Yarra City Council

Health and Wellbeing Plan

2025–2029

Welcome

Yarra's Health and Wellbeing Plan sets out the Council's health priorities and strategies for the next four years.

Our goal

We aim to help Yarra residents achieve their highest attainable health and wellbeing at every stage of life.

We aim to improve health equity by providing responsive, inclusive, prevention-focused, culturally safe facilities, programs and services.

Development of our plan

This plan is informed by the best available evidence on the health and wellbeing of our local community, published in the Yarra Health and Wellbeing Profile.

Our one-page Health and Wellbeing Snapshots summarises key health and wellbeing issues.

Our plan has been developed according to the relevant legislation and the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–27.

The priority areas are based on feedback and ideas shared with us via extensive community engagement, including with our Community Working Group and local health and social support organisations that took part in our Health and Wellbeing Expert Reference Group.

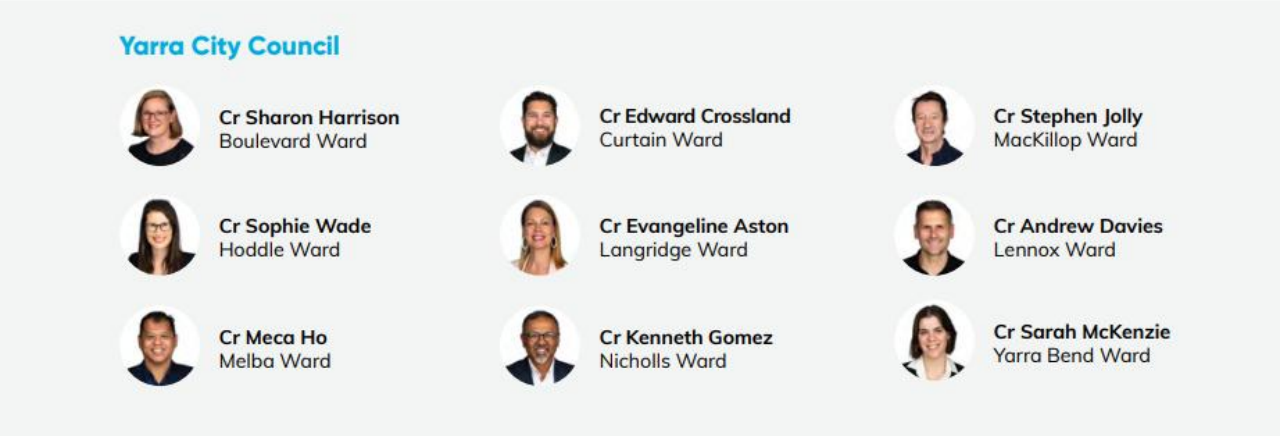
For more detail on the development of our plan, please see our Health Plan Development overview.

How we will deliver

We support our community through programs, services, infrastructure and facilities,

We will develop specific annual action plans and report on our progress through the Council's Annual Report.

We're passionate about our community and working to ensure that Yarra is a place that supports the health and wellbeing of everyone in our city.



Yarra's Health and Wellbeing Plan

Priority areas

The Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 guides the Council's work for the next four years to ensure we support the community to achieve their best possible health and wellbeing.

The plan guides Council's work in protecting, improving and promoting our community's health and wellbeing.

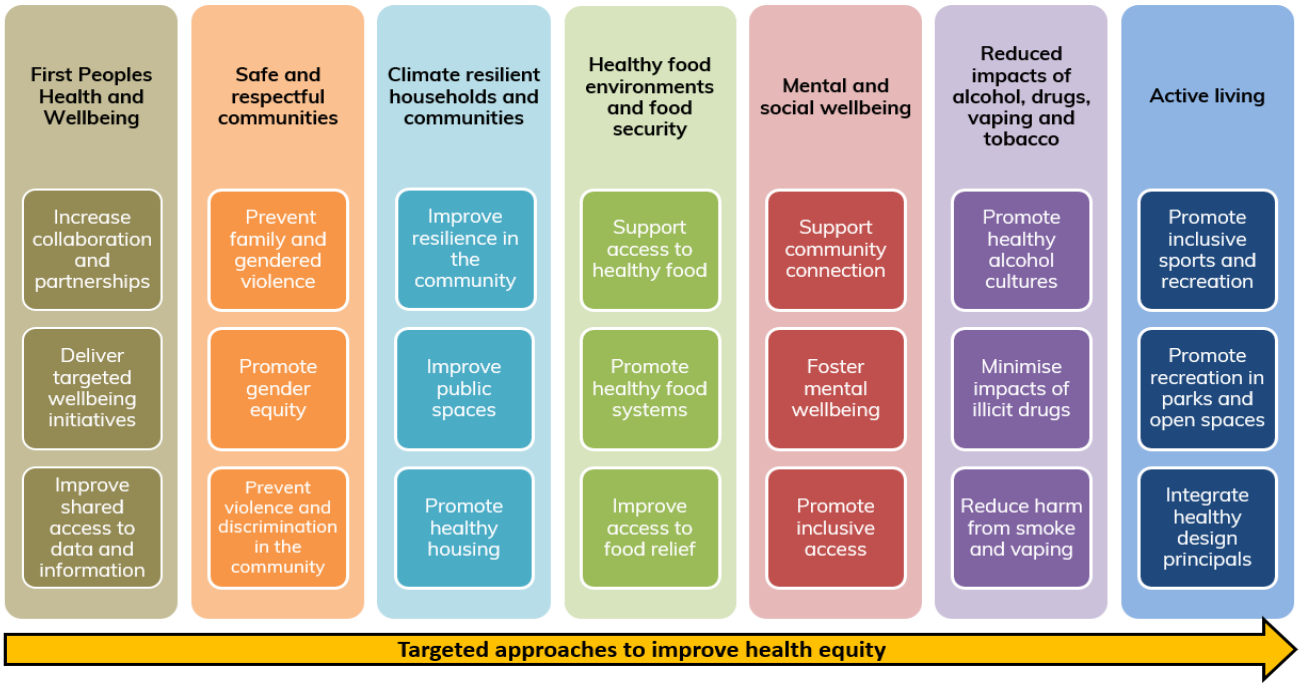
Seven priority areas and related strategies will guide the delivery of a range of initiatives.

Our priority areas are:

- First Peoples' Health and Wellbeing
- Safe and respectful communities
- Climate resilient households and communities
- Food security and healthy food environments
- Mental and social wellbeing
- Reduced impacts of alcohol, drugs, vaping and tobacco
- Active living

We will work towards improving the health and wellbeing of all people in Yarra through targeted actions to promote health equity across all priority areas.

Overview of priorities and related strategies



Monitoring success

Throughout this plan we outline measures to track the direct impact of our work in the community (such as gender equality in allocations to sports clubs). **More detailed measures will be developed in parallel with the annual action plans.**

Council's role in promoting health and wellbeing

Local governments play a crucial role in understanding and addressing their communities' health and wellbeing needs. As the closest level of government, councils have authority over policies and processes that shape neighbourhoods' natural, built, and social environments. This positions councils uniquely to address inequities and improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

Council's core services promoting community health and wellbeing:

- Maternal child and health services
- Youth and family services
- Age and disability services
- Library services
- Recreation and leisure services
- Art and cultural events
- Immunisation services
- Health protection
- Needle and syringe disposal
- Cleansing services (public amenity)
- Waste management and minimisation

Council infrastructure and facilities supporting health and wellbeing:

- Urban design, planning & place-making
- Strategic transport and planning
- Sustainability and biodiversity
- Open space, parks & urban agriculture
- Building and asset management, including footpaths, bike paths and roads

Grants to support health and wellbeing

Yarra City Council also provides a significant material investment through grants to local community groups and initiatives to support health and wellbeing.

Partnerships

Council partners with and advocates for various stakeholders in the City of Yarra who work to promote community health and wellbeing. Council is an important conduit between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments and local health and wellbeing providers and champions.

Yarra Council Plan 2025–2029

Yarra's Council Plan outlines strategic objectives to ensure that Yarra remains a place where people love to live, visit, work and celebrate. The Council Plan includes many priorities to support health and wellbeing, including:

- Greening our streets and public spaces, including expanding the tree canopy.
- Enhance safety in our streets and public spaces.
- Deliver programs to foster connection and support people of all ages and backgrounds to live a healthy and fulfilling life.
- Advocate for external stakeholders to support at-risk communities in Yarra.
- Support families in accessing early years services and programs in their neighbourhood.
- Maintain and develop our cycling network.

Understanding health and wellbeing

Environmental, social and behavioural determinants of health

We recognise that the local environments around each person can strongly influence their health and wellbeing choices, capabilities, and opportunities.

There is strong evidence that the most effective approach to achieving equitable health and wellbeing across a community is to address the social, natural and built environmental conditions that influence health and the social factors and processes that distribute these conditions unequally.

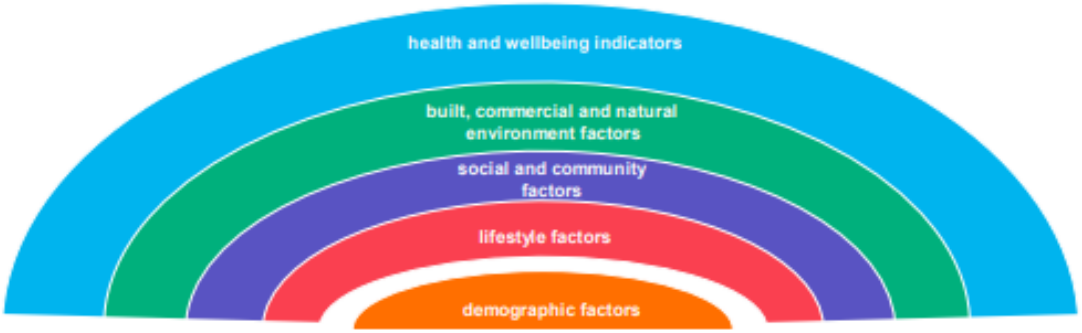


Figure 1: Framework for the social determinants of health

Balancing universal approaches and health equity

We aim to ensure that all community members have the opportunity to achieve good health and wellbeing.

Across all priority areas of the Health and Wellbeing Plan, initiatives will be designed to benefit everyone while also addressing specific needs to ensure equitable outcomes.

Targeting health equity is a strong approach for everyone.

Certain groups experience a disproportionate burden of poor health and wellbeing. Council has the opportunity to address this by implementing tailored, culturally appropriate planning and actions within this plan. By improving the health and wellbeing of those most affected by social, political, and structural determinants of health, we can uplift the health and wellbeing of the entire community.

Figure 2: Interplay between universal and health equity approaches

Priority populations and improving health equity

The following priority groups have been identified as having a greater burden of health and wellbeing challenges:

- First Peoples
- People living with disability
- People who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community
- People living in low-income households
- People who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse

Key age cohorts are:

- Early childhood/families with young children
- Youth (aged 15–24)
- Seniors (aged 50+)

Gender differences in health and wellbeing

Yarra City Council also acknowledges important differences in health and wellbeing by gender. The impact of gender is considered in all policies and programs by conducting Gender Impact Assessments.

Specific approaches to improving health equity

To strengthen our approach across Council, we will invest in:

- Conducting Equity Impact Assessments on policies, services, and programs
- Investing in staff awareness and upskilling
- Reviewing existing programs to improve health equity
- Further developing targeted programs to address gaps

Approach to First Peoples health and wellbeing

Yarra Council is committed to Closing the Gap in First Peoples Health and Wellbeing.

The health and wellbeing of First Peoples is a standalone focus in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP). With over 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in Yarra, and many more connected to the city through work and community ties, Council is committed to partnering with community-controlled and other organisations to close the gap in First Peoples' health and wellbeing.

We will work collaboratively to design and deliver culturally appropriate services that reflect First Peoples' values, knowledge, and aspirations. In partnership, we will help establish and sustain a local network to respond to the health and wellbeing needs of First Peoples in Yarra. Our approach will be grounded in self-determination, ensuring that First Peoples have control over decisions affecting their health.

First Peoples Health and Wellbeing

Our aim

- To contribute to Closing the Gap in health and wellbeing outcomes for First Peoples
- To work in partnership with community-controlled organisations, other service providers and community to design and deliver culturally appropriate services that reflect First Peoples' values, knowledge, and aspirations

Why is this important?

All First Peoples have the right to live and grow in a community that recognises their strengths, sustains their culture, and supports improved health outcomes.

How we will deliver to the community

- Be guided by the Yana Ngargna framework
- Implement commitments under Yarra's Reconciliation Action Plan
- Strengthen cultural safety in maternal and child health and early years services by listening to First People to shape service design and delivery

Strategies and initiatives:

Increase collaboration and partnerships
Partner with community-controlled and other organisations to help close the gap in First Peoples' health and wellbeing
Collaborate to identify shared opportunities, fill service gaps, and strengthen local partnership pathways.
Engage with community-controlled organisations through Closing the Gap sector meetings to identify and progress shared priorities
Deliver targeted wellbeing initiatives
Co-design and deliver initiatives that support First Peoples' health and wellbeing
Strengthen cultural safety across Yarra's programs and services
Improve shared access to data and information
Enhance the quality, access, and relevance of local First Peoples health and wellbeing data.
Support local monitoring and reporting with community-controlled organisations, upholding data sovereignty and community control over data use.

Monitoring success

1. Increased and strengthened partnerships with Aboriginal Controlled organisations to progress Closing the Gap socio-economic outcome areas*
2. Improved cultural safety across Council programs and services, as reflected in feedback from First Peoples organisations and community members

For more information

See our information about Aboriginal Yarra, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and Closing the Gap implementation in Victoria in partnership with Ngaweeyan Maar-oo.

*Aligns with monitoring in the Council Plan

Safe and respectful communities

Our aims

- To prevent family, gendered and sexual violence, which is inclusive of women, girls, gender diverse people, cis-gender and transgender women
- To achieve a community that is gender equitable and free of racism, stigma, ableism, homophobia and transphobia

Why is this important?

Family, domestic and sexual violence is a significant health and welfare issue in Australia, with higher rates of violence and discrimination experienced by the identified priority groups within our community.

Mechanisms to deliver to the community

- Extensive family, youth and children's services programs
- Advisory groups and partnership plans
- Workforce training to detect and respond to family violence

Strategies and initiatives:

Support a community-wide approach to preventing family and gendered violence
Promote healthy relationships through education and awareness
Cross-council coordinated approach
Create and support local partnerships
Promote gender equity
Gender equity across programs and processes
Initiatives to support gender equity
Promote social cohesion
Celebrate and promote diversity in the community
Ensure Council spaces and programs are safe and welcoming
Strengthen organisational networks and relationships in the community

Monitoring success

1. Number of grants awarded to projects that support gender equity and social cohesion programs
2. Improved gender equity in access to sports clubs, facilities and grounds
3. Yarra's diverse communities are well represented across networks and advisory groups

For more information

See our data snapshots on Family and Gendered Violence and Community Safety

Climate resilient households and community

Our aims

- To reduce the impact of extreme weather and climate change on health and wellbeing
- To support residents to live in healthy and thermally comfortable homes

Why is this important?

Climate change affects health and wellbeing through extreme weather and poor air quality, with greater impacts on older people who have existing health conditions or live in lower-quality housing.

Mechanisms to deliver to the community

- Urban greening and open space improvements
- Emergency management during extreme weather
- Via Yarra's neighbourhood houses

Strategies and initiatives:

Improve climate resilience in the community
Support communities to understand and prepare for extreme weather
Collaborate with local organisations to build climate-resilient communities
Provide emergency management
Improve public spaces to support climate resilience
Enhance nature to mitigate the Urban Heat Island effect
Improve public spaces to support climate resilience
Increase biodiversity of the urban forest to support healthier environments
Promote healthy housing
Address the impacts of extreme weather on people sleeping rough
Support to create more thermally efficient homes and developments
Identify opportunities to advocate for improved rental housing standards

Monitoring success

1. People sleeping rough are supported to access places of respite from extreme weather
2. Better awareness of shaded routes and way finding to access essential services, school and public transport
3. Neighbourhood houses and other relevant organisations are well prepared to support their local community during extreme weather events

For more information

See our data snapshots on Climate Resilience and Healthy Housing

Healthy food environments and food security

Our aim

- To improve the availability and affordability of healthy food in Yarra
- To support people experiencing food insecurity to access healthy and culturally appropriate food relief

Why is this important?

Rising living costs make it harder for people to access healthy food, with food insecurity increasing across the community – particularly among low-income households.

How we deliver to the community

- Investing directly in local food relief
- Provide infrastructure to link the community to food relief
- Community gardens/through our neighbourhood houses

Strategies and initiatives:

Support access to healthy food
Support community growing spaces
Promote affordable healthy food options
Empower the community through education and partnerships
Promote equitable and healthy food systems
Investigate options to expand markets and affordable fresh food options
Advocate for improved food systems
Contribute to regional partnerships towards systemic changes
Improve access to food relief
Support and connect local food relief providers
Connect community to food relief options
Provide funding for food relief

Monitoring success

1. Local food relief providers are supported to deliver different forms of food relief
2. The community are supported to develop skills and access public growing spaces
3. The community are supported to access affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food

See our data snapshot on Food security and food environments

Mental and social wellbeing

Our aim

- To improve social connection and reduce loneliness in the community
- To increase access to the services and facilities that support mental health and wellbeing

Why is this important?

Social isolation and exclusion are linked to serious health risks, while social inclusion and connection can improve mental and physical wellbeing by fostering a sense of belonging and community.

How we deliver to the community

- Volunteering programs
- Youth hubs, programs and services
- Grants programs

Strategies and initiatives:

Support community connection
Partner with community organisations to deliver programs
Provide spaces and programs to foster community connection
Support and deliver loneliness reduction initiatives
Foster mental wellbeing
Provide equitable opportunities for civic participation
Promote local mental health and wellbeing support services
Advocate for more inclusive mental wellbeing services in Yarra
Promote inclusive access
Strengthen processes to identify barriers to access
Embed inclusive practices across services, events and programs
Ensure facilities and spaces are accessible and inclusive

Monitoring success

1. More of our community feel connected to community life*
2. More people have access to services and places which support their health and wellbeing*

For more information

See our data snapshot on Mental and social wellbeing

*Aligns with monitoring success in the draft Council Plan

Reduce impacts of alcohol, drugs, vaping and tobacco

Our aim

- To reduce the harms related to the use of alcohol, drugs, vaping and tobacco
- To reduce the impacts of intoxication on the broader community

Why is this important?

Yarra has relatively high rates of binge drinking, smoking, vaping, and drug use – major risk factors for preventable illness and death that carry significant health, social, and economic impacts for individuals and the broader community.

How we deliver to the community

- Yarra's local law on public drinking
- Enable intoxication outreach through service commissioning
- Yarra's youth services

Strategies and initiatives:

Promote healthier alcohol cultures
Promote a safer night-time economy
Promote the responsible service of alcohol
Promote utilisation of existing and emerging alcohol-free spaces and programs
Minimise the community impacts of illicit drugs
Advocate for more responsive recovery and rehabilitation services
Strengthen enhanced outreach and neighbourhood community policing
Proactively engage with local health and wellbeing agencies to promote more responsive and effective services
Reduce harm from smoking and vaping
Promote smoke and vape-free environments across shared public spaces
Help raise awareness of tobacco and vaping harms and promote pathways to cessation for young people and priority populations

Monitoring success

1. Yarra's liquor licensees are supported to create a safer night-time economy
2. Yarra has strong partnerships with local health and wellbeing agencies
3. Increased visibility of smoke and vape free environments

For more information

See our data snapshots on Alcohol and drugs and Smoking, tobacco and vaping

Promote active living

Our aim

- To ensure our community is supported to be physically active in a way that suits their needs, lifestyle and preferences
- To actively support physical activity for our priority population groups who may face additional barriers to being active

Why is this important?

Active living supports health and reduces the risk of chronic disease, but some community members face barriers and have fewer opportunities to stay active. Creating environments that promote physical activity helps everyone stay healthier and more connected.

How we will deliver to the community

- Sporting grounds, courts, pavilions and pitches
- Sports clubs
- Parks and open spaces

Strategies and initiatives:

Promote inclusive physical activity, sports and recreation
Deliver and support programs to encourage recreation
Deliver targeted programs to meet needs of priority populations
Improve inclusion and accessibility in sports clubs

Promote recreation in parks and open spaces
Create spaces that are welcoming, flexible and safe
Infrastructure to suit different abilities and preferences
Promote movement and connection in Yarra's diverse natural spaces

Integrate healthy design principals to support active living
Deliver safe, connected and comfortable opportunities active transport
Advocate for improvements in accessibility of public transport services and infrastructure
Reduce barriers to movement for all members of the community

Monitoring success

1. More people with greater access to green space nearby*
2. Transport networks are better connected and accessible*

For more information

See our data snapshot on Active living

*Aligns with monitoring success in the draft Council Plan

Acknowledgement of Country Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

This publication is available in alternative accessible formats on request.

Electronic copy PDF versions of this report can be downloaded from yarracity.vic.gov.au

National Relay service TTY 133 677 then (03) 9205 5555 or relayservice.gov.au

Speak to us in your language:

Use our interpreter service to speak to us in a language other than English.

Call our interpreter service: 03 9280 1940

Yarra City Council PO Box 168, Richmond, VIC 3121 9205 5555

info@yarracity.vic.gov.au

yarracity.vic.gov.au

Customer service centres

Richmond Town Hall 333 Bridge Road, Richmond

Collingwood Town Hall 140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford