Draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Stage 3 - Community Engagement Report

This report provides information on the community consultation for the draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan project and reports on the engagement outcomes. The consultation opened on Friday 11 July and closed at 9am on Monday 11 August 2025.

Overview

Project background

In line with the Local Government Act 2020, the following strategic plans are legislatively required to be reviewed and developed using deliberative engagement principles and practices and each Council's Community Engagement Policy:

- Council Plan
- Community Vision
- Asset Plan
- Long-Term Financial Plan

The engagement approach that has already been undertaken for all documents listed above has also been undertaken for the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. This approach has included:

Stage 1: Social Research and broad community engagement via Your Say Yarra online engagement platform and community pop ups – capturing both a baseline understanding from a representative sample and a broad understanding of our community's expectations and priorities for Yarra.

Stage 2: Deliberative process – representative community working group deliberating over a specific dilemma and providing recommendations for Council's consideration

The final stage took place from Friday 11 July to 9am on Monday 11 August 2025. Within this stage, the draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan was available for community feedback. This consultation happened concurrently with the consultation on the draft Asset Plan and draft Community Infrastructure Plan. This followed the adoption of the Council Plan, Community Vision Reflection and Update and Financial Plan in June 2025.

The information in this community engagement report only relates to that stage of engagement.

In addition to the public engagement work, Council convened a Health and Wellbeing Expert Reference Group to support the development of the draft Plan. This was a series of workshops with 20 local expert stakeholders in health and wellbeing organisations to discuss recommended priorities and recommended roles and actions.

Objectives of this engagement

1. Inform the community to the purpose of the draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the work done to date to inform its creation.
2. Gather comments from the community on the draft Plan before it is presented to Council for adoption.
3. To make the engagement as accessible and inclusive as possible to allow everyone in the community an opportunity to participate.
4. To share with participants how their feedback helped contribute to the final decision made by Council.

Level of community influence

1. Community comments on the draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan were considered for inclusion.

Engagement methods:

- Online survey tool hosted through Your Say Yarra engagement platform
- 2 x place-based pop-ups at the following locations:
    - Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House Twilight Market opposite 9 Belgium Avenue in Richmond on Monday 4 August from 3pm to 5pm
        - This was a shared event with Community Infrastructure Plan and Asset Plan engagements
    - Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library on Saturday 9 August from 11am to 1pm

Engagement question:

Do you have any comments on the draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan?

Engagement reach

Engagement promotion:
Social media channels (including social media advertisements) reaching over 1100 people.
Council email newsletters including Yarra Life and Your Say Yarra email newsletter. This reached a total of 9190 subscribers.
Promoted via Yarra News which is distributed to every household in Yarra (over 60,000 properties).
News story on Yarra City Council's website and promotion on homepage.
Postcards and other printed collateral available at events and postcards were distributed to 22 Council venues. These include town halls, neighbourhood houses, seniors' centres, libraries and leisure centres.

Your Say Yarra project page:

The success of the Your Say Yarra page is tracked against the following metrics:

- **Views** - The number of times the page was seen.
- **Visitors** – The number of unique visitors that saw the page.
- **Responses** – The number of feedback responses that were submitted online.

Views	Visitors	Responses submitted online
417	241	23

In person engagement opportunities:

In-person session (including date and location)	Approximate number of people we spoke to	Responses
Pop-up information session at Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House Twilight Market on Monday 2 August from 3pm to 5pm • This was a shared event with Community Infrastructure Plan and Asset Plan engagements • Vietnamese and Mandarin Bicultural Liaison Officers and Interpreters were present for this session.	21	3 responses received through online survey on Your Say Yarra (with the assistance of the interpreters in attendance) 3 responses received anecdotally during conversations with community members
Pop-up information session at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library on Saturday 9 August from 11am to 1pm	23	13 responses received anecdotally during conversations with community members
TOTAL	44	19 (16 interactions recorded by officers, 3 via YSY)

Engagement results

Who did we hear from?

46 responses were collected in total during the consultation period.

Demographic data was collected via the 23 online copies of the engagement tool. Demographic data was not collected for the 23 responses collected anecdotally during in-person information sessions.

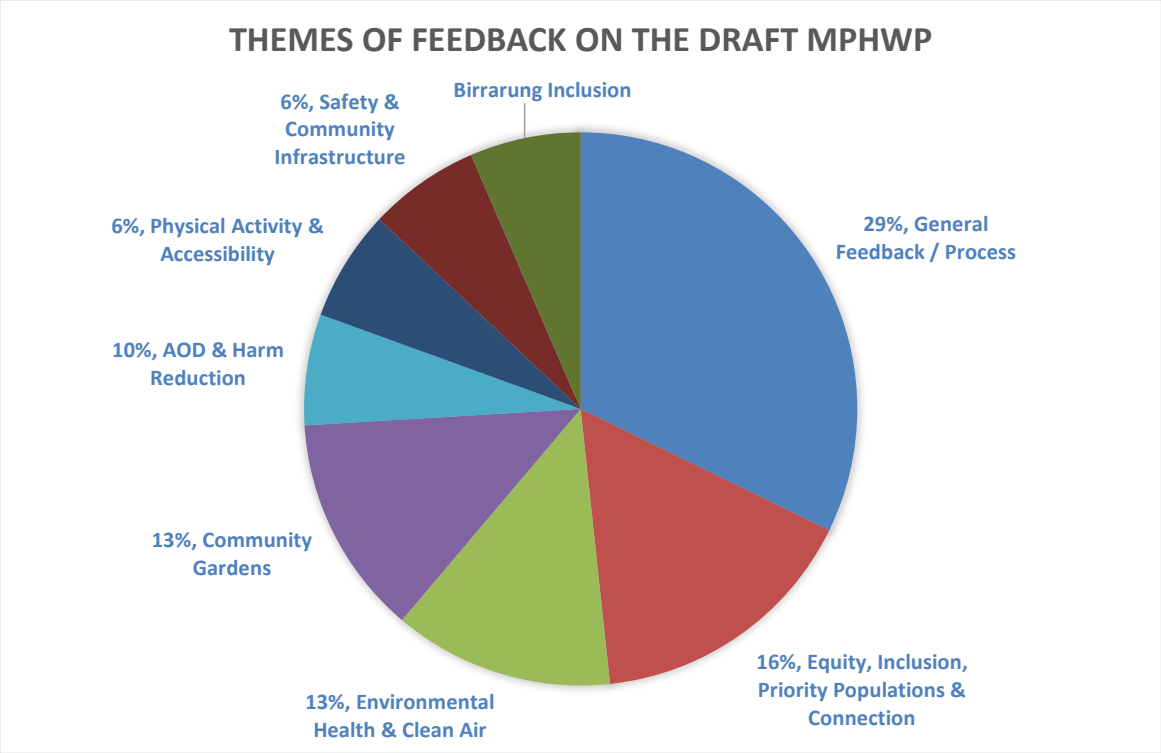
What's your connection to Yarra? *Please note: Respondents could select multiple options.*	Numbers	Percentage
Live in Yarra, in a property I own (either outright or with a mortgage)	15	65.22%
Live in Yarra, in a property I rent	5	21.74%
Own a property in Yarra but live outside of Yarra	0	0%

Work in Yarra	6	26.09%
Own a business/business occupier in Yarra	2	8.70%
Study in Yarra	1	4.35%
None of the above	0	0%
I prefer not to say	0	0%
What is your housing situation?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Own home	16	69.57%
Private rental	1	4.35%
Public housing	4	17.39%
Community housing	0	0%
Temporary accommodation	0	0%
I prefer not to say	2	8.70%
What best describes your household type?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
I live alone	7	30.43%
Couple without children	6	26.09%
Couple with children	6	26.09%
One parent household	1	4.35%
Group household	0	0%
I prefer not to say	3	13.04%
Other	0	0%
What gender do you identify as?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Man	7	30.43%
Woman	13	56.52%
Self-described	1	4.35%

I prefer not to say	2	8.70%
What is your age range?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Under 11	0	0%
12 to 17	0	0%
18 to 24	0	0%
25 to 34	1	4.35%
35 to 49	3	13.04%
50 to 59	3	13.04%
60 to 69	11	47.83%
70 to 84	3	13.04%
85 and older	1	4.35%
I prefer not to say	1	4.35%
What suburb do you live in	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Abbotsford	3	13.04%
Alphington	0	0%
Burnley	1	4.35%
Carlton North	1	4.35%
Clifton Hill	4	17.39%
Collingwood	3	13.04%
Cremorne	0	0%
Fairfield	1	4.35%
Fitzroy	2	8.70%
Fitzroy North	1	4.35%
Princes Hill	0	0%

Richmond	4	17.39%
I live outside of Yarra	3	13.04%
Select all that apply. I am.... *Please note: Respondents could select multiple options.*	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Someone who speaks a language other than English at home.	3	13.04%
A person who was born overseas.	5	21.74%
A person living with a disability.	5	21.74%
A member of the LGBTIQA+ community.	3	13.04%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	0	0%
None of the above.	9	39.13%
I prefer not to say.	3	13.04%

Engagement Results



Example of how to present responses to long text or short text questions that have resulted in changes.

Feedback Theme 1: General Feedback	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Comments in this category expressed a broader sentiment and support regarding particular priorities. • Clarification of wording or meaning • General support for Plan • Particularly supportive of the healthy housing priority • Early childhood and families are important	In response to feedback, a change has been made to increase clarity to an initiative under the **'Safe and Respectful Communities'** priority area. **We changed the initiative:** '*Cross-council coordinated approach*' to '*Enable timely and appropriate referrals between essential service points.*' (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 7).

Feedback Theme 2: Equity, Inclusion, Priority Populations & Connection	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Comments in this category expressed support for priority populations, inclusion and health equity: • Importance of priority populations (CALD, low-income households) • Consider needs of women over 50 who are at greater risk of homelessness • Importance of intersectionality • Recognise a seniors card for Yarra Leisure memberships • Need more small group programs for social connection	In response to feedback, two changes were made to strengthen initiatives under the **'Safe and Respectful Communities**' priority area. **We changed the initiative:** '*Gender equity across all programs and processes*' to '*Evaluate and foster gender equity across all programs and processes*'. **We changed the initiative:** '*Initiatives to support gender equity*' to '*Deliver targeted initiatives to support gender equity*'. Specific actions to support priority populations and health equity will be included as part of the annual operational plan. (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 7). Specific concerns about single and divorced women over 50, who face higher risks of insecure housing and homelessness, have been noted. No change to the Plan is required, as this issue is already addressed through Council's Social and Affordable Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, and operationally

	through the Yarra Zero Program, which aims to end rough sleeping. Feedback regarding Seniors Card recognition at Yarra Leisure centres has also been noted. While the Seniors Card is accepted for casual visits, ongoing membership concessions are limited to holders of means-tested cards such as the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card and Health Care Card.

Feedback Theme 3: Environmental Health & Clean Air	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Comments in this category expressed support for priority populations, inclusion and health equity: • Stronger action on supporting climate resilience • Address air pollution from wood-fired heaters • More smoke and vape-free areas needed	In response to feedback on expanding smoke and vape free areas, we note that the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan already includes the initiative of: *'Promote smoke and vape-free environments across shared public spaces'.* (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 10). Opportunities to expand smoke and vape-free areas will be investigated as part of the annual operational plan. Comments calling for stronger action on climate resilience, including reducing air pollution from wood-burning stoves, are recognised. These matters are more appropriately addressed through Yarra's Climate Emergency Plan 2024–2030, and its 2024–2027 Action Plan, which includes measures to reduce household emissions. There are opportunities to utilise the Council's website to better inform the community about the negative impacts of wood-fired heaters and effective usage techniques to reduce health risks and pollution associated with their use.

Feedback Theme 4: Community Garden and access to healthy food	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Community feedback was received describing the importance of community gardens to support access to healthy food, facilitate social	In response to feedback, one change has been made to an initiative under the **'Healthy Food Environments and Food Security'** priority.

connections, enhance mental wellbeing and support physical activity • More community gardens are needed (x3) • Food relief should cater for all dietary requirements	**We changed the initiative:** *'Support community growing spaces'* to *'Support access to community growing spaces locally'*. Regarding the suitability of food relief options for people with dietary requirements, one change has been made. **We changed the initiative:** *'Provide finding for food relief'* to *'Provide funding for food relief that is culturally appropriate and meets diverse dietary requirements'*. (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 8). Notably, Council supports access to gardens in partnership with Neighbourhood Houses and by promoting programs offered through the Urban Agriculture Officer under the My Smart Garden project. Opportunities also exist for community groups to establish new gardens through the Community Grants Program, particularly under the Climate-Resilient and Adapted City stream (supporting community-led greening) and the Healthy, Inclusive and Connected Communities stream (supporting food security, nutrition and social inclusion).

Feedback Theme 5: Safety & Community Infrastructure	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Community feedback was received describing safety and community infrastructure regarding pedestrians and family violence: • Lights shining up from pavements are dangerous for people with vision impairments • Yarra River: safety for pedestrians (lighting, paths, separation from cyclists) • Greater support for family violence not-for-profit organisations	Concerns about upward-facing footpath lighting creating glare and making people feel unsafe have been referred to the Buildings Team and the Access and Ageing Well Unit for consideration in future design and maintenance reviews. The importance of the Birrarung for health and wellbeing has been included explicitly as an initiative under the 'Active Living' priority. **The initiative now reads:** "Promote movement and connection in Yarra's diverse natural spaces, including the Birrarung." See Attachment 4, page 11. Concerns about cyclist behaviour on shared paths and its impact on pedestrian safety,

	particularly for older residents and families with prams, have been noted. While the MPHWP does not cover path maintenance or management, Yarra's Transport Strategy 2022–32 and Transport Action Plan 2024–34 commit to major improvements. These include upgrading 30 km of the New Deal for Cycling network, delivering 50 cycling and 50 pedestrian spot improvements, increasing cycling by 40 per cent, doubling the number of women cycling, expanding bike parking, and introducing 20 shared zones and five additional 30 km/h zones. Enforcement of unsafe behaviour remains the responsibility of Victoria Police under Victorian road and cycling laws. The draft Plan already includes actions under the theme of Safe and Respectful Communities, which focus on family and gendered violence and promoting respectful relationships. Council supports not-for-profit organisations through the Community Grants Program, including Stream 2: Healthy, Inclusive and Connected Communities, which allocates 30 per cent of funding to health initiatives such as family violence prevention and response. Council also participates in networks such as the Neighbourhood Justice Centre's Family Violence Network and MAV forums, with ongoing collaboration continuing under the initiative Create and support local partnerships. (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 9).

Feedback Theme 6: Alcohol, other drugs and harm minimisation	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Community feedback was received describing the importance of harm minimisation and targeted regulation of alcohol regulation. • The need for targeted regulation of alcohol venues • Stronger efforts needed on AOD harm minimisation	Feedback about the need for stronger regulation of alcohol venues has been noted. Until recently, venues wishing to serve alcohol required both a statutory planning permit from Council (to consider land use, location, hours of operation and amenity impacts) and a liquor licence from the State regulator. This included assessment against Council's local Licensed Premises policy in the Yarra Planning Scheme (Clause 13.07-1L-02), which provided a framework for managing

	venue clustering, operating hours, noise and neighbourhood character. Since the removal of Clause 52.27 from the Victorian Planning Provisions, a planning permit from Council is no longer required. Venues now only need to obtain a liquor licence from Liquor Control Victoria (LCV). This change has significantly reduced Council's role. While Council can still provide feedback on licence applications, all decisions rest with this statutory authority, and Council no longer collects income from the permitting process. Consistent with local government responsibilities under the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Council's focus is on reducing community-level impacts and creating environments that support health and wellbeing. This includes delivering the Yarra Liquor Forum to engage business operators, Victoria Police and LCV in promoting safe and responsible venue management; managing the impacts of public drug consumption through syringe collection and cleansing; supporting harm reduction and referral pathways with local health agencies; and working with commissioned health and wellbeing services and State Government departments to strengthen local support networks. Council also advocates to the State and Commonwealth Governments for broader system-level improvements and continues to exercise its statutory responsibilities in tobacco regulation, including enforcement to prevent sales to minor. Approaches to harm minimisation are reflected in the existing strategies and initiatives under the 'Reduced impacts of alcohol, drugs, vaping and tobacco' priority. These include: 1) 'Promote healthier alcohol cultures' 2) 'Minimise the community impacts of illicit drugs', and 3) 'Reduce harm from smoking and vaping' (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 10).

Feedback Theme 7: Physical Activity & Accessibility	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Community feedback was received describing the need for me accessible sports, as well as accessible active and public transport: • More accessible sports • Accessible active/public transport	Suggestions related to improving Active Transport are already captured under the initiatives within the 'Active Living' priority under the '*integrate healthy design principles to support active living*' strategy. It is noted that these initiatives reflect the extensive actions being undertaken as part of the Strategic Transport Plan. Suggestions related to more accessible sports infrastructure were already captured under the strategy of '*Promote inclusive physical activity, sports and recreation*'. (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 11).

Feedback Theme 8: Birrarung Inclusion	
What did we hear	**Our response**
Comments in this category expressed the importance of the Birrarung River and the need for its inclusion within the Plan: • Inclusion of the importance of Birrarung River for the wellbeing of the community	In response to the feedback one change was made under the '**Active Living'** priority area. **We changed the initiative:** '*Promote movement and connection in Yarra's diverse natural spaces*' to '*Promote movement and connection in Yarra's diverse natural spaces including the Birrarung*' (see Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, page 11).