of the population is distributed throughout the remaining area. There are over 55 suburbs, townships, small communities and rural areas within the Shire, making it one of the most diverse of any municipality in the State.

Our people

Yarra Ranges can be characterised as a ‘young’ Shire, with a higher than average proportion of the population aged between 5 and 17 years and more family households than typical across Melbourne. The median age of Yarra Ranges’ residents is 36.4 years.

While cultural diversity is not as pronounced in the Shire as it is in other municipalities, almost 10,000 residents are from non-English speaking backgrounds. Yarra Ranges also has a considerable Indigenous community, with Indigenous people comprising 0.6% of the Shire population overall and more than 5% in some areas (ABS, Census, 2006).
Our environment

Yarra Ranges has long been recognised as a special place for its natural beauty and diverse habitats. The combination of national parks, state forests, private gardens and its location on the doorstep of Melbourne all combine to make the area unique.

The Shire contains some of the most environmentally important areas in Victoria, which are a significant factor in attracting residents and tourists. The mountainous landscapes and the Yarra River valley contain significant areas of remnant native vegetation, much of which is botanically and zoologically significant, providing important habitat for wildlife.

Our economy

Yarra Ranges has a diverse economy of around 10,000 businesses, employing some 35,000 people. Manufacturing continues to represent the single most valuable sector of the economy in Yarra Ranges, yielding $2.8 billion in regional output. Other key sectors in Yarra Ranges are construction, property and business services and retail trade. Agriculture (including wine making) also remains an important sector of the economy (ABS, Census, 2006).

The Shire, and in particular the ‘Yarra Valley’, is gaining local and international recognition as a fine food and wine producing area. Each year, over 2.2 million tourists visit the area, including the wineries of the Yarra Valley and the townships and gardens of the Dandenong Ranges.
In the 2008 review of Vision 2020, the Yarra Ranges community considered the key challenges and opportunities facing the Shire in achieving our vision for the future and came up with a list of ten priority areas that require particular focus. These priorities represent the things that matter most to our community now and that require the greatest attention in the short-term. They are listed and described below.

**Our Priorities**

**Ecological sustainability**

The preservation and enhancement of Yarra Ranges’ natural environment and the sustainable use of resources are at the core of the ecological sustainability priority, particularly in the context of climate change. This includes the desire for greater efforts to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions including encouraging the increased use of renewable energy and green technologies, the provision of natural gas throughout the Shire, localising food production and sourcing, and developing sustainable transport options. The preservation of our natural forests and biodiversity, as well as reduced usage and improved management of water, are also essential.

**Connecting the community**

This priority reflects the desire to increase the level of connection between individuals and local communities across the Shire. It includes the wish to focus effort on interactivity at the neighbourhood level as well as acknowledging the importance of the connections people have through their various social, family and professional networks. Acknowledging and increasing access to local arts and entertainment, sporting clubs, neighbourhood houses and volunteering are seen as central to the development of better community connections, as is increased support for alternative community models.
Council’s role good governance

Council’s responsibilities to the Yarra Ranges’ community and role in contributing to the achievement of **Vision 2020** are central to this priority area. The Yarra Ranges community sees **Vision 2020** as the Shire’s premiere document and wishes Council to undertake balanced decision-making that considers all community voices, as well as playing a greater educative role.

Affordable and sustainable housing

The affordable and sustainable housing priority brings together community concern over the availability of low cost housing in Yarra Ranges with the desire for housing that is more sustainable. This includes increased provision of higher density housing near services as well as planning and policies that encourage sustainable housing. It also highlights the need for a greater range of housing options to be made available in the Shire, covering the needs of young people, older residents and the disadvantaged.

Farming

Acknowledgement of the key role of agriculture in Yarra Ranges and greater encouragement of local food production for local people and businesses are the focus of this priority. This includes allowing structures such as environmental netting on farms, providing greater support for sustainable land management practices and encouraging more farmers’ markets, community gardens and home food production to further encourage sustainability. The farming priority also acknowledges farm based and plantation timber production.

Youth and children

This priority area places importance on improving the way we meet the needs of youth and children to ensure their best possible future. This includes focusing efforts on providing housing and support services to reduce youth homelessness, improving public transport, creating learning and job opportunities, increasing affordable entertainment and recreation opportunities and providing support to parents. Increasing safety and perceptions of safety for children and young people is also critical.
Ageing population

The ageing population priority is concerned with making positive changes in response to the overall ageing of the Shire's population. This includes increasing the recognition of older people as a valuable part of the community, building connections across all age groups, providing localised services that meet the diverse and changing needs of older people and ensuring appropriate affordable housing options are available so that older residents can remain in their communities.

Transport

The transport priority is focused on encouraging a range of innovations to improve transport options, as well as enhancing environmentally friendly transport. This includes increasing and improving public transport, improving linkages between townships and suburbs, making key facilities and services more accessible, facilitating shared private transport, increasing and improving bike paths and walking trails and introducing more efficient cars and buses.

Localising the economy

Developing a strong and resilient local economy that provides local jobs is at the centre of this priority. Key elements include increasing support for home based businesses, enhancing the Shire’s tourism industry, encouraging small business clusters, building relevant job skills and developing a suitable mix of shops that provide for both locals and tourists.

Mental and physical health

The mental and physical health priority emphasises the importance of individual health and wellbeing and the need for the innovative delivery of services to improve the mental and physical health of all Yarra Ranges residents. It focuses on the desire for increased provision and promotion of health and mental health services in local communities including outreach services, improved education about health and mental health issues across the community, greater early intervention programs as well as improved response times for ambulance services.
Achieving the Vision

This document sets out a vision of the Yarra Ranges community for the long-term future, as well as key priority areas identified by the community as needing particular attention in the short term. The real challenge is how to address these priority areas and turn the vision into reality.

Working together

Vision 2020 requires the concerted efforts of the entire Yarra Ranges community to make it a reality.

Individuals, households, groups, organisations, businesses, governments and agencies all have an important role to play in shaping the future of our community. No single organisation alone can ‘deliver on Vision 2020’.

Through the conscious decisions and actions of the whole community, whether big or small, we will be able to make a real difference. And there is a great opportunity to further build on individual efforts by working together as one towards our shared vision of a happy, healthy, safe and prosperous community.

For its part, Council is heavily guided by Vision 2020 in all its activities. Council uses Vision 2020 to inform its planning processes and the development of the Council Plan.

Measuring our progress

Our community has expressed a desire to ‘measure progress' towards Vision 2020. Ideally this means measuring and reporting both effort (what individuals and organisations have done) and outcomes within the community (the state of something and how it changes over time).

The Yarra Ranges Community Indicators Report provides a snapshot of Yarra Ranges’ environment, community and economy to provide information on outcomes within the community and to measure progress towards, or away from, Vision 2020. The first Yarra Ranges Community Indicators Report was produced in 2008 as a measure of progress to date. It also formed a key input to the 2008 review of Vision 2020.

Council, for its part, regularly reports on its efforts towards achieving this community vision. Council produces a Report to the Community about its activities, as well as an Annual Report each year. Given the important role of other organisations and groups in achieving Vision 2020, the capturing of effort by these organisations would further improve the way progress is measured.
Strong, Healthy and Connected Communities

In 2020...

- Yarra Ranges is a Shire of strong local communities working well in a global world
- the Community Link acts as a social, network building, information and service centre for the local community
- an ageing community is supported to live at home or locally
- services are accessible to those who need them
- all sectors of the community can and do participate in decision making
- quality leisure, recreational and cultural activities are available for all
- the community enjoys an active and healthy lifestyle
- each community has a thriving representative group
- Council and the community identify service needs and work with various agencies to ensure delivery
- Council is oriented to facilitating the needs of communities rather than delivering specific services.
Vision for the Shire

In the globalised world of 2020, Yarra Ranges offers a strong sense of local community. The majority of the Shire’s residents still live in the urban areas of the Shire. Others live in small but thriving communities dotted throughout the semi-rural, rural or bushland settings. No matter where they are located, these communities have a strong sense of place and identity, within one Yarra Ranges community. The health, strength and connection of these local communities has been improved over the past 20 years through a sustained and collaborative effort guided by a shared vision for the future.

A key to this improvement has been the Council’s commitment to partnering with the local community to strengthen township groups and encourage ways for the community to come together. An example is the ‘Community Link’ in each town, which acts as the focal point for the community. It is where local citizens go to find out about and access services, get information, offer themselves as volunteers, find out what activities are available and how to join them. It is the link between those in the community who seek and those who offer. The size and location of the ‘Link’ varies from town to town. Each community has decided on the location of its own ‘Link’, which has been established within the existing infrastructure of the town. The drive for the existence of the ‘Links’ has come from the local community, and Council has played an active role in making them a reality. In very small communities the ‘Link’ often takes the form of a well placed notice board. However, in larger centres, the ‘Links’ are part of a larger multi-use complex or ‘hub’ which integrates the provision of a range of services.

Those in need of support are helped by the array of services that can be accessed through the ‘Link’. Families with children are supported across the community. Critical needs in the community, such as housing, employment, transport and medical services are now being effectively managed across the community. The human and health impacts of climate change are also now better understood. Council and other service providers have developed excellent protocols that make sure the system operates at its optimum most of the time. Council has developed a strong partnership with its providers. It takes responsibility for identifying the needs and planning of the services.

The partnership that has developed between all the service providers and the Council has led to significant innovations in delivering health and social services to the community. The various religious and community groups, through their combined efforts, play a significant role in this partnership. This has led to a complete reorientation from a focus on delivering a particular service to a focus on facilitating the needs of a particular community. Community service facilities are well planned, well located, accessible and flexible, meeting a variety of uses. They reflect the research and planning undertaken by Council and others into the needs of specific communities.

Well before 2020 the State Government accepted that the Shire’s natural assets and the citizens’ efforts in improving the lungs of the city were a major contributor to the health of all Melbournians. Yarra Ranges is recognised across the state as an unpolluted environment of cultural and spiritual significance to many people and allows the community to achieve maximum wellbeing. Negative impacts on air and water...
quality have been minimised through years of careful monitoring and planning. The State recognised that the smaller communities were essential to the maintenance of those assets and that there was a cost to the Yarra Ranges community for the protection of them. The State Government granted the Shire ‘social credit’ payments in exchange for the carbon and water quality credits it creates and shares with the wider metropolitan area.

Citizens respect and value the diversity of their community and celebrate the many differences that make local communities such rich and interesting places to be. People have a far greater understanding and acceptance of these differences and through this have strengthened their sense of community. Citizens continue to accept both personal and community responsibility and are actively involved in community affairs.

The Shire’s ageing population is also supported through the provision of age-friendly infrastructure, programs such as U3A and other activities that enable productive, vibrant and resilient ageing in place. Volunteerism, innovation in service delivery and a greater range of appropriate housing options means that most of the aged have been able to stay at home or live locally in quality aged care.

A range of recreation and cultural activities is available to suit all ages, interests and abilities. Community participation in passive and active recreation has been steadily growing since the turn of the century.

Sports clubs such as football, netball, soccer and swimming are widely acknowledged as vital for community connectedness and wellbeing.

The Shire offers great opportunities for young people to undertake activities, providing a productive and positive outlet for the energy and natural risk-taking needs of youth. The Shire’s young people have a role in community decision making. Through programs such as the ‘Young Leaders’, youth are given the encouragement to take an active and keen interest in issues of the Shire and their local community. These experiences are seen as opportunities that will help launch them into becoming healthy adults with a strong sense of ‘self’. They also provide stronger reasons for staying within the region.

The wider community has developed a good understanding and acceptance of young people and the issues they face. Actively connecting young people to communities has become an important investment for the future. The concerning issue of youth homelessness is also being addressed through the provision of affordable housing, job creation and other support programs. Getting out of the local community seems less important than it did 20 years ago.
With the virtual world of technology at one’s doorstep, 50% of the working population now spends at least half of the week working from home. Healthier and more fulfilling lifestyles are supported through a sense of connectedness via the everchanging technology of online social networking media.

The public transport issue has taken on a new dimension. Considerable effort has been made to improve transport, particularly through the use of more innovative, flexible and environmentally friendly systems such as tele-buses and car-pooling. Improvements in local communication have made these systems a working reality and have enabled many communities to become active in addressing many of their own local transport needs.

Personal and community health is recognised as central to the long-term wellbeing of the community. The focus has shifted considerably towards prevention, early intervention and supporting healthy lifestyles. Issues related to mental health are widely recognised, discussed and targeted through a raft of programs. Access to health services has improved dramatically as a result of innovative and mobile outreach services as well as improved public transport options across the Shire. Ambulance response times are comparable to that of our metropolitan neighbours.

Volunteering is a critical foundation to the strength of the Yarra Ranges community, bringing people together and providing immeasurable services that benefit the entire community.

Guiding Principles

- that in the globalised world of 2020, Yarra Ranges will offer a strong sense of community
- that individuals within the community accept responsibility for themselves and their community
- that the community has a role in issues that affect it and is active in the planning for and delivery of services
- that all people have access to quality facilities and services
- that the diverse housing needs of the Shire are catered for
- that the early stages of human development, from early childhood to adolescence, are recognised and valued as an important period of growth towards independence
- that involvement in sport, social and recreational activities is encouraged as essential in developing healthy individuals and communities
- that the aged have the opportunity to grow old and remain productive within and connected to their own community
- that the community and Council has a strong role as facilitators and initiators of partnerships and advocate for the Shire
- that technology is embraced and used as a tool for improving community services and wellbeing
- that people are proud to live in Yarra Ranges and strongly identify with their local community
- that the Shire is a living and dynamic environment that needs involvement, growth and replenishment.
Environmental Stewardship

In 2020...

- the challenges of climate change are being sustainably addressed by all sections of the community: governments, businesses and households
- a healthy environment is valued by the community as critical, and underpins all decisions and actions
- all sectors of the community are more environmentally aware
- the community plays an active role in improving the natural environment
- water is valued as a precious and scarce resource and is conserved accordingly
- catchments and waterways are managed to improve water quality
- a network of bush corridors – ribbons of green along road reserves, trails and creeks – connect bushland remnants on private property to forested public land
- the community has embraced the concept of a zero waste society
- biodiversity is actively conserved and protected across the community
- world-wide recognition of the National Parks and gardens in Yarra Ranges has been achieved
- the Council is an environmentally friendly purchaser.
Vision for the Shire

The natural beauty of the Shire is its greatest asset and in 2020 Yarra Ranges is held up as a national model of biodiversity and sustainable living. By 2020, **climate change has created a far greater awareness of the importance of** ecological sustainability and how areas such as Yarra Ranges contribute to the environmental sustainability and health of the broader global community.

Council has actively led the way in enhancing the **ecological sustainability** of the Yarra Ranges, particularly the protection of the natural environment, water conservation, the promotion of responsible resource use and environmentally sensitive development and business practice. Council’s initiatives have been supported by strong regional and local planning policies which build on the strategic policies set by the State Government.

In the 20 years since the turn of the millennium, the health of the Shire’s **natural environment** has improved considerably. The historic decline of native vegetation cover on private land has been arrested and turned around. From small bush blocks to large farms, residents, landcare groups and farmers actively protect and link bushland remnants on their land, thus helping to create a **network of bush corridors** - ribbons of green along road reserves, trails and creeks - which connect bushland remnants on private property to forested public land. These projects play a vital role in minimising land degradation through soil conservation and erosion control, and acting as buffer zones between pristine bushland and other areas.

Revegetation programs along creeks and riverbanks have led to the steady improvement of instream water quality in the upper catchments of Melbourne’s waterway network. The major improvements have largely been achieved by local communities or ‘Friends Groups’ which, with the support of Council, have each taken on the responsibility for the protection and enhancement of their local environment, creating safe and high quality flora and fauna ‘havens’ for future generations. The importance of understorey vegetation and its role in tree and forest health is now widely recognised due to Council’s Biodiversity Conservation Program.

The **significant biodiversity** of the Shire has been actively conserved and protected through efforts of governments, landholders and the whole community. These efforts have led to improved biodiversity throughout the Shire and have arrested the decline that was evident in the early years of the 21st century. The quality of remnant bush is now an important measure of the value of conservation. Council’s pioneering work in weed spread analysis, vegetation quality measurement and the concept of sustainability assessment is recognised nationally for its contribution to sustainable development and habitat protection. A major breakthrough came when Council provided, via the web, the opportunity for community and Friends Groups to **exchange information**, resources and experience with each other.

**Water** has also become a key focus of the community’s efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment. Water conservation programs, **water sensitive urban design**, greater community awareness and concern have led to a significant reduction in water usage in all sectors of the community.
Water is valued as a precious and scarce resource. The quality of water entering and passing through the Shire has been dramatically improved through innovative catchment management approaches, sustainable farming and stormwater and wastewater interventions. The Shire boasts some of the healthiest waterways in the country.

The problem of weeds, a significant issue in 2000, has been considerably reduced through intensive weed control programs introduced under the Shire's Weed Management Strategy in 2005. These programs now extend beyond high value road reserves to all areas of the Shire including private land. Landowners understand the negative impact of weeds on the environment and have been supported to purchase and plant indigenous and lower impact species.

The program was given further impetus when local ‘Friends Groups’ became the driving force in connecting Council and community efforts. As environmental leaders in the community they share knowledge and experience with local school children and emerging young adults such as the Young Environment Protectors and the Learning for Sustainability programs. Both programs have made environmental care a badge of honour among the young.

The collaboration of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, VicRoads and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) with Council has led to a holistic approach in managing issues of air quality, water quality, wastewater disposal, fire prevention and control and biodiversity conservation.

As the global community has come to accept the seriousness of climate change, world-wide efforts of international and local communities has led to profound changes in our human behaviour and day-to-day activities. These include the way that communities produce and use energy, and emit wastes into the environment.

The Council has inspired local knowledge and action to reduce the impact of climate change, and has shown the way through these considerable changes.

Community knowledge of the natural environment has been significantly enhanced through a number of initiatives, which the Council has shared in as a sponsor. This has included wider ranging environmental education programs run and promoted by Council and through the Birdsland Environmental Education Centre and other facilities. These have included the new online residents’ kit, a joint effort of the local real estate industry, community groups and State Government departments. This has led to a dramatic increase in awareness of the issues associated with living in the various parts of the Shire. As a result, owners of bush blocks are educated in the value of the indigenous flora and fauna. Owners are also better at planning and improving their dwellings with reference to the environment, energy efficiency, resource use, protection from natural disasters and wastewater pollution control. This has led to the dramatic reduction of individual and our collective ecological footprint on the natural environment.

The implementation of waste minimisation and resource recovery strategies, together with extensive community-based education programs has resulted in the community embracing the concept of a zero waste society. The community management of green waste has been central to these efforts.
Local communities throughout the Yarra Ranges have continued to place considerable importance on clean air for a wide range of environmental, health, economic and amenity reasons. High impacts on air quality have been reduced through changed practices, innovation and improved technologies. **Energy initiatives**, such as the promotion and use of clean and renewable energy and the facilitation of community energy audits, has created a cleaner and more energy efficient community. Natural gas is now provided to households across the Shire.

The Council is also well known for its initiatives in encouraging the use of solar power and other renewable energy sources in a variety of applications. The manufacturing and farming practices of the Shire reflect the increased community awareness for the need to apply sustainable business and agricultural practices. There is a much better appreciation among farmers of the impacts of agricultural activity on the community and the environment. **Sustainable farming practices** are widely followed throughout the Shire.

The communication of environmental initiatives and achievement has been essential to the success of Council’s programs. This has been achieved by way of the local print media, local community radio and via the web. The environmental improvements of the past two decades has resulted in **world-wide recognition** of the significance of the National Parks and gardens in Yarra Ranges, in particular William Ricketts Sanctuary and the Yarra and Dandenong Ranges National Parks. This has had both an economic benefit from increased tourism and a longer-term social benefit which is reflected in the increased pride of the community; securing the long-term protection of these significant sites.

Communities, including individuals, households, businesses, organisations and governments have developed a great sense of personal responsibility for their decisions and actions that impact on the environment. This responsibility has reinforced the concept of environmental stewardship on both public and private land.
Guiding Principles

- that the natural environment is one of the Shire’s most important assets and will be preserved and enhanced
- that biodiversity will be maintained and improved
- that water is used as a precious resource
- that development should not be at the expense of the environment
- that the intent and policy directions of the Regional Strategy Plan and Melbourne 2030 are supported and underpin strategic decision making
- that the planning scheme is strategic in its approach and has a focus on environmental, social and economic sustainability
- that the community should be supported and encouraged to take a leading role in enhancing the Shire’s environmental sustainability
- that the community needs to be educated and encouraged in caring for the natural environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- that the use of indigenous plant species should be encouraged
- that indigenous custodianship of the land and the principles behind it are understood, recognised and respected
- that sensitive economic growth and social prosperity is dependent on environmental sustainability

- that the community and Council have a strong role as facilitators and initiators of partnerships to address environmental issues
- that the community and Council strengthens its role as an environmental advocate, particularly on water and wastewater issues
- that the community and Council are committed to the principles of waste minimisation and resource recovery
- that Council embraces and encourages the use of new technology, which improves environmental sustainability.
In 2020...

- agricultural and environmentally sensitive land is protected from urban growth
- a range of suitable housing options is available to suit changing community needs
- infrastructure is more sustainable and suitable to community needs
- the community has embraced the concept of a zero waste society
- pedestrian and riding paths link townships, improving access, safety and social connectedness
- new developments adopt sustainable design principles, reinforcing a strong sense of identity, protecting and enhancing neighbourhood character of localities within the Shire
- water and wastewater issues are addressed
- in partnership with stakeholders the heritage value of assets is recognised and protected
- the community plays an active role in improving the built environment
- necessary technological infrastructure is in place
- new and/or redeveloped infrastructure for Council facilities utilises sound urban design principles.
Vision for the Shire

In 2020, the built environment reflects the needs, values and aspirations of the community. The local community is an integral player in decisions regarding the physical infrastructure that supports their lifestyle. An integrated approach to planning and good urban design has been reflected in a built environment that is consistent with sustainability principles, local neighbourhood character and the natural environment. The negative environmental impact of buildings and infrastructure has radically been reduced over the past two decades. All aspects of the built environment now meet good urban design and environmental performance standards.

The urban growth boundary (UGB) ‘hard edge’ has been maintained and continues to be universally accepted by the community. This fixed boundary has ensured the protection and preservation of the Shire’s high value rural landscapes and amenity. It has supported the community’s desire to contain urban sprawl. This ‘hard edge’ has not resulted in stopping appropriate development in defined urban areas. While the population of the Shire has stayed relatively constant since 2001, the number of dwellings in the Shire has increased significantly. This has been supported to meet the needs of changing family structures, lifestyles and an ageing population.

The increase in dwellings has been achieved within existing urban areas and without loss to local neighbourhood character, damage to the environment or quality of living. Council, early in the new millennium, acknowledged the projected changes in housing demand and took proactive steps to meet those demands. Key residential development and redevelopment sites were identified to offer opportunities for the diversification and high intensification of residential stock. As a result of this work medium and high density housing is clustered in and around activity centres that offer convenient access to community, commercial and public transport services.

The residential areas in the Shire’s suburbs and townships are valued by the local community, and admired by others, for their successful integration of houses, gardens and canopy trees. The Shire in 2020 provides a diverse range of affordable housing types which play a valuable role in attracting and retaining specific population groups, particularly younger people, and in providing suitable housing alternatives for the Shire’s growing older population. Housing is also more accessible. Proactive planning and decisions have resulted in improving the options for the elderly to age within their community and also increased the levels of public housing to meet the needs of disadvantaged residents. Schemes that enable the disadvantaged and unemployed to participate in housing development are also in place.

Council has taken an active role in encouraging the design and development of energy efficient housing as well as houses that take fire and other environmental hazards into account. Innovative strategies for minimising the consumption of natural resources and production of waste have been embraced by the community. High quality urban design, particularly focusing on town centres has, by 2020, significantly
improved the character and vibrancy of the Shire’s townships. The infrastructure servicing townships reflect the neighbourhood **character of the local areas** and strengthens the **heritage and social values of the local community**. Green spaces have been preserved throughout urban areas, providing important social and recreational areas.

In 2020, heritage value is attributed, not only to buildings, but also gardens, trees and broad landscapes. Valuing and preserving local heritage has strengthened the identity of local communities and provides a point of interest for residents and tourists alike. The nature of rural townships have changed in order to become more sustainable communities. Many of the business, social and housing needs of the surrounding rural areas are now met through townships.

Functional improvements to townships such as pedestrian path networks, improved community meeting places, better transport and safer roads have strengthened the Shire’s townships, making them a crucial element of the sustainability of Yarra Ranges. Improved **pedestrian and cycling access** throughout the Shire have enabled greater mobility and have supported improvements in community health, safety, mobility and social connections. Pedestrian mobility is now far more prominent and important to communities than in the past. Community safety has been improved through the environmental design of buildings, infrastructure and public places.

In 2020 water is a precious resource. **Water conservation and management** is an important consideration in the building and upgrading of dwellings and other facilities. The community, in partnership with key agencies, has steadily taken up the challenge of improving the quality of our waterways and management of run-off from agricultural properties. The critical issue of **sewage and wastewater management across the Shire**, particularly in the Dandenong Ranges, has been addressed. Council has played a significant role in bringing together key stakeholders, community groups and agencies to work in partnership to address these issues.

**Guiding Principles**

- that the adoption of sustainable design principles are fundamental to ensuring new development meet community needs, and enhances the Shire’s special attributes, and improves economic and social success
- that the demand for a greater choice of housing will continue and be met within existing urban boundaries
- that the urban growth boundary is accepted and maintained
- that development is socially, economically and ecologically sustainable
- that stewardship of assets and the approval of developments is based on the Shire’s overall long term welfare and sustainability
- that the intent and policy direction of the Regional Strategy Plan and Melbourne 2030 are supported and underpin strategic decision making particularly in relation to urban containment and protection of green wedge areas
- that local heritage should be supported and reflected in the built environment
- that Council has a leading role in bringing key stakeholders together to address township development and infrastructure issues
- that high and medium density residential development should be focussed around existing activity centres
- that the green and leafy character of the Shire’s other residential areas is retained.
Local Economy and Tourism

In 2020...

- economic sustainability is valued by the community
- agricultural land is protected from urban growth and farming is recognised as an important contributor to the Yarra Ranges economy
- value-added local produce is an important part of the local economy and is sold locally and globally
- more residents are employed locally
- local retailing centres have specialised and thrive in an e-commerce environment
- Yarra Ranges is locally and internationally recognised as a premium tourism destination
- a diverse range of tourism attractions and products are marketed in a coordinated way
- the tourist providers are committed to the sustainability of the environment
- information for tourists is accurate, accessible and of high quality
- tourist providers work closely with the local producers, who form part of the tourism attraction of the Shire of Yarra Ranges.
Farming is highly valued and productivity has steadily increased. This has been achieved through the adoption of sustainable farming practices, innovative leasing and joint venture partnerships. The community respects the right to farm and understands that living within or on the edge of a productive rural area also involves living with the sights, sounds and smells associated with agricultural activity.

With global economic and climatic changes, agriculture is also constantly changing. Yesterday’s windmill is today’s wind turbine. Dairy farms have been replaced with vineyards and orchards covered with hail netting. Provided that the environment is looked after, the activities and changes that go with productive agriculture are generally accepted. In 2020, farm based and plantation timber production is seen as an agricultural crop or carbon sink.

Local ‘value adding’ is also regarded as an integral part of the rural economy. Upstream processing of local rural produce has dramatically increased in appropriate locations. Council and the community have recognised that this is fundamental to the growth of local investment, local research and development, and subsequently, local jobs.

The efficiency with which irrigation water is used in agriculture has increased significantly now that there is a cap on water allocations, and the use of this water has moved to the highest value industries. Environmental management systems, that are also profitable, have increased the sustainability of farms and significantly reduced the impact of agricultural run-off on streams and waterways.

Vision for the Shire

The Shire’s economic growth up to 2020 has been fundamental to the overall health and success of the community. Production and investment decisions have been made within an agreed sustainability framework and, as a result, the environment and local community prospers with every economic increase.

In 2020, the Shire is more self-sufficient and capable of employing, within its boundaries, a far greater proportion of its residents. Job opportunities, particularly for the youth, have been created. Business confidence is high and the local economy is thriving. A widely diverse range of businesses and industries make up the Yarra Ranges economy. It is this diversity that enables communities throughout the Shire to thrive. Innovation across these industries has been central to their ability to change and meet emerging demands.

Agriculture continues to be the primary major activity in rural areas underpinning a strong rural economy. Agricultural activities cover almost the same acreage as they did at the turn of the millennium. The Shire’s agricultural land is highly valued by the community and has been protected for rural use. Council has resisted pressure for the subdivision of rural land for urban or rural residential development, the loss of productive agricultural land and the clearing of bushland for agricultural production.
Demand for **organic products** has grown significantly with organic food production becoming widespread and mainstream. This has further strengthened the Shire’s clean and green reputation. Community gardens have been established across the Shire and local food production is seen as vital for the **reduction of food miles** as well as providing valuable employment opportunities.

Internet shopping and e-commerce have impacted heavily on retailers. As a result, strip shopping centres have had to review their purpose and develop a new market focus. Those that have prospered attribute their success to high quality personalised service and a product range that caters for a niche market or relies on personal shopping.

Active **traders’ groups** have become an important element of thriving retail precincts, developing joint marketing programs. The ongoing improvement to local retail precincts and community spaces has been central to the growth of local economies, sense of community and pride of places major business developments in townships have been carefully managed between community, Council and developers to strengthen local character and amenity.

Around the turn of the century it became evident that a key area of economic growth for the Shire was the ‘**business of the environment**’. Global trends, coupled with a proactive local approach, have resulted in a thriving ‘environmental industry’ sector in the Shire in 2020. Swinburne University and the Council, through a ‘Growth and Development Partnership’, have played a leading role in training and advising local businesses. Swinburne has also partnered major producers in the development of a local research institute focusing on ecologically sustainable industries. As a result, local investment in research and development has significantly increased, new business opportunities have been created and several of the emerging ‘green industries’ have been attracted to the Shire.

**Telecommuting** and the shift to flexible work places have also had a significant impact on the local economy. Many residents have homes wired to their offices, work some days each week at home and go to the ‘office’ only two or three days a week. Professionals are able to conduct their global business on-line from offices or residences in the Shire. Many residents own and operate their own home-based businesses, which are either ‘stand alone’ or more often form part of strategic alliances or supplier chains.

The **industrial areas** of the Shire have continued to operate successfully and provide supporting services and employment for local communities. They have benefited from the networking and training support provided through the Council and have become significant players in the local and global market. A significant 21st Century industry has emerged through the trading of ‘carbon credits’. This has resulted in previously cleared land becoming more viable as a source of ‘carbon credits’ through the planting of trees, indigenous species predominantly.
Businesses have adopted innovative ways of meeting their employment needs in response to a much-changed labour market. This has included creative approaches to working with the unemployed to develop their skills and abilities. Seasonal employment demands in rural industries have been supported through accommodation and other measures.

Volunteering continues to be an important part of the local economy and communities, providing substantial amounts of unpaid labour. Volunteers are both recognised and supported as critical in modern society.

In 2020, tourism is integral to the prosperity of Yarra Ranges, playing a critical part in the lives of the community. It provides significant economic benefits and is essential to the protection of the Shire’s natural environment and cultural heritage.

Over the past 20 years tourism has created real wealth in the community. Tourism and its related activities are major employers. This has been achieved without loss of local community identity and amenity.

This growth has been possible because of an increase in the range of options and facilities offered to tourists. In 2020, overnight stays by tourists are an accepted practice. They know that the Shire has so much to offer that it cannot be fully appreciated in a single day’s visit. Proximity to Melbourne means they can spend less time travelling and more time enjoying their visit. Visitors now have the choice of a variety of accommodation options to suit their budget and the type of experience they seek.

Variety is the hallmark of tourism within the Shire. Tourism operators in Yarra Ranges have come to understand the benefits of having one region which is so diverse and offers such a wide range of experiences to tourists. While focusing on their own business, operators actively promote other tourism opportunities within the Shire.

The once disparate promotional efforts are streamlined and coordinated through a single tourism peak body. This group has worked closely with State Government marketing organisations to promote, globally, the Shire’s attractions. Information about the Shire’s natural, artistic, cultural and heritage assets is widely accessible for tourists visiting the region for a diverse tourism experience. Potential tourists worldwide regularly visit the Shire’s tourism website to take virtual tours of the region and plan their actual visits.

Eco-tourism and backpacker tours have proved increasingly popular and the Shire offers a great range of walking paths. Trails are packaged so visitors can spend weeks rather than nights walking in the region and appreciating the many unique attractions.

By 2020, food and wine tourism has been integrated and forms a major attraction in the region. Since the end of the last century food producers and winemakers have come together to provide improved opportunities to sample the region’s exceptional range of quality food and wine experiences.
The development and adoption of a strong regional brand and quality of tourism experiences have played a key part in the worldwide recognition of the Shire.

Marketing co-operatives of small producers representing a range of foods and local produce have been established. They retail their produce locally through ‘produce stores’ established across the Shire. These stores have become multifunctional. They are favourite stop-off points for tourists seeking the world-renowned ‘Yarra Ranges’ suite of produce, or an afternoon tea or light lunch.

Over the past 20 years the great natural beauty of the region has been even further enhanced. Tourist operators have recognised the importance of a healthy environment to the ongoing prosperity of their industry. As a result, some of the wealth generated through tourism has been redirected towards environmental programs for community groups committed to the protection of the natural environment.

The Shire has ensured, through appropriate planning and regulatory controls, that development has occurred in a manner that reflects the environmental and tourism needs of the community, and maintains local amenity.

Guiding Principles

- that the Shire’s long term business success is dependent on maintaining a healthy environment and society
- that every member of the community benefits from a strong local economy
- that small business support and growth are fundamental to the Shire’s economic success
- that local value adding to rural produce is good for the community and that suitable sites are identified
- that the ‘local strip shopping centre’ is essential to maintaining a ‘sense of identity’ within each community and should be enhanced
- that tourism is a business that generates wealth and jobs for our residents and is intrinsically linked to the prosperity of the Yarra Ranges
- that long-term success of the Shire’s tourism industry is dependent on maintaining and enhancing a healthy environment and nurturing the Shire’s rich cultural heritage
- that an increase in overnight stays is necessary to improve the benefits of tourism to the Shire
- that tourism planning and promotion should be generally undertaken on a regional, Shire wide basis, rather than restricted to local areas
- that local youth should be actively encouraged to train and work in the local tourist and hospitality industries.
Arts, culture and Heritage

In 2020...

- the Shire is widely recognised for its cultural heritage and richness
- community members actively participate in cultural experiences
- artistic and cultural expression is an intrinsic part of the everyday life of the community
- arts, culture and heritage play an important role in bringing people together and creating communities
- the Indigenous community is understood, respected and plays an important role in the community
- understanding cultural heritage
- there is a thriving, networked arts community throughout the Shire
- through cultural celebration, the community has far greater understanding and acceptance of each other
- the diverse heritage of the Shire is documented, preserved and celebrated
- the arts and cultural heritage of the Shire are widely recognised for their quality and are major tourist attractions in themselves
- the heritage and culture of communities is well documented and accessible through a variety of sources.
Vision for the Shire

The arts are thriving in the Shire and the community has many opportunities to express its creativity. There exists vibrant artist networks and many opportunities for self expression. Successful lobbying by Council and community groups has succeeded in gaining significant corporate sponsorship for many of the Shire’s local artists and cultural activities.

The general community has embraced the arts as a means of improving sense of identity, social connections and wellbeing. Through arts, the community has been able to express and understand the stories of the different people and places that make up Yarra Ranges which make it such a unique and special place to be.

Public places are used effectively to display and celebrate local art forms and provide an attractive and appealing place for social interaction. The arts have assisted the community to come together and overcome cultural barriers.

Local artists across the Shire regularly come together through networks to share experiences, knowledge and skills. These networks are a foundation of the thriving arts community. The Shire is proud to showcase the diversity and richness of its culture – both past and present. Through a range of targeted initiatives, the profile of arts and heritage within Yarra Ranges has been improved. Active participation in cultural events has assisted the community to become far more understanding, accepting and embracing of diversity and difference.

Involvement in cultural activities of all kinds has become a regular past-time of many families and individuals across the Shire. It has helped the community to understand and celebrate who it is.

The Shire has become an icon for major cultural events, drawing interest and participation from Melbourne’s vast population and international guests. These have included unique cultural partnerships with communities across the globe.

Over the past 20 years, the diverse heritage of the region has been documented including that of the traditional Indigenous communities. In a major initiative, oral histories have been recorded for residents of different communities throughout the Shire. Tourists come to share the experience of the many significant heritage properties and indigenous sites.

The history of their local communities in the Shire has become an important area of study for children in the Shire. Many of those who lead the community were born here and have been imbued with this history. This history has been interpreted in a variety of ways that are both sensitive to local communities and attractive to the tourists.
The cultural heritage of the local Indigenous community is understood, respected and celebrated both within the Shire and further afield. The Indigenous community’s history, connection to the land and rich cultural heritage provides an important link to the past and an important source of information about land stewardship. Published material about the cultural heritage and traditional life of the local Indigenous community is widely available and sought after by residents and visitors alike. Through this improved understanding and recognition, the process of reconciliation has progressed significantly.

The heritage of the Shire’s built form has been mapped and sites of significance have been preserved. These sites are managed in the context of changing and evolving communities.

By developing an appreciation of the heritage of people and places throughout the Shire, the community has been able to better understand and shape its current and future sense of identity.

The thriving involvement and celebration of the arts, culture and heritage in the Shire have become central to community living and have become significant tourism attractions in their own right. These diverse tourism experiences complement the local food and wine, natural environment and iconic attractions.

There is a range of key cultural facilities located across the Shire, which are a central focus for community life. These facilities are highly accessible and provide dynamic entertainment and arts programs. They are the heart of local social life across the Shire.

Guiding Principles

- that the diversity of local art and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued
- that arts provide an opportunity for communities to better understand themselves and celebrate diversity and difference
- that the Shire’s natural heritage is unique and should be valued and protected
- that the identity and local history of Yarra Ranges and its townships should be preserved
- that our indigenous heritage should be fostered and provided with opportunities for expression
- that Council has a role in providing the opportunity for heritage, tourism and environmental groups to get together to share information and find solutions to challenges
- that arts, culture and tourism present a unique tourism experience in Yarra Ranges.
A Living and Learning Community

In 2020...

- learning is valued as a lifelong experience
- learning is both informal and formal
- Yarra Ranges is a learning community
- the facilities have expanded and the learning experiences multiplied
- the community is strengthened through support for the leaders of the next generation
- mentoring has become a valued learning opportunity throughout communities
- the Council is an information broker about where learning experiences are available
- the Council and Swinburne foster research for industry.
In 2020, learning is a **lifelong experience** in Yarra Ranges and the organisations that facilitate learning are an integral and valued part of our community. Learning is the pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons and enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. It is recognised that learning is not confined to the classroom and takes place throughout life and in a range of situations.

**Learning is available in many forms**, both formal and informal, and is accessed through a variety of media including online and face to face. Yarra Ranges is recognised for the diversity of learning experiences it offers. The Council’s Learning Communities Strategy has played an important role in achieving this. The range of community learning facilities, such as neighbourhood houses, learning centres and libraries, has expanded. These facilities play an important role in enabling lifelong learning opportunities at the local community level.

**Our schools** are an integral part of the community they live in, and provide students with the skills and knowledge that enrich their lives and help them to become employable in local and regional industries.

Becoming a ‘**Learning Community**’ has helped the community to gain the flexibility to adapt and meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Both informal and formal learning environments are supported and widely utilised. People understand how existing providers work together to offer a range of learning pathways from early years to schools through to post-secondary education and community/adult learning programs. Service providers are not competitors, rather, they work together in the interests of building community capability.

Through a range of local and global networks, all residents can access information and participate in learning. Through family, friends and other networks, **mentoring** has become an important learning avenue. Passing on and sharing skills, knowledge and experiences has enabled the Yarra Ranges community to maximise the talent it has.

The community has every opportunity to obtain the skills needed to meet the requirements of the jobs available in 2020, many of which did not exist in the year 2000. Through learning opportunities, youth have been able to develop the skills and confidence to become the future leaders and custodians of Yarra Ranges. Swinburne, TAFEs and other accredited providers have been pivotal in all of this, and are at the forefront of promoting new ways of learning. By 2020, education in its own right, is one of the Shire’s major industries.
There is a clear sense that Swinburne, the Council and industry are working together towards common goals. This productive relationship commenced with the signing of the ‘Growth and Development Partnership’ between Swinburne and the Shire in 1999. In 2020 we can easily identify the strong links between business and the educational organisations. Around Lilydale, major companies have established research laboratories that have a direct interface with Swinburne. Businesses look to the educational institutions and neighbourhood houses to educate their staff and provide ongoing training. Students are able to find local employment, which has been created by local industries. For example, local providers offer world class tourism programs supported by a broad range of onsite training programs.

Swinburne and others are also emphasising the development of ecologically sustainable practices which has drawn many of the emerging ‘green industries’ to the Shire.

People have a learning vision and are self-motivated. There is a greater sense of community and our learning has made us a more compassionate and caring society. We are more accepting and non-judgmental. We understand better the importance of inner wholeness and actively seek harmony and wisdom through learning.

Participating in a Yarra Ranges’ learning experience is a major attraction for tourists. For example, walking trails through the natural environment, such as the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail, are well signed and interactive information on the specific trail, is readily available.

Both informal & formal learning environments are supported...

The owners of the local bed & breakfasts encourage visitors to share the cultural and historical experiences that are available in their community. They provide a wealth of promotional information on local artists, historic sites, environmental attractions and other places of interest.

Council’s major role in achieving this vision has been to facilitate the coming together of the community, industry and learning providers to discuss and plan for their own needs. Council has made sure, where appropriate, that the necessary infrastructure and policies are in place to facilitate and encourage learning. It has also celebrated the successes of the learning community and readily promotes events and activities that are working well. Its values are reflected in what it does, not just in what it says.

Learning and education have played an important role in helping the Yarra Ranges community understand and respond to the many emerging challenges that have come about over the last two decades. The community has learned how to live more sustainably in a changed world.
Guiding Principles

- that learning is a lifelong process that builds the self-worth and confidence of both individuals and communities
- that the education system is an important part of building a sense of community
- that learning should be accessible to all that education should be adaptable to the needs of a changing world and society
- that formal educational institutions, while important, are not the only source of valuable learning
- that a diversity of learning experiences should be encouraged
- that community leadership is fostered and opportunities are provided to enable people to realise their full potential
- that new technology should be available and its use encouraged as a tool to improve learning opportunities.
A Safe and Accessible Shire

In 2020 …

- there exists a greater sense of personal security and neighbourhood safety
- people are much better at managing the risks of living in the Shire
- new homes are built to minimise risk
- it is safer to move around the Shire
- public transport and alternative means of transport are effective and utilised
- public health has been improved
- coordination between emergency services works effectively
- Council is a leading advocate of community safety.
with the physical environment in which they live. They also have a greater capacity and willingness to take responsibility for their own personal safety. They no longer assume that if they are at risk, others will solve the problem for them.

Of course the residents of the Shire are still at risk from unavoidable natural hazards such as fire, flood and landslip. These risks have been reduced however, through a combination of responsible fuel reduction, increased community education and changes in housing siting, design and building materials. New homes are built to minimise risk. Houses are designed to retain established vegetation. Tree planting and landscaping, incorporating indigenous trees and understorey, are designed to take account of fire risk, whilst enhancing the landscapes and environment of the Shire.

The various emergency services groups work closely together, each with a special set of skills required in an emergency. All emergency staff are trained to a minimum ‘first level’ response. The framework, within the initial emergency response and recovery processes are delivered, is coordinated by the appropriate emergency service providers working in partnership and supported by Council.

Council has been an ardent safety advocate on behalf of the community which has been widely recognised. Since the turn of the century, it has achieved a number of changes to legislation, including:

- changes to relevant building regulations to minimise risk from fire and landslip
- changes to the requirements and practices of insurance companies to encourage safer building designs.

Underpinning this vision is the work of the Shire and the community in undertaking:

- risk and safety audits for each local community
- the use of the ‘Community Link’ where people can come and volunteer for safety and emergency services
- regular safety awareness and training programs to make sure that members of the community are aware of their risks and take appropriate actions to manage those risks.

In 2020 we have a more empowered and educated community sensitive to its physical and social issues and less reliant on others to do things for them.

Guiding Principles

- that every person has a right to personal and property security
- that a ‘strong sense of community’ and community pride contributes to a safer Shire
- that residents and communities need to take greater personal responsibility for their own safety and need to be provided with the capacity to do so
- that Council has a major role in facilitating local networking between emergency service providers
- that Council has a major role in facilitating networking between key road safety and transport stakeholders
- that improved and accessible walking and riding paths will reduce the community’s reliance on the car and improve community access and health
- that improved communication and education will reduce the risks to individuals and the community
- that Council and the community has a major role in advocating for enhanced and innovative public transport solutions.
In 2020, Yarra Ranges is a safe and accessible place for its citizens. An increased sense of ‘local community’ has contributed to a greater feeling of personal security and neighbourhood safety. People of all ages feel safe to participate in activities outside their homes.

A healthy economy and increased employment opportunities have helped to reduce the local crime rate. Increased communication and accessible health and personal services have also contributed to the greater perception of personal safety.

An increase in the availability of youth activities, programs and affordable entertainment, especially during weekend and holiday periods, has encouraged greater participation by youth in our community. The provision of safe and timely transport such as the Nightrider service has also reduced the risks to our youth.

Council’s commitment to increased road maintenance and successful lobbying for State and Federal funds to upgrade roads, particularly for tourist routes, has made car travel around the Shire safer. Council, in consultation with the community, has implemented a range of initiatives to cater for the safe driving needs of both residents and tourists. These include an introduction of appropriate speed limits to increase road safety to suit our local environment.

While the car remains an important means of travel the community’s reliance on the car has reduced. Alternatives are readily available and have improved the community’s access to social activities, services and jobs. Safe walking and riding paths link communities and town centres. Public transport and community based transport solutions have improved significantly, particularly in servicing rural townships.

Improved public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure has been important to not only improving community safety, but also employment, business development, health, the environment and access to community services. Pedestrian facilities connecting key destinations across the Shire have built community connectedness, enabled the community to move about more freely and safely, reducing the reliance on cars.

Over time, the community has changed its perception of many issues, such as drug and alcohol use, from a safety concern alone to a broader community concern and have adopted different approaches to dealing with them. The impact of hoon behaviour, vandalism and litter on our children’s perceptions of safety have been acknowledged with programs in place to reduce this. Personal safety of community members in their own home is also a priority, with injury and violence issues addressed by the local community.

Improved drainage and sewerage systems have reduced community health risks and improved the health of the waterways and surrounding areas. Residents understand and are prepared for the risks associated
Ecological Sustainability
Connecting the Community
Council’s Role Good Governance
Affordable and Sustainable Housing
Farming Youth and Children
Ageing Population Transport
Localising the Economy
Mental and Physical Health