



Advocacy Prospectus

JULY 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this Country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional Owners of this place.

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A growing community that’s shaping Victoria

This advocacy prospectus seeks Victorian Government co-investment in 19 key initiatives across seven integrated economic domains: infrastructure and community services; employment; public transport; health and wellbeing; affordable housing; roads; and environmental sustainability.

These domains interact to affect economic development, with investment in the initiatives in one domain also advancing outcomes in others. For example:

Investment in our public transport initiatives will increase local housing values by \$2.44 billion and deliver travel time savings of \$523 million by 2030.

Investment in our infrastructure and community services initiatives will deliver more than \$4.5 million in improved health outcomes each year, create 800 jobs, and add more than \$719 million in economic value to the region.

In this way, our investment initiatives work together to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability. This is essential for our residents now – and critical if we are to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population.

This integrated approach can also inform municipal development in other rapidly growing, outer suburban councils. By co-investing across all domains, Council and the Victorian and Australian governments can work together to develop a transparent, evidence-based model that sets meaningful benchmarks for future growth areas.

Optimising opportunity

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the state; projections show it will grow by 60% by 2040. This exceptional growth poses challenges and opportunities.

ABS figures show the City is the fifth most disadvantaged metropolitan municipality in Victoria. The pandemic has compounded this disadvantage. Unemployment in the City is now at 6.1% – higher than Greater Melbourne at 5.4%, Victoria at 4.6% and the nation 4.4%.¹ Rates of distress are also high, with nearly 70% of residents saying the pandemic affected their mental health.²

This makes investment in our health and employment initiatives crucial for our region’s post COVID-19 recovery – and for our ‘high population’ future.

But initiatives such as the E6 Freeway, the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT), and the Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH) will revive our region.

The E6 will provide a key national-scale road corridor for NSW, ACT, Queensland, and Victoria and connect trade gateways and nationally significant manufacturing and distribution clusters.

The BIFT will contribute \$3.5 billion to the economy each year, generate 18,800 jobs, and encourage vital additional investment within the northern growth corridor.

The MFIH will create 3,500 construction jobs and 6,500 ongoing jobs. This will drive Victoria’s food and fibre exports and help reboot the food services and distribution sectors – sectors which experienced an 80% drop in income through the global pandemic.

¹ REMPLAN, 2022, *Economy, jobs, and business insights*.
² City of Whittlesea, 2021, *Municipal pandemic readiness and recovery plan, January - June 2021*.

Our investment initiatives work together to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability. This is essential for our residents now – and critical if we are to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population.

These initiatives – and all the initiatives in this prospectus – are supported by our communities. They address our region’s chief deficits and optimise our region’s strengths. Together they will:

- deliver world-class infrastructure and services
- build a stronger, inclusive, and more resilient community
- increase participation and reduce disadvantage
- enhance health outcomes and living standards
- reinvigorate our regional and state economies
- protect and enhance our environment.

Most importantly, they will transform Victoria, advancing the objectives of *Victoria’s Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* and generating social, economic, and environmental prosperity for our state.

We welcome your support.



Lydia Wilson
Chair of the Panel
of Administrators



Craig Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

Section 1

Community services and infrastructure

Investment in our infrastructure and community services initiatives will provide opportunities for Aboriginal residents, deliver more than \$4.5 million in improved health outcomes each year, create 800 jobs, and add more than \$784 million in gross benefits to Victoria over 30 years.



Investment Initiative

01

Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$40M for Phase 2
+ future investment for remaining phases

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-----------------|
| <p>Co-invest to construct a state-of-the-art sports and aquatic centre in Mernda</p> <p>The Centre will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 indoor and 8 outdoor floodlit multipurpose courts• 50 metre multipurpose pool• warm water, teaching and leisure pools, spa, steam and sauna• gymnasium with group fitness rooms• health consulting and wellness suites | <p>Yan Yean</p> |
| Benefits | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver \$784.3M in economic value and \$150.7M in social value to Victoria over 30 years• Deliver \$4.52M in improved health outcomes each year• Deliver \$135.6M in improved health outcomes over 30 years• Create 800 jobs | |

Rationale

Almost 45% of adults residing in the City of Whittlesea do insufficient physical activity – the second highest proportion in north-eastern Melbourne. The City also has: ³

- the highest proportion of adults who are overweight in north-eastern Melbourne – 58%
- the sixth highest proportion of adults with heart disease in Victoria – 7%
- the third highest proportion of adults with type 2 diabetes in Victoria – 6%
- high rates of adults with arthritis (25%) and osteoporosis (20%).

Increasing the rate of physical activity by just 10% can reduce disease and death related to physical inactivity by 13% and 15% per year respectively. More children participating in sport drives better educational outcomes for them and increases lifetime earnings by \$1.5 billion every year. ⁴

Research by KPMG shows significant benefits from investing in community sports and active recreation infrastructure, including the following health benefits: ⁵

- reduced risk of chronic disease, dementia, and falls
- improved mental health and wellbeing
- improved education and employment outcomes
- reduced anti-social behaviour
- increased connectedness and inclusion

³ Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017, *Dashboard, selected results and quick statistics for local government areas and time series data (2015-2017)*, LGA Snapshot.
⁴ Boston Consulting Group, 2017, *Intergenerational review of Australian sport*, p37.
⁵ KPMG, 2018, *The value of community sport and active recreation infrastructure*.

Return on investment

Community engagement shows strong support for the centre – 72% of survey respondents rate the centre’s importance at 7/10 or higher and 45% rate it at 10/10.

Council estimates the centre will attract up to 550,000 visits per year and run at a profit when fully operational. ⁶ Modelling by Deloitte Australia shows the centre will generate:

- \$784.3 million of economic value for Victoria over 30 years
- around 800 jobs, including 430 local jobs, comprising:
 - 135 direct jobs in the local building and construction sector
 - 241 jobs in indirect intermediate industries
 - 54 jobs through indirect consumption impacts.
- \$4.52 million each year and \$135.6 million over 30 years in improved health outcomes including: ⁷
 - \$2.3 million each year in acute benefits through improved mental health, increased productivity, and improved educational outcomes
 - \$1.31 million each year in chronic benefits through reduced rates of cardiovascular disease, breast and bowel cancer, Type 2 diabetes, dementia, as well as health system savings
 - \$0.86 million each year through increased water safety education and reduced risk of drowning.

Our business case also identifies the following key benefits:

- increased participation in more non-physical activities
- increased participation by women and girls in structured and unstructured physical activity
- improved job opportunities for women.

Additional multipurpose indoor and outdoor courts will increase participation in netball and basketball. This is particularly significant for women and girls who comprise 96% of the City’s netball registrations and 28% of our basketball registrations.

In 2017, Netball Victoria identified that half of the 1,967 registered netballers within the Whittlesea local government area (LGA) played with associations outside the LGA. The new courts will allow almost 1,000 netballers to stay in their LGA to play. ⁸

According to Royal Life Saving Australia, more than 70% of the 67,000 workers in the national aquatic industry are female. ⁹ Providing infrastructure that encourages and supports gender equity in physical activity will also create job opportunities for women in areas such as sports centre management and leadership, lifesaving, fitness and aquatic exercise instruction, and swimming and water safety instruction.

⁶ Sport and Leisure Solutions, 2018, *Mernda aquatic centre planning study*, City of Whittlesea, p10.
⁷ Deloitte Australia, 2022, *Regional Sports Centre at Mernda Business Case (Draft)*, pp25-26
⁸ City of Whittlesea, 2019, *Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041*.
⁹ Royal Life Saving Australia, 2019, *National Aquatic Workforce Profile*.

Investment Initiative

02

Aboriginal Gathering Place

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$4M

| Initiative | Electorates |
|--|-------------|
| Co-invest to establish a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place in Quarry Hills Regional Park, South Morang, to be completed in 2024 | Mill Park |

Benefits

- Advance ‘closing the gap’ targets in health, education, and employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Melbourne’s north east
- Foster reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities

Rationale

Victoria has 14 successful Aboriginal Gathering Places. Evaluations show they deliver positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their wider communities.¹⁰ These outcomes include:

- improved physical health through increased attendance and participation in community health checks, chronic disease screening, and specific health programs
- improved social and emotional wellbeing through the development of social support networks and increased social connection
- improved pathways to education and employment and more opportunities that optimise the contribution of Indigenous people’s skills and knowledge
- enhanced cultural awareness and cultural identity through cultural activities and links to community networks
- increased mainstream awareness of, and respect for, Aboriginal culture
- increased opportunities for reconciliation activities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The City of Whittlesea has the second largest and fastest growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in metropolitan Melbourne and five Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

The local Aboriginal community and the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, have been asking for a Gathering Place for 20 years.

Their many conversations have led to the establishment of the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG). WAGPAG has identified the Quarry Hills Regional Park in South Morang as the preferred site.

Return on investment

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, family and community, Country and place, cultural identity, and self-determination are strongly associated with improved health and wellbeing outcomes.¹¹

This is reflected in the Australian Government’s National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031 which recognises the strengths of culture as a protective influence on physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

The Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will advance progress towards key ‘closing the gap’ targets through programs including:

- bush kinder programs that foster connection to Country and Indigenous culture
- ‘Welcome Baby to Country’ ceremonies
- leadership development and mentoring programs
- men’s and boy’s programs
- sustainability, land care and stewardship programs
- job creation, with Aboriginal organisations and businesses providing programs and services at the centre
- primary and secondary school programs and additional programs for ‘at risk’ students, with approximately 300 students attending the centre each week for environmental and cultural programs.

The Aboriginal community and stakeholders will also help co-design the facility and deliver key components, including landscaping, fit-out, and artwork.

These activities and outcomes will reduce individual and government costs associated with poor health and economic and social disadvantage.

¹⁰ Indigenous Health Equity Unit University of Melbourne and Gathering Place Reference Group, 2016, *Health and wellbeing outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gathering place model in Victoria: a place for inclusion, connection and empowerment, Final report for the Department of Health and Human Services*, ppv-vi.

¹¹ Verbunt, E, Luke, J, Paradies, Y, et al, 2021, Cultural determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – a narrative overview of reviews. *Int J Equity Health* 20, p181.

03

Mobile and broadband coverage

| Initiative | Electorates |
|--|----------------------|
| Black spots Fix eight mobile and broadband blackspots <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cooper Street business precinctUniversity HillOlivine Estate and Kinbrook EstateThomastownAurora EstateWhittlesea TownshipBeveridge, Merriang and Glenvale100c Gorge Road, South Morang | ALL |
| New connections Provide connectivity for six future growth areas <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cooper Street West, EppingDonnybrook/Woodstock PrecinctWollert PrecinctMernda Town CentreBeveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT)Northern Quarries/Craigieburn South | Thomastown, Yan Yean |

- Benefits**
- Ensure all residents and businesses are connected during emergency events
 - Improve access to, and participation in, employment and education
 - Improve social connection
 - Eliminate disruption to local business
 - Prepare for future demand

Rationale

Mobile and broadband are essential infrastructure. They are critical for relaying information and staying connected in emergencies.

Blackspots and gaps matter because they have a direct impact on the social determinants of health, including access to health care and educational, employment, and business opportunities.

Residents and businesses report that poor connectivity at work and home is having the following serious impacts:

- disrupting employment seeking activities
- disrupting business operations
- increasing business costs as businesses seek alternative coverage
- affecting business and employment income
- reducing family and community connection
- disrupting education, including home schooling, homework, and other study
- disrupting library services
- disrupting the delivery of emergency services and community safety information.

Return on investment

Upgraded and improved mobile and broadband connectivity will reduce and remove these impacts. They will:

- enhance community safety, particularly during emergencies
- improve social connection
- increase access to, and participation in, education, employment, and health services.

Providing services for planned developments will allow residents, businesses, and services immediate access to mobile and broadband and all the benefits of connectivity. This will help circumvent social problems that arise through isolation and reduced opportunities to connect and participate.

Section 2

Employment

Our employment initiatives will generate well over 25,000 ongoing jobs and add billions to the Victorian economy. This is crucial to both the region's and the state's post COVID-19 recovery – and critical for our City's 'high population' future.



04

BIFT – Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal

| Initiative | Electorates |
|--|-------------|
| Fast track development of BIFT to provide critical national logistics and freight infrastructure which will create a major employment precinct for the northern region and generate substantial ancillary employment opportunities | Yan Yean |

Benefits

- Contribute \$3.5B each year
- Generate 18,800 jobs
- Improve freight productivity
- Create an innovative multimodal supply chain
- Reduce road congestion

Rationale

The Australian Government has allocated \$2 billion to develop a new intermodal freight terminal in Melbourne. The Beveridge site – over 1,000 hectares east of the Melbourne-Sydney rail line and north of the proposed E6 Freeway – will link seamlessly with the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane rail line, the Hume Freeway, and the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road. Its development will leverage the northern region’s existing assets and create one of the largest employment precincts in the region. It will also drive large scale infrastructure investments that transform the freight and logistics network along the eastern seaboard.

Return on investment

The BIFT will contribute \$3.5 billion to the economy each year, generate 18,800 jobs, and encourage vital additional investment within the northern growth corridor.¹² During peak construction, it is expected to support up to 1,350 jobs, and when complete, it will deliver:

- improved freight rail services
- improved efficiency and network reliability
- improved freight productivity.

Timely confirmation and delivery of the project will also:

- increase local and regional employment opportunities and drive additional local expenditure
- increase accessibility for multiple road and transport network users, including freight
- facilitate seamless travel when the Outer Metropolitan Ring and E6 Transport Corridor are complete
- encourage vital additional investment within the northern growth corridor which is expected to have a population of over 150,000 in the next 30 years.

These deliverables advance the Australian Government’s [Infrastructure Investment Program](#) and the Victorian Government’s [Plan Melbourne](#), the [North Growth Corridor Plan](#), and the [Victorian Freight Plan](#).

¹² Urbis, 2019, *Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal – A Solution for Freight in Victoria*.



05

MFIX – Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Infrastructure Fund the infrastructure to develop MFIX as a transformational project for the northern region of Melbourne and Victoria | Thomastown |
| Incentives Provide incentives for a major industry player to relocate to Epping as an anchor tenant to attract other food and export businesses | Thomastown |

Benefits

- Generate 3,500 construction jobs
- Generate 6,500 ongoing jobs



Rationale

Home to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable, and Flower Market (the Melbourne Market), Melbourne’s north is already a food hub of national significance: produce worth \$2 billion passes through the market each year as more than 5,000 businesses buy and sell there.¹³

With around 120,000 square metres of warehouse space – the largest warehousing precinct of any central market in Australia – the Melbourne Market readily facilitates the integration of supply chain logistics. This unique capacity has already seen the local food production sector develop into an industry cluster of tertiary institutions, freight networks, and a burgeoning skilled workforce.

Return on investment

Developing a 50-hectare land parcel adjoining the Melbourne Market into MFIX will optimise the market’s assets and deliver lasting infrastructure and job opportunities for the region. Modelling shows MFIX will:¹⁴

- create 3,500 construction jobs and 6,500 ongoing jobs
- establish the northern region as a world-class agri-food industry and innovation precinct
- provide a strategic platform to collaborate and innovate across Victoria’s food and industry ecosystem
- double the food and beverage sector’s annual turnover in 10 years (from \$2.6 billion to \$5 billion)
- encourage new ancillary business.

Comprising approximately 120 hectares including the Melbourne Markets, MFIX will offer direct access to Melbourne’s airport and extensive freeway network. This will deliver logistical advantages and reduce handling, transport, and labour costs. It will also:

- create opportunities for food and beverage processors, manufacturers, packaging specialists, cold-chain suppliers, and logistic and transport companies to co-locate and expand and grow
- drive Victoria’s food and fibre exports (already 28% nationwide) and reboot income in the food services and distribution sectors after an 80% drop during the pandemic.¹⁵

¹³ Melbourne Market, 2021, *Overview - Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable & Flower Market*.

¹⁴ Melbourne Market Authority, 2018, *The Melbourne Food Hub at Epping*.

¹⁵ Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 2020, *Victorian Food and Fibre Export Performance Report 2019-20*.pdf, p2.

Section 3

Public Transport

Investment in our public transport initiatives will increase local housing values by \$2.44 billion and deliver travel time savings of \$523 million by 2030.



Wollert Rail

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Construct the rail line to Wollert from the existing Lalor Station on the Mernda Line by 2030 | Thomastown |

Benefits

- Connect the Wollert community to employment, education and health hubs
- Increase property values by \$2.44B
- Deliver travel time savings of \$523M and 500,000 hours



Rationale

The 2002 Epping North Strategic Plan identified a planned public transport corridor. This influenced the decision of many residents to purchase property in these areas. The integration of a train line was a key feature of this transport corridor. It was to encourage high density development and activity centres around the proposed transport interchanges.

Residents now expect the Victorian Government to deliver the Wollert train line to improve the area’s liveability and support their housing investment and their livelihoods.

Projections demonstrate that Wollert Rail will be well used, with approximately 15,000 daily trips from day one and 40,000 daily trips by 2040.

Return on investment

Wollert Rail will connect the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor – where the population is projected to increase by 117% by 2040 – to jobs and opportunities in the Melbourne CBD and local precincts such as the Cooper Street employment area, the Northern Hospital, and Pacific Epping.

It will remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability in one of Australia’s fastest growing areas. It will also:

- increase property values by \$2.44 billion by 2030
- reduce congestion and generate approximately 500,000 hours and \$522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030
- generate 2,000,000 hours and \$1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users each year by 2040
- make it easier for staff and visitors to get to the Northern Hospital, which has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state, treating nearly 90,000 patients each year and employing around 3,000 people.



Better bus services

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| New services Deliver new and quicker bus services between Epping North and the Epping Central Activity Centre | Thomastown |
| Interim service Deliver a 10-minute premium bus service from Epping to Wollert (until Wollert Rail is complete) | Thomastown |

- Benefits**
- Allow more efficient commutes
 - Reduce road congestion
 - Improve access to employment, education, and health services

Rationale

The three bus routes between Epping North and the Epping Central Activity Centre introduced by Public Transport Victoria in 2016 have led to a 25% increase in residents using bus services.

While still critical, these services no longer meet the needs of our communities in Epping North and Wollert: they operate on a low frequency – every 20 minutes, even during peak times – and demand will exceed capacity by 2025.

- Return on investment**
- The proposed new services will:
- help capacity keep pace with demand and remove barriers to participating in education, employment, and health services
 - give residents direct access to Epping Plaza, the Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping, and Epping Station, as well as to CBD employment and education opportunities
 - enable residents to transfer from bus to rail at Epping Station for longer trips to the inner suburbs and Melbourne CBD – this is particularly helpful to residents in Epping North and Wollert working in skilled occupations in the CBD.



Investment
Initiative

08

T86 extension

| Initiative | Electorates |
|--|---------------------|
| Extend Tram Route 86 (T86) from the Plenty-McKimmies roads intersection to the Plenty Valley Town Centre | Mill Park, Bundoora |

Benefits

- Allow 15,000 residents to easily use the Mernda Station at South Morang for better access to education, employment, retail, and health services

Rationale

The T86 line was extended to RMIT Bundoora in 1993. In the almost 30 years since, residential growth has exploded along Plenty Road to South Morang and beyond. Rapid population growth and new and expanded education and employment precincts such as University Hill and RMIT demand greater capacity and an expanded tram service in the area.

The existing T86 route and bus network between University Hill and Plenty Valley Town Centre require residents to transfer from a high-capacity tram and queue for a lower-capacity bus – this is very time-consuming and inconvenient. Residents have long called for the route to be extended.

Land has already been set aside to allow the T86 extension to be designed and delivered efficiently and without delay.

Return on investment

Extending T86 to the Plenty Valley Town Centre will enhance the lives of 15,000 residents. It will:

- improve access to significant education, employment, and service hubs such as RMIT Bundoora, La Trobe University, La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster, University Hill, Mill Park Library, and the Plenty Valley Town Centre
- allow users of the Mernda train line to transfer at South Morang for university campuses, employment hubs, and health services across the expanded tram network.

Investment
Initiative

09

Wallan electrification and connection

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Electrify and connect Wallan to connect greenfield developments in the Northern Growth Corridor to the metropolitan rail network – this includes upgrading Donnybrook Station | Yan Yean |

Benefits

- Prepare for future greenfield developments on the growth corridor
- Improve access to employment, education, and health services for current and future residents

Rationale

Electrifying and connecting Wallan is fundamental to the success of the metropolitan growth strategy.

Released in 2002, *Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth* established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around Melbourne to manage outward expansion in a coordinated way.

The purpose of the UGB is to:

- direct urban growth to areas where appropriate infrastructure and services can readily be provided
- protect other valuable peri-urban land and environmental features from urban development.

Return on investment

New suburbs in the Northern Growth Corridor are currently serviced by infrequent V-Line services. Electrifying and connecting Wallan to the metropolitan rail network will connect and integrate these suburbs and greenfield developments in the Northern Growth Corridor.

Access to connective public transport when settling in a new suburb helps circumvent the health, wellbeing, and other social issues created through social isolation and poor access to education, employment, and health services.

Section 4

Health and wellbeing

The City of Whittlesea is an area of high need. Between 2020 and 2040, our population will grow by more than 60% – compared to 25% for Victoria – and we need urgent investment to expand our key mental health, maternal and child health, family violence, and gambling harm minimisation programs.



Investment Initiative

10

Adolescent mental health services

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$1M pa

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$1.036M pa

| Initiative | Electorates | Benefits |
|--|-------------|---|
| headspace Fund a full headspace facility | ALL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide integrated health care for 600 young people |
| YFlex Expand YFlex service | ALL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce presentations to Northern Hospital ED• Reduce experiences of social isolation• Reduce high risk taking and substance misuse• Prevent suicide• Reduce interruptions to education and employment• Reduce associated long-term impacts of mental health issues |



Investment
Initiative

10

Adolescent mental health services

Continued

Rationale

In 2018, the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Care Network (EMPHN) identified the City of Whittlesea as ‘an area of high need’ with: ¹⁶

- fewer adolescent mental health services than other municipalities in the region
- the highest rate of high or very high psychological distress in the network catchment for people over 18
- the highest rate of emergency department presentations with anxiety in the network catchment.

Then came the pandemic:

- Almost 40% of young people aged 10 to 25 years in the City of Whittlesea reported experiencing hardship in the first lockdown – compared with 24% across the state.
- More than 20% of young people aged between 18 and 24 reported experiencing high psychological distress – compared with 16% across the state.

Demand for mental health services continues to exceed availability. Services report:

- an increase in the number of young people seeking mental health support, with 15% experiencing a high level of psychological distress – higher than the state average of 13% ¹⁷
- an increase in the number of risk assessments conducted each week
- wait times of up to four weeks for an initial assessment and eight months for ongoing counselling.

Yflex reports:

- an increase in the number of referrals from individuals and from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- an increase in the complexity and risk in the referrals they receive
- an increase in the number of referrals they are unable to accept.

Return on investment

As the OECD also states:

With adequate support and timely intervention, young people experiencing mental distress may be able to bounce back as we recover from the COVID 19 crisis. This will require a scaling up of existing mental health support in education systems, workplaces and health systems, and comprehensive policies to support young people to remain in education, or to find and keep a job. ¹⁸

headspace provides early intervention information, support, and services to young people, aged 12-25 years, and to their families and friends. Establishing a full headspace instead of our smaller satellite service will reduce waiting times and provide integrated mental health support to approximately 600 young people.

YFlex provides responsive and flexible support to young people 12-25 who have developed, or are at risk of developing, severe mental illness. It delivers recovery focused support with integrated clinical care to support young people who are hard to reach.

Expanding YFlex services will help to:

- reduce the high number of presentations to Northern Hospital emergency department
- reduce experiences of social isolation
- reduce high risk taking and substance misuse
- prevent suicide
- reduce interruptions to education and employment and associated long term impacts.

These outcomes are consistent with Australian and Victorian government plans, including:

- the Australian Government’s Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan
- the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan which aims to support the mental health of Australians during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
- Victoria’s infrastructure strategy 2021-2051 which recommends the delivery of infrastructure for a more responsive and integrated mental health system (recommendation 72).

¹⁶ Bell, T, Mendoza, J, Stretton, A, and Salvador-Carulla, L, 2018, *EMPHN integrated mental health and AOD service atlas (East and North East Melbourne) – Final report*.

¹⁷ Whittlesea Community Futures, 2021, *Lockdown survey* June 2021.

¹⁸ OECD, 2021, *Supporting young people’s mental health through the COVID-19 crisis*.

Investment
Initiative



Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services

| Initiative | Electorates | Benefits |
|--|-------------|---|
| KAS review Review the Key Ages and Stages (KAS) framework by end 2023 | ALL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow clients more time with an MCH nurse |
| Workforce Review the MCH workforce and develop a workforce strategy to retain and attract additional nurses by end 2023 | ALL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all infants, children and families have access to an MCH nurse as per the revised KAS |
| IT Infrastructure Fully fund the development of a new IT infrastructure system and replace the current Child Development Information System (CDIS) by mid 2024 | ALL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create administrative efficiencies for MCH nurses• Allow more accurate, digital reporting |
| Pilot projects Fund pilot projects to identify improved service delivery models | ALL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test delivery models in a rapidly growing multicultural community and identify the best service solution for high-birth, diverse region |

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services

Continued

Rationale

Between 2020 and 2040, our population will grow by more than 60% – compared to 25% for Victoria.

More than 3,000 babies were born in the City in the 12 months to July 2021.

Increasing population drives demand, and the City cannot keep up. Our MCH service already helps more than 21,000 children and their parents each year.

Almost 10% of residents are now younger than five – compared to Greater Melbourne (6.4%) and Victoria (6.3%) – and residents are already experiencing waitlists for MCH services.

The MCH service is an essential and universal program. The first 1,000 days of a child’s life have a profound influence of their health outcomes.

The City has one of the highest rates of family violence in Melbourne (see initiative 12) and there is considerable interface between our MCH service and local family violence service agencies.

Our MCH service is currently staffed by an ageing workforce – 17% of MCH nurses are over 61 years old – and about 30% of the workforce under 41 years were on maternity leave in 2021.

The COVID pandemic has increased in the number of families needing greater support from the MCH service.

More children are also experiencing developmental delay due to missed socialisation opportunities and disruption to the Key Age and Stage (KAS) service.

The Child Development Information System (CDIS) – the state-wide database designed to record client care – is no longer fit-for-purpose for generating critical reports and identifying individual and local needs.

Return on investment

The 2012 Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry, stated:

*Victoria’s antenatal and maternal and child health services are a cornerstone of its universal, early intervention and prevention program covering all children and are particularly important in the early care of vulnerable children.*¹⁹

Investment in these initiatives will help ensure this key service is available to all eligible children and families, so:

- every mother and child in the City of Whittlesea can attend 10 consultations from the child’s birth until the child is at least three and a half years old
- families and children at risk of poor health outcomes can receive an additional 15 hours of MCH care.

Because the MCH service is a universal service, it can, and should, reach all families in the municipality with young children and infants. This can help reduce family violence and support harm prevention programs.

Research shows women are at greater risk of experiencing violence from an intimate partner during pregnancy and post-partum.²⁰

Women also experience increased mental health risk during pregnancy and following childbirth.²¹

As well as improving health outcomes, ready access to the MCH service will:

- identify children and families who need assessment, intervention, referral and/or support, including families experiencing, or at risk of, family violence
- bring families together, create social networks and playgroups, and build community
- encourage uptake of other services such as immunisation.

Replacing the existing CDIS will reduce administrative time for MCH nurses. It will also allow for more accurate reporting and more realistic workforce management.

¹⁹ Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2012, *Report of the protecting Victoria’s vulnerable children inquiry*, pxxxiv.

²⁰ ABS Personal Safety Survey, 2013, *Domestic and family violence in pregnancy and early parenthood: Overview and emerging interventions*, Child Family Community Australia.

²¹ DHHS, 2015, *Victoria’s 10-year mental health plan*.



Investment Initiative

12

Family violence prevention programs

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$230k Year 1 + \$190k pa

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Fund locally tailored initiatives to prevent violence against women and to assist with family violence recovery, including: | |
| Migrant women’s driving program (\$50k pa) | ALL |
| CALD women’s social groups (\$30k pa) | ALL |
| CALD women’s recovery groups (\$70k Year 1 + \$30k pa) | ALL |
| Family violence housing brokerage (\$80K pa) | ALL |

Benefits

- Prevent and reduce family violence
- Increase crisis accommodation capacity
- Reduce mental and physical health consequences of family violence
- Improve family cohesion
- Build community understanding of gender equality and how to prevent family violence

Rationale and return on investment

The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest rates of family violence in Metropolitan Melbourne (1,452 per 100,000 of population, compared to 1,242 in Victoria). More than 3,000 incidents are reported to police in the municipality each year. These locally tailored initiatives will help reduce the number of incidents and support recovery.

Migrant Women’s Driving Program

This investment will help culturally and linguistically diverse women and women from migrant and refugee backgrounds:

- get their Driver’s Licence by providing bi-lingual driving education
- gain independence, reduce social isolation, and access formal and informal support networks.

CALD Women’s Social Groups

This investment will provide small grants to women’s social groups where culturally and linguistically diverse women from migrant and refugee backgrounds can:

- strengthen their understanding of family violence and where to get help and advice
- develop new support networks and positive relationships with service providers.

CALD Women’s Recovery Groups

This investment will support women from diverse backgrounds to co-design family violence recovery programs that are tailored to their needs so they can identify and commence their path to recovery.

Family Violence Housing Brokerage

This investment will continue the successful philanthropic program (which ceased in June 2022) that has already helped 117 women maintain safe and stable housing by providing food and fuel vouchers and financial aid for rent and bond.

Investment Initiative

13

Gambling harm minimisation

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$160k pa

Initiative

Extend library operating hours to:

- provide a safe and welcoming alternative for community members at risk of social isolation, gambling harm, family violence
- provide internet access for lower income households
- allow Council to expand prevention programs such as *Libraries After Dark*

Electorates

Thomastown, Yan Yean, Mill Park

Benefits

- Reduce social isolation – a risk factor for gambling
- Reduce rental and mortgage stress
- Reduce family violence
- Increase access to work and study friendly spaces for low-income households

Rationale

Poker machines account for about 80% of all gambling addictions and are known to increase mortgage stress, family violence, crime, and family breakdown.^{22, 23}

The City of Whittlesea is ranked sixth in Victoria for money lost on poker machines. Residents lost more than \$110 million through poker machines in the 2018-19 financial year.²⁴

In March 2022 alone, residents lost \$12.7 million – the third highest in Victoria behind Casey and Brimbank councils – and equivalent to almost \$410,000 per day.²⁵

The Victorian Government allowed a 25% increase in the number of poker machines in the municipality in 2017.²⁶

Residents in our new communities are particularly vulnerable to gambling because they are geographically isolated and have limited access to leisure and recreation facilities.

Many households in Lalor, Mill Park, and Thomastown rely on libraries for internet access. Expanded hours will provide greater access for people who need it for study, work, and job seeking.

Return on investment

The successful *Libraries After Dark* program gives communities a weekly alternative to gambling. Every Thursday evening, participating libraries extend their opening hours and become community lounges, where residents can relax and connect, instead of going to a gambling lounge. Recurrent government investment will allow the Yarra Plenty Regional Park library branches at Mill Park and Thomastown libraries to continue this valuable program one night per week and the Lalor and Whittlesea branches to expand their opening hours to commence the program one night per week.

²² Productivity Commission, 2010, Gambling. (No.50). Canberra: Australian Government. Retrieved from <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/gambling-2009/report>.

²³ Dowling, N, 2014, *The impact of gambling problems on families* (AGRC Discussion Paper No. 1). Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre.

²⁴ Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Reform, 2020, *Expenditure on Electronic Gaming Machines by Local Government Area*, City of Whittlesea data, <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/resources/data-and-research>.

²⁵ Sunday Herald Sun, 2022, *Pokies goggle \$257m*, 1 May.

²⁶ Victoria Government Gazette, 2017, S 318, 20 September.

Section 5

Affordable housing

Investment in social and affordable housing infrastructure benefits society and delivers significant cost savings to government by supporting social inclusion, participation, place making, and economic productivity.



Social and affordable housing

| Initiative | Electorates | Benefits |
|---|-------------|---|
| Increase and improve stock | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Break the cycle of homelessness• Relieve pressure on local homelessness services• Reduce number of young people sleeping rough• Reduce rental and mortgage stress and associated ill health• Improve and increase participation in employment, education, and health care• Improve wellbeing• Strengthen connections to support systems• Improve access to financial support• Reduce household energy and operational costs |
| Introduce state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a state-wide minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments• measures to ensure developments are close to services and infrastructure | ALL | |
| Invest in all types of affordable housing in the City of Whittlesea from crisis accommodation to affordable home ownership | ALL | |
| Increase social and affordable housing in established areas for essential workers with low-moderate incomes and others experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including young people, older people, and people experiencing family violence | ALL | |
| Use surplus State land in the City of Whittlesea for affordable housing | ALL | |
| Improve the thermal performance and energy efficiency of existing social and affordable housing | ALL | |
| Access point and outreach services | | |
| Establish specialised outreach homelessness services to support people across the municipality and break the cycle of homelessness | ALL | |
| Youth crisis accommodation and housing services | | |
| Fund the Hope Street First Response Service | ALL | |
| Establish youth crisis accommodation and youth housing services with ongoing operational funding from the Specialist Homelessness Services Fund | ALL | |

INVESTMENT

\$4.8M capital,
\$2.3M pa

Investment
Initiative

14

Social and affordable housing

Continued

Rationale

The City of Whittlesea has a housing crisis, with 46% of households – more than 5,000 households – experiencing moderate or heavy housing related stress.

Demand for affordable housing exceeds supply, with more than 3,000 households unable to access the housing they need.

Housing may appear affordable when compared with other LGAs, but cost of living pressures compounded by poor public transport and access to local jobs make it out of reach for many.

More than 20% of households in the City fall within the lowest income range (\$0 to \$38,480); and almost 25% fall within the medium income range (\$38,352 to \$73,632).²⁷

Only 0.2% of rentals in the City of Whittlesea were affordable for very low-income households for the 12 months to June 2020.²⁸

The City’s stock of new rental housing that is affordable to lower income households declined from 65% in 2006 to 9% in 2018.²⁹

ABS data shows the City of Whittlesea had fewer social housing households (1.3%) compared with greater Melbourne (2.6%).

In 2019, over 4,045 applicants from Whittlesea, Nillumbik, Darebin, and Banyule were waiting for social housing on the Victorian Housing Register in north-east Melbourne. More than 60% had priority access status.³⁰

The City has no designated emergency accommodation for young people. Nearly 50,000 young people between 15 and 24 years old will live in the City by 2041. Current trends show many will experience homelessness.

The City has the highest rate of family violence in the north-east metropolitan region (1,474 incidents per 100,000 population, compared to 1,204 for Victoria). More than 40% of people accessing homelessness support services reported experiencing domestic and family violence.³¹

The Victorian Government’s Big Housing Build will not meet the need in the City of Whittlesea.³²

Established areas such as Epping, Lalor, Thomastown, South Morang, and Bundoora present excellent opportunities to deliver affordable housing for very-low-income households as they have more access to jobs, public transport, education, and community infrastructure than newer areas.

Council recently amended its local planning scheme to incorporate specific social and affordable housing measures. Regulatory action remains with the Victorian and Australian governments.

Return on investment

Affordable housing and social housing infrastructure benefits society by supporting social inclusion, participation, place making, and economic productivity.

People living in affordable or social housing can experience improvements in their health, safety, and sense of empowerment once they are no longer at risk of homelessness.

Social housing is particularly effective at reducing homelessness: it’s affordable, because rents are typically set at around 25% of income. It’s more likely to be secure, because long-term and lifetime leases are available.

Housing security benefits individuals and communities. It also benefits government through savings in costs associated with health, justice, and welfare services.

Research shows investing in long-term social housing can deliver significant cost savings to government. An ACT study estimated that:³³

- costs of service use for people in stable and affordable housing were around \$15,300 per person per year less than for people who were experiencing homelessness
- government will recoup 57 cents for every dollar it spends on a new, low-cost housing through welfare offsets.



²⁷ Profile.id, *City of Whittlesea Household income quartiles*.

²⁸ Profile.id, *City of Whittlesea Housing affordability*.

²⁹ Victoria Government, Data Vic, 2019, *Rental Report – Quarterly, Affordable lettings by local government area*.

³⁰ Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services, 2019, *Victorian Housing Register*.

³¹ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), 2020, *Housing, homelessness and domestic and family violence*.

³² Victorian Government, 2022, *Big housing build*.

³³ Davison, J, Brackertz, N and Alves, T, 2021, *Return on investment for social housing in the ACT*, report prepared for ACT Shelter, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.

Section 6

Roads

Targeted investment in our roads will increase capacity for industry and commuters. It will improve life for thousands of residents, save millions in travel hours, and make access to employment, education, and health services much easier.



Investment Initiative

15

E6 Freeway

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Bring forward construction of the E6 Freeway to 2027 to ensure it is complete by 2035 | ALL |

Benefits

- Provide capacity for 80,000 vehicles per day
- Allow traffic to bypass Hume Freeway
- Relieve congestion on arterial roads
- Provide a designated route for heavy vehicles
- Service freight movements
- Cater for growing communities

Rationale

The proposed E6 Freeway connecting the outdated and overused Hume Freeway to the M80 Ring Road will provide a much-needed north-south corridor through the City of Whittlesea.

The Australian Government has already shown strong support for this project, announcing substantial funding in its 2021-22 Budget, matching the Victorian Government's \$10 million allocation.

Projections suggest a 32% population increase for the City of Whittlesea alone by 2030. Neighbouring LGAs will also grow: the Mitchell Shire is expected to grow by almost 90% and Banyule is expected to grow by 10%.

This rapid growth makes it imperative that construction of the E6 is brought forward so the freeway is complete and traffic ready by 2035.

Rather than commence in 2035 as previously planned, work would ideally occur as follows:

- business case by 2023
- detailed project planning by 2024
- construction by 2027
- completion by 2035.

Land along the designated route is already reserved and no known impediments to this timeline exist.

Return on investment

The E6 is a freeway of national significance, providing a key national-scale road corridor for NSW, ACT, Queensland, and Victoria. Capable of carrying more than 80,000 vehicles each day, the E6 will:

- connect planned and existing trade gateways and national manufacturing and distribution clusters
- service freight traffic movement to and from the proposed Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) and Melbourne Airport
- connect established suburbs and growth areas and improve access to regional employment centres for residents from the outer north.

At the local level, the E6 will:

- create more liveable communities by supporting the delivery of future passenger and freight rail services to Melbourne's north and west, reducing the freight network's overall impact on local communities and environments
- increase the mobility and participation of residents by providing an essential north-south road connection along the Northern Growth Corridor, especially for residents of Epping North, Wollert, Donnybrook, Kalkallo, Beveridge, and Wallan
- provide accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities for residents
- streamline commuting by increasing road capacity
- reduce traffic congestion on arterial roads including Epping Road/High Street, Dalton Road, Edgars Road, Cooper Street, Plenty Road, and Yan Yean Road.

Road upgrades

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Partner with Council to declare and duplicate key roads to relieve congestion, allow for bus routes, and keep pace with population growth and increasing traffic | Yan Yean, Mill Park, Thomastown |
| <div>Benefits</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase cyclist and pedestrian safety• Reduce accidents• Create time savings• Improve access to employment, education, and services | |

Epping Road – Duplicate between Craigieburn Road East and Bridge Inn Road and upgrade the Epping Road/Bridge Inn Road intersection

Epping Road is the main road servicing the fast-growing areas of Epping North and Wollert and one of two arterial roads providing access to the rapidly expanding Donnybrook community.

The Victorian Government has committed to duplicating Epping Road from Memorial Avenue to Craigieburn Road East. We now seek the commitment to continue the duplication works to Bridge Inn Road/Boundary Road (another 1.6kms).

This will unlock a 2,900-lot residential subdivision that will inject \$225 million into the local economy and provide more than 1,000 jobs.

Findon Road – Declare and duplicate between Plenty Road and Epping Road

Findon Road crosses the City of Whittlesea and provides a link between the Hume Freeway and Plenty Road. It already carries 17,000 vehicles each day and modelling suggests it will carry 35,000 vehicles per day by 2031.

This project will ensure it becomes a key east-west arterial road with significantly increased traffic capacity. This will reduce the volume of traffic on McDonalds Road, ease congestion, and make it easier for people to get to facilities and services such as the Plenty Valley Town Centre.

It will also make it possible to run more regular and reliable bus services on Findon and McDonalds roads.

Improved design will separate oncoming traffic, provide turning lanes, and restrict right turns. This will:

- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce head on and rear end collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow.

Donnybrook Road – Duplicate between Epping Road and the Merri Creek

Donnybrook Road will be the key east-west road connecting Donnybrook residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west and north west in Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire.

The current population of 2,200 in Donnybrook is forecast to grow to 52,600 by 2041.

This project will increase road capacity and allow bus routes to run along Donnybrook Road so residents can get to Donnybrook Station, local town centres, and employment and activity centres to the west and north west.

Improved design will also separate oncoming traffic, provide turning lanes, and restrict right turns. This will:

- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce head on and rear end collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow.

Rationale and return on investment

Bridge Inn Road – declare and duplicate between Plenty Road and Wellington Street by 2031

Bridge Inn Road is the main east-west road through the northern suburbs of the City of Whittlesea, connecting the growing suburbs of Mernda and Doreen with the rapidly developing Wollert area.

It is built to rural standards and is not suitable for high volume urban traffic. It currently carries 18,700 vehicles each day west of Plenty Road and modelling projects it will carry 32,000 vehicles per day by 2032. This poses serious safety risks to road users and to children going to and from school.

The Victorian Government has committed to duplicating and urbanising Bridge Inn Road from Yan Yean Road to Plenty Road. We now seek the commitment to extend this project from Plenty Road to Wellington Street. As well as addressing safety and congestion concerns, this will improve access to Mernda Town Centre and the train station.

Craigieburn Road East – duplicate between Epping Road and the Hume Freeway by 2025

Craigieburn Road East will be the key east-west road connecting Epping North and Wollert residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west in the City of Hume. The current population of 36,000 in Epping North and 1,800 in Wollert is set to increase to 92,000 by 2040.

Duplication will:

- provide \$295 million in travel time savings
- significantly increase road capacity to cater for future traffic demand
- make it possible for bus routes to run along Craigieburn Road East, so residents can travel to local town centres, Craigieburn Town Centre, and their jobs in the west.

Section 7

Environmental sustainability

Investment in conservation, water management and the circular economy will preserve the City of Whittlesea as a unique urban environment with a rich biodiversity for generations to come.



Investment Initiative

17

Conservation

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$20M + 10-year funding plan

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$2M pa

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$200k + ongoing implementation funds

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$5M pa to Parks Victoria or Traditional Owners

| Initiative | Electorates | Benefits |
|--|----------------------|--|
| Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Fulfil 2009 commitment to establish 1200-hectrare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) Reserve and: <ul style="list-style-type: none">develop a 10-year funding plan to secure the reserve by 2031invest \$20M to secure the first land holdings through voluntary negotiation with landowners | Yan Yean, Thomastown | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Protect the site which is listed as a critically endangered ecological communityProtect threatened species:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Golden Sun Moth</i>– <i>Striped legless lizard</i>Protect other wildlife and threatened floraProtect and improve biodiversityIncrease community connection to natureSafeguard and increase environmental amenity for the regionReduce threat of climate change on flora and fauna |
| On-ground conservation activities Fund immediate on-ground conservation activities in all future conservation reserves identified under the Melbourne Strategic Assessment | Yan Yean, Thomastown | |
| Kangaroo management plan Develop and implement a regional kangaroo management plan | ALL | |
| Parks Victoria funding Increase funding to Parks Victoria to improve biodiversity and community infrastructure outcomes in the City’s major parks: Plenty Gorge Parklands, Craigieburn Grasslands and Mt Disappointment | ALL | |
| Legislative review Review the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1987 to improve sustainable land management | ALL | |

Investment
Initiative

17

Conservation

Continued

Rationale

Whittlesea has a unique urban/rural interface. It also has a burgeoning population. Combined, these two characteristics create environmental opportunities and challenges.

In 2009, the Victorian Government committed to establishing the 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) Reserve. This reserve area is home to a variety of wildlife including woodland birds and possums as well as threatened flora and fauna.

A June 2020 report by the office of the Victorian Auditor General found the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning had failed to meet its commitments and that ‘delays in acquiring land, and continuing threats of degradation, pose significant risks to the ecological values of native vegetation within the reserves’.³⁴

Acquiring the land now will ensure that the important flora and fauna values of the reserve can be protected and maintained.

As our population expands, the management of kangaroos in an integrated way is increasingly important. The development of a regional approach to kangaroo management will reduce the risk of landlocking on kangaroo populations and ensure the ongoing health and viability of kangaroos in the City of Whittlesea.

Parks Victoria are responsible for managing significant sites of biodiversity value within and around the City of Whittlesea. Currently, the limited funding provided to Parks Victoria is reducing the flora, fauna, and community use value of these sites. Increasing funding to Parks Victoria to manage urban conservation areas will help safeguard the environmental amenity.

Currently, the state government does not undertake compliance activities under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1987. This means that threats to flora, fauna, and agricultural productivity are not adequately addressed. The Act needs to be revised to make sure all landholders are responsible for reducing threats to the environment.

Return on investment

Investment will ensure the City of Whittlesea remains an urban environment with a rich biodiversity. It will:

- improve waterway health
- reduce urban heat island effects
- increase community participation in outdoor and environmental protection activities
- improve health and wellbeing for residents
- improve health, life expectancy, and sustainability outcomes for the rare and threatened species that call the City of Whittlesea home.

³⁴ Victorian Auditor General’s Office, 2020, Protecting critically endangered grasslands, Independence assurance to the Parliament, p8.



Investment Initiative

18

Integrated water management

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$200k

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Undertake a feasibility study in 2023-24 into integrated water management to provide rural areas access to alternative water supply within the cities of Whittlesea, Hume and Nillumbik | ALL |

Benefits

- Build rural climate resilience
- Protect agricultural land in Melbourne’s peri-urban food bowl

Rationale

Water is essential to our wellbeing and is imperative to the healthy functioning of our communities, our environment, and our agriculture and food industries. The overall need for water in our municipality will increase substantially as our population grows, from 15.2 gigalitres per year to 19.6 gigalitres per year in 2040. This increased usage will also create more wastewater. At the same time, our water supply is likely to decline as the climate changes. Reduced supply and increased demand could threaten the area’s future agricultural productivity, reducing economic growth and jobs. An effective water management plan is therefore essential.

Return on investment

Facilitating integrated water management will:

- build rural climate resilience
- protect agricultural and support productivity uses in Melbourne’s peri-urban food bowl.

Investment Initiative

19

Circular economy

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$200k pa

| Initiative | Electorates |
|---|-------------|
| Fund sustained community education across the state to improve recycling compliance and achieve diversion from landfill targets | ALL |

Benefits

- Implement *Recycling Victoria*
- Reduce landfill
- Create employment opportunities

Rationale

Waste management is rated as one of the most important services that Council provides and is a major component of Council’s annual budget. Rising costs in the landfill levy make it more important than ever to divert waste from landfills. Council plays an important role in helping our community avoid waste and improve recycling compliance.

Return on investment

Supporting our ongoing community education and behaviour change campaigns will help Council:

- transform the current linear economy mindset – take, use, and throw away – and encourage residents and businesses to recover, recycle, repair, and reuse
- encourage environmental innovation and productivity that supports existing businesses, creates new ones, and delivers more jobs and growth for local, regional, and state economies.

About Whittlesea



³⁵ City of Whittlesea, 2021, *Annual report 2020-2021*, pp4-5.

Population



The City’s population – 237, 932 residents in 2021 – is expected to increase by 32% by 2030 and 60% by 2040.³⁶ About 8,000 new residents arrive each year and 60 babies are born each week.³⁷

People



The City of Whittlesea has the second largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in metropolitan Melbourne. It’s also home to a vibrant migrant community, with more than 35% of residents born overseas and 44% speaking a language other than English at home.

Languages spoken include:
Macedonian (5.1%)
Arabic (5%)
Italian (5%)
Greek (3.7%)
Punjabi (3.2%).

Localities



| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Beveridge | Lalor |
| Bruces Creek | Mernda |
| Bundoora | Mill Park |
| Donnybrook | South Morang |
| Doreen | Thomastown |
| Eden Park | Whittlesea |
| Epping | Wollert |
| Humevale | Woodstock |
| Kinglake West | Yan Yean |

³⁶ REMPLAN, 2022, *Economy, jobs, and business insights*.
³⁷ City of Whittlesea, 2021, *Annual report 2020-2021*, pp4-5.

Age



34 years

Median age

27.7%

of population aged 0-19

16.2%

of population aged over 60

Gender



50.6%

Females

49.4%

Males

Households



42% couples with children

22% couples without children

16% single person households

12% one-parent families

Communities



More than 70%

of the City is rural, but most residents live in the City’s established areas of Bundoora, Epping, Lalor, Mill Park, and Thomastown.

These established areas, along with Mernda, Doreen, and South Morang, will continue to grow, but our highest population growth over the next 20 years is expected to be in Epping North, Wollert, and Donnybrook.

Industry



The three largest industry employers are health care and social assistance; retail trade; and construction.
The City has significant employment precincts in Epping (the Northern Hospital and Epping Plaza), Plenty Valley, South Morang and University Hill, Bundoora.

Disadvantage



5th most socioeconomically disadvantaged

The City of Whittlesea is the 5th most socioeconomically disadvantaged of Victoria’s 31 metropolitan local governments.³⁸

17% of residents live in poverty

Around 17% of residents live in poverty, including 40% of children under 15 in Thomastown – compared with Melbourne (12.6%) and Victoria (13.2%).

The City of Whittlesea has:³⁹

- Fewer residents (4.8%) attending university than Greater Melbourne (6.4%)
- More residents with a vocational qualification (18.1%) than Greater Melbourne (15.3%)
- more young people aged 15 to 24 years who are disengaged from both education and employment (9.8%) than Greater Melbourne (7.5%)
- more households experiencing mortgage stress (14.2%) and rental stress (32.5%) than in Greater Melbourne (11.2% and 27.4%).

³⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, *Census of Population and Housing*.
³⁹ City of Whittlesea, 2018, *Place profiles: demographic profiles of precinct areas in the City of Whittlesea*, pp11-12.
⁴⁰ Ibid. p12.

Education



20.2%

of children in the City of Whittlesea were vulnerable on one or more childhood development domains – compared with 19.9% of children in Victoria.

45.6%

aged 15+ held educational qualifications – compared to 52.2% in Greater Melbourne.

46%

had no qualifications – compared with 38.6% in Greater Melbourne.

18.1%

had vocational qualifications – compared to 15.3% in Greater Melbourne.

18%

had a Bachelor or degrees – compared to 27.5% in Greater Melbourne.

⁴¹ REMPLAN, 2022, *Economy, jobs, and business insights*.

Income



The City of Whittlesea has:⁴⁰

- lower median weekly household incomes (\$1,441) than Greater Melbourne (\$1,539)
- lower median weekly individual incomes (\$592) than Greater Melbourne (\$673)
- fewer residents earning a high income (17.0%) compared with Greater Melbourne (22.9%)
- fewer residents earning a low income (15.3%) compared with Greater Melbourne (16.7%).

Unemployment



The unemployment rate at Dec 2021⁴¹

| | |
|------|--------------------|
| 6.1% | City of Whittlesea |
| 5.4% | Greater Melbourne |
| 4.6% | Victoria |
| 4.4% | Nationwide |

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