



City of
Whittlesea

Advocacy Prospectus

2025-29





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About the City of Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea is located in Melbourne's northern suburbs, about 20 kilometres from the city centre. It is one of Melbourne's largest municipalities, covering a land area of approximately 490 square kilometres. A city in its own right, with a thriving and growing economic base, it includes rural areas to the north, the emerging neighbourhoods and suburbs in the greenfield areas and the established suburbs to the south.



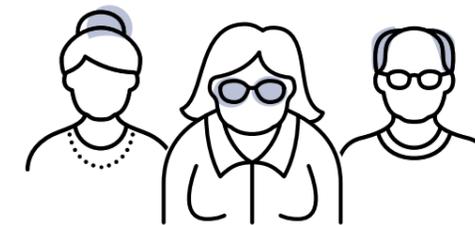
Quick facts about the City of Whittlesea



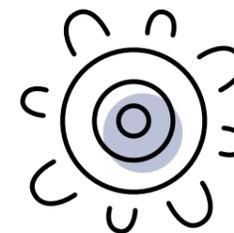
Our population continues to grow
A population of
257,000 in 2025, projected to be
355,000 by 2040 – a 38% increase.¹



We're home to many young families
54% of households are families with children. **27%** of the population is under 19.³



We have a growing older population
17% of our population is over 60.¹
Our median age is expected to shift
from 35 to 39 by 2040.⁴



We have a growing
First Peoples population
38% increase from 2016 to 2021²



We're a diverse and multicultural community
37.6% of residents were born overseas²
and **45%** speak a language other
than English at home.²

¹ Population projections for City of Whittlesea from .id, 2024

² ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

³ Population forecast, Place Info Pty Ltd, 2025

⁴ Population forecast, Place Info Pty Ltd, 2025

Councillor message

It is with great pride that we present the Advocacy Prospectus 2025–29 – our commitment to advocating for a thriving, connected and resilient community.

This Advocacy Prospectus reflects the priorities and aspirations of the people who call the City of Whittlesea home. It is a plan for partnership and a call to work together across all levels of government, industry and community to deliver the infrastructure, services and opportunities our growing municipality needs.

Our community is experiencing rapid growth and change. By 2041, our population will exceed 360,000 people, and with this growth comes both opportunities and challenges. This Prospectus outlines 12 key partnership opportunities that will make a real difference to the lives of our community, from affordable housing and homelessness support, to better transport connections, youth engagement, maternal and child health, and environmental protection.

Each initiative is grounded in evidence and informed by the voices of our community. Residents and businesses have told us they want safer roads, better public transport, access to affordable housing, and stronger digital connectivity. They want vibrant neighbourhoods where families feel safe, young people are supported, and everyone can participate fully in community life.

This Prospectus is more than a wish list, it is a roadmap for collaboration and investment in our growing community. It sets out clear asks demonstrating why these priorities matter and how they will deliver long-term social, economic and environmental outcomes.

We cannot achieve this alone.

The challenges we face require coordinated action. By working together, we can ensure that every person in our community has the opportunity to thrive.

We invite you to join us in delivering these priorities for our community.

Together, we can build a future that is inclusive, sustainable and full of opportunity.

Partnership opportunities

 Housing	
Affordable housing and homelessness	Allocate \$10 million to invest in the delivery of at least 50 social and affordable homes on council owned land in partnership with the Community Housing Sector. Invest \$1.5 million over three years for the provision of local homelessness services.
Good planning to facilitate the delivery of homes	The State Government to meaningfully engage with Local Government to improve the planning system on the development of key planning reforms.
 Community Services and Infrastructure	
Youth Hub and Spoke	Establish a purpose-built youth hub to deliver services throughout the municipality with a prevention-based approach as a 'hub and spoke' model.
Investment into Maternal Child Health (MCH) sustainable funding model	A contemporary funding model with State Government to support and enable connected service pathways, opportunities for innovation, the development of workforce strategies, updates to practice frameworks and technology system investments in Maternal Child Health (MCH) services.
Community safety and amenity	Co-investment in a suite of community safety and amenity initiatives, including public space and street lighting upgrades, localised prevention programs and place activation, to create safer neighbourhoods.
Mobile and broadband coverage	To improve mobile coverage with poor or unusable signal and urgently connect identified growth areas and blackspots to the National Broadband Network (NBN).
 Public Transport	
Wollert Rail	Deliver Wollert Rail by 2030 – extending the train corridor from Lalor station to Wollert via Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC).
Better bus services	Improve bus networks in the municipality by delivering extensions and frequency to existing routes in Epping, Wollert and Donnybrook.
 Roads	
OMR/E6 Freeway	Bring forward construction of the OMR/E6 (Stage 1) Freeway to ensure it is complete by 2035.
Key road upgrades	Deliver key road upgrades to Donnybrook Road, Findon Road, Bridge Inn Road, Epping Road, Craigieburn Road East and key intersection upgrades on Dalton Road.
 Environmental Sustainability	
Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands	Deliver on the long-overdue 2009 commitment to establish a 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands reserve within the City of Whittlesea with a \$20 million investment and a 10-year funding plan.
Waste and illegally dumped rubbish	State Government to reinvest the \$1.2 million paid by Council to the waste levy each year back into Council services that address illegal dumping, with increased funding for consistent maintenance of State-controlled land.



Section 1

Housing

- Affordable housing and homelessness
- Good planning to facilitate the delivery of homes



Section 01

Affordable housing and homelessness

Affordable housing



Data from the City of Whittlesea Community Insights Study



More than **74%** of respondents believe affordable housing should be part of future neighbourhoods



More than **60%** of people think the lack of affordable housing is an issue in the City of Whittlesea



63% of respondents believe Council should advocate for more State and Federal Government funding

The ask

Invest in increasing and improving the housing stock

- Invest in the delivery of at least 50 social and affordable homes on Council-owned land in strategic locations in partnership with the Community Housing Sector.
- Allocate budget towards a dedicated 'growth area' funding round, under the Housing Australia Future Fund, to increase social and affordable housing in the growth corridors of the City of Whittlesea.
- Release surplus State land in the City of Whittlesea for affordable housing.

Increase supply through policy reform

- Exempt Victorian Local Governments from paying Windfall Gains Tax for projects that enable affordable housing on Council-owned land, further outlined in the Planning Reforms section of this document.
- Introduce state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing:
 - classification of affordable housing as essential infrastructure; and
 - a state-wide minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments.

Benefits

- Accelerated delivery of social and affordable housing across the City of Whittlesea.
- Reduced service costs by more than \$15,000 per year for individuals living in stable and affordable housing instead of experiencing homelessness.
- Improved access to social and affordable housing for vulnerable residents.
- Reduced rental and mortgage stress.
- Increased participation and improved outcomes in employment, education, health care and community life.
- Improved wellbeing.

Rationale

The City of Whittlesea is facing a serious housing challenge – with more than 5,200 households having an unmet need for affordable housing in 2025. This is expected to grow to almost 9,000 households by 2041.⁵

Affordable housing refers to housing that is suitable for the needs of very low to moderate-income households. Affordable housing is quality and fit for purpose, priced at a level which is affordable relative to the income of its occupants and still allows these households to meet their other essential living costs.

The demand for affordable housing from very low, low and moderate-income households is overwhelming, with more than 16,000 applications on the Victorian Housing Register with preferences in the northeastern region.⁶ Nearly 23% of households within the municipality earn less than \$881 per week and 56% fall within the medium income range of \$882 to \$2946 per week.⁷

There has been a significant drop in new rental supply that is affordable for households on lower incomes, from 57.6% in September 2004 to just 9.5% in September 2024.⁸ The City of Whittlesea also has fewer social homes (1.1%) compared with the Greater Melbourne average (2.3%).⁹

Council's Affordable Housing Plan 2025-2030 sets out what we will do to address the lack of affordable housing, but we can't do it alone. All levels of government must work together on new projects and policy reforms to address this growing challenge effectively.

Return on investment

Additional affordable and social housing will provide long-term accommodation for families and individuals who cannot afford to rent in the private rental market.

The housing will be allocated to eligible households with low to moderate incomes. It will benefit:

- vulnerable populations at risk of homelessness, including elderly people, people who need assistance and people experiencing family violence
- lower income-earning essential workers, including childcare, health care, aged care, hospitality, retail, service and delivery industry workers
- one-parent families.

Improving access to social and affordable housing brings benefits for the community, including vulnerable groups, by:

- reducing rental and mortgage stress and associated poor health
- supporting social inclusion, participation and economic productivity
- reducing the number of young people sleeping rough
- breaking the cycle of homelessness
- relieving pressures on local homelessness services
- increasing participation in employment, education and health care
- improving the overall health, safety, wellbeing and sense of empowerment.

⁵ City of Whittlesea Internal Modelling 2025

⁶ Homes Australia (2023), Applications for Victoria Housing Register (VHR) <https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202309/VHR%20location%20preferences%20-%2030%20June%202023.xlsx>

⁷ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2021) City of Whittlesea- Household Income <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/household-income>

⁸ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2025) Rental Report Department of Families Fairness and Housing Victoria | Rental report

⁹ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2021) City of Whittlesea- Housing Tenure <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/tenure>



Section 01

Affordable housing and homelessness

Homelessness support services



More people are experiencing homelessness. People sleeping rough and experiencing homelessness has increased by

150%
over the past 20 years¹²



Demand for affordable housing is growing. In 2024, there was an estimated shortage of more than

4,000
affordable homes in our municipality¹³

The ask

Allocate funds for a dedicated homelessness access point with wraparound support services in the City of Whittlesea.

Invest \$1.5 million over three years for a comprehensive assertive outreach service for people sleeping rough in the City of Whittlesea.

Benefits

- Provide an essential service to the most vulnerable members of our community.
- Reduced number of people sleeping rough.
- Reduce pressure on homelessness services outside the municipality.
- Increased participation and improved outcomes in employment, education, health care and community life.
- Improved community safety and wellbeing.

Rationale

Ending homelessness starts with early interventions involving both universal and targeted prevention. Homelessness systems in the City of Whittlesea are in crisis. The need is evident for a homeless access point, supported by a coordinated outreach service to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. This is particularly pertinent for growth area councils such as the City of Whittlesea, which will be responsible for accommodating most of Australia's housing growth over the coming decades.

Experiences of homelessness are varied in the City of Whittlesea and a substantial portion of the homeless cohort are 'invisible.' Haven Home Safe, the access point provider for the community, is in Preston, at least 45 kilometres from the rural north of the municipality. This creates barriers to access, which places our community at further risk. Funding a local assertive outreach service and access point in the City of Whittlesea will bridge this gap. The City of Whittlesea experiences the 12th highest level of homelessness in Victoria. There were 854 people experiencing homelessness in the municipality during the 2021 Census. Qualitative data from homelessness services indicates this figure is underscored significantly, with the experience of homelessness in the municipality being much higher and more visible. A substantial portion of the homeless cohort is provisionally accommodated. Homelessness affects a wide range of people from different regions, ages and cultural backgrounds. Risk of homelessness may be increased by poor physical or mental health, and homelessness exacerbates and complicates access to health services, employment and vulnerability to crime and personal attacks.

The City of Whittlesea has the third-highest rate of family violence amongst northern municipalities, with 1,228 incidents per 100,000 population. 42% of people accessing homelessness support services reported escaping domestic and family violence.¹⁰ When local governments do get involved in the problem of homelessness, it is often too late. They are reacting when homelessness has reached a crisis point, instead of working to prevent it. Local Governments have limited resourcing, capacity, or impact to influence long-lasting changes in this space. At this stage of the crisis, success is dependent on all other levels of government supporting any Council-led homelessness response. Homelessness services are overwhelmed. The higher cost of living, including rising rents, and the lack of affordable housing, are key factors leading to housing stress and higher rates of homelessness. In the northern region, there is no crisis accommodation, particularly for people escaping family violence. The closest access point, Haven Home Safe, receives limited funding and does not have the capacity to meet the needs of rough sleepers in the area.

The Victorian homelessness system is organised under what is called The Opening Doors Framework, which aims to provide a coordinated service response by a limited number of designated entry points into the homelessness system. Victorians can only access homelessness services through these access points.¹¹ Haven Home Safe is located in Preston at least 45 kilometres from the rural north of the municipality. Rough sleepers who present at the closest access point seeking emergency or crisis accommodation are often turned away. This can be because there is no availability in hotels, motels, or rooming houses; there is no funding available; or the person is not considered a priority over others.

Return on investment

Implementing Assertive Outreach and the Functional Zero model offers a coordinated, real-time approach to identifying and supporting people experiencing homelessness. The Functional Zero model is a data-driven, coordinated approach that ensures homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring by maintaining a real-time record of every person experiencing homelessness in the community. This enables services to respond quickly and collaboratively so that the number of people without housing never exceeds the community's capacity to support and house them. By testing these models locally, Council can ensure funding delivers the greatest return on investment.

The framework connects local efforts through four interrelated tiers, each playing a distinct role in coordinating responses and driving measurable outcomes:

- **Hot Spots:** Brings together Local Government, community members, and local services to build a shared understanding of homelessness within the municipality. This group shares up-to-date information on the location and prevalence of rough sleeping to inform effective and targeted responses.
- **Service Coordination:** Ensures efficient coordination of housing and support resources. This includes developing data tools, maintaining real-time information on individuals experiencing homelessness, and ensuring no one is overlooked in accessing assistance and housing pathways.
- **Improvement Working Group:** Acts as the central communication and action point between frontline, person-centred service coordination and the strategic, resource-focused activities of the Executive and Hot Spots groups. It applies a continuous quality improvement approach and provides support to address issues escalated from service coordination.
- **Executive:** Provides strategic leadership, establishes the authorising environment, secures resources, and drives a whole-of-community response to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

¹⁰ Crime Statistics Agency, 2024

¹¹ <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/getting-help>

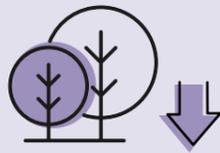
¹² Census 2006 and Census 2021

¹³ Affordable Housing Need, compiled by .id, 2024



Section 01

Good planning to facilitate the delivery of homes



Tree coverage is low in urban areas. In established suburbs, tree cover varies from

7-11%.

In growth areas, the canopy cover is as low as

6%¹⁸

The ask

That the State Government work in true partnership with the City of Whittlesea to ensure planning reforms achieve the delivery of homes at scale in high-quality, well-connected neighbourhoods.

The City of Whittlesea calls for the State Government to action better planning processes in four key areas:

- 1.** Timely delivery of infrastructure to support new housing
- 2.** Facilitating access to appropriate land to unlock infrastructure delivery
- 3.** Windfall Gains Tax exemption
- 4.** Reintroducing Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) requirements and tree canopy coverage to the newly introduced residential codes.

Benefits

- Accelerate the delivery of homes at scale, including affordable housing.
- Deliver high-quality, safe neighbourhoods where residents can access services easily and close to home.
- Maximise the use of existing public assets to benefit the community.
- Support housing projects on Council-owned land.
- Unlock land for additional housing and employment sites in appropriate locations.
- Reduce staging costs for the development of new estates.
- Improve commuter travel time in growth areas.
- Homes that are affordable to run, leading to longer-term energy and water savings for residents.
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change through the reduction of urban heat island effects and the construction of high-quality homes.
- Increase canopy tree coverage in urban areas, reducing extreme heat impacts.
- Improve community safety in emergency situations.

Rationale

The City of Whittlesea's growth areas are projected to grow by just over 100,000 people under existing Precinct Structure Plans, which have been prepared and approved by the State Government. These areas are substantially lacking in essential infrastructure to support the projected population.

The City of Whittlesea seeks a collaborative partnership with the State Government to improve the planning system to ensure new development is affordable, high-quality, sustainable and supported by essential infrastructure to build thriving communities.

As a growth area council, the City of Whittlesea is an expert and experienced Planning Authority, and eager to be engaged as a leading partner and facilitator in housing and urban development, contributing informed input and feedback on key planning reforms.

Return on investment

- Unlocking vital housing supply through the provision of timely infrastructure in line with housing targets and affordable housing goals.
- Efficient and coordinated infrastructure delivery to growing communities.
- Uplift in the value of housing through the timely provision of infrastructure.
- Reduced cost of living and improved climate resilience through a holistic, integrated approach to Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) across all development types.
- Ensuring new neighbourhoods are sustainable, affordable and communities are prepared for a changing climate consistent with State Government targets.



Case study

Epping Road/Boundary Road, Wollert PSP-09

In Wollert, the non-delivery of a critical intersection is causing a bottleneck to development. With delivery obstructed by land fragmentation across multiple properties, the State Government is responsible for acquiring land for the project to be delivered by others. The delivery of this intersection alone would immediately unlock 1,050 dwellings and ultimately 5,500 new homes.

1. Timely delivery of infrastructure to support new housing

Growth areas are expanding rapidly, but infrastructure delivery is lagging. Without timely investment, new communities face reduced access to essential services and increased development staging costs. The current system lacks coordination and flexibility, limiting councils' ability to respond to local needs.

Ask

- Ensure State infrastructure, including road upgrades, public transport, educational and health facilities, is provided in a timely manner to service the growing community and catalyse development.
- Ensure that locations planned for new housing are supported by the infrastructure they need, or planning triggers are introduced to ensure development is staged until the required infrastructure can be delivered.
- Ensure development contributions system reforms provide for a well-coordinated, consistent and transparent mechanism for councils to fund essential local infrastructure in areas of high growth.
- Provide greater flexibility in how Local Government use contributions made by the development sector to prioritise and deliver infrastructure projects in response to community need.

2. Facilitating access to land to unlock infrastructure delivery

The City of Whittlesea faces bottlenecks due to the non-delivery of critical infrastructure. The land required for public infrastructure is often privately owned or under Public Acquisition Overlays (PAO), causing major delays in delivering the vital infrastructure required for residents to access schools, jobs and services.

These delays are also restricting the much-needed delivery of housing and employment uses in growth areas.

Ask

The City of Whittlesea is calling on the State Government to:

- Fund the acquisition of land identified in Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs).
- Enable access licences to land with Public Acquisition Overlays (PAO) for interim delivery of infrastructure works.
- Fast-track Planning Scheme Amendments to support land acquisition for infrastructure in growth areas which have been identified in PSPs.
- Ensure land to be acquired by the State Government for infrastructure is provided in a timely manner to unlock infrastructure delivery and development.

3. Windfall gains tax exemption

To meet ambitious State Government housing targets, Local Governments are encouraged to identify and repurpose under-utilised assets. This can include disused car parks, vacant lots and surplus land within parks and open spaces to accelerate the delivery of much-needed homes – particularly social and affordable housing. These projects require the rezoning of land to residential use, triggering substantial value uplifts that, in turn, incur the Windfall Gains Tax.

This tax significantly impacts project viability, creating a financial barrier to the rapid delivery of affordable and well-located housing. By removing this cost barrier for councils by creating a Windfall Gains tax exemption, funds from the sale of affordable housing can then be reused in future housing developments, enabling councils to support State and Federal Government housing targets.

Ask

- Exempt Local Government from Windfall Gains Tax when rezoning publicly owned land to deliver housing or other government priorities.

Case study

Huskisson Recreation Reserve – unlocking housing while enhancing community safety and amenity

The Huskisson residential development is a proposed 19-lot neighbourhood on Council land within the under-utilised Huskisson Recreation Reserve in Lalor. Approximately 3,079 sqm of this reserve is proposed to be rezoned from Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) to residential use, to enable housing development.

The rezoning triggers a Windfall Gains Tax liability of approximately \$382,500, representing 50% of the land value uplift. This tax makes the project commercially unviable without an exemption. At least 15% of the 19 new homes would be affordable housing delivered in a well-located neighbourhood, close to critical services and infrastructure.

If delivered, beyond provision of new affordable homes in a location with good access to public transport, healthcare, retail, and employment hubs, this project would address long-standing access and safety concerns of Huskisson Recreation Reserve. By orienting new homes to face the reserve, this project would seek to activate the park edge, improving passive surveillance and deterring antisocial behaviour.

4. Environmentally sustainable development (ESD) and tree canopy coverage

Planning amendment VC267¹⁴ has ‘turned off’ the City of Whittlesea planning policies, which will result in reduced tree canopy coverage, reduced sustainability outcomes and poor infill housing outcomes. In response to loss of tree canopy coverage and poor infill housing outcomes, the City of Whittlesea undertook strategic research to provision for more trees, landscaping and environmentally sustainable development (ESD) outcomes. Total urban tree canopy coverage for the established areas of the municipality in 2017 was 7.97%, well below the target set by Plan for Victoria¹⁵ of 30% by 2050.

Ask

The City of Whittlesea is calling on the State Government to:

- reverse recent changes to planning provisions that remove the ability for councils to achieve good design outcomes in development approvals (such as the deletion of tree and landscaping controls in the schedules to the City of Whittlesea’s residential zones)
- ensure greater tree canopy coverage in open space and private developments is achieved in densifying established areas, growth areas and activity centres
- strengthen sustainability standards for townhouses and low-rise residential development by reinstating ESD provisions
- implement the evidence-based key focus areas identified in *Position Paper: Planning for sustainable and resilient communities – 2025 and beyond*¹⁶, to:
 - strengthen sustainability standards for townhouses and low-rise residential development by reinstating ESD provisions already demonstrated to be achievable and successful
 - expedite the completion of Stage 2 of the State Government ESD Roadmap by introducing robust and comprehensive ESD standards for all building types and subdivisions
 - embed consistent and ambitious ESD requirements in Activity Centre Structure Plans and associated planning scheme ordinance to ensure equitable access to sustainable, adaptive and resilient developments
- empower Local Governments to elevate ESD targets by authorising the Elevating ESD Targets Planning Policy Amendment.¹⁷

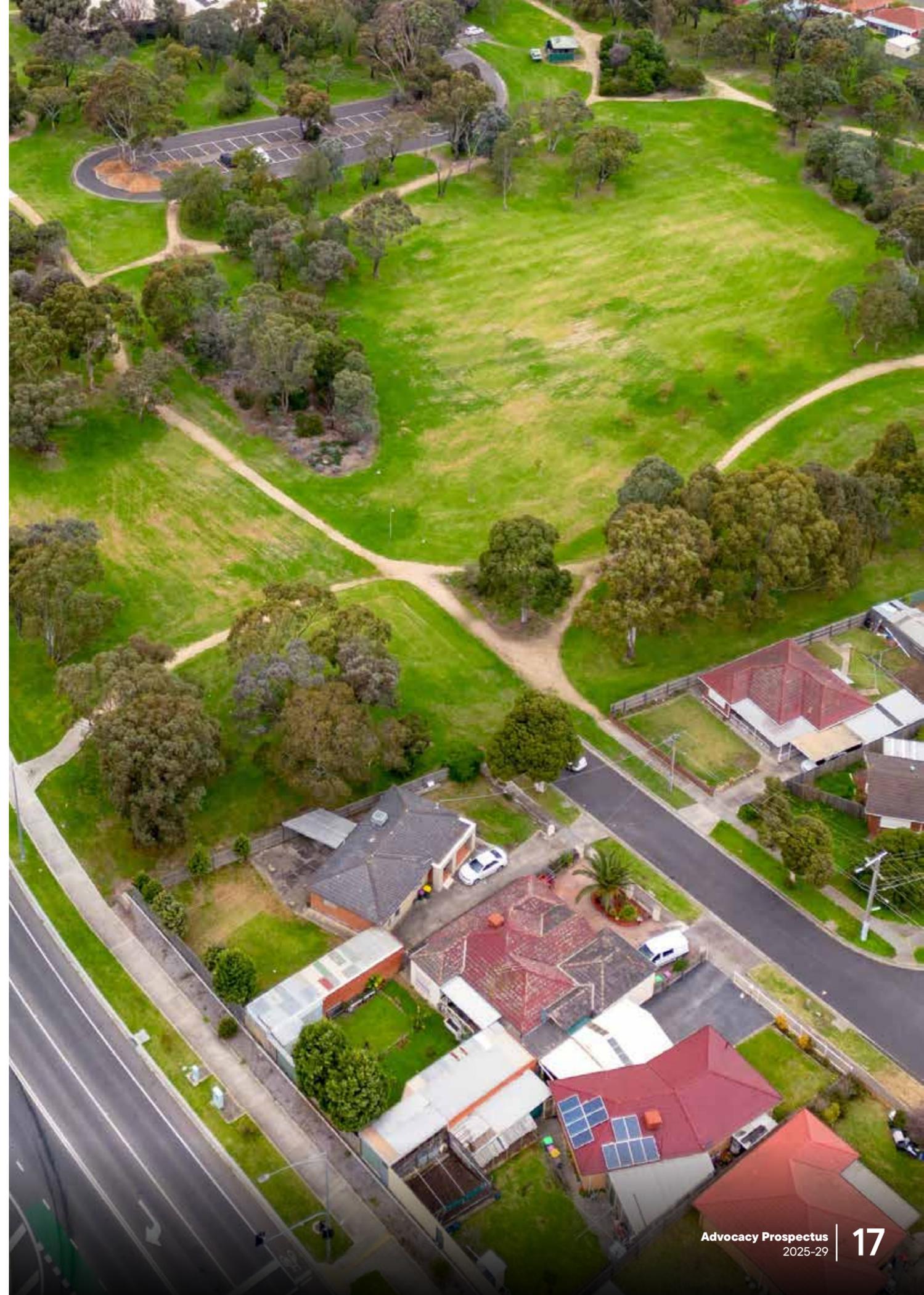
¹⁴ <https://planning-schemes.app.planning.vic.gov.au/Victoria%20Planning%20Provisions/amendments/VC267>

¹⁵ Victorian State Government, Plan for Victoria, A plan by Victorians for Victorians, 2025

¹⁶ CASBE Position Paper: Planning for sustainable and resilient communities – 2025 and beyond, July 2025

¹⁷ <https://factsheets.bess.net.au/buildings/elevating-esd-targets.html>

¹⁸ Greening Whittlesea Strategy 2020-2040, 2021





Section 2

Community Services and Infrastructure

- Youth Hub and Spoke
- Investment into Maternal Child Health (MCH) sustainable funding model
- Community safety and amenity
- Mobile and broadband coverage



Section 02

Youth Hub and Spoke

35%

of the City of Whittlesea population is aged 25 or under ²¹



The ask

The City of Whittlesea is seeking \$3 million in funding for the establishment of a new purpose-built Youth Hub.

The Youth Hub would respond to the needs of a growing youth population – engaging with young people, building their capacity and connection, and delivering improved health and wellbeing outcomes with a prevention-based approach.

A hub and spoke model for youth centres combines a central hub offering comprehensive programs and specialist support with satellite locations that extend these services into schools, community centres, and mobile outreach, ensuring equitable access for all young people.

Benefits

- Significantly increase the number of young people who access youth programs and services.
- Engage a broad range of young people in prevention activities.
- Better youth physical and mental health outcomes.
- Success at school and lower rates of school refusal.
- Better youth employment outcomes.
- Social cohesion, including a sense of solidarity and respect for others and control of negative anti-social behaviours.
- Increased uptake of community leadership and increased civic participation by young people.
- Provide in-person opportunities for social connection in line with recent federal policies that limit social media access for under-16s.



Rationale

The need for a dedicated Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea is an issue that has been raised by young people, their families and local service providers for a long time and through various community engagements.

According to local service providers, there are four major issues impacting young people in the City of Whittlesea. These include:

1. Social isolation and loneliness
2. Poor mental health, ranging from relatively minor anxieties to serious conditions such as disordered eating and self-harm
3. Disengagement from school, including reported school refusal and behavioural issues in school
4. Higher family violence rates leading to a range of other issues for young people, such as homelessness.

These factors are further compounded in many parts of the municipality where community members experience high levels of disadvantage. Agencies and organisations that work with young people in the City of Whittlesea have reported that social isolation, alongside remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, meant young people were developing fewer social cues, having trouble finding their “tribe” and building networks, and despite being busy, experiencing loneliness.

There are many barriers prohibiting young people accessing services that respond to the issues identified. These include:

- overwhelmed existing services that need more staff and facilities to properly address current and growing needs
- a lack of preventive measures and recreational activities for young people, including drop-in facilities and programs. Many existing centres are oriented towards young families or are primarily service-focused, which concentrates on mental health services
- parental concern around the types of places young people can go, with concerns around safety in the design and access of these spaces
- access, with a lack of transport options in the area. Young people travel into the CBD, Collingwood or Seymour, to use youth hubs they can access by train
- a lack of services overall.

The establishment of a purpose-built Youth Hub will enable new opportunities to work with an increased number of young people before they require service intervention. The Youth Hub will provide a dedicated asset from which to run youth programming, with a focus on engaging young people in activities that can help prevent issues that negatively affect them. A focus on prevention would have a major impact on a significant number of young people in the City of Whittlesea.

Establish a Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea to enable delivery of a ‘hub and spoke’ service model to run ongoing youth programs throughout all of the municipality with a prevention-based approach. Extensive community consultation, needs analysis, examination of ideal sites and feasibility studies have been completed, informing the scope and sites of the future ‘hub and spoke’ service model.

The Youth Hub will include:

- a new facility incorporating flexible design principles identified during extensive community consultation
- a kitchen and activity space, foyer, multi-purpose meeting, consulting and quiet rooms, outdoor space, office space, and gender-neutral amenity spaces
- access via public transport
- dedicated staffing for key activities and services.

Return on investment

Social impacts

The Youth Hub will support the health and wellbeing of young people in the City of Whittlesea by:

- improving service access, increasing the capacity of youth support services, and expanding programming to reach a wider audience informed by community consultation
- boost participation of young people in public life, reducing social isolation and improving wellbeing outcomes.

The Youth Hub will engage more young people who are at risk and provide early intervention to prevent issues from arising or worsening. Promoting social inclusion is expected to result in a better overall quality of life for individuals. This is likely to reduce crime and hospitalisation rates that are associated with low wellbeing, providing flow-on economic benefits in the form of cost savings on the public system.

Social impacts were assessed in the form of improvement in participants' mental health, estimated at \$2,271 benefit per young person who is materially and positively impacted by the Youth Hub. With this calculation, it is expected the Youth Hub will generate an estimated social benefit of \$1.3 million in present-day terms.¹⁹

Economic impacts

The Youth Hub will enable the participation of young people in society through tailored programming and expanded service access. By providing ongoing support that meets modern needs, this can lift the confidence and ability of young people and encourage them to fulfil their potential across work and study. This leads to improved economic outcomes for these participants, including reduced unemployment, increased productivity and higher educational achievements they might not have otherwise achieved.

The improved economic outcomes have been quantified in terms of accelerated employment and increased lifetime earnings for young people associated with improved educational attainment. By assisting young people with job searching and early engagement in the labour market, this is likely to generate a benefit of \$12,059 to \$43,344 per young person at risk of un/underemployment that is materially and positively impacted. It is therefore likely that the Youth Hub will generate an estimated economic benefit of \$15.3 million in present-day terms.²⁰

Progress

In June 2023, the State Government announced a grant to complete a feasibility study for a dedicated Youth Hub within the City of Whittlesea. This study was completed in July 2024, demonstrating the urgent need for dedicated funding to deliver a Youth Hub and Spoke model to support the growing youth population.

¹⁹ SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

²⁰ SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

²¹ Census 2021





Section 02

Investment into Maternal Child Health (MCH) sustainable funding model

Between June 2024
and July 2025 the
City of Whittlesea:


received **3,261**
birth notices and
delivered 3,261
home visits


delivered **28,871**
hours of key age
and stage visits and
supported 1,471
first-time parents


had **58** Aboriginal
babies born in the
service and 263
actively engaged
Aboriginal children
in the service


completed **1,169**
key age and stage
visits with the support
of a professional
interpreter

The ask

- Commitment to a contemporary funding partnership with the State Government.
- Service framework modernisation that reflects contemporary evidence, with the last framework updated in 2009.
- A workforce sustainability strategy and leadership development and clinical governance focus that supports strengthening workforce sustainability and safe and high-quality clinical systems.
- Service innovation and integration to support local, place-based service model innovations to meet the needs of different communities.

The current funding model does not adequately cover the cost to deliver the service, with the City of Whittlesea covering 65% of the Universal MCH service cost which is consistent across Victoria. The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has gathered in-depth information to inform the negotiation for the new Memorandum of Understanding and unit cost discussions.

Benefits

- Lifelong benefits from investing in early years services.
- Identification and referral for developmental delay, imperative in ensuring children are receiving age-appropriate support and early intervention.
- Increased parenting capacity through confidence building and awareness of expected developmental outcomes and the importance of caregiver and child attachment.
- For every dollar invested in early childhood programs, two dollars is received back over a lifetime.²²
- Increased participation rates across the service.
- Flexible delivery models enabling families to remain engaged in service.
- Actively re-engages families who have been part of a Child Information Sharing Scheme request from Child Protection or the Orange Door.
- Referrals to specialised family violence support services for impacted individuals and other appropriate referrals for children impacted by family violence.

Rationale

MCH services are an essential community infrastructure that every Victorian family relies on during the critical first 2000 days of a child's life. With more than 100 years of trusted partnership between State and Local Government, MCH services represent one of Council's most valued and accessible services. With statutory responsibility under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, it is essential the service continues to have universal reach for every family in the municipality, a trusted entry point into Council and community services, and preventative investment to reduce the long-term costs across health, education and social services.

The City of Whittlesea is the fifth-most socioeconomically disadvantaged of Victoria's 31 metropolitan local governments.²³ 19.1% of households in the municipality fall within the lowest income range – \$0 to \$799 per week.²⁴ Historically, Council would be aware that roughly one in three children accessing MCH services were known to be eligible for a Health Care Card.²⁵ While current data is limited, the complexity for families due to cost-of-living pressures likely means this figure is higher than current data suggests.

Alongside financial vulnerability, 43% of our yearly birth notices received are first-time parents.²⁶ With ongoing deficits in referral services, the MCH service continues to hold and support families until they can access services from waiting lists. These include mental health, drug and alcohol, allied health (such as speech pathology), and family violence services.

Without a contemporary funding model that respects the expertise of the workforce, there is a high risk that there will continue to be a widening gap in recruitment and retention of the workforce due to the growing expectations of what clinicians are able to deliver within the current model.

Return on investment

The City of Whittlesea's population forecast is anticipated to grow by 61.7% from 2020-2040, in comparison to the Victorian population growth forecast of 24.9% for the same period. More families are expected to move into the municipality in developing areas, such as Wollert and Donnybrook, which will continue to see the need for MCH services grow.

Stress that impacts parents and caregivers can have a direct impact on the experience of the infant and child. Investment in the MCH service will support today's babies and children well into the future to provide them a start in life that builds great foundations.

With an appropriately staffed and funded MCH service, the community will continue to receive a high level of service availability. This, in turn, will enable children and families to thrive.

“I can honestly say without the support of my MCH nurse, I probably wouldn't be here today. Having depression with a young baby is scary and the nurse never judged me and heard my cries for help, which has helped me to still be here today and I have learnt to enjoy my baby.” – Sarah

²² Economic Analysis Summary Report, the Front Project, the Early Years Springboard, A smarter investment for a smarter Australia, 2019.

²³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

²⁴ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Household Income <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/household-income>

²⁵ City of Whittlesea Central Application System, Kindergarten data for sessional kindergarten

²⁶ Child Development Information System (CDIS), MCH program data for City of Whittlesea



Section

02

Community safety and amenity



37%

of residents feel safe or very safe at night, compared to 85% of residents who feel safe or very safe during the day⁴¹

The ask

The City of Whittlesea seeks co-investment in a suite of community safety and amenity initiatives, including public space and street lighting upgrades, active travel investment, localised prevention programs and place activation, to create safer neighbourhoods.

The investments are broken into two key areas:

- **Infrastructure upgrades for safer and more welcoming public spaces, including:**
 - activation of existing and investment in new pedestrian and active travel routes in local neighbourhoods
 - installation of bollards to prevent vehicle intrusion into pedestrian areas
 - installation of raised pedestrian crossings to prioritise people over vehicles
 - upgrades to public lighting
 - increased tree planting for shade and amenity
 - expansion of mobile connectivity to improve emergency access and public safety
 - design improvements to enhance visibility and safer public space, with building facades and windows overlooking public spaces for passive surveillance
 - installation of CCTV
 - improved management of State-owned infrastructure.
- **Community connection and social cohesion initiatives, including:**
 - expansion of youth engagement programs through investment in the Youth Hub and Spoke model
 - investment in family violence prevention programs
 - education and employment support programs targeting disengaged or at-risk groups
 - facilitate increased awareness about the risks of gambling harm in the City of Whittlesea.

Benefits

- increased perceptions of safety and confidence at home and in public spaces.
- proactive investment from the State Government creates a flow of benefits in reducing future cost pressures on the justice system, housing services and the public health system.
- safer neighbourhoods and more connected communities lead to a reduction in social isolation.
- increased access to prevention programs and support services, particularly for young people and people at risk of family violence, gambling harm and harm from alcohol and other drugs.
- investment in prevention programs builds protective factors that reduce vulnerability to social, financial and health-related harms.
- build social cohesion. Inclusion and trust within neighbourhoods.
- addresses intersecting harms through integrated community based responses.
- ensures collaboration to deliver locally tailored solutions.
- increase access to prevention and early intervention programs for people affected by family violence, gambling harm, or alcohol and other drug (AOD) misuse.
- improved social connection and inclusion leading to reduced vulnerability to community harms and improved perceptions of safety and wellbeing.
- investment in active travel leads to more walking and cycling, reducing car dependency and improving community health outcomes and accessibility.
- ensures pedestrian areas remain safe and inviting, reducing the likelihood of antisocial behaviours.
- improved amenity in public spaces fosters a sense of security and community connection.

Rationale

Community safety and amenity are consistently identified as top priorities by residents and local businesses. Perceptions of safety significantly influence wellbeing, community participation, and access to services.

Infrastructure improvements, including active travel investment, lighting upgrades, mobile coverage, and passive surveillance, work together to create safer environments, improve public confidence and support emergency response. These upgrades are particularly important in growth areas where infrastructure has not kept pace with population increases.

Public lighting workshops with the community indicate that 67% of shared path users do not feel safe using the paths at night,²⁷ and 1 in 15 community requests for public open space is related to lighting or safety, where access to a public open space has been limited due to the perceptions of safety or low levels of light in the evening.

Public lighting is one of the most frequently correlated and significant built environment factors affecting women's perceived safety.²⁸ This is further reinforced with practical research in Melbourne laneways completed with the public confirming lighting as an effective method to increase perceptions of safety.²⁹ Good public lighting can help build social inclusion and civic life across urban spaces, creating environments that are engaging, accessible, and comfortable for a diverse community.³⁰

Active travel investment also has positive flow-on benefits to community health outcomes. Walking and cycling can contribute to minimising risks of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers and osteoporosis, according to the National Health Survey 2017-2018 Australia. This is an important factor in our municipality, where 51% of residents are overweight and 35.5% do less than one hour of physical activity per week.³¹

Uptake of active travel also leads to reductions in traffic congestion, resulting in lower transport related emissions and lower costs to remaining road users.³² Walking and cycling as modes of transport have been identified as crucial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change in Victoria's Climate Change Strategy.³³ It also reduces parking requirements with space and cost savings freeing up land for strategic use.

CCTV in specific built environment settings continues to be a technology that can, coupled with the right prevention based programs and interventions, reduce certain types of crime.³⁴

Rationale

Social cohesion initiatives address underlying drivers of disengagement and vulnerability. Programs that support youth, promote respectful relationships and connect people to education and employment are essential to building resilient communities. When people feel connected, supported and included, communities are safer, more vibrant and better able to respond to emerging challenges. Importantly, social issues such as gambling harm, alcohol and other drug misuse, and family violence often intersect. Each can compound the effects of the others, leading to cycles of financial stress, relationship breakdown, mental health challenges, and community safety concerns. Local prevention efforts that address these interconnected drivers deliver far greater social and economic value than isolated interventions.

Family violence is an under-reported crime, as many people who experience family violence may never seek support from services or report this to the police. In the City of Whittlesea, there were 3,313 family violence incidents in the year ending June 2025. This is a 14.6% increase compared with the previous year, with 2,891 incidents.³⁵

Family violence does not have a single cause but is driven by gender inequality. It is also a combination of numerous complex factors and interactions, that play out from the individual to the social level.³⁶

Tackling it requires a full continuum of intervention:

- prevention: Stop violence before it starts
- response: Protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide immediate support
- recovery: Offer long-term help for survivors to rebuild.

Behaviour such as alcohol and drug use are often associated with both the perpetration and experience of family violence.³⁷ Whilst reported police incidences of family violence do not paint the full picture, it does show alcohol in a disproportionate number of police callouts to family violence incidents.³⁸

Data from the 2022-2023 NDSHS showed that 21% of people in Australia aged 14 and over had been verbally or physically abused or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol in the previous 12 months.³⁹ Gambling does not directly cause intimate partner violence. However, where gendered drivers of violence and abuse are present, gambling harm and the stress it causes greatly intensify and exacerbate violence against women.⁴⁰ The City of Whittlesea is ranked third for gambling losses in Victoria in the financial year 2024-25 at \$154,279 million.⁴² Prevention-based programs are critical to reducing harm and supporting recovery, and where Local Government can be a partner to influence better outcomes for community. Similarly, youth disengagement has been linked to poor mental health, social isolation and limited access to safe spaces, issues the Youth Hub and Spoke model would directly address through prevention based targeted youth programming.

Return on investment

Investment in community safety and amenity will:

- improve perceptions of safety and increase public space usage
- reduce long-term costs associated with crisis response
- reduction in pressure on the justice system, housing services, the public health system, enforcement and service demand
- enhanced liveability and participation, safer, more connected communities that foster inclusion, attract investment and support local economic activity
- improved social connection and reduced vulnerability to multiple overlapping harms
- support healthier, more connected communities
- enhance social cohesion, neighbourhood liveability and economic participation.

²⁷ ARUP, Lighting for Shared User Paths Perceptions of Safety, City of Whittlesea, 2022

²⁸ Dubey, S., Bailey, A. & Lee, J., 'Women's perceived safety in public places and public transport: A narrative review of contributing factors and measurement methods', Cities The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning 156, 105534

²⁹ Sumartojo, S., ed. Lighting design in shared public spaces. London, UK: Routledge, 2022, 123

³⁰ Sloane, M., Slater, D. & Entwistle, J. 2016, Tackling Social Inequalities in Public Lighting

³¹ City of Whittlesea, Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

³² Transport and Infrastructure Council, 2017, Australian Transport Assessment and Planning Guidelines (ATAP)

³³ Victoria Government: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, May 2021, Victoria's Climate Change Strategy

³⁴ Piza, E., Welsh, B., Farrington, D. & Thomas, A. 2019, 'CCTV surveillance for crime prevention', Criminology & Public Policy, 18(1), 135-159.

³⁵ crimestatistics.vic.gov.au September 2025

³⁶ Our Watch Opportunities to address alcohol policy, Oct 2025

³⁷ Sax Institute, Integrated approaches for DFV, MH issues and AOD use Sept 2020

³⁸ Our Watch Opportunities to address alcohol policy, Oct 2025

³⁹ AIHW 2024, Table 4.54

⁴⁰ ANROWS INSIGHTS, Gambling and DFV Practice Guide, Dec 2020

⁴¹ City of Whittlesea Community Insights Wave 2.1 2025

⁴² Monthly expenditure data by Local Government Area (LGA) - Report | vgccc.vic.gov.au December 2024





Section 02

Mobile and broadband coverage



Scan the QR code
For more information
and to view the full
connectivity study



The ask

The City of Whittlesea seeks State and Federal Government investment to:

- Improve mobile coverage in areas with poor or unusable signal
- Urgently connect identified growth areas and blackspots to the National Broadband Network (NBN) including areas of:
 - Donnybrook
 - Wollert
 - Epping
 - Beveridge

Benefits

- Increased community safety and resilience during emergencies.
- Enhanced access to education, employment, health care, and emergency services.
- Improved business operations and economic productivity.
- Greater social inclusion and digital equity.

Rationale

In the City of Whittlesea, 41% of mobile coverage is rated as fair or poor, and 10% is unusable. 13% of emergency markers have poor or no signal, and more than a third of road segments tested have inadequate coverage. Reliable digital connectivity is essential for modern living.⁴³

Residents and businesses in areas with poor or no connectivity experience:

- limited access to telehealth and emergency information
- disrupted and reduced access to online education and remote work
- reduced business efficiency and increased operational costs
- social isolation due to poor digital connectivity.

As remote work and distance learning become standard practice, the need for robust and reliable telecommunications infrastructure is becoming increasingly critical.

The City of Whittlesea's rapid growth, particularly in areas like Donnybrook, Wollert and Beveridge, makes timely investment in telecommunications infrastructure critical. The Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, expected to be fully operational by 2028-29, further underscores the urgency for improving connectivity.

Return on investment

Fast and reliable broadband services will allow residents and businesses to enjoy the benefits of connectivity that urban residents and businesses already access.

Investment in mobile and broadband infrastructure will:

- support the Federal Government's *Better Connectivity for Regional and Rural Australia Plan*⁴⁴
- provide immeasurable safety benefits for emergency response and preparedness
- improve economic participation and digital inclusion
- enable equitable access to services and opportunities across both urban and rural communities.

This is consistent with the Federal Government's commitment to the NBN which recognises the importance of internet coverage for connection, access to services and business operations and growth.⁴⁵

Council is committed to working with telecommunication providers to identify appropriate locations for infrastructure placement to ensure our community is not left behind.

⁴³ City of Whittlesea Municipal Telecommunications Accessibility Report, Cart GIS, September 2024

⁴⁴ Australian Government, 2022, *A stronger, more resilient economy*, Budget, October 2022-23

⁴⁵ Australian Government, 2022, *A stronger, more resilient economy*, Budget, October 2022-23



Section 3

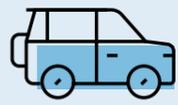
Public Transport

- Wollert Rail
- Better bus services

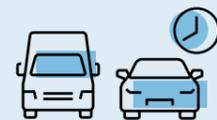


Section
03

Wollert Rail



76%
of people travel
to work by car⁵¹



Many of our working
residents have
long commutes
to work, nearly

30% spend
more than an hour and

7% spend
more than two
hours getting to
and from work.⁵²

The ask

The City of Whittlesea is seeking urgent investment in the construction of Wollert Rail.

Council is calling on the State Government to:

- Preserve the rail corridor using a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO)
- Acquire the remaining 5% of land needed for the Wollert Rail Corridor
- Publicly release the Wollert Transport Corridor Feasibility Study
- Construct Wollert Rail by 2030.

Benefits

- Connect the Wollert community to employment, education and health hubs.
- Increase property values by \$2.44 billion.⁴⁶
- Deliver travel time savings of \$523 million and 500,000 hours by 2030.⁴⁷
- Reduce congestion on local and arterial roads.
- Encourage higher-density housing in the Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre.
- Improve the mode share of public transport trips.

Rationale

The 2002 Epping North Strategic Plan⁴⁸ identified a planned public transport corridor that included a train line to Wollert, influencing the decision of many residents to purchase property in these areas.

The integration of rail was intended to support high-density development and vibrant activity centres around transport interchanges.

Residents now expect the State Government to deliver on this promise to enhance liveability, protect housing investments and support community growth. Projections show strong demand, with approximately 15,000 daily trips from day one and 40,000 daily trips by 2040.⁴⁹

Return on investment

The Epping North and Wollert growth corridor is projected to grow by 101% by 2041.⁵⁰

Wollert Rail will:

- remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from the already congested roads
- connect residents to jobs and vital services in key local precincts such as Cooper Street, Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping and the Melbourne CBD
- create a vital connection to the Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) enabling growth and density within Epping
- improve access to the Northern Hospital, which treats nearly 90,000 patients annually and employs over 3,000 staff
- increase property values by \$2.44 billion by 2030
- deliver 500,000 hours and \$522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030
- generate 2 million hours and \$1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users annually by 2040
- help achieve the mode share targets outlined in the City of Whittlesea Integrated Transport Plan 2024-2034.



“A train line is essential to support the business growth and development in Epping and Wollert areas.” – David

⁴⁶ Epping-Wollert Rail Corridor Independent Study by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

⁴⁷ Epping-Wollert Rail Corridor Independent Study by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

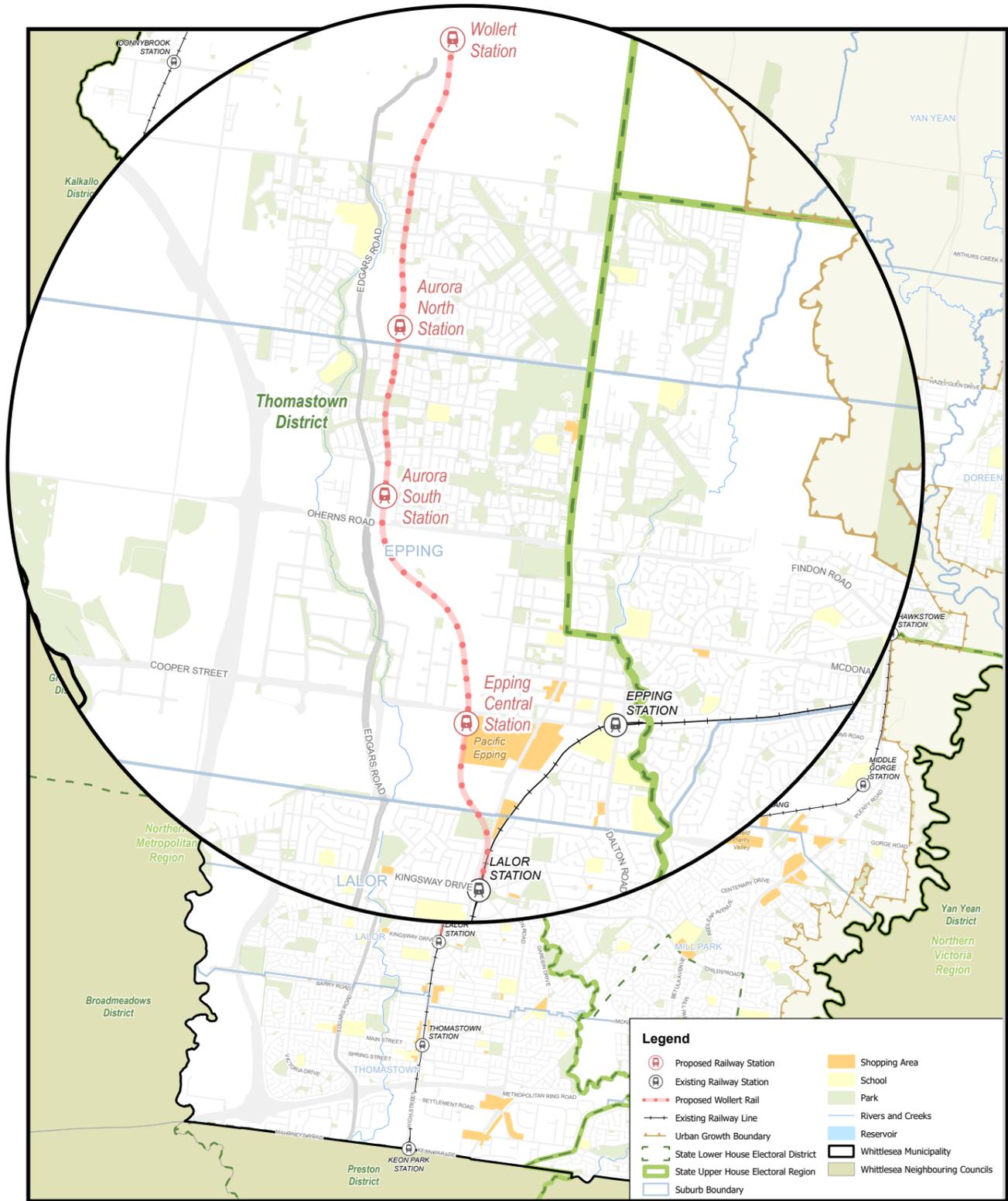
⁴⁸ Epping North Strategic Plan, City of Whittlesea, 2002

⁴⁹ City of Whittlesea projections based on trip generation per household

⁵⁰ Population projections for City of Whittlesea from .id, 2024

⁵¹ City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Survey, Wave 1.1, 2024

⁵² City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Survey, Wave 1.2, 2024





Section 03

Better bus services



Better bus services in growth areas can lead to travel time savings of \$280 to \$390 million over 20 years.⁵⁴

The ask

Improve the bus network in the City of Whittlesea:

- Deliver extensions and improved frequencies to existing routes connecting Epping, Epping North and Wollert
- Improve east-west connections throughout the City of Whittlesea connecting communities with employment and education precincts
- Review existing bus service provision for Donnybrook, including the introduction of on-demand Flexi-Ride services and the expansion of existing bus routes into new estates
- Review existing bus service provision within established areas and identify improved connections and opportunities to increase service frequencies
- Support the rollout of Zero Emissions Buses (ZEBs)
- Deliver improved bus interchange and on-board vehicle facilities.



“(We want) a focus on advocacy with the State Government for improved bus services. Specifically, direct, straight routes where possible, bus rapid transit operations and frequent service operations (every 10 mins) to support uptake of services.”⁵⁴

Benefits

- Improved and convenient transport choices.
- Reduced car dependency and road congestion.
- Improved access to employment, education and health services.
- Increased accessibility and social inclusion.
- Higher frequency services provide estimated benefits of around \$1.40 for every dollar invested.
- Previous bus reform in Melbourne showed that expanding operating hours can grow patronage by around 10%.
- Travel time savings of \$280 million to \$390 million over 20 years (in growth areas).⁵³

Rationale

A significant proportion of trips within our municipality are under 5km, which are well-suited to bus travel.

Many bus routes continue to operate on a low service frequency. A higher frequency and more connected bus network, which integrates with other public transport modes, will encourage more people to make use of bus travel to meet their daily transport needs.

Improved bus network coverage, particularly within growth areas, will provide more convenient transport choices, tackle congestion and reduce car dependency and costs associated with car ownership.

Improved bus interchange facilities and on-board passenger experience will also help boost bus patronage within the municipality.

Return on investment

The proposed changes will:

- manage traffic congestion and vehicle emissions
- improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our community, including more family time and greater social inclusion
- reduce car dependency by giving residents improved and convenient transport choices, with improved access to key trip attractors including Epping Plaza, Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping, and Epping Station, as well as to CBD employment and education opportunities
- enable residents to transfer from bus to rail 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.

Progress

The State Government announced a new bus service, Route 524 from Kalkallo to Olivine via Donnybrook station, under the Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) 2023-2024 funding.

Council was successful in advocating for the route to be extended to Peppercorn Hill to provide greater accessibility for the growing Donnybrook community. The service came into effect in March 2025.

The State Government announced extensions to bus routes 356, 357 and 358 as well as a new bus service between Epping station and Mystique estate, as part of the 2025-26 State budget.

This new bus service provision is welcomed however the City of Whittlesea urgently needs further route extensions and improved service frequencies as these estates continue to develop.

⁵³ Fast, frequent, fair: how buses can better connect Melbourne Infrastructure Victoria 2023

⁵⁴ City of Whittlesea Integrated Transport Plan (2024-2034).



Section 4

Roads

- OMR/E6
- Key road upgrades



Section 04

OMR/E6 Freeway

The ask

- Funding for the detailed planning of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR)/E6 Transport Corridor, including fast rail capacity.
- Bring forward construction of the OMR/E6 (Stage 1) Freeway to ensure completion by 2035.

Benefits

- Provide capacity for 80,000 vehicles per day (Stage 1).
- Allow traffic to bypass the Hume Freeway.
- Relieve congestion on arterial roads.
- Activate opportunities for additional, much needed employment precincts for residents.
- Provide a designated route for heavy vehicles.
- Service freight movements in getting goods to market.
- Better connect people to jobs and services.
- Improve road safety for all users.

Rationale

Melbourne's north is home to more than 1 million residents and is forecast to grow to more than 1.5 million over the coming decades. A large proportion of this population commutes beyond their municipality, with heavy reliance on private vehicles. Investment in the OMR/E6 is required now to prevent congestion worsening and ensure increased freight movements can be effectively handled.

The proposed OMR/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 and will become part of the Principal Freight Network (PFN). It will also connect and provide road capacity for the growing north and west.

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

Rapid growth in Melbourne's north makes it imperative that construction of the OMR/E6 is brought forward so the freeway is complete and traffic ready by 2035, including:

- a business case and detailed planning as soon as possible
- construction completed by 2035 (Stage 1). Land along the designated route is already reserved and no known impediments to this timeline exist.

Return on investment

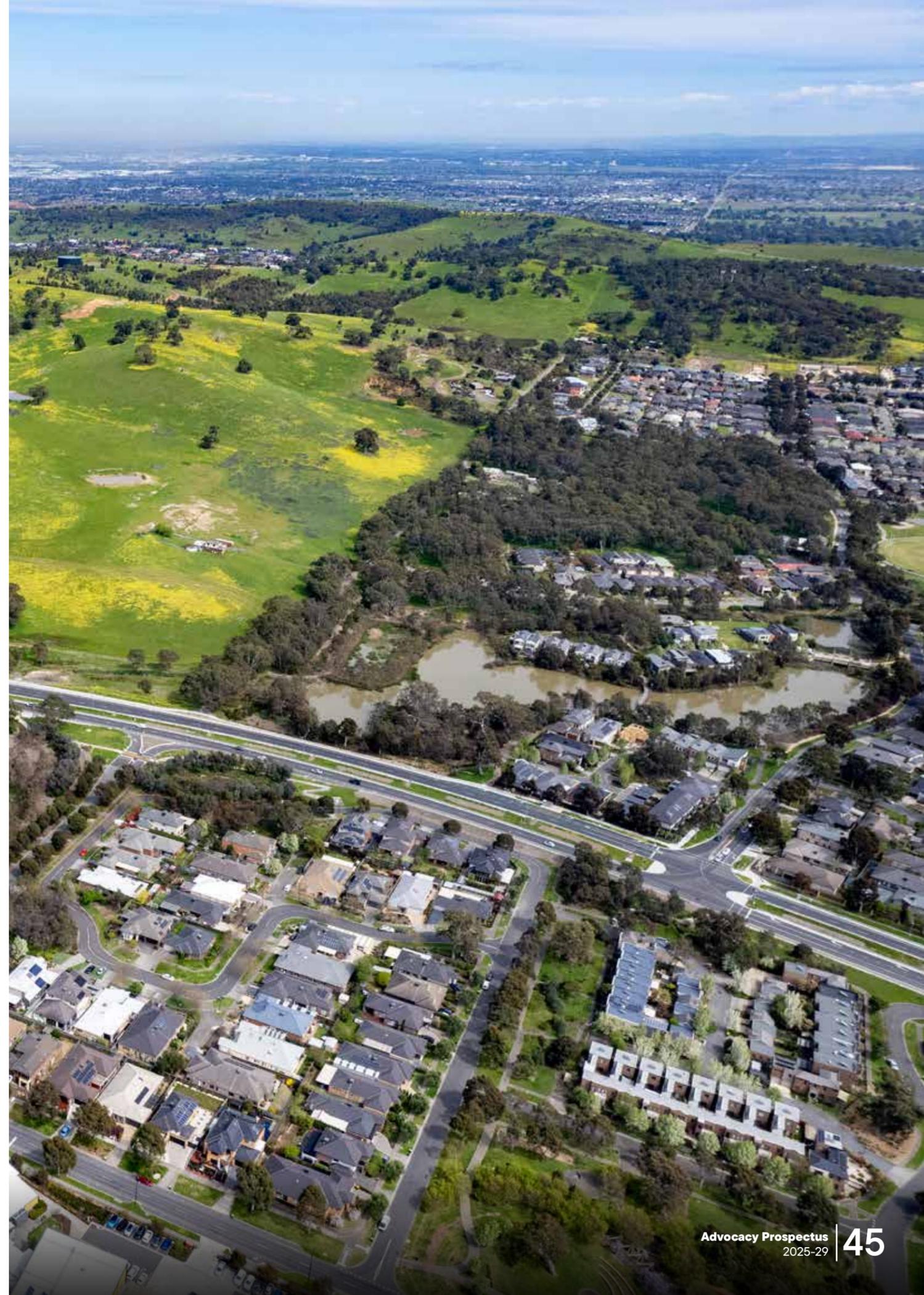
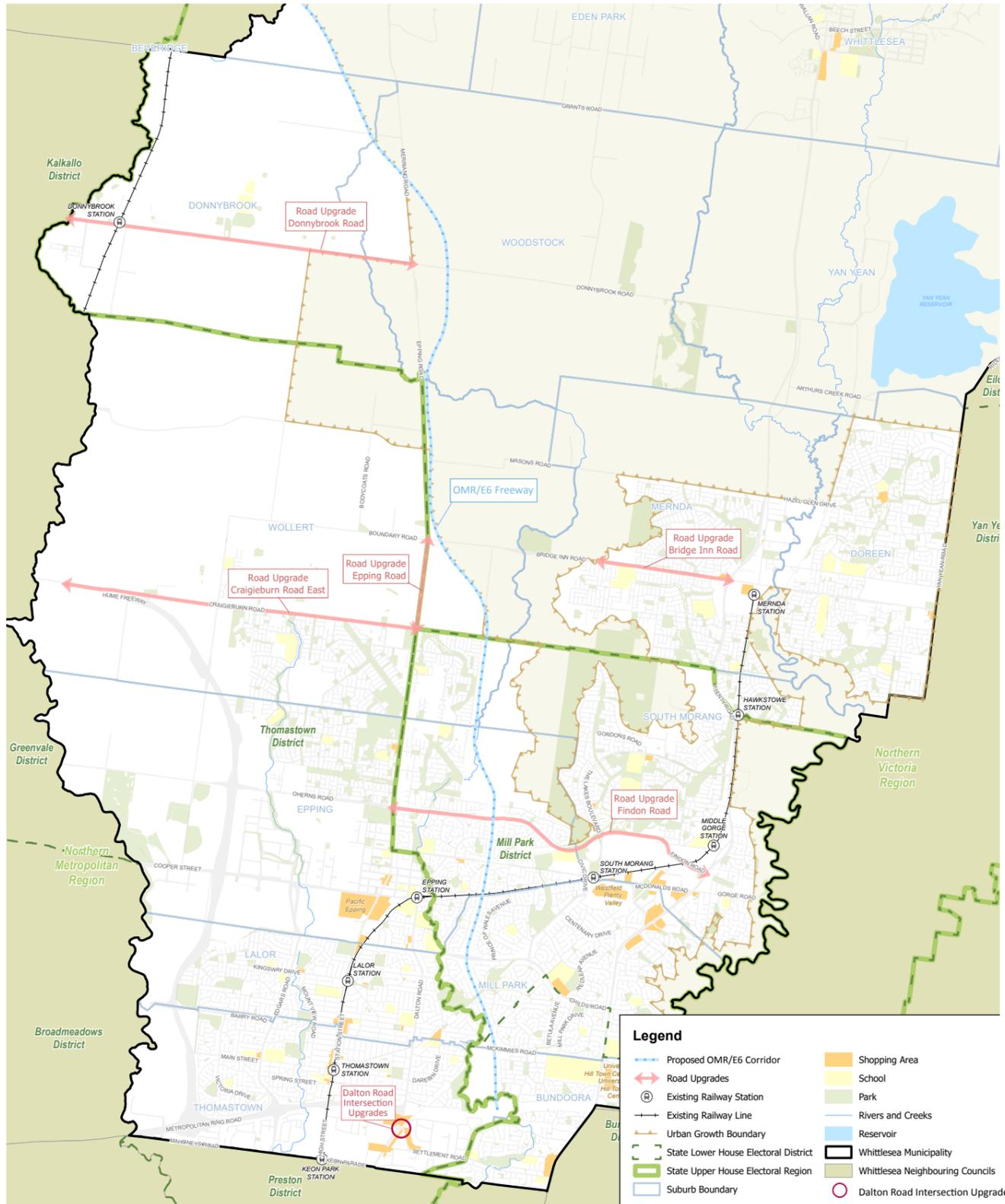
The OMR/E6 is a proposed 123km high-speed transport corridor connecting the north and west of Melbourne.

The OMR/E6 will:

- connect planned and existing trade gateways and national manufacturing and distribution clusters
- connect established suburbs and growth areas, and improve access to regional employment centres for residents from the outer north
- facilitate the critically required increased capacity for future freight movements to the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP)
- improve access to jobs, education and essential services for residents in the Northern Growth Corridor
- strengthen east-west and north-south connectivity, linking growth areas in Melbourne's north
- enable modal shift and future-proof transport infrastructure, supporting dedicated lanes for freight and fast rail
- relieve growing congestion
- support freight movements to and from key logistics centres, including Melbourne Airport, the Port of Geelong, Avalon Airport, the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct and the proposed Western Intermodal Precinct.

For the communities within the City of Whittlesea, the OMR/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, Wollert, Donnybrook, Kalkallo, Beveridge, and Wallan
- provide accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities for residents
- improve community wellbeing by reducing travel times and increasing family time
- reduce traffic congestion on arterial roads, including Epping Road/High Street, Dalton Road, Edgars Road, Cooper Street, Plenty Road, and Yan Yean Road.





Section 04

Key road upgrades



63%
of working residents
commute to other
areas.⁶¹

The ask

The City of Whittlesea seeks funding for the delivery of key arterial road upgrades and key road declaration, including:

- Donnybrook Road (Epping Road to Merri Creek)
- Findon Road (Plenty Road to Epping Road)
- Bridge Inn Road (Plenty Road to Wellington Street)
- Epping Road (Craigieburn Road East to Summerhill Road)
- Craigieburn Road East (Epping Road to Hume Freeway)
- Key intersection upgrades on Dalton Road.

Benefits

- Safer roads for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists.
- Reduced traffic congestion and improved travel times.
- Improved access to employment, education and essential services.
- Enhanced public transport reliability and frequency.
- Improved capacity allowing better vehicle flow.
- Significant economic benefits through travel time savings and improved freight movement.

Donnybrook Road – duplicate between Epping Road and the Merri Creek

Donnybrook Road is a key east-west road connecting Donnybrook residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west and northwest in Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire. The current population of 9,100 in Donnybrook is forecast to grow to 48,000 by 2041.⁵⁵ Traffic volumes are forecast to rise from 10,000 to 46,000 vehicles per day by 2046.

This project will improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, 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 northwest.

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

This will:

- reduce the severity and frequency of crashes
- boost health and wellbeing outcomes for current and future residents, increase family time and reduce social isolation
- facilitate improved traffic flow, reduced queuing and improved journey times
- support the expansion, frequency and reliability of bus services in Donnybrook
- provide a continuous, separated shared user path allowing the community safe access to key destinations, including Donnybrook station, local schools and bus stops along Donnybrook Road
- deliver \$91 million in prospective travel time savings.⁵⁶

Findon Road – declare and duplicate between Plenty Road and Epping Road by 2030

Findon Road provides an important connection between arterial roads and therefore meets the criteria to be declared as an arterial road. Findon Road crosses the City of Whittlesea and provides an important link between the Hume Freeway and Plenty Road. It already carries 23,000 vehicles each day⁵⁷ and modelling suggests it will carry 35,000 vehicles per day by 2031.⁵⁸ Commensurate with the forecast population in Wollert at 41,000 in 2030. This project will ensure it becomes a continuous east-west link with significantly increased traffic capacity.

This will reduce the volume of traffic congestion on nearby McDonalds Road 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:

- unlock \$422 million in travel time savings
- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce vehicle collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow.

Bridge Inn Road – declare and duplicate between Plenty Road and Epping Road by 2030

Bridge Inn Road is the main east-west road through the northern suburbs of the City of Whittlesea, connecting 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 21,000 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 Hazel Glen College and Ivanhoe Grammer School Plenty Valley Campus in Doreen.

The State Government completed the duplication and urbanisation of Bridge Inn Road from Yan Yean Road to Plenty Road in 2024. 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. Bridge Inn Road provides connectivity between arterial roads and therefore meets the criteria to be declared an arterial road.

Epping Road – duplicate between Craigieburn Road East and Summerhill Road, including the upgrade of the Epping Road/Bridge Inn Road intersection, as soon as possible

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 population in Wollert is expected to increase to 41,000 by 2030. Donnybrook's population is set to increase to 21,000 by 2030. Traffic volumes are expected to increase from 22,900 (at present) to 30,000 vehicles per day by 2030.⁵⁹ The State Government is delivering the duplication of Epping Road from Memorial Avenue to Craigieburn Road East.

We now seek the commitment to continue the duplication works a further 1.6kms to Bridge Inn Road/Boundary Road. 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. Duplication will generate \$38 million of benefit in the form of travel time savings.

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

Craigieburn Road East is a 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 39,000 in Wollert is set to increase to 91,000 by 2030. Traffic volumes are forecast to increase from 14,000 vehicles per day (at present) to around 32,000 vehicles per day by 2030. The State Government undertook planning to investigate this potential upgrade. A business case has been completed, which will inform future decision-making. The City of Whittlesea is calling for the business case to be made publicly available.

Duplication will:

- provide \$295 million in travel time savings⁵⁸
- significantly increase road capacity to cater for future traffic demand and deliver more reliable journey times
- allow for increased frequency, reliability and punctuality of bus services to run along Craigieburn Road East, so residents can travel to Wollert town centres, Craigieburn Town Centre, and their jobs in the west
- provide continuous separated footpath and bicycle paths to allow the community safe access to key destinations and bus stops along Craigieburn Road East
- improve safety and reduce the severity and incidence of crashes.

Dalton Road – key intersection upgrades at Settlement Road and Wood Street

The Dalton Road and Settlement Road roundabout in Thomastown has been noted as the second-most dangerous intersection in North-Eastern Melbourne in the RACV My Melbourne Road Survey 2025,⁶⁰ alongside the nearby intersection of Dalton Road and Wood Street. These roundabouts are heavily congested with confusing lane markings, leading to driver frustration and risky driving.

As a key connection to the M80 Ring Road, Dalton Road is an important North-South link with over traffic volumes of over 31,000 vehicles per day in 2014.

Upgrades will:

- improve safety and reduce crashes, approximately 40% of crashes in Greater Melbourne occur at intersections⁶⁰
- increase the capacity, safety and timely movement of freight servicing the Thomastown industrial estates
- increase active travel opportunities by providing upgraded footpaths and pedestrian crossings.

⁵⁵ Population projections for City of Whittlesea from .id, 2024

⁵⁶ Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

⁵⁷ Findon Road Corridor Traffic Study, 2024

⁵⁸ MAJOR ROAD INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CITY OF WHITTLESEA, A 2021 prospectus, Hale Infra Strategy Pty Ltd, 2021

⁵⁹ City of Whittlesea, Northern Growth Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

⁶⁰ My Melbourne Road Survey, RACV, October 2025

⁶¹ NIEIR, 2023, compiled and presented in economy.id by .id





Section 5

Environmental Sustainability

- Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands
- Waste and illegally dumped rubbish



Section
05

Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands



The ask

\$20 million + 10-year funding plan

Deliver on the long-overdue 2009 commitment to establish a 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea.

This includes a need to:

- develop a funding plan to secure the reserve by 2031
- immediately invest \$20 million to secure the first land holdings through voluntary negotiation with landowners, with similar investments made available thereafter until the land is secured.

Benefits

- Protection of the woodlands, which are listed as critically endangered.
- **Protection of nationally threatened species:**
 - Golden Sun Moth
 - Striped Legless Lizard.
- Prevent further loss and/or degradation of sites supporting the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands.
- Protect and improve biodiversity.
- Increase community connection to nature.
- Safeguard and increase environmental amenity for the region.
- Reduce the threat of climate change on flora and fauna.

Rationale

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

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands are made up of majestic Red River Gums that are the environmental hallmark of the municipality. They are also home to a variety of wildlife, including woodland birds and possums, as well as threatened species, such as the Golden Sun Moth, Striped Legless Lizard and threatened flora. Unfortunately, its existence is under threat.

The woodlands are endemic to Victoria and used to be widespread across the Victorian Volcanic Plain, but have undergone severe decline and are now mostly reduced to small and degraded fragments. Less than five per cent of the original woodlands remain. Unfortunately, some land management practices associated with farming and agriculture, as well as urban development, have contributed to the significant destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of the woodlands.

In 2009, the State Government committed to establishing the 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands (GEW) Reserve by 2020. This reserve was to be established to offset the loss of native vegetation associated with extending the urban growth boundary. So far, no land within this reserve has been secured.

A June 2020 report by the office of the Victorian Auditor General found the State Government 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”.

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

Return on investment

Investment will ensure the City of Whittlesea retains its hallmark majestic woodlands and remains a municipality with rich biodiversity and a healthy environment. Additionally, it will:

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



Waste and illegally dumped rubbish

The ask

Council seeks a reinvestment of 10% of waste levy fees paid by the City of Whittlesea (or \$1.2 million) annually from the State Government’s waste levy revenue into Council-run services to address illegal dumping.

The City of Whittlesea also seeks increased funding for consistent maintenance of State-controlled land within the municipal boundaries.



Benefits

- Cleaner, safer, and more attractive public spaces, enhancing community pride.
- Improved public health and wellbeing for residents and visitors.
- Reduction in criminal activity and unwanted waste disposal behaviours to build community social cohesion.
- Cost savings and improved service efficiency through proactive waste management interventions.

Rationale

Illegal dumping remains a persistent and costly issue in the City of Whittlesea, ranging from large-scale commercial waste disposal to widespread residential kerbside dumping. Despite significant investment in prevention and clean-up efforts, the problem continues to impact the community, the environment and public amenity.

The City of Whittlesea currently invest in the following services to address illegal dumping:

- asset protection officers monitoring construction site waste compliance
- litter enforcement officers identifying and prosecuting offenders
- environmental education and community awareness campaigns
- free recycling vouchers, hard waste collection and annual discounted tip vouchers
- public services including street sweeping, public litter bin collection, Water Sensitive Urban Design asset maintenance
- implementation of a four-bin kerbside waste system.

To further strengthen these efforts, the City of Whittlesea seeks State and Federal Government investment across four focus areas.

1. Reducing the direct financial cost of managing illegally dumped rubbish.
2. Addressing underlying causes of illegal dumping through education and enforcement programs.
3. Improving the amenity of State Government controlled roads and public land reserves.
4. Expansion of non-kerbside accepted waste and recycling service provision.

Return on investment

Investment in illegal dumping prevention and waste services will:

- enhance social cohesion by fostering a sense of shared community responsibility
- reduce the long-term costs associated with reactive clean-up and enforcement
- serve as a scalable model for other growth councils facing similar challenges.



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