



Agenda

Scheduled Council Meeting

Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 6pm

Council Chamber,
25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang



**City of
Whittlesea**

Councillors

Cr Lawrie Cox, Mayor	Ganbul Gulinj Ward
Cr Blair Colwell, Deputy Mayor	Mill Park Ward
Cr Deb Gunn	Painted Hills Ward
Cr Michael Labrador	Lalor Ward
Cr Jarrod Lappin	Mernda Ward
Cr David Lenberg	Epping Ward
Cr Aidan McLindon	Kirrip Ward
Cr Christine Stow	North Ward
Cr Martin Taylor	South Morang Ward
Cr Daniela Zinni	Bundoora Ward

Executive Leadership Team

Craig Lloyd	Chief Executive Officer
Emma Appleton	Director Planning & Development
Agata Chmielewski	Director Community Wellbeing
Sarah Renner	Director Customer & Corporate Services
Debbie Wood	Director Infrastructure & Environment
Janine Morgan	Executive Manager Public Affairs
Jacinta Stevens	Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Order of Business

1	Opening	6
1.1	Meeting Opening and Introductions.....	6
1.2	Apologies	6
1.3	Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement	6
1.4	Diversity and Good Governance Statement	7
1.5	Acknowledgements	7
2	Declarations of Conflict of Interest	7
3	Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s.....	7
4	Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters	8
4.1	Public Question Time	8
4.2	Petitions.....	8
4.2.1	Petition - School Crossing Request at McLeans Road, Bundoora	8
4.2.2	Petition - Skate Park at Norris Bank Reserve	9
4.3	Joint Letters	10
5	Officers' Reports.....	11
5.1	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report - Q2 ended 31/12/2025	11
5.2	2025-2026 Q2 Community Grants	59
5.3	Youth Hub Business Case.....	67
5.4	Planning Scheme Amendment C287 - Heritage Overlay at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda - Exhibition Outcomes.....	213
5.5	2017-75A: Awarding of Contract Variation for Kerbside Garbage, Recycling and Green Waste Collection Services	252
5.6	Governance Report.....	258
6	Notices of Motion.....	276

7 Urgent Business.....	276
8 Reports from Councillors and CEO Update	276
9 Tabled Reports	276
9.1 Gender Equality Letter from the Minister for Local Government	276
10 Confidential Business	279
10.1 Family Day Care Service Review Findings & Recommendations	279
11 Closure.....	279

Note:

At the Chair's discretion, the meeting may be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The provision which is likely to be relied upon to enable closure is set out in each item. These reports are not available for public distribution.

Question Time:

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow for public questions, petitions or joint letters from our community to be read out by the Chief Executive Officers delegate and responses will be provided by the Chief Executive Officer.

Questions are required to be submitted in writing no later than 12 noon on the day prior to a Scheduled Council Meeting.

Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to agenda items. Any questions submitted after 12 noon the day prior will be held over to the following Council Meeting.

The Public Question form can be downloaded from Council's website. Refer:

<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council's democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone Council's Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on (03) 9217 2170.

1 Opening

1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions

The Chair, Cr Lawrie Cox will open the meeting and introduce the Councillors and Chief Executive Officer:

Cr Blair Colwell, Deputy Mayor

Cr Michael Labrador

Cr Jarrod Lappin

Cr David Lenberg

Cr Aidan McLindon

Cr Christine Stow

Cr Martin Taylor

Cr Daniela Zinni

Craig Lloyd, *Chief Executive Officer*

The Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will introduce members of the Executive Leadership Team:

Emma Appleton, *Director Planning and Development;*

Agata Chmielewski, *Director Community Wellbeing;*

Sarah Renner, *Director Customer and Corporate Services;*

Debbie Wood, *Director Infrastructure and Environment;*

Janine Morgan, *Executive Manager Public Affairs;* and

Jacinta Stevens, *Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO.*

1.2 Apologies

Cr Deb Gunn

1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement

The Chair will read the following statement:

“On behalf of Council, I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

I would also like to acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”

1.4 Diversity and Good Governance Statement

The Chair will read the following statement:

“At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters active participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and into the future, to support our community’s vision of A Place For All.”

1.5 Acknowledgements

2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s

Recommendation

THAT Council confirm the minutes of the following preceding meetings, as circulated:

- 1. Scheduled Council Meeting held on 17 February 2026.**
- 2. Unscheduled Council Meeting held on 24 February 2026.**

4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters

4.1 Public Question Time

4.2 Petitions

4.2.1 Petition - School Crossing Request at McLeans Road, Bundoora

An electronic petition has been received from 154 residents and 450 non-residents requesting Council install a supervised school crossing on McLeans Road, Bundoora directly in front of Northside Christian College.

Recommendation

THAT Council:

- 1. Note the petition.**
- 2. Refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration.**

4.2.2 Petition - Skate Park at Norris Bank Reserve

A petition has been received from 81 residents and 24 non-residents requesting Council consider the development of a skate park at Norris Bank Reserve, Bundoora.

Recommendation

THAT Council:

- 1. Note the petition.**
- 2. Note the petition will be referred to Finance to include with future budget submissions received.**

4.3 Joint Letters

No Joint Letters

5 Officers' Reports

5.1 Quarterly Corporate Performance Report - Q2 ended 31/12/2025

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Report Author: Coordinator Financial Performance & Reporting

In Attendance: Chief Financial Officer
Unit Manager Financial Strategy & Performance

Executive Summary

This report provides the Quarterly Corporate Performance (Q2) outcomes and comprehensive summary for the period ended 31 December 2025 provided at Attachment 1 relating to:

- Council's financial performance.
- Community Action Plan 2025-26.
- Good Governance Actions.
- 2025-26 Capital Works program.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council note the:

1. **Quarterly Corporate Performance Report for the period ended 31 December 2025 in Attachment 1.**
2. **Financial performance for the period ended 31 December 2025 contained within Attachment 1.**

Background / Key Information

Introduction

The Quarterly Performance Report for the period 31 December 2025 has been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*. This report is designed to identify major variances against the December year to date budget.

The attached report (Attachment 1) includes a comprehensive summary of:

- Community Action Plan 2025-26.
- Good Governance actions.
- 2025-26 Capital Works program.
- Council’s financial performance.

The report includes the following comparisons for the six months ended 31 December 2025:

- Actual and budgeted operating revenues and expenses.
- Actual and budgeted capital revenues and expenses.
- Actual movements in the balance sheet.
- Actual movements in the cash flow statement.

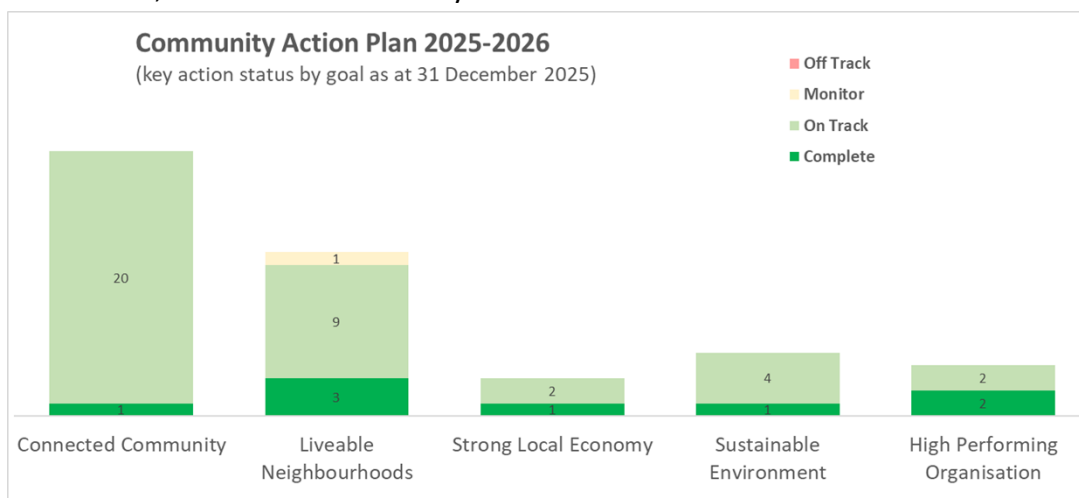
Community Action Plan

The Community Plan 2025-29 includes 55 Strategic Priorities. 46 targeted actions are included in the Community Action Plan to be delivered during the 2025-26 financial year.

Of the 46 key actions included in the Community Action Plan 2025-26:

- 8 are reported as “Complete”.
- 37 are reported “On Track”.
- 1 is reported “On Monitor”.

The figure below is the spread by goal of the Community Action Plan 2025-26 actions by their status; the full list Community Plan Actions and comments is listed in Attachment 4:



The table below lists the key action reported as “Monitor”:

Goal 2: Liveable neighbourhoods	
Complete the design and commence the construction of the Johnsons Road residential development in Mernda, including affordable housing.	Monitor
<p><u>Comment:</u> The contract for the design was awarded and concept design for the subdivision development and Johnsons Road redevelopment has commenced. Additional studies are required for the drainage system in consultation with Melbourne Water. While some preparatory works can commence on site, the main construction works will be delayed until later in the 2026 calendar year.</p>	

Good Governance

During the reporting period several actions were undertaken to ensure continuous improvements are made. Council continued to deliver good governance and make informed decisions.

Key achievements for Q2 relating to continuous and improved good governance include:

- Following community consultation, Council adopted their updated Governance Rules which strengthened processes associated with sound decision making practices.
- The Good Governance Action Plan, resulting from the Commission of Inquiry into the City of Whittlesea, was adopted by Council at its November 2025 Council meeting. Part of the Good Governance Action Plan included amendments to the Councillor Internal Resolution Procedure, which was also adopted by Council at its November Council meeting.
- Cr McLindon successfully completed two of three training programs requested by the Minister for Local Government resulting from the Commission of Inquiry findings. The third training program has been scheduled to commence on 30 January 2026.
- Cr Labrador successfully completed the mandatory Councillor Induction Program.
- All Councillors completed the annual mandatory professional development and training.
- Council appointed Councillor representatives to State-wide, Metropolitan, Regional, Whittlesea based organisations, Council Advisory Committees and Standing Committees for a period of 12 months.
- Ensuring open and transparent decision-making, scheduled Council meetings continued monthly. During this reporting period, six Council resolutions remain open.
- To support open, transparent and informed decision-making, six Council Briefings were held during the reporting period, providing Councillors with key information ahead of upcoming Council meeting decisions.

- There were five Scheduled Council meetings held during the reporting period, with one being for the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the next 12 months.
- During the reporting period, the Youth Council met twice, on 6 October and 1 December 2025. Youth Councillors provided input into the draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036, potential youth hub locations, the 2026–27 Budget, and the Community Action Plan 2026–27. They adopted their 2026 meeting dates and participated in a virtual meeting with Andrew Giles MP to discuss youth priorities in the City of Whittlesea. Youth Councillors presented their achievements throughout the year to the Council at a Briefing and represented young people through participation in planting of trees at bunjil nganga Parkland and attendance of the MAV Annual Conference. The Youth Council held its final meeting for the current term in December 2025, including an awards ceremony, and supported the recruitment of the incoming Youth Council to ensure continuity of youth representation.
- The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed their Charter to greater align best practice. The Charter was adopted by Council at its October 2025 Scheduled meeting. At the same meeting, Council resolved to appoint Mr Potgieter as the Audit and Risk Committee Independent Chair until 30 September 2027.
- The Audit and Risk Committee met once on the 6 December 2025, reviewing key governance and risk matters including Councils financial performance during the quarter, risk management practices, internal and external audit outcomes, and internal control systems. These discussions continue to strengthen Council’s oversight and accountability frameworks.

Transparency

At Council’s meeting of 16 December 2025, the external Arbiter findings and statement of reasons relating to four consolidated internal arbitration applications were publicly tabled. At the same meeting, Cr McLindon provided a statement which addressed the requirements of the Arbiter findings. Additionally, Cr McLindon will complete time management training in early 2026 which will satisfy another recommendation of the Arbiter.

Freedom of Information statistic for the quarter include:

New FOI Applications Received	9
Completed/Closed FOI Requests	10
Current FOI’s In Progress	9

During this period, six minor privacy matters were received and appropriately managed through internal processes and staff training. These included:

- Three related to an email sent to the wrong address.
- Three related to concerns of personal information being shared incorrectly in internal systems.

Capital Works Program

Council adopted the 2025-26 Capital Works Program on 17 June 2025 with a budget of \$110.69 million. The Capital Works Annual Budget also includes 2024-25 carry forwards of \$11.13 million, providing a total budget of \$121.82 million.

The below table includes a summary of the Capital Works program:

	Capital Works Budget \$'000
Adopted Budget 2025-26	110,685
Additional carry forwards from 2024-25	11,131
Annual Budget	121,816
Approved budget adjustments Q1	346
Proposed budget adjustments Q2	723
Projected savings	(1,327)
Anticipated carry forwards 2025-26	26,093
End of year forecast	95,465

The financial expenditure performance of the Capital Works program to 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000
Property	11,649	7,249	(4,399)	22,225	22,882	19,611
Plant and equipment	493	1,624	1,131	2,537	2,896	2,801
Infrastructure	22,670	30,204	7,534	85,923	96,038	73,054
	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465
Represented by:						
New assets	20,011	27,650	7,639	74,212	81,516	56,362
Asset renewal	11,089	8,327	(2,761)	23,916	25,795	26,710
Asset expansion	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asset upgrade	3,713	3,100	(613)	12,557	14,506	12,392
Total Capital works	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465

As at 31 December 2025, capital expenditure stands at \$34.81 million, compared to the year-to-date Annual Budget of \$39.08 million, reflecting a variance of \$4.26 million behind budget.

The forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 anticipates total capital expenditure of \$95.47 million, which is \$26.35 million below the Annual Budget of \$121.82 million.

The majority of the underspend is due to the Regional Sports Precinct construction delays following significant wet weather impacts on the site subgrade after the completion of the bulk earthworks early works.

Infrastructure Grants

A summary of recent infrastructure grant outcomes is included in the Grants Status Report (Attachment 2). A total of \$0.19 million in applications have been successful to date this financial year. Applications to the value of \$26.32 million are awaiting outcomes and \$3 million have been unsuccessful.

Financial Performance

The Financial Performance Report for the period ended 31 December 2025 includes the following financial statements included in the Corporate Performance Report (Attachment 1):

- Comprehensive Income Statement.
- Balance Sheet.
- Statement of Cash Flows.
- Statement of Capital Works.
- Summary of Reserves.

The financial performance of the operating program for the period ended 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000	Budget vs Forecast Variance \$'000
Operating						
Income	385,168	371,239	13,929	502,419	497,362	(5,058)
Expenditure	166,549	173,919	7,369	349,878	349,631	247
Operating surplus / (deficit)	218,619	197,321	21,299	152,541	147,731	(4,811)
Less						
Capital non-recurrent grants	(4,987)	(6,379)	1,392	(24,000)	(24,602)	(602)
*Development contributions	(95,195)	(72,079)	(23,117)	(144,039)	(144,118)	(79)
Adjusted underlying surplus / (deficit)	118,436	118,863	(427)	(15,498)	(20,989)	(5,492)

*Includes gifted assets which do not convert into cash

*Includes development contributions which are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure

For the six months ended 31 December 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$218.62 million, which is \$21.3 million favourable to the year-to-date budget.

Council's operating surplus is impacted early in the year by the timing of rate revenue being reported. The forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 is expected to have an operating surplus of \$147.73 million, which is (\$4.81 million) unfavourable to the Adopted Budget. Detailed information regarding forecast variances can be found in Attachment 1.

Operating Surplus

Whilst the operating surplus may look like a significant surplus, it is important to note that it is not a cash surplus or immediately available funds for Council. A significant portion of this surplus is tied to non-cash items or restricted by legislation as per the following:

- a) Gifted assets: These are non-cash contributions received from developers such as roads, parks or infrastructure from developers.
- b) Developer contributions: These are contributions received from developers and are restricted by legislation on how and when they can be used.
- c) Capital grants: The grant received for a specific infrastructure project and usage is restricted by the funding agreement.
- d) Capital Works program: A significant portion of the available surplus is invested towards maintaining, upgrading or delivering new critical infrastructure for our growing community.

If the above items from a) to c) were removed, the year to date adjusted underlying surplus is \$118.44 million and the forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 is expected to have an adjusted underlying deficit of (\$20.99 million).

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2025-2029:

High Performing Organisation

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

All matters raised in this report, which have financial implications, have been reflected in the Corporate Performance Report for the six months ended 31 December 2025 (Attachment 1).

Community Consultation and Engagement

The Community were extensively engaged and consulted in developing the 2025-26 budget.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (g) The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

Council Policy Considerations**Environmental Sustainability Considerations**

No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health

No implications.

Economic

No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No implications.

Implementation Strategy**Communication**

Reported information has been sourced and discussed with line management and project managers across the organisation. Consultation has also been undertaken with the Executive Leadership Team.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Corporate Performance Report December 2025 [5.1.1 - 30 pages]
2. Capital Grants Status Update December 2025 [5.1.2 - 2 pages]
3. Community Action Plan 2025-26 - Q2 Report [5.1.3 - 8 pages]



Quarterly Corporate Performance Report

for the period ended 31 December 2025



Table of Contents

Introduction and Key Highlights.....	3
Community Action Plan	3
Capital Works Performance.....	3
Financial Performance	4
Community Action Plan	7
Good Governance	9
Capital Works Performance	13
Program impact and carry forwards.....	14
Infrastructure Grants Update	14
Financial Performance	16
Operating Performance	16
Operating Surplus	16
Cash position	17
Financial Statements.....	18
Comprehensive Income Statement	18
Balance Sheet	21
Cash Position	22
Working capital.....	23
Rates debtors.....	24
Financial Arrangements.....	26
Statement of Cash Flows	28
Statement of Capital Works.....	29
Summary of Reserves	30

Introduction and Key Highlights

Community Action Plan

The Community Plan 2025-29 includes 55 Strategic Priorities. 46 targeted actions are included in the Community Action Plan to be delivered during the 2025-26 financial year. These actions outline the community's top priorities in a meaningful, practical, and sustainable way.

Of 46 key actions included in the Community Plan Action Plan 2025-26, 8 are reported as complete, 37 are reported as on track and 1 is reported on monitor.

Capital Works Performance

Council adopted the 2025-26 Capital Works Program on 17 June 2025 with a budget of \$110.69 million. The Capital Works Annual Budget also includes 2024-25 carry forwards of \$11.13 million, providing a total budget of \$121.82 million. A summary of the Capital Works program is detailed below:

	Capital Works Budget \$'000
Adopted Budget 2025-26	110,685
Additional carry forwards from 2024-25	11,131
Annual Budget	121,816
Approved budget adjustments Q1	346
Proposed budget adjustments Q2	723
Projected savings	(1,327)
Anticipated carry forwards 2025-26	26,093
End of year forecast	95,465

The financial expenditure performance of the Capital Works program to 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000
Property	11,649	7,249	(4,399)	22,225	22,882	19,611
Plant and equipment	493	1,624	1,131	2,537	2,896	2,801
Infrastructure	22,670	30,204	7,534	85,923	96,038	73,054
	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465
Represented by:						
New assets	20,011	27,650	7,639	74,212	81,516	56,362
Asset renewal	11,089	8,327	(2,761)	23,916	25,795	26,710
Asset expansion	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asset upgrade	3,713	3,100	(613)	12,557	14,506	12,392
Total Capital works	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465

As at 31 December 2025, capital expenditure stands at \$34.81 million, compared to the year-to-date Budget of \$39.08 million, reflecting a variance of \$4.27 million behind budget.

The forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 anticipates total capital expenditure of \$95.47 million, which is \$26.35 million below the Annual Budget of \$121.82 million.

Financial Performance

The financial performance for the period ended 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000	Budget vs Forecast Variance \$'000
Operating						
Income	385,168	371,239	13,929	502,419	497,362	(5,058)
Expenditure	166,549	173,919	7,369	349,878	349,631	247
Operating surplus / (deficit)	218,619	197,321	21,299	152,541	147,731	(4,811)
Less						
Capital non-recurrent grants	(4,987)	(6,379)	1,392	(24,000)	(24,602)	(602)
*Development contributions	(95,195)	(72,079)	(23,117)	(144,039)	(144,118)	(79)
Adjusted underlying surplus / (deficit)	118,436	118,863	(427)	(15,498)	(20,989)	(5,492)

*Includes gifted assets which do not convert into cash

*Includes development contributions which are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure

For the six months ended 31 December 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$218.62 million, which is \$21.3 million favourable to the year-to-date budget. The forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 is expected to have an operating surplus of \$147.73 million, which is (\$4.81 million) unfavourable to the adopted Budget. Detailed information regarding variances can be found under 'Comprehensive Income Statement'.

Operating Surplus

Whilst the operating surplus may look like a significant surplus, it is important to note that it is not a cash surplus or immediately available funds for Council. A significant portion of this surplus is tied to non-cash items or restricted by legislation as per following:

- Gifted assets: These are non-cash contributions received from developers such as roads, parks or infrastructure from developers
- Development contributions: These are funds received from developers to contribute to the delivery of community and local transport infrastructure to service growing neighbourhoods. The use of these contributions are restricted by legislation in terms of when and what they can be used for, with requirements defined in endorsed strategic plans, such as Precinct

Structure Plans

- c) Non-Recurrent capital grants: The grant received for a specific infrastructure project and usage is restricted by the funding agreement
- d) Capital Works program: A significant portion of the available surplus is invested towards maintaining, upgrading or delivering a new critical infrastructure for our growing community.

If the above items from a) to c) were removed, the year to date adjusted underlying surplus is \$118.44 million. This surplus in the early part of the financial year is primarily due to the upfront recognition of the annual rate income, which is recognised when levied, in line with the accounting standard. As the year progresses, this surplus is expected to reduce as operating and capital works expenses are incurred.

The operating result is a key figure to assess Council's financial performance. Although Council is a not-for-profit organisation, it should still generate a surplus to ensure future financial sustainability.

Community Action Plan



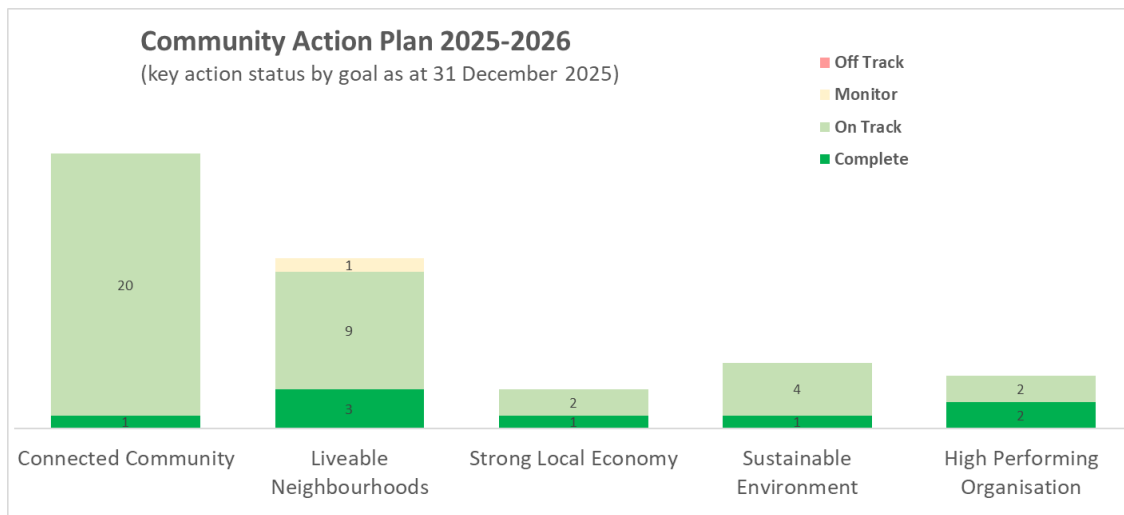
Community Action Plan

The Community Plan 2025-29 includes 55 Strategic Priorities. 46 targeted actions are included in the Community Action Plan to be delivered during the 2025-26 financial year.

Of the 46 key actions included in the Community Action Plan 2025-26:

- 8 are reported as “Complete”
- 37 are reported “On Track”
- 1 is reported as “Monitor”

The figure below is the spread by goal of the Community Action Plan 2025-26 actions by their status:



The table below lists the key action reported as “Monitor”:

Goal 2: Liveable neighbourhoods	
Complete the design and commence the construction of the Johnsons Road residential development in Mernda, including affordable housing.	Monitor
<p><u>Comment:</u> The contract for the design was awarded and concept design for the subdivision development and Johnsons Road redevelopment has commenced. Additional studies are required for the drainage system in consultation with Melbourne Water. While some preparatory works can commence on site, the main construction works will be delayed until later in the 2026 calendar year.</p>	

Good Governance



Good Governance

Quarter 2 Highlights

During this quarter, Council continued to strengthen good governance, improve integrity and accountability, and enhance community and staff engagement across all areas of operations. Key achievements include:

Council

- To ensure good governance practices continue to evolve around decision making, Council amended its Governance Rules (**Rules**) and put them out for community consultation between 19 November to 2 December 2025 prior to adopting the Rules at its Council meeting on 16 December 2025.
- In accordance with Reg 6A of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*, all Councillors completed their annual professional development training prior to 31 December 2025. Written declarations by individual Councillors were signed in the presence of the CEO except for one Councillor who was unable to attend Council in person to sign the declaration. The Councillor will sign the declaration at the first briefing in 2026.
- Councillor Labrador completed the mandatory Councillor Induction Program within the required 4 month period from taking the Oath of Office. The mandatory Induction Program is a requirement under s 32(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Reg 6 of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*.
- Following the Commission of Inquiry into Whittlesea City Council final report being tabled in Parliament, Minister Staikos, Minister for Local Government requested Council develop a detailed Action Plan addressing the four recommendations from the Commission's final report. Council developed a Good Governance Action Plan with clear actions and deliverables and following adoption, submitted it to the Minister Staikos.
- Councillor McLindon completed two of the three training sessions as recommended by the Commission of Inquiry and requested by Minister Staikos. The third training program to be undertaken, commences on 30 January 2026 and will be facilitated by MAV.
- On 16 December 2025, Council appointed Councillor representatives to State-wide, Metropolitan, Regional, Whittlesea based organisations, Council Advisory Committees and Standing Committees for a period of 12 months. These appointments continue to ensure the City of Whittlesea participates and contributes to local and strategic issues that align to Council achieving its goals.
- Council continued to prioritise open and transparent decision-making, with five scheduled meetings and six briefings held ensuring Councillors were well-informed ahead of key decisions. Council considered a wide range of strategic and operational matters, including

Planning Scheme Amendments, the Proposed Lease of 52W Main Street Thomastown, Road Management Plan, the 2024-2025 Annual Report, Community Plan 2025-29 and Community Action Plan 2025-26, the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2030, Yarra Plenty Regional Library Supplemental Agreement, the Draft Public Open Space Plan 2026-36, the Affordable Housing Plan 2025-2030, Strategic Property and Land Plan 2025-2030, updated Terms of Reference for Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group, the 2025-29 Advocacy Prospectus, updated Governance Rules and the appointment of a new Audit and Risk Committee Chair.

- During the period, 6 Council resolutions remain open with three relating to planning matters, one relating to a petition, another to a position paper and one administrative matter that is awaiting closure.
- Youth Councillors contributed to the development of key strategic and planning documents by providing feedback on the draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036, the 2026–27 Budget, and the Community Action Plan 2026–27. They also provided input on potential locations for a youth hub and shared insights to strengthen Council’s engagement with young people across the municipality. In addition, Youth Councillors adopted their 2026 meeting dates and participated in a virtual meeting with Andrew Giles MP to discuss youth priorities in the City of Whittlesea.

During the quarter, Youth Councillors attended a Council briefing to present their achievements and areas of focus for the year. They represented young people across a range of community and civic activities, including participating in the planting of trees at bunjil nganga Parkland and representing the Youth Council at the MAV Annual Conference.

The Youth Council held its final meeting for the current term in December 2025, which included an awards ceremony recognising the contributions of Youth Councillors throughout their term. To continue their legacy, they participated in the recruitment of the new Youth Council by supporting group interviews, reviewing applications, and meeting with shortlisted young people as part of the selection process.

Integrity Frameworks

- A compliance register was implemented, documenting all legislative obligations relating to the operations of the City of Whittlesea and work has commenced to assess Councils compliance of these obligations. The purpose of the register is to provide a single, reliable source of truth for all legislative obligations, current controls, compliance status and actions in place, supporting stronger governance and informed decision-making.
- Progress continued in strengthening organisational integrity awareness through the delivery of the Integrity Training Calendar, including targeted training on Conflict of Interest, Fraud and Corruption, Gifts and Benefits, and Privacy to the school crossing supervisors.
- Targeted awareness of the acceptance of Gifts and Benefits during the festive season was

delivered to all staff through all-staff newsletters, internal intranet, emails and an interactive video to encourage organisation-wide compliance and reinforce Council's ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct.

Committees

- During the reporting period, the Audit and Risk Committee reviewed their Charter which was adopted by Council. Council resolved to appoint Mr Potgieter as the Audit and Risk Committee Independent Chair until 30 September 2027.
- The Audit and Risk Committee continued to consider several matters including Council's Community Plan Action Plan 2024-25, Good Governance actions, 2025-26 Capital works Program and Council financial performance, risk management activities completed in the quarter including the annual risk reviews and associated treatment plans, a presentation on Strategic Risk 1 – Financial Sustainability, internal and external audit outcomes including a completed audit report on Privacy, systems of internal control including an update on Fraud and Corruption controls and several governance and compliance matters that relate to the committee's workplan.

Transparency and Compliance

- **Transparency:** At Council's 16 December 2025 Council meeting, the external Arbiter findings and statement of reasons relating to IAP 2025-2, IAP 2025-4, IAP 2025-5 and IAP 2025-7, which were heard together, were publicly tabled. Cr McLindon provided a statement which addressed the requirements of the Arbiter findings. Additionally, Cr McLindon will complete time management training in early 2026 which will satisfy another requirement of the Arbiter. The total cost incurred by Council for these arbitrations matters to be heard was \$15,174.
- **Freedom of Information:** During this period, Council received 9 new FOI requests, with 10 requests completed and 9 remaining in progress. Requests related to public liability, maternal and child health, CEO and staff matters, and other community-related topics, reflecting active community engagement and information access.
- **Privacy:** Six minor privacy matters were appropriately managed, including three email errors, one instance of an invoice sent to an incorrect client, and two inquiries regarding personal information access, reflecting effective internal processes and staff training in handling sensitive information.

Capital Performance



Capital Works Performance

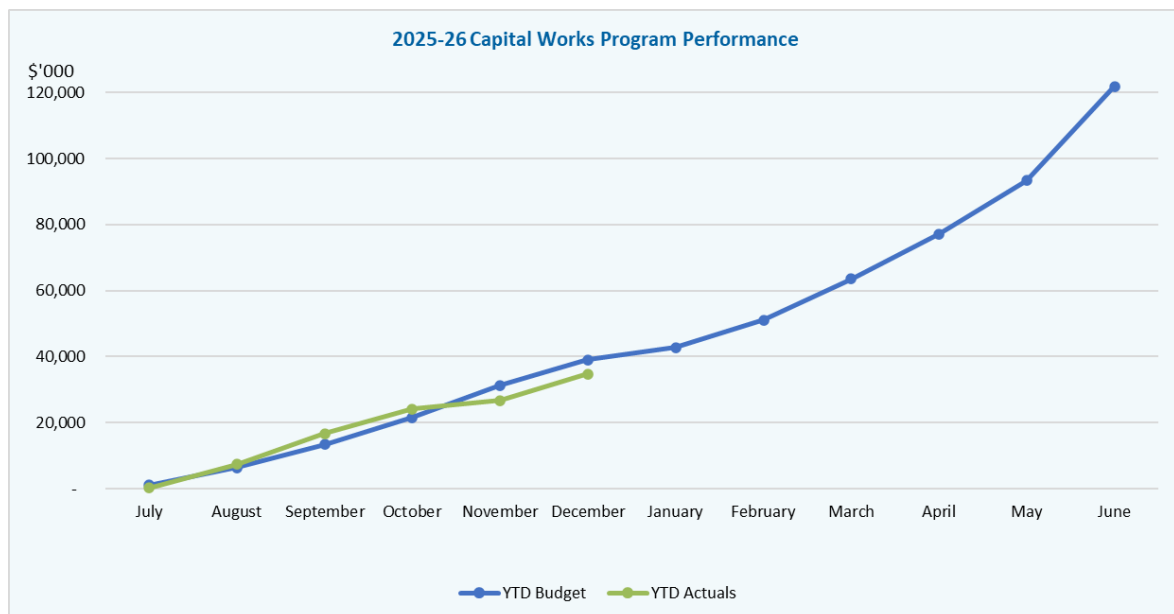
Council adopted the 2025-26 Capital Works Program on 17 June 2025 with a budget of \$110.69 million. The Capital Works Annual Budget also includes 2024-25 carry forwards of \$11.13 million, providing a total budget of \$121.82 million.

The financial expenditure performance of the Capital Works Program to 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000
Property	11,649	7,249	(4,399)	22,225	22,882	19,611
Plant and equipment	493	1,624	1,131	2,537	2,896	2,801
Infrastructure	22,670	30,204	7,534	85,923	96,038	73,054
	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465
Represented by:						
New assets	20,011	27,650	7,639	74,212	81,516	56,362
Asset renewal	11,089	8,327	(2,761)	23,916	25,795	26,710
Asset expansion	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asset upgrade	3,713	3,100	(613)	12,557	14,506	12,392
Total Capital works	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465

As at 31 December 2025, capital expenditure stands at \$34.81 million, compared to the year-to-date Budget of \$39.08 million, reflecting a variance of \$4.26 million behind budget.

The forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 anticipates total capital expenditure of \$95.47 million, which is \$26.35 million below the Annual Budget of \$121.82 million.



Program impact and carry forwards

The delivery of projects within the 2025-26 capital works program have been impacted to date due to the following themes.

- Delays in sequencing of construction works
- Site conditions
- Delays in design phase
- Resource constraints

This has resulted in an estimated forecast of \$26.09 million to be carried over into 2026-27. The majority of this amount is due to the Regional Sports Precinct construction delays following significant wet weather impacts on the site subgrade after the completion of the bulk earthworks early works.

Project progress will continue to be monitored and reported to Enterprise Portfolio Board to assist in early identification and mitigation of risks to delivering this year's capital works program.

Infrastructure Grants Update

A total of \$185,000 in applications have been successful to date this financial year including:

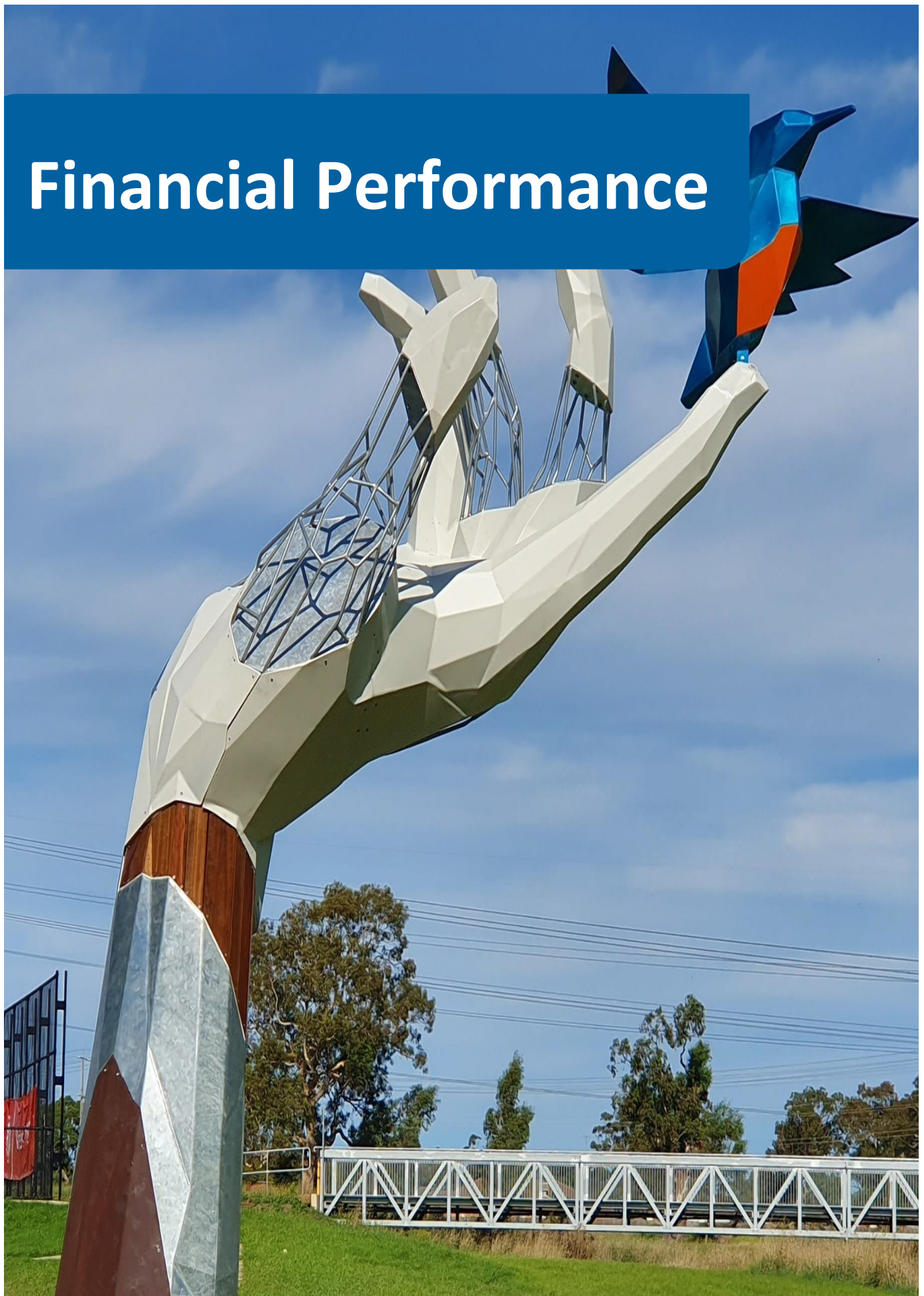
- \$115,000 from the Victorian Government towards Electric Vehicle Charging at Council's Epping Depot. This funding supports our Sustainable Environment Strategy in transitioning our fleet to electric and, contributing to our aim of achieving net-zero emissions.
- \$70,000 from the Victorian Government Election Commitment towards a play space at West Lalor Tennis Club - Huskisson Reserve, Lalor. Provision of a designated new children's play space area will enhance and complement the Huskisson Recreation Reserve Redevelopment project.

Two applications totalling \$3 million have been unsuccessful through the Federal Government's Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program due to the volume of applications submitted under the program that exceeded the available funding.

A further \$26.32 million in applications have been submitted and are awaiting outcomes, seeking contributions to water and energy efficiency, kindergartens, road safety, park and playgrounds and sporting infrastructure.

A summary of all infrastructure grant applications and outcomes is included in the Grants Status Report (Attachment 2).

Financial Performance



Financial Performance

Operating Performance

The Corporate Performance Report for the period ended 31 December 2025 includes the following financial statements:

- Comprehensive Income Statement
- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Cash Flows
- Statement of Capital Works and
- Summary of Reserves

The financial performance of the operating program for the period ended 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000	Budget vs Forecast Variance \$'000
Operating						
Income	385,168	371,239	13,929	502,419	497,362	(5,058)
Expenditure	166,549	173,919	7,369	349,878	349,631	247
Operating surplus / (deficit)	218,619	197,321	21,299	152,541	147,731	(4,811)
Less						
Capital non-recurrent grants	(4,987)	(6,379)	1,392	(24,000)	(24,602)	(602)
*Development contributions	(95,195)	(72,079)	(23,117)	(144,039)	(144,118)	(79)
Adjusted underlying surplus / (deficit)	118,436	118,863	(427)	(15,498)	(20,989)	(5,492)

*Includes gifted assets which do not convert into cash

*Includes development contributions which are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure

For the six months ended 31 December 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$218.62 million, which is \$21.3 million favourable to the year-to-date budget. Councils operating surplus is impacted early in the year due to the timing of Rate revenue being recognised in July. The forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 is expected to have an operating surplus of \$147.73 million, which is (\$4.81 million) unfavourable to the Adopted Budget.

Operating Surplus

Whilst the operating surplus may look like a significant surplus, it is important to note that it is not a cash surplus or immediately available funds for Council. A significant portion of this surplus is tied to non-cash items or restricted by legislation as per the following:

- Gifted assets:** These are non-cash contributions received from developers such as roads, parks or infrastructure from developers
- Development contributions:** These are funds received from developers to contribute to the

delivery of community and local transport infrastructure to service growing neighbourhoods. The use of these contributions are restricted by legislation in terms of when and what they can be used for, with requirements defined in endorsed strategic plans, such as Precinct Structure Plans

- c) **Non-recurrent capital grants:** The grant received for a specific infrastructure project and usage is restricted by the funding agreement and
- d) **Capital Works program:** A significant portion of the available surplus is invested towards maintaining, upgrading or delivering new critical infrastructure for our growing community.

If the above items from a) to c) were removed, the year to date adjusted underlying surplus is \$118.44 million and the forecast for the year ending 30 June 2026 is expected to have an adjusted underlying deficit of (\$20.99 million).

This surplus in the early part of the financial year is primarily due to the upfront recognition of the annual rate income which is recognised when levied in line with the accounting standard. As the year progresses, this surplus is expected to reduce as operating and capital works expenses are incurred.

The operating result is a key figure to assess Council's financial performance. Although Council is a not-for-profit organisation, it should still generate a surplus to ensure future financial sustainability.

Cash position

The cash position as at 31 December 2025 shows a cash and investment balance of \$364.5 million compared with \$369.59 million as at 30 June 2025.

	YTD Actual \$'000	2024-25 Actual \$'000
Cash and cash equivalents	364,500	369,586
Restricted funds	256,217	232,148
Unrestricted cash and cash equivalents	108,283	137,438
Intended allocations	158,997	141,080
Net available cash	(50,714)	(3,642)

The cash and investment balance was sufficient to meet the restricted cash of \$256.22 million at the end of December 2025. Restricted cash is the amount of cash holdings Council requires to meet external restrictions such as trust funds and statutory reserves. Cash for intended allocations includes cash held to fund future capital works, employee entitlements and project works.

Financial Statements

Comprehensive Income Statement

for the period ended 31 December 2025

	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD	Adopted	Quarter 2	Budget vs	Budget vs
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance	Budget	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
Ref	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
Income								
Rates and charges	240,808	240,192	615	0%	241,891	242,234	343	0%
Statutory fees and fines	1 11,265	10,617	648	6%	20,834	22,517	1,683	7%
User fees	6,154	5,938	216	4%	12,587	12,701	114	1%
Grants - operating	2 13,082	23,384	(10,302)	(44%)	36,129	25,883	(10,246)	-40%
Grants - capital	3 6,849	8,251	(1,402)	(17%)	26,495	27,096	601	2%
Contributions - monetary	16,513	17,405	(891)	(5%)	34,691	34,770	79	0%
Contributions - non-monetary assets	4 78,682	54,674	24,008	44%	109,348	109,348	-	0%
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	5 293	501	(207)	(41%)	783	783	-	0%
Share of Net Profits/(Losses) of	-	-	-	-	200	200	-	0%
Other income	6 11,523	10,279	1,244	12%	19,461	21,829	2,368	11%
Total income	385,168	371,239	13,929	4%	502,419	497,362	(5,058)	-1%
Expenditure								
Employee benefits	7 67,268	71,187	3,919	6%	135,352	131,786	3,566	3%
Materials and services	8 54,031	58,469	4,438	8%	126,002	125,377	625	0%
Depreciation	9 32,849	31,475	(1,374)	(4%)	62,952	64,911	(1,959)	(3%)
Amortisation - intangible assets	-	-	-	-	71	71	-	0%
Amortisation - right of use assets	-	-	-	-	918	918	-	0%
Allowance for impairment losses	10 1,130	1,143	12	1%	3,186	3,186	-	0%
Borrowing costs	11 32	556	524	94%	1,113	1,113	-	0%
Finance costs - leases	-	-	-	-	104	104	-	0%
Other expenses	12 11,239	11,088	(151)	(1%)	20,180	22,165	(1,985)	(9%)
Total expenditure	166,549	173,919	7,369	4%	349,878	349,631	247	0%
Total comprehensive result	218,619	197,321	21,299	11%	152,541	147,731	(4,811)	-3%
Less								
Capital grants - non recurrent	(4,987)	(6,379)	1,392	(22%)	(24,000)	(24,602)	(602)	2%
*Development contributions	(95,195)	(72,079)	(23,117)	32%	(144,039)	(144,118)	(79)	0%
Adjusted underlying surplus / (deficit)	118,436	118,863	(427)	(0%)	(15,498)	(20,989)	(5,492)	26%

*Includes gifted assets which do not convert into cash

*Includes development contributions which are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment

Explanation of material variations

Council has adopted a materiality threshold for explanations provided if the variance is greater than 10% or \$1 million. Explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality threshold unless the variance is considered to be material in nature.

Variance Ref	Item	Explanation
1	Statutory fees and fines	The full year forecast is \$1.68 million favourable to budget primarily due to higher-than-anticipated asset protection fines. This uplift reflects increased construction activity across the municipality, which has led to a higher volume of inspections and associated infringements.
2	Grants - operating	Year to date performance is (\$10.3 million) unfavourable to budget primarily due to 50% of the 2025-26 Financial Assistance Grant being paid in 2024-25 and recognised in line with the Accounting Standard. The full year forecast is (\$10.25 million) unfavourable to budget due to the reason mentioned above.
3	Grants - capital	Year to date performance is (\$1.4 million) unfavourable to budget primarily due to sequencing of construction works delays related to the Regional Sports Precinct.
4	Contributions - non-monetary assets	Year to date performance is \$24.01 million favourable to budget primarily due to higher than anticipated developments reaching practical completion throughout the municipality.
5	Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	Year to date performance is (\$0.21 million) unfavourable to budget as a result of proceeds from vehicle sales to be received later than expected. This is due to minor delays in the purchasing of replacement fleet.
6	Other income	Year to date performance is \$1.24 million favourable to budget primarily due to higher than projected interest income and unbudgeted reimbursements of land tax payments, which have been recouped from tenants. The full year forecast is \$2.37 million favourable to budget due to the reason mentioned above.
7	Employee benefits	Year to date performance is \$3.92 million favourable to budget largely driven by vacant positions across the organisation not yet filled as well as the Workcover premium being lower than budgeted. The full year forecast is \$3.57 million favourable to budget due to the reasons mentioned above.
8	Materials and services	Year to date performance is \$4.44 million favourable to budget primarily due to reimbursements related to Developer Contributions being paid later than budgeted.

9	Depreciation	<p>Year to date performance is (\$1.37 million) unfavourable to budget as a result of an increase in the valuation of Council assets and the receipt of significant gifted assets after the budget was adopted, which were not accounted for in the budget depreciation.</p> <p>The full year forecast is (\$1.96 million) unfavourable to budget due to the reasons mentioned above.</p>
10	Borrowing costs	<p>Year to date performance is \$0.52 million favourable to budget driven by lower than anticipated borrowing costs as a result of planned borrowings which have not yet been drawn down.</p>
11	Other expenses	<p>The full year forecast is (\$1.99 million) unfavourable to budget primarily due to contributions related to committed upgrades to Casa D’Abruzzo lighting and sports fields which are expected to be paid in the second half of 2025-26 and unbudgeted land tax payments, which will be recouped from tenants.</p>

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2025

	YTD Actual \$'000	2024-25 Actual \$'000	Net Movement \$'000
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	49,500	49,587	(87)
Trade and other receivables	198,555	67,213	131,342
Other financial assets	210,000	270,000	(60,000)
Inventories	40	48	(8)
Other assets	6,326	10,216	(3,890)
Total current assets	464,421	397,064	67,357
Non-current assets			
Investment in associate	3,079	3,079	0
Other financial assets	105,022	50,022	55,000
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	5,535,338	5,459,554	75,784
Intangible assets	151	151	(0)
Right of use assets	2,339	2,339	(0)
Total non-current assets	5,645,929	5,515,145	130,785
Total assets	6,110,350	5,912,209	198,141
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	33,042	32,181	861
Trust funds and deposits	26,080	44,681	(18,601)
Provisions	24,708	23,928	780
Lease liabilities	783	783	0
Interest-bearing liabilities	800	1,593	(793)
Unearned Income	39,275	37,376	1,899
Total current liabilities	124,687	140,542	(15,855)
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	3,343	3,067	276
Lease liabilities	1,681	1,681	(0)
Interest-bearing liabilities	6,032	6,031	1
Total non-current liabilities	11,055	10,779	275
Total liabilities	135,743	151,321	(15,579)
Net assets	5,974,607	5,760,888	213,719
Equity			
Accumulated surplus	3,458,917	3,256,092	202,825
Reserves	2,515,690	2,504,796	10,894
Total equity	5,974,607	5,760,888	213,719

Cash Position

for the period ended 31 December 2025

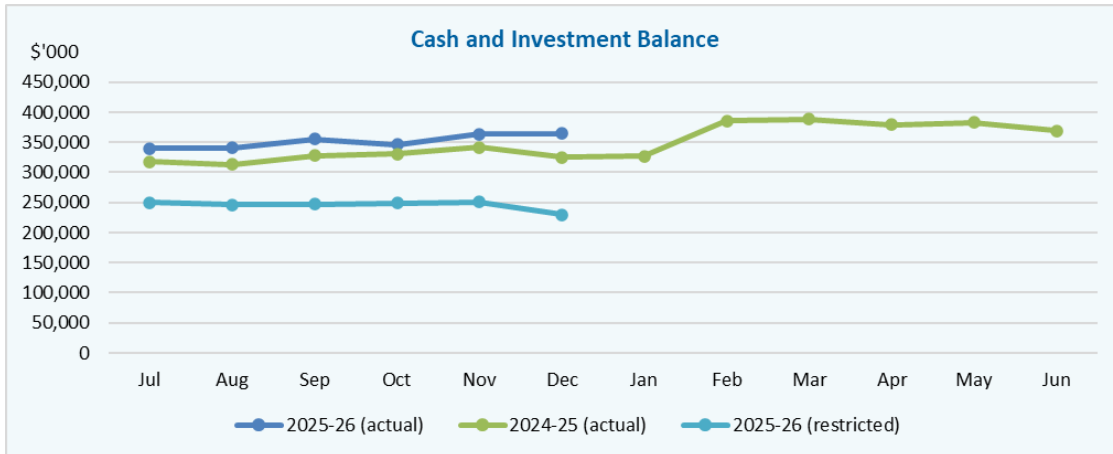
	YTD Actual \$'000	2024-25 Actual \$'000
Cash and cash equivalents		
Cash on hand	4	4
Cash at bank	999	1,045
Term deposit	48,497	48,537
Total cash and cash equivalents	49,500	49,586
Other financial assets		
Term deposits	315,000	320,000
Total other financial assets	315,000	320,000
Total cash and cash equivalents	364,500	369,586
Restricted and unrestricted cash and cash equivalents		
Trust funds and deposits	26,080	50,600
Asset development reserves	230,137	181,548
Total restricted cash and cash equivalents	256,217	232,148
Total unrestricted cash and cash equivalents	108,283	137,438
Unrestricted cash intended allocations		
Cash held to fund carried forward capital works	26,093	11,131
Unexpended grants and subsidies	39,275	37,376
Employee entitlements	28,051	26,995
Asset replacement reserves	65,578	65,578
Total Unrestricted cash intended allocations	158,997	141,080
Net available cash	(50,714)	(3,642)

The cash position as at 31 December 2025 shows a cash and investment balance of \$364.5 million compared with \$369.59 million as at 30 June 2025.

The cash and investment balance was sufficient to meet the restricted cash of \$256.22 million at the end of December 2025. Restricted cash is the amount of cash holdings Council requires to meet external restrictions such as trust funds and statutory reserves including development contributions and subdivision levy. Unrestricted cash intended allocations include cash held to fund future Capital Works and project works.

The chart below shows Council’s cash balance year to date for 2025-26 against the cash balance from 2024-25 and restricted cash.

The cash and investments balance is currently (\$40.86 million) unfavourable to the budgeted year end position. Every opportunity is taken to invest surplus cash to maximise investment returns.

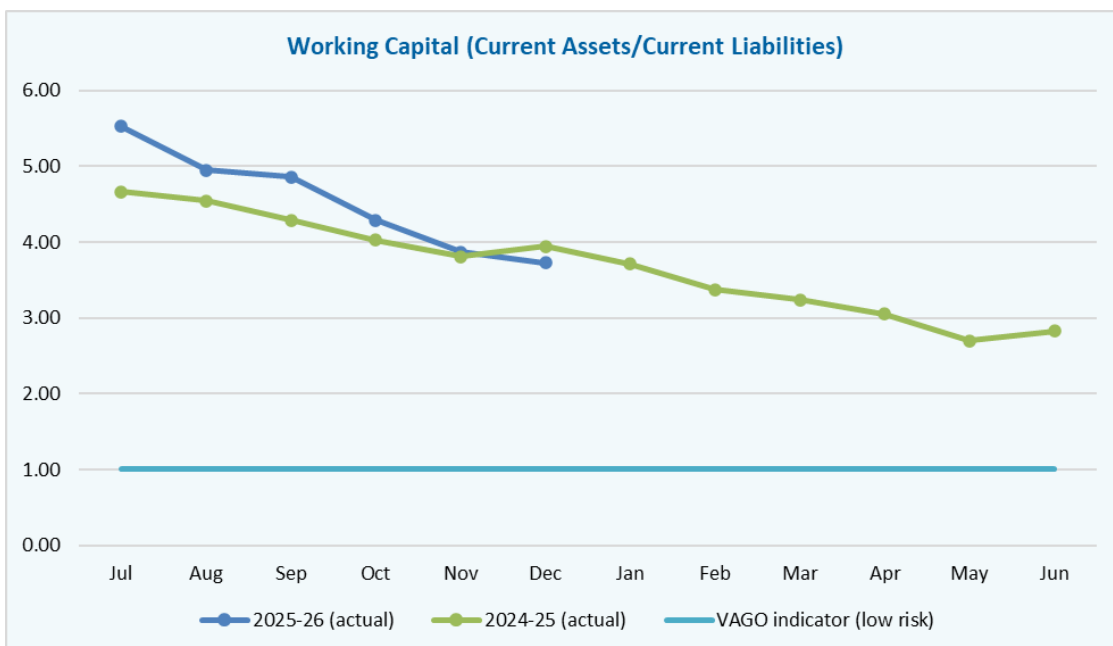


Note: Cash and investments include term deposits with a maturity date exceeding 90 days which are classified as other financial assets in the Balance Sheet.

Working capital

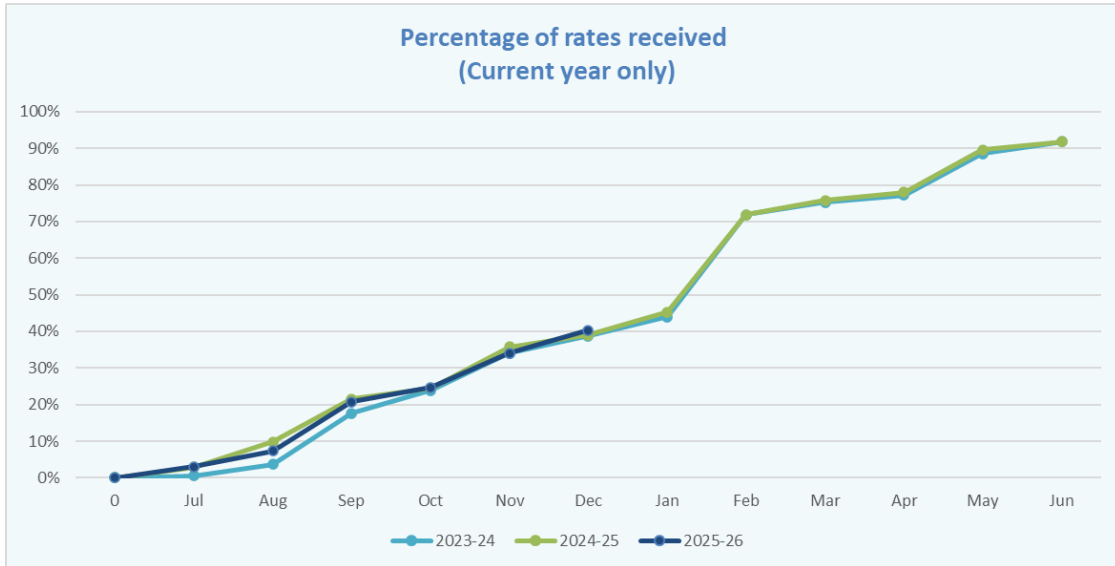
The chart compares current assets to current liabilities, which provides a measure of the ability to pay existing liabilities in the next 12 months.

Council’s working capital is forecast to remain in the low-risk range and well above the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) liquidity indicator as shown below.

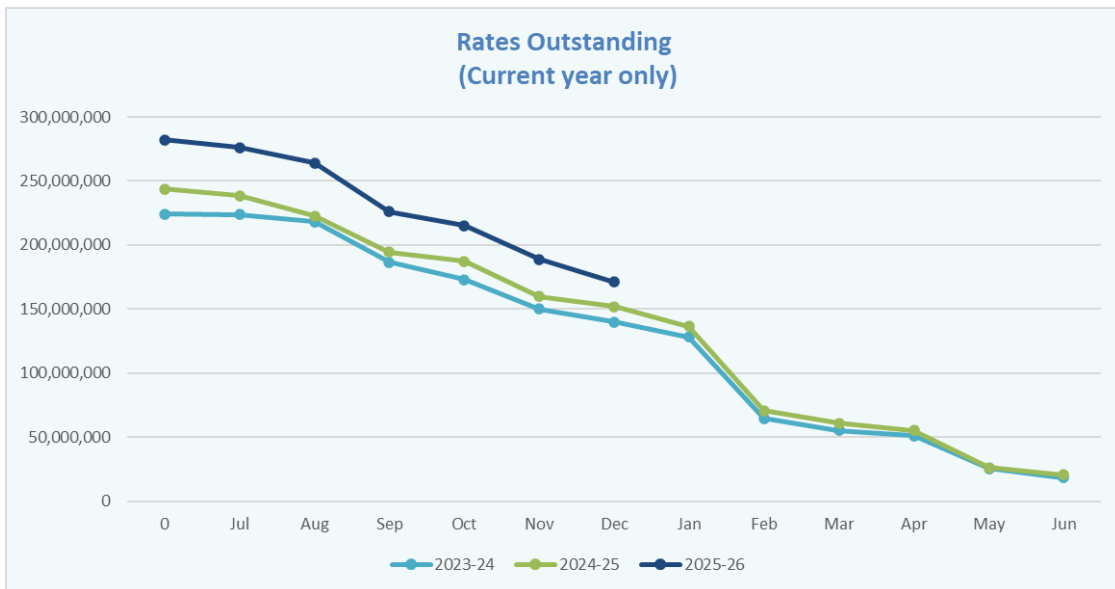


Rates debtors

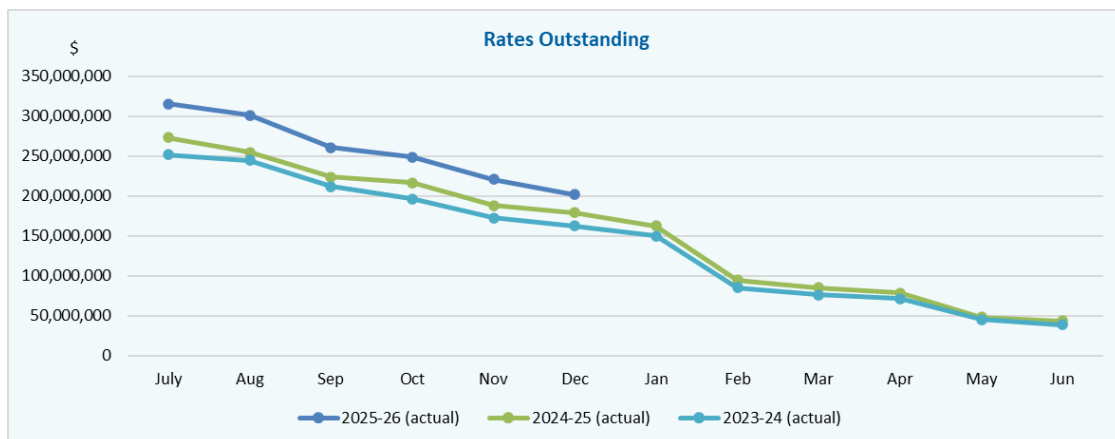
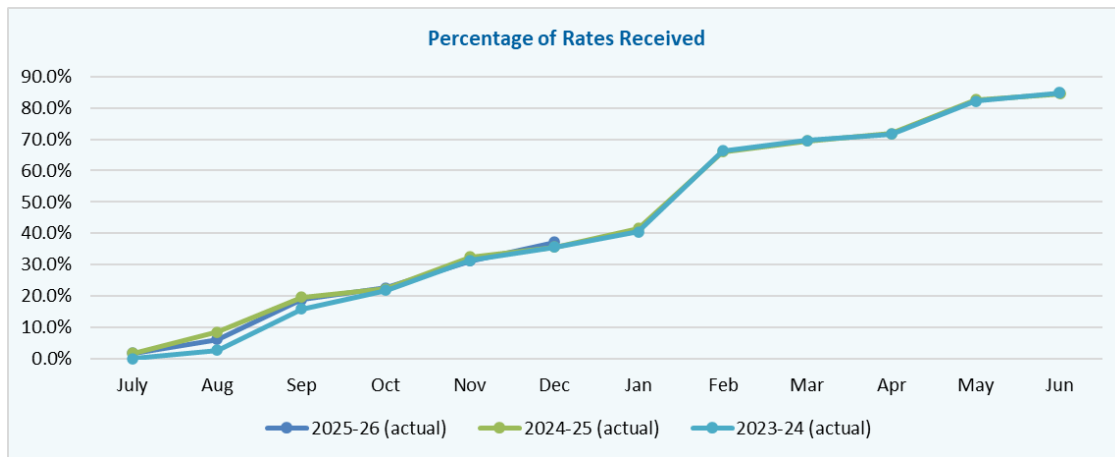
As at 1 July 2025, \$281.93 million was raised in rates and charges to Council’s property base. As at 31 December 2025, 40.3% of the rates raised have been collected compared to 39.1% at the same period of the 2024-25 financial year.



The below graph displays the balance of the current year’s rates and charges to date.

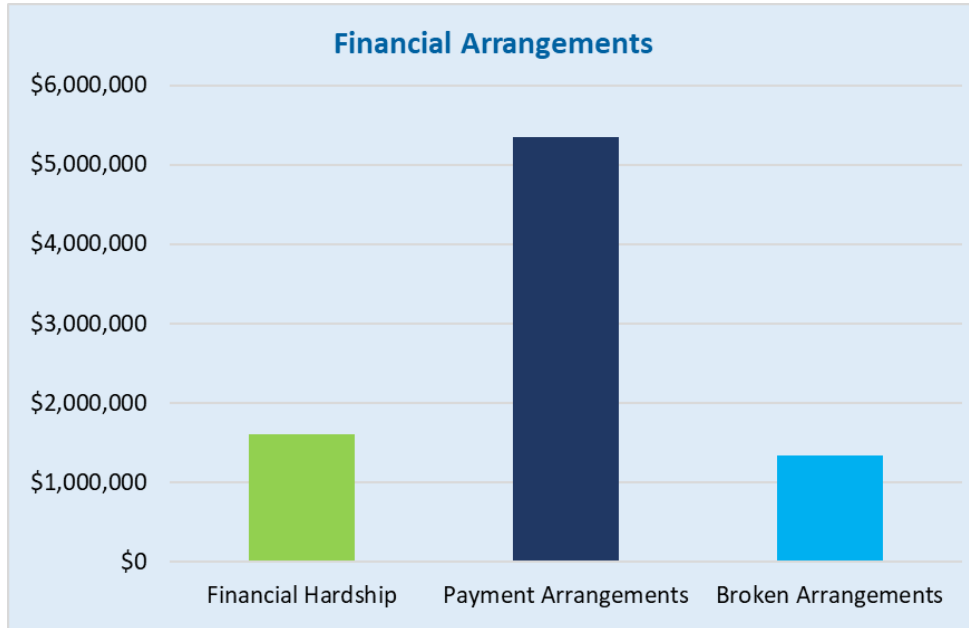


The below graphs demonstrate the percentage of rates collected including arrears from previous years. As at 31 December 2025, 37.1% of the rates debt has been collected compared 35.6% at the same period of the 2024-25 financial year.

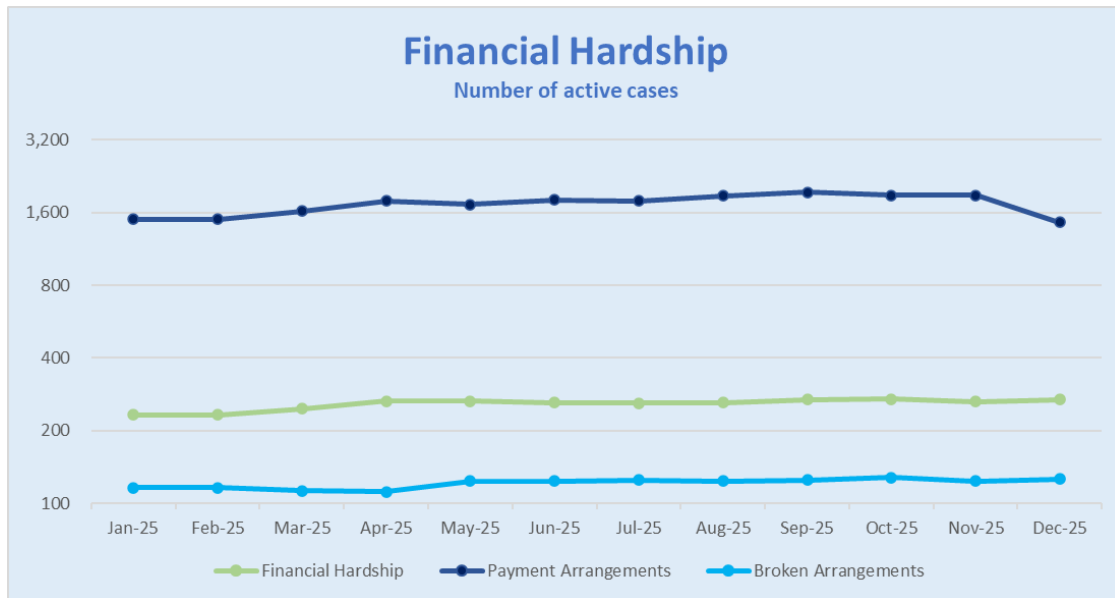


Financial Arrangements

To help reduce debt to Council, the following initiatives are being implemented.



Request Type	Total (\$)
Financial Hardship	1,599,715
Payment Arrangements	5,351,812
Broken Arrangements	1,338,765
Total	8,290,291



- Active Financial Hardship (FHS) active cases have remained at similar levels this financial year. As at the 31 December 2025, there were 269 active financial hardship cases, which represents 0.25% of total rateable properties within the municipality.

Financial hardship – ratepayers that qualify for assistance as per the Financial Hardship policy.

Payment arrangements – payment plan for ratepayers in arrears by 1 - 12 months.

Broken arrangements – ratepayers that have defaulted on their arranged payment plan more than once.

Statement of Cash Flows for the period ended 31 December 2025

	2025-26 Inflows / (Outflows) YTD Actual \$'000	2024-25 Inflows / (Outflows) Actual \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities		
Rates and charges	99,711	223,676
Statutory fees and fines	9,203	18,996
User fees	15,254	855
Grants - operating	13,082	45,144
Grants - capital	6,849	22,691
Contributions - Monetary	16,513	34,692
Trust funds and deposits taken	(14,820)	8,221
Other receipts	7,426	25,035
Interest received	7,987	557
Net GST refund	1,587	(412)
Payments to employees	(66,212)	(122,626)
Payments to suppliers	(56,667)	(85,065)
Short-term, low value and variable lease payments	(277)	(687)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	-	(14,140)
Other payments	(9,340)	(19,461)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	30,296	137,476
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for infrastructure, property, plant and equipment	(34,558)	(107,234)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	-	404
Payments for investments	5,000	(5,000)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	(29,558)	(111,830)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Finance costs	(32)	(74)
Repayment of borrowings	(793)	(1,567)
Interest paid - lease liability	-	(118)
Repayment of lease liabilities	0	(881)
Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities	(825)	(2,640)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(87)	22,991
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	49,587	26,596
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	49,500	49,587

Statement of Capital Works

for the period ended 31 December 2025

	YTD Actual \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Adopted Budget	Annual Budget \$'000	Quarter 2 Forecast \$'000
Property						
Land	232	235	3	1,060	1,060	560
Building	9,499	5,368	(4,131)	13,180	17,020	14,570
Building improvements	1,918	1,646	(272)	7,985	4,801	4,480
Total Property	11,649	7,249	(4,399)	22,225	22,882	19,611
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery & equipment	301	1,200	899	1,952	2,002	2,002
Fixtures, fittings & furniture	52	156	104	335	401	150
Computers & telecommunications	140	268	128	250	493	649
Total plant and equipment	493	1,624	1,131	2,537	2,896	2,801
Infrastructure						
Roads	8,499	5,905	(2,594)	14,815	15,637	15,536.20
Bridges	-	80	80	298	298	298.20
Footpaths & cycleways	1,771	2,549	778	7,240	9,421	9,320.63
Drainage	143	60	(83)	650	1,322	1,018.35
Recreation, leisure & community facilities	2,789	13,322	10,532	37,355	37,455	14,822.76
Parks, open space & streetscapes	7,508	6,843	(665)	19,784	23,830	25,045.55
Carparks	1,051	755	(296)	1,150	2,917	2,006.99
Waste management	76	100	24	2,382	2,482	2,461.12
Other infrastructure	833	590	(243)	2,249	2,677	2,543.76
Total infrastructure	22,670	30,204	7,534	85,923	96,038	73,054
Total capital works	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465
Represented by:						
New assets	20,011	27,650	7,639	74,212	81,516	56,362
Asset renewal	11,089	8,327	(2,761)	23,916	25,795	26,710
Asset expansion	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asset upgrade	3,713	3,100	(613)	12,557	14,506	12,392
Total capital works	34,812	39,077	4,265	110,685	121,816	95,465

Summary of Reserves as at 31 December 2025

	2024-25 Actual \$'000	Transfer to \$'000	Transfer from \$'000	2025-26 YTD Actual \$'000
Discretionary reserves				
LASF defined benefit plan liability	3,739	-	-	3,739
Native vegetation offset site maintenance	1,071	-	-	1,071
Strategic investment reserve	34,922	-	-	34,922
Strategic properties reserve	4,807	-	-	4,807
Synthetic turf replacement reserve	375	-	-	375
Technology improvement fund reserve	3,494	-	-	3,494
Transport infrastructure reserve	615	-	-	615
Waste reserve	3,395	-	-	3,395
Strategic operational projects	2,516	-	-	2,516
Regional sports precinct	3,739	-	-	3,739
Resilience and emergency management	449	-	-	449
Plant replacement reserve	772	-	-	772
Community grants reserve	660	-	-	660
Aquatic and Leisure Centre Capital Improvement Reserve	472	-	-	472
Growling Frog Golf Course Capital Improvement Reserve	67	-	-	67
Total Discretionary reserves	61,094	-	-	61,094
Non-discretionary reserves				
Development contributions	194,010	16,175	(908)	209,277
Net gain compensation	1,522	36	-	1,558
Non standard street lighting contribution	4,201	-	-	4,201
Parklands contributions (open space)	14,571	432	-	15,002
Planning permits drainage	2,431	240	(221)	2,449
Plenty Road duplication	88	2	-	90
Purchase of Lutheran Church and Cemetery	380	-	-	380
Street tree contributions reserve	689	-	-	689
Traffic lights construction	974	-	-	974
Total non-discretionary reserves	218,865	16,884	(1,129)	234,621
Asset revaluation reserve				
Asset revaluation reserve	2,224,836	7	(4,868)	2,219,975
Total asset revaluation reserves	2,224,836	7	(4,868)	2,219,975
Total Reserves	2,504,796	16,891	(5,997)	2,515,690

Capital Works Grant Status Progress Report
December 2025

Submitted

Financial Year	Grant Number	Title	Organisation Name	Project ID	Project Name	Funding Type	Funding Requested	Council Contribution	Other Contribution	Total Project Cost
25/26	GCW-10288	Building Blocks Partnership Project - Dalton Road Kindergarten	Victorian School Building Authority	CW-10289	Redevelopment of Dalton Road Kindergarten and MCH	State	4,500,000	4,750,000	40,000	9,290,000
25/26	GCW-10289	Building Blocks Partnership Project - Derby Meadows Preschool	Victorian School Building Authority	CW-11041	Derby Meadows Preschool and Boori Childrens Centre	State	4,500,000	7,300,000	0	11,800,000
25/26	GCW-10306	Growth Areas Infrastructure Program 2025 - High Street Shared Path, Keon Park Station to Thomastown Station	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10237	Construct shared path - High Street - Keon Park Station to Epping Station	State	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	6,000,000
25/26	GCW-10318	2025 TAC Local Government Grant Program - Plenty Parklands Primary School Wombat Crossing	Transport Accident Commission	CW-11215	25-26 Safe Routes to Schools	State	50,000	50,000	0	100,000
25/26	GCW-10320	Federal Black Spots Program 26-27 - Wattle Street and Myrtle Street Thomastown - Roundabout	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	CW-11302	Roundabout Construction: Wattle Street and Myrtle Street intersection in Thomastown	Federal	505,000	0	0	505,000
25/26	GCW-10321	Federal Black Spot Program 26-27 - Findon Road Epping - Roundabout and left in, left out / right in, intersection	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	CW-11121	Roundabout Construction: Findon Road / North Haven Drive, Epping (including left turn treatment at Healey Drive, Epping)	Federal	1,240,000	0	0	1,240,000
25/26	GCW-10322	Federal Black Spots Program 26-27 - Oleander Drive Mill Park - Wombat Crossings	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	CW-11303	Construct Wombat Crossings on Oleander Drive, Mill Park - Road Safety	Federal	432,000	0	0	432,000
25/26	GCW-10323	DEECA - 100 Neighbourhood Batteries Program Round 3 Stream 3 - Community Power Hub - Building resilience with back up	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	CW-11276	25-26 Energy Efficiency Program	State	395,926	139,109	73,465	608,500
25/26	GCW-10324	Safe Local Roads & Streets Program (SLRSP) - Regent Street, Mernda - Traffic Calming	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-11203	Regent Street, Mernda - Road Safety Improvements	State	1,000,000	0	0	1,000,000
25/26	GCW-10325	Safe Local Roads & Streets Program (SLRSP) - Vincent Drive, South Morang - Traffic Calming	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10698	Local Area Traffic Management and Streetscape Improvements - Study and Implementation in Local Areas 26, 32 and 42 in Mill Park and South Morang	State	1,000,000	65,000	0	1,065,000
25/26	GCW-10326	Safer Local Roads & Infrastructure Program (SLRIP) - Tranche 4 - Urbanisation of Cookes Road	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	CW-11027	Cookes Road - Bassetts Road to Heywood Street, Doreen	Federal	900,000	900,000	0	1,800,000
25/26	GCW-10327	Strengthening Community Safety - Election Commitment Funding - Whittlesea Community Safety Enhancement Project	Department of Industry Science and Resources			Federal	748,340	0	0	748,340
25/26	GCW-10328	Pick My Park - Dr Harry Jenkins Reserve Playground Upgrade	Department of Transport & Planning	CW-11080	Dr Harry Jenkins Park and Playground Redevelopment	State	250,000	450,000	0	700,000
25/26	GCW-10329	Pick My Park - Frost Court Park Playground Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10796	Renewal of playgrounds and general landscape improvements program	State	112,500	112,500	0	225,000
25/26	GCW-10330	Pick My Park - Golf Links Park Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10796	Renewal of playgrounds and general landscape improvements program	State	110,000	110,000	0	220,000
25/26	GCW-10331	Pick My Park - Lalor Recreation Reserve Play space Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-11257	Lalor Recreation Reserve Play Space and Reserve Frontage	State	250,000	553,400	0	803,400
25/26	GCW-10332	Pick My Park - Longwood Park Playground Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10796	Renewal of playgrounds and general landscape improvements program	State	100,000	100,000	0	200,000
25/26	GCW-10333	Pick My Park - Meadow Glen Playground Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-11320	Meadow Glen Playground Upgrade	State	250,000	403,000	0	653,000
25/26	GCW-10334	Pick My Park - Roycroft Avenue Park Playground Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10796	Renewal of playgrounds and general landscape improvements program	State	125,000	125,000	0	250,000
25/26	GCW-10335	Pick My Park - WA Smith Reserve Playground Upgrade	Department of Transport and Planning	CW-10400	Upgrade open space - Implement WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve Masterplan	State	250,000	431,400	0	681,400
25/26	GCW-10337	2025-26 Community Sport & Recreation Project - Painted Hills Recreation Reserve Sports Lighting Upgrade	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions	CW-11233	Painted Hills Recreation Reserve - Lighting Upgrade	State	250,000	0	0	250,000
25/26	GCW-10338	Safe Local Roads & Streets Program (SLRSP) Supplementary Round - Gillwell Road Lalor - Traffic Calming	Transport Accident Commission	CW-10806	Traffic control devices un-programmed works	State	275,000	0	0	275,000

**Capital Works Grant Status Progress Report
December 2025**

Financial Year	Grant Number	Title	Organisation Name	Project ID	Project Name	Funding Type	Funding Requested	Council Contribution	Other Contribution	Total Project Cost
25/26	GCW-10339	Safe Local Roads & Streets Program (SLRSP) Supplementary Round - Stagecoach Boulevard, South Morang - Raised Intersection	Transport Accident Commission	CW-10811	Collector Road traffic management (Various locations)	State	448,000	0	0	448,000
25/26	GCW-10340	Major and Local Community Infrastructure Program (MLCIP) - Nick Ascenzo Reserve Upgrade	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts	CW-11190	Nick Ascenzo - Master Plan Implementation	Federal	4,500,000	0	0	4,500,000
25/26	GCW-10341	Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways - AF Walker Reserve Stormwater Harvesting Design and Construction	Melbourne Water	CW-11218	AF Walker Reserve Stormwater Harvesting	State	475,000	480,000	0	955,000
25/26	GCW-10342	2025-26 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund, Community Facilities Stream - Edgars Creek Community Netball Development	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions	CW-10071	Design - Edgars Creek Reserve Masterplan Implementation	State	500,000	1,551,176	0	2,051,176
25/26	GCW-10343	2025-26 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund, Community Sports Lighting Stream - Huskisson Reserve Tennis and Pickleball Lighting	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions	CW-10235	Huskisson Reserve - Multi Purpose Facility	State	150,000	100,000	0	250,000
							26,316,766			
Successful										
Financial Year	Grant Number	Title	Organisation Name	Project ID	Project Name	Funding Type	Funding Requested	Council Contribution	Other Contribution	Total Project Cost
25/26	GCW-10315	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) - EV Charging at Epping Depot for the future of our fleet	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	CW-11280	25-26 Electric Vehicle Charging at Council Facilities	State	115,000	90,000	0	205,000
25/26	GCW-10319	Community Sport and Recreation Grant Election Commitment - Ace Kids Zone at West Lalor Tennis Club	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions	CW-10235	Huskisson Reserve - Multi Purpose Facility	State	70,000	0	6,910	76,910
							185,000			
Unsuccessful										
Financial Year	Grant Number	Title	Organisation Name	Project ID	Project Name	Funding Type	Funding Requested	Council Contribution	Other Contribution	Total Project Cost
25/26	GCW-10298	Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program (SLRIP) Tranche 2 - Findon Road and The Great Eastern Way	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	CW-11106	Signalised intersection - Findon Road & The Great Eastern Way, South Morang	Federal	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	3,000,000
25/26	GCW-10299	Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program (SLRIP) Tranche 2 - Urbanisation of Cookes Rd	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	CW-11027	Cookes Road - Bassetts Road to Heywood Street, Doreen	Federal	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	3,000,000
							3,000,000			

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment		Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Goal 1 Connected Community					
Key direction 1 A socially cohesive community					
Outcome: All members of our community feel that they belong, are valued and respected					
Strategic priority 17: Deliver Council's Fair Access Policy to ensure women and girls can equally use local sports facilities and feel supported to get involved in sport and recreation.					
Action 1	Deliver education modules to sports clubs and undertake an Expression of Interest for usage of the Regional Sports Precinct as part of the implementation of Council's Fair Access Policy.	On Track	Anthony Traill	Active Places & Communities	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	A number of local sporting clubs successfully completed Council's Fair Access education program in November 2025. The program supports clubs to create more inclusive, welcoming environments for women and girls in sport. All sporting clubs are required to complete six Fair Access modules, covering topics such as gender equity, participation, safe and inclusive spaces, and bystander action, along with a gender equity audit and action plan by the end of 2026. Additional clubs will begin the program in February 2026. Sporting clubs are also asked to make a Fair Access Pledge, demonstrating their dedication to improving access to formal sport for women and girls. Several clubs have already made this pledge, securing their eligibility for the 2026 season allocations process.				
Strategic priority 44: Support service providers to expand initiatives that promote inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in community life, employment and education.					
Action 2	Support service providers to develop a work readiness program that will engage local employers and community organisations to build awareness and capacity to create viable work and volunteer opportunities for young people with disability.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	In partnership with Northern School for Autism, Council will deliver a work-readiness program designed to support students in developing practical skills for employment. The program will provide hands-on training in garden maintenance and nursery operations and is scheduled to begin in early 2026. The program will also work closely with local employers and community organisations to build understanding of inclusive employment practices and encourage the creation of meaningful work and volunteer opportunities for young people with disability.				
Outcome: Our community strengthens connections between diverse cultures					
Strategic priority 4: Deliver and facilitate culturally safe services and programs for First Peoples children and their families, suited to local needs.					
Action 3	Provide First Peoples children and their families with culturally responsive local family engagement opportunities.	On Track	Amelia Ryan	Children & Families	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council delivered 16 parent information and support sessions in partnership with local organisations, helping families strengthen their connections to local services and supports. This included two major events in October—the Bringing Up Kids Expo and National Children's Week—which together welcomed more than 300 families and featured culturally responsive activities for First Peoples children and families. Planning for the 2026 program is now in its final stages, with a 12-month schedule to be released in January. The program will include celebrations for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day in August, as well as the continued delivery of the Aboriginal Supported Playgroup pilot in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.				
Outcome: Our community shares stories and learns from one another					
Strategic priority 49: Partner with other Councils to renew the regional Library Services Agreement and to transition the service to a new entity as required by the Local Government Act 2020.					
Action 4	Continue to consider the future arrangements for the delivery of Library Services, including opportunities for collaboration with other councils.	On Track	Anthony Traill	Active Places & Communities	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	In November 2025, Council endorsed the continuation of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) service agreement through to 2031. Council will continue working closely with YPRL to ensure library services respond to the needs of the City of Whittlesea's growing and diverse community, supporting lifelong learning, connection and access for all residents.				
Outcome: Our community values and respects First Peoples and celebrates their rich, diverse cultures					
Strategic priority 39: Partner with First Peoples communities to co-design and deliver programs and activities at the Aboriginal Gathering Place throughout the municipality that support social, physical, cultural, emotional and wellbeing needs.					
Action 5	Partner with First Peoples communities to co-design and establish programs and activities at the Aboriginal Gathering Place.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	The Aboriginal Gathering Place (AGP) is now complete and will be officially opened for community use in February 2026. This exciting new space will provide a welcoming place for connection, culture and community. Council is working closely with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG), the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group (WRG), local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and the wider community to build strong partnerships and co-design the programs and activities that will call the AGP home.				
Key direction 2 A healthy and safe community					
Outcome: Our community is healthy, well and physically active					
Strategic priority 19: Deliver and operate the Regional Sports Precinct in Mernda consisting of an indoor stadium with multi-purpose courts, lit outdoor netball courts, a netball pavilion, car parking, pathways, lighting, landscaping and wetlands.					
Action 6	Continue construction of Stage 2 of the Regional Sports Precinct including the indoor stadium and outdoor netball courts.	On Track	Nick Mazzarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Works to integrate the Initial Early Works package and the Main Works are being finalised. Building Permit 1A has been obtained for the underground services, with construction drawings for the superstructure currently being prepared.				
Strategic priority 20: Deliver the new Wollert Sports Reserve consisting of playing fields with lighting, multi-purpose sporting spaces, playground, car parking and a community pavilion.					
Action 7	Commence the design of a new sports reserve in Wollert (Alkira).	On Track	Nick Mazzarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	An conceptual design for Alkira Recreation Reserve in Wollert has commenced and will inform a business case to confirm the scope of the proposed sports facilities. The detailed design and specification of the proposed sports facilities will subsequently be prepared this financial year.				
Strategic priority 21: Deliver the Huskisson Reserve Multi-Purpose Facility in Lalor consisting of new multi-purpose community pavilion and redevelopment of the existing tennis courts into new courts with lighting, car parking, pathways and landscaping.					
Action 8	Commence the redevelopment of the Huskisson Recreation Reserve sports facilities with fencing and lighting, a new community sports pavilion, additional car parking, connecting paths and landscaping.	On Track	Nick Mazzarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The redevelopment of the Huskisson Recreation Reserve sports facilities is well underway. The site services upgrade is now complete, demolition works are nearing completion, and earthworks have commenced for the new community sports pavilion and tennis courts.				
Strategic priority 22: Deliver the new Edgars Creek Recreation Reserve in Wollert consisting of a new multi-purpose community pavilion, an additional oval, outdoor sport courts, open space and a recreation area and car parking.					
Action 9	Complete design of a natural turf sports oval and synthetic cricket wicket with lighting, netball courts with fencing and lighting, community sports pavilion, additional car parking, connecting paths, passive open space and landscaping.	On Track	Nick Mazzarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The design process is progressing well. The detail design is underway and is expected to be completed before the end of financial year 2025-26 in preparation for tendering for construction.				

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment		Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Strategic priority 23: Deliver the new Ashley Park Recreation Reserve in Doreen consisting of playing fields with lighting, a new multi-purpose community pavilion, playground and car parking.					
Action 10	Complete design of soccer pitches with lighting, community sports pavilion, playground, additional car parking, connecting paths, passive open space and landscaping.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The design is progressing well. Site concept design for car parks and sports fields is almost complete. Detailed design will follow later this financial year (2025/26), with construction anticipated to be late 2026.				
Strategic priority 42: Facilitate local services to improve access to fresh, healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food; respond to food insecurity and promote healthy eating.					
Action 11	Advocate and partner for better access to fresh, healthy, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food systems to increase healthy eating.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	The Foodbank Bus supermarket in Thomastown will continue operating in 2026, bringing fresh, healthy, and affordable food directly to local residents. This mobile supermarket offers a wide range of groceries, including fresh fruit and vegetables, pantry staples, and culturally appropriate foods, at reduced prices to support households and families in the community. Council will also continue supporting the Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network to provide emergency food assistance when it's needed most. In addition, Council is working with local partners and stakeholders to improve access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food options across the municipality.				
Outcome: Our children and young people are supported to thrive					
Strategic priority 3: Partner with the Victorian Government and stakeholders to implement the Best Start, Best Life Reform, including free kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-old children and extending kindergarten hours.					
Action 12	Develop a Kindergarten Position Paper for Council endorsement that outlines Council's future role in implementing the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life Reform.	Complete	Amelia Ryan	Children & Families	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	In October 2025, Council endorsed its Kindergarten Position Paper, outlining how it will support the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reforms. These reforms are designed to give every child the best start in life, improving learning outcomes in the two years before school. To meet growing community demand, Council is working closely with the Department of Education to deliver new and upgraded kindergarten facilities, ensuring more children have access to high-quality early learning close to home.				
Strategic priority 5: Advocate for funding from other levels of government to establish a dedicated youth hub and create additional youth-friendly spaces where young people can thrive.					
Action 13	Advocate for funding to develop a dedicated youth hub and youth-friendly spaces for middle years and young people, providing access to services, programs and support.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council has endorsed the development of a Business Case to identify the ideal location for a new Youth Hub. The project will include further consultation with young people and is scheduled for completion in March 2026. The Youth Hub will be a vibrant, safe, and welcoming space where young people can connect, learn, and explore new opportunities. Council is actively working with key partners and stakeholders to turn this vision into reality.				
Strategic priority 50: Deliver the West Wollert Community Centre providing kindergarten/early years rooms, maternal child health consulting rooms, a community hall, lounge and library space, meeting rooms and a community garden.					
Action 14	Continue construction of the West Wollert Community Centre.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The construction is progressing well. The concrete slab, walls, and roof framing are complete, and sewer and stormwater services are almost finished. Block works and internal fit-outs have started. While car park excavation has been challenging due to rock encountered, the overall schedule remains on track and expected to be completed by late 2026.				
Strategic priority 51: Deliver the Murnong Community Centre in Donnybrook providing kindergarten/early years rooms, maternal child health consulting rooms, a community hall, lounge and mini-branch library space and meeting rooms.					
Action 15	Complete the construction of the Murnong Community Centre and commence operations of the new community facility including a library.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The construction works are close to be completed with the centre opening for operation in January 2026.				
Outcome: Our community experiences financial wellbeing					
Strategic priority 40: Facilitate increased awareness and advocate about the risks of gambling harm in the City of Whittlesea.					
Action 16	Partner with health providers to develop local awareness about gambling harm.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	As part of Gambling Harm Awareness Week, Council delivered targeted education to the community. This included a community session in partnership with Holstep Health, Gambler's Help, and Settlement Services International, alongside a social media campaign to raise awareness about gambling-related harm and the support services available.				
Strategic priority 41: Advocate for and facilitate the expansion of local services for individuals experiencing homelessness and those at risk.					
Action 17	Partner with external agencies to pilot a homelessness outreach program.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council, in partnership with Merri Outreach Support Service (MOSS), is running a project to better understand homelessness in our community. The project is mapping trends, identifying areas where people are sleeping rough, and learning more about local support services. Initial data collection and community engagement have been completed, with findings to be shared with Council in early 2026. The insights from this project will help Council and local services plan more effective support, ensuring people experiencing homelessness in our community get the help they need.				
Outcome: Our community feels safe and supported					
Strategic priority 43: Advocate for and facilitate improved access to mental health services and partner to raise awareness and deliver preventative programs.					
Action 18	Partner with local organisations to increase access to services that are culturally safe, inclusive and accessible to diverse communities including marginalised groups.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council is exploring new partnership opportunities at the recently opened Aboriginal Gathering Place, ensuring the space supports the wellbeing of all community members. In partnership with InTouch, Council delivered the 'Healing through Recovery' program for Arabic-speaking and South Asian women living in the City of Whittlesea. This program supports women recovering from family violence, offering opportunities to build healthy relationships and engage in therapeutic activities such as art and movement, to support their recovery.				
Strategic priority 48: Deliver accessible precincts for people living with a significant disability and their carers, including enhanced facilities, sensory spaces and greater flexibility in utilising community facilities.					
Action 19	Deliver a feasibility study on the development of an accessible neighbourhood pilot project to better meet the needs for people living with a significant disability and their carers.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening	Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council is developing a feasibility study for the Accessible Precinct Pilot Project, exploring multiple sites to create a space that is fully accessible, welcoming, and designed with the needs of people with significant disability and their carers in mind. The study will help identify the best location for the pilot precinct and guide the future development of inclusive, accessible community spaces for everyone to enjoy.				

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment	Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Outcome: Our community experiences healthy, equal and respectful relationships, and live free from abuse and family violence				
Strategic priority 30: Advocate for equality and partner on initiatives that build a safe, respectful community with zero tolerance for all forms of violence, including family, gender-based, racial, faith-based and LGBTIQ+ violence.				
Action 20	Partner with local health services to pilot a program that engages men to help stop gender-based violence and promote gender equity.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council, in partnership with DPV Health, will deliver the Stepping Up for Equality: Men’s Action Group in early 2026. The program will bring local men together to actively prevent gender-based violence and promote equality in our community.			
Outcome: Our community is prepared and able to respond to and recover from emergencies				
Strategic priority 29: Partner with external emergency and welfare services to explore the feasibility of a Safer Neighbourhoods Expo to enhance community education and awareness of available services.				
Action 21	Deliver a feasibility assessment for a Safer Neighbourhoods Expo to enhance community education and awareness of available services.	On Track	Andrew Mason	Emergency Management & Regulatory Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Council has completed a benchmarking study with 13 other Victorian councils to understand how neighbourhood safety expos and similar events are delivered across the state. Council is now analysing the findings and preparing a report. This report will outline several options, including hosting a dedicated neighbourhood safety event or expanding existing community events to include safety activities and information.			

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment		Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Goal 2 Liveable Neighbourhoods					
Key direction 1 Smart, connected transport network					
<i>Outcome: Our community has options to easily travel where they need to go</i>					
Strategic priority 6: Deliver the Yan Yean Pipe Track and Edgars Creek Trail shared paths to increase recreation opportunities and sustainable transport options in line with the City of Whittlesea Walking and Cycling Plan and Northern Trails Strategy.					
Action 22	Complete design for Edgars Creek Shared Path from Main Street to Kingsway Drive, Lalor.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The tender process is currently underway to appoint structural engineers for the design of the boardwalks and retaining walls along the shared path.				
Action 23	Commence construction of the Yan Yean Shared Path from Childs Road to Centenary Drive, Mill Park.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	A contractor has been awarded for the construction of the shared path between Childs Road and Centenary Drive. Construction is expected to commence early 2026.				
Strategic priority 8: Advocate for expanded transportation options and improvements to the transport network, including road upgrades, enhanced shared pathways and increased public transport, such as the Wollert Rail.					
Action 24	Commence design for the signalisation of the intersection of Findon Road and The Great Eastern Way to improve safety, ease congestion and improve local access to surrounding community facilities.	Complete	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The concept design is complete, and detailed design is now underway.				
Key direction 2 Well designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres					
<i>Outcome: Our neighbourhoods are attractive and desirable places to live, work and play</i>					
Strategic priority 18: Deliver the Granite Hills Major Community Park featuring an adventure park and playground, open-air pavilion, public barbecues, giant slides, nature and water play and public toilets with a Changing Places facility.					
Action 25	Complete the Granite Hills Playground featuring an adventure park and playground, open-air pavilion, public barbecues, giant slides, nature and water play, boardwalks and connecting paths, landscaping and public toilets with a Changing Places facility.	Complete	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Granite Hills Playground was completed and officially opened to the public on 9 December 2025.				
Strategic priority 28: Deliver the Suburb Place Frameworks to enhance the municipality's distinct character, improve safety, enhance public spaces and upgrade infrastructure.					
Action 26	Complete the Mill Park Place Framework identifying opportunities to address the distinct needs for the area, including safer streets, enhanced public places and improved infrastructure and develop an implementation action plan.	On Track	Arashdeep Singh	Urban Design & Transport	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Council continues to progress several initiatives under the Mill Park Place Framework, including safer streets, improved safety and amenity of open spaces, create thriving community hubs, revitalise key destinations, increase walkability and reimagining green corridors and easements.				
Strategic priority 31: Deliver revitalised and upgraded neighbourhood streetscapes and shopping precincts to enhance accessibility, local character and support local spending.					
Action 27	Commence the upgrade of The Boulevard Shops in Thomastown including tree planting, garden beds, improved pedestrian footpaths, reconfigured car parking, raised pedestrian crossings, road resurfacing and improved drainage.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Council awarded the construction contract at its meeting on 16 December 2026. Construction works are expected to commence early 2026.				
Strategic priority 32: Deliver a review of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to ensure planning policies and controls achieve high quality design and sustainable development outcomes.					
Action 28	Commence a review of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to ensure planning policies and controls continue to deliver high quality design and sustainable development outcomes.	On Track	Liam Wilkinson	Strategic Futures	Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Council has begun background research and selected a consultant to commence the review of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.				
<i>Outcome: Our neighbourhoods are well-designed and enable all people to connect</i>					
Strategic priority 24: Deliver the staged construction of VR Michael Reserve Master Plan in Lalor providing an upgraded dog off leash area, central lawn, circuit paths, toilet facilities, exercise fitness station and car parking.					
Action 29	Commence the design of dog off-leash area, playground and picnic facilities, new public toilet, lighting, upgraded access road and car park, connecting paths, passive open space and landscaping at VR Michael Reserve.	Complete	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The detailed design has been finalised. A contractor will be appointed in early 2026, and construction is expected to commence in March 2026.				
Strategic priority 25: Deliver the staged construction of Whittlesea Park Master Plan in Whittlesea Township providing trees, play spaces, circuit paths, bridges and car parking.					
Action 30	Continue upgrading pedestrian bridges over the Plenty River and the construction of connecting paths.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Detail design has been completed and we are currently waiting on approval from external authorities.				
Strategic priority 26: Deliver the staged construction of Lalor Recreation Reserve Master Plan in Lalor, Lowalde Master Plan in Epping, Nick Ascenzo Reserve in Thomastown, Whittlesea Public Gardens in Lalor and Mernda Recreation Reserve Master Plan in Mernda.					
Action 31	Commence design of the park improvements at Nick Ascenzo Reserve.	On Track	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The tender evaluation for the design contract is currently underway, with design work commencing in early 2026.				

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment	Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Key direction 3 Housing for diverse needs				
Outcome: Our community has the right mix and supply of housing to provide choices for all				
Strategic priority 33: Deliver an affordable housing plan which defines Council’s role as well as future projects that deliver diverse housing opportunities for our community.				
Action 32	Deliver an affordable housing plan which defines Council’s role and identifies associated actions over the short, medium and longer term that deliver diverse housing opportunities for our community.	On Track	Amanda Allen	Strategic Property & Portfolio Development Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Council recently completed community engagement on the Draft Affordable Housing Plan, with feedback from the community and industry stakeholders helping to refine the final document. The final plan was adopted by Council at the 16th of December Council Meeting.			
Strategic priority 34: Deliver the Ashline Street Affordable Housing Project in Wollert, partnering with a community housing organisation to provide affordable homes and a community park.				
Action 33	Commence construction of Ashline Street Affordable Housing Project in Wollert, providing affordable homes and a community pocket park.	On Track	Amanda Allen	Strategic Property & Portfolio Development Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Council is partnering with Beyond Housing to deliver 27 new social and affordable housing dwellings on the Ashline Street site. Beyond Housing has engaged the local community on the designs of the housing and a new park that will be delivered as part of the project. Construction of the housing will commence in February 2026 and take 12 months to complete. Beyond Housing will keep the community informed of the build on its project website and through quarterly updates mailed to nearby residents.			
Strategic priority 35: Deliver the Johnsons Road residential development in Mernda, comprising at least 35 homes, including affordable housing, open spaces and pathways linking to the Plenty River.				
Action 34	Complete the design and commence the construction of the Johnsons Road residential development in Mernda, including affordable housing.	Monitor	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The contract for the design was awarded and concept design for the subdivision development and Johnsons Road redevelopment has commenced. Additional studies are required for the drainage system in consultation with Melbourne Water. While some preparatory works can commence on site, the main construction works will be delayed until later in the 2026 calendar year.			

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment	Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Goal 3 Strong Local Economy				
Key direction 1 Increased local employment				
Outcome: Our municipality attracts investment to provide more local jobs to match population growth				
Strategic priority 38: Advocate for the creation of local jobs and other community benefits as outcomes from the planning and development of the Intermodal Freight Precinct in Beveridge, which on completion will be the largest intermodal precinct in Australia transforming the nation’s supply chain and providing economic benefits to the region.				
Action 35	Advocate as part of the planning for the Intermodal Freight Precinct in Beveridge, led by the Federal Government, including for enhanced environmental outcomes, accessible open space, protection of heritage assets, upgrades to the road network and increased employment land supply.	On Track	Liam Wilkinson	Strategic Futures Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Planning Scheme Amendment GC249 was gazetted in August 2025 by the State Government, which gives effect to Stage 1a of the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct. Council continues to meet regularly with counterparts at the State Government (Victorian Planning Authority) and its consultant team regarding the planning for the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, including Stages 1b and 2. Council awaits further direction from the Department of Transport and Planning on the planning of Stage 1b of the precinct and beyond.			
Outcome: Our economy is inclusive and accessible for all				
Strategic priority 45: Deliver a campaign to attract major festivals and events to the region to increase visibility and promote social cohesion.				
Action 36	Develop an industry prospectus to promote local function and event spaces through tourism networks and support PRACC to position itself as a venue of choice for the performing arts and creative industries.	Complete	Sarah Rowe	Economic Development Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Council has finalised the revised Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events (MICE) Prospectus to promote local venues, address potential gaps, and improve accessibility information. The information will be made available on the Explore Whittlesea website and reviewed regularly.			
Key Direction 3 Successful, innovative local businesses				
Outcome: Our economy has a diverse base that fosters small business development				
Strategic priority 37: Develop and implement a new Strong Local Economy Strategy to support the growth of the local business community, promote investment, local employment and education opportunities, enhancing social connections and economic sustainability.				
Action 37	Develop a new Strong Local Economy Strategy, inclusive of a night-time economy plan to respond to current and continued growth in the municipality.	On Track	Sarah Rowe	Economic Development Planning & Development
Public Comment:	Development of the new Strong Local Economy Strategy is progressing, with a background paper being prepared from the findings of the pre-consultation and public consultation on a series of discussion papers. This paper will guide the development of the draft Economic Growth Strategy (Strong Local Economy Strategy), which will be presented to Council prior to being released for public consultation in mid-2026.			

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment		Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Goal 4 Sustainable Environment					
Key direction 1 Valued natural landscapes and biodiversity					
Outcome: Our landscapes, waters and species are protected, improved, and valued					
Strategic priority 16: Deliver the revitalisation of Peter Hopper Lake in Mill Park to improve water quality and habitat for flora and fauna and enhance local area.					
Action 38	Complete the rehabilitation of Peter Hopper Lake and commence the refilling of the lake.	Complete	Nick Mazarella	Capital Delivery	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The rehabilitation of Peter Hopper Lake has been completed. Other associated works including the circuit path will be undertaken in 2026. The lake will be closely monitor over the next 12 months.				
Key direction 2 Climate ready					
Outcome: Our city's green cover is enhanced to reduce the risk of extreme heat					
Strategic priority 11: Deliver the City Forest program, planting more than 60,000 trees and working towards a target of an additional tree per resident across the municipality, to increase canopy cover, decrease urban heat and enhance biodiversity.					
Action 39	Deliver the annual tree planting programs for main roads, residential streets, parks, creek corridors and conservation reserves.	On Track	Arashdeep Singh	Urban Design & Transport	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Conservation Reserves Tree Planting Program has commenced with the National Tree Day 2025 community planting event in July where a total of 3,573 plants were planted by the community and contractors. Planning and procurement has commenced for the autumn 2026 planting season.				
Key direction 3 Leaders in clean, sustainable living					
Outcome: Our city becomes a net zero emissions municipality					
Strategic priority 9: Deliver and advocate for initiatives that help people and businesses make homes and workplaces more comfortable, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly.					
Action 40	Partner with providers to deliver a pilot household program for energy upgrades.	On Track	Amanda Dodd	Sustainable Environment	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	Council has partnered with Solar Savers to launch the Energy Smart Homes grant. Through this initiative, 27 households were selected as eligible to participate in the general program, they are now accessing Solar Savers to get quotes and have their upgrades. There are five spots open for an invite only program to support at risk homes to insulate and draught proof, saving money on energy bills and upping the thermal comfort of their homes.				
Strategic priority 10: Provide additional opportunities to generate local carbon offsets on Council owned and private land to help reduce municipal wide carbon emissions.					
Action 41	Commence the bunjil nganga Parkland (Quarry Hills) tree planting program.	On Track	Amanda Dodd	Sustainable Environment	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	The tree planting for 2025 have been completed. Planning for the 2026 season is underway, with planting scheduled to begin in autumn 2026.				
Outcome: Our city is low waste and transitions to a circular economy					
Strategic priority 13: Deliver a targeted program to eliminate rubbish dumping, including stronger enforcement, shorter wait times for collection and community education on waste minimisation, illegal dumping and recycling.					
Action 42	Enhance the hard waste collection service including the trial of a home collection service for whitegoods, e-waste, clothing and small household items.	On Track	Amanda Dodd	Sustainable Environment	Infrastructure & Environment
Public Comment:	We have commenced a detailed service review on hard waste, including a review of current services, and benchmarking across the wider industry. That review will be finalised by March 2026.				

Community Action Plan 2025-2026: Quarter 2 Summary

Strategic Priority / Action / Quarter 2 Public Comment	Progress	Action Sponsor	Lead Department	Lead Directorate
Key direction 1 Driving better community outcomes				
<i>Outcome: Our community finds it easy to interact with Council</i>				
Strategic priority 52: Deliver innovative and technology-driven solutions to continually enhance customer experience and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Council's operations.				
Action 43	Increase our digital offering to enable self-service and make it easier for our community to interact with us online.	On Track	Jordan Glancy	Customer Experience Customer & Corporate Services
Public Comment:	Council has been shortlisting potential vendors through a tender process to implement a generative artificial intelligence (AI) solution using a large language model (LLM) for Council's website. The solution is intended to enable customers to receive instant responses to common enquiries based on publicly available information, with live customer service support available for more complex queries.			
Key direction 2 More informed council decisions				
<i>Outcome: Our communities engage with us on issues and activities that affect them</i>				
Strategic priority 53: Facilitate the reduction, removal and prevention of barriers for marginalised and at risk groups to contribute to Council decisions.				
Action 44	Establish a Disability Advisory Committee to facilitate communication and consultation between people with disabilities and Council on matters that affect their lives.	On Track	Stephen McKay	Community Strengthening Community Wellbeing
Public Comment:	Council will establish the Disability Advisory Committee by mid-2026, creating a new voice for people with disabilities in our community. The Committee will help shape Council programs, services, and spaces, ensuring they are inclusive, accessible, and designed with the community in mind.			
Key Direction 3 More cost-effective investment and engaged workforce				
<i>Outcome: Our community is confident that City of Whittlesea can fund community needs in the future</i>				
Strategic priority 54: Deliver service and innovation reviews to identify ways to improve efficiency, investing in technology like artificial intelligence to boost productivity, optimise resource use and lower costs.				
Action 45	Commence the review of Council Fees and Charges, in accordance with Council's Pricing policy to ensure Council services are financially sustainable.	Complete	Aaron Gerrard	Finance Customer & Corporate Services
Public Comment:	Council has commenced the review of Council fees to ensure they align with the recently adopted Pricing Policy as part of developing the 2026-27 Budget.			
Action 46	Begin a review of Council services that considers financial sustainability and alignment with Council priorities.	Complete	Adrian Napoleone	EPMO & Change Customer & Corporate Services
Public Comment:	Council is currently undertaking two service reviews and will continue to work to deliver service reviews yearly to identify ways to improve efficiency, and optimise resources across the organisation.			

5.2 2025-2026 Q2 Community Grants

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Report Author: Unit Manager Community Grants

In Attendance: Manager EPMO & Change
Unit Manager Community Grants

Executive Summary

This report is to provide an overview of the community grants program for the Quarter 2 period of the 2025-2026 Financial Year from 1 October 2025 to 31 December 2026. A total of 113 applications were submitted across seven grant programs that included Round 1 of the Business-to-Business Grant Program.

Grant payments totalling **\$362,143.04** were processed during this quarter, which included Year 2 payments for groups under a Funding Agreement to deliver Diwali, Whittlesea Cruise Night, Whittlesea Show and preparation for the Chinese New Year Celebrations.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council note the 2025-2026 Q2 Community Grants Program Summary at Attachment 1.

Background / Key Information

This quarter saw an 80% increase in applications submitted with the Community Grants team processing and coordinating 113 applications for grants.

This quarter included working collaboratively with the Positive Ageing team, where a total of 75 Seniors Clubs applied for the 2025-2026 Senior Club Grants.

This quarter also opened up Round 1 of the Business to Business (B2B) Grant Program. The B2B Grant Program offers up to \$10,000 per individual application through two streams for businesses to choose from; **Stream 1 – Business Improvement and Innovation** and **Stream 2 – Elevating your business**.

The main purpose of the B2B Grant Program is to support existing businesses to procure local products and services from a list of approved local vendors to encourage B2B interaction and transactions. The B2B Grant Program will:

- Build membership of the City of Whittlesea Business Network (WBN). Memberships include traditional businesses of all sizes, non-government organisations and not-for-profit organisations providing essential social services to our community.
- Strengthen local supply chains and generates wealth in the community and long-term sustainability.
- Encourage and support new and existing diverse business activities and activation in activity centres and commercial precincts.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to *Whittlesea 2040* and Community Plan 2021-2025:

High Performing Organisation

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Considerations of Local Government Act (2020) Principles

Financial Management

The Centralised Grants budget has actual expenditure of \$1,038,329.01 (52%) of the annual budget.

Community Consultation and Engagement

The Community Grants team presented at the Female Inclusion in Sport grants support session regarding acquittals as many were either first time grant recipients or had very little experience in submitting an acquittal for grants.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

All approved grant recipients coordinating events will have conditions to ensure low waste initiatives are included for their events.

Social, Cultural and Health

No implications.

Economic

No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

It was determined that Senior Club grants would not be taxable for GST purposes, however, grant recipients are required to report on the use of funds through the acquittal process.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Council continues to feature stories and articles of grant recipients in Council newsletters, promoting the benefits that the program offers for community and how support through the program is helping bring people together.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

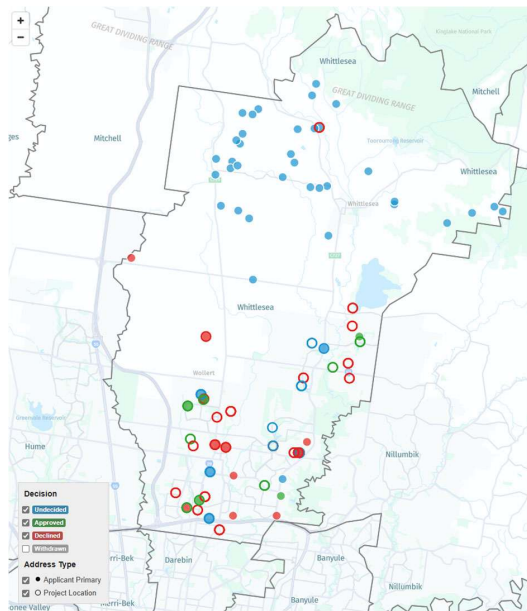
1. 2025-2026 Q2 Summary [5.2.1 - 5 pages]

Community Grants Program

2025-2026 Quarter 2 Summary



The City of Whittlesea Community Grants program offers year-round grants to support local programs, events, projects and initiatives.



Location of grant applications Q2 2025-2026

A total of 113 grants were received this quarter from October to December 2025. This is an 80% increase in comparison to Quarter 1 of this financial year.

Grant payments totalling **\$362,143.04** were processed during this period.

This included Year 2 payments for groups currently on a four-year Funding Agreement to deliver Diwali, Whittlesea Cruise Night, Whittlesea Show and preparation for the Chinese New Year Celebrations.

Applications for the Business to Business (B2B) Grant Program were received in this quarter. The B2B Grant Program offers up to \$10,000 per individual application through two streams for businesses to choose from; Stream 1 – Business Improvement and Innovation and Stream 2 – Elevating your business.

Grant Program	No. Applications	No. Application Approved	Amount Approved
Individual Grant	5	2	\$1,300.00
Small Grant	8	1	\$3,250.00
Medium Grant	6	1	\$8,047.00
Large Grant	6	0	4 TBC
Emergency Grant	1	0	\$0.00
Business to Business Grant	13	3	\$10,820.50
Seniors Club Grants	75	75	\$328,533.56
Totals	113	82	\$351,951.06

2025-2026 Q2 Grants Approved

Grant Program	Applicant	Received a grant last FY	Event or Project Title	Suburb	Event or Project Date/ Type	Amount
Business to Business	Complementary Care Partners	No	Improving Business Resilience Through HR and Cashflow Coaching	Doreen	Healthcare	\$7,200.00
Business to Business	Advantage Allied Health	No	Enhancing Natural Light Mill Park in Clinic Spaces through Mirror Installation		Healthcare	\$658.00
Business to Business	Ravalu Pty Ltd	No	Boosting Online Marketing for The Saltiest Dog	Epping	Pet Food	\$2,962.50
Individual Grants	Renee Gaitanis	No	LA Vic NZ Development Tour	Wollert	Competitive Sports	\$1,000.00
Individual Grants	Ian Marks	No	Let's Talk Songwriting	Thomas-town	Arts or Culture	\$300.00
Medium Grant	Doreen RSL Sub-Branch Inc.	No	ANZAC Day Dawn Service	Doreen	25/04/2026	\$8,047.00
Small Grants	Unity Libyan Youth Association & Palestinian Community Network	No	Bridges of Culture - Connection	Epping	09/02/2026	\$3,250.00

2025-2026 Q2 Grants Approved

Grant	Applicant	Amount
Senior	Circolo Pensionati Italiani di Bundoora Inc	\$4,480.00
Senior	Northern Eastern Greek Elderly Citizens Club Inc	\$2,277.98
Senior	Spanish Speaking Women's Senior Group North East Region	\$1,450.00
Senior	Mill Park Recycled Teenagers	\$3,039.34
Senior	Mill Park Senior Citizens	\$3,039.34
Senior	Whittlesea Senior Citizens Club inc	\$2,500.00
Senior	Doreen Combined Probus Club	\$4,150.00
Senior	Whittlesea Combined Pensioners Association Inc	\$2,590.00
Senior	Chaldean Senior Citizens Group of Whittlesea	\$1,900.00
Senior	Tamil Seniors Social Club Inc	\$4,240.00
Senior	Shlama Inc.	\$2,200.00
Senior	St Anthony Senior Social Club Inc.	\$5,921.60
Senior	The Community of Cypriots of the Northern Suburbs of Melbourne Senior Citizens	\$8,650.00
Senior	Welcome Senior Women's Group Inc	\$2,250.79
Senior	Greek Cypriot Cultural and Theatrical Centre Paradise	\$2,860.00
Senior	Italian Speaking Senior Citizens Association of Epping Inc.	\$5,170.00
Senior	CCRNA REKA SENIORS CITIZENS FISHING ASSOCIATION INC	\$3,400.00
Senior	Neret Seniors Citizens Group Inc	\$3,275.28
Senior	GOLDEN SUN DISABLED AND SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION INC.	\$10,840.00
Senior	The Good Shepherd Egyptian Seniors Ass. Inc.	\$3,398.16
Senior	MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF MELBOURNE AND VICTORIA ELDERLY	\$5,078.67
Senior	Circolo Pensionati Del Maiella Club	\$3,078.65
Senior	Lalor and District Men's Shed	\$2,114.84
Senior	The Chinese Seniors Friendship Association of Whittlesea INC.	\$6,760.00
Senior	Community of Niki	\$2,680.00
Senior	Italian Senior Citizens Club of Lalor and Thomastown Inc	\$4,126.98
Senior	Macedonian Australian Senior Citizens Group Ilinden inc.	\$4,450.00
Senior	Kajmakcalan Social Club	\$3,490.00
Senior	Thomastown East Italian Senior Citizens Club Inc	\$2,495.51
Senior	Macedonian Men's Seniors Group of Whittlesea Inc.	\$2,950.00
Senior	Macedonian Beranci Social Seniors of Whittlesea Inc.	\$7,460.67
Senior	Bitola Macedonian Senior Citizens Group of Whittlesea Inc	\$8,341.61
Senior	Italian Women's Senior Citizens Association of Whittlesea Inc	\$3,256.87
Senior	Green Island Turkish Womans Group	\$2,800.00
Senior	Northern Melbourne Sri Lankan Association	\$5,350.59
Senior	Galada Indian Seniors Group Inc.	\$3,700.00
Senior	"Goce Delchev" Senior Citizens Association Inc.	\$9,400.00
Senior	St Marys Multicultural SENiors Social Club	\$1,960.00

2025-2026 Q2 Grants Approved

Grant	Applicant	Amount
Senior	Community of Cypriots of the Northern Suburbs of Melbourne Women's Group	\$8,022.47
Senior	Thomastown East Greek Senior Citizens Club Inc.	\$3,190.00
Senior	Whittlesea U3A Inc	\$22,840.00
Senior	Whittlesea Maltese Senior Citizens Club	\$6,130.00
Senior	Macedonian Veterans and Friends Senior Citizens Group Inc.	\$7,404.49
Senior	Cultural Centre Of Florinians Aristotelis Elderly Citizens Club	\$3,078.65
Senior	Italian Pensioners ASsociation of Mill Park Inc	\$6,100.00
Senior	Macedonian Senior Citizen Group Thomastown, Lalor, Epping and Mill Park	\$6,400.00
Senior	DOREEN SENIORS CLUB INC.	\$5,740.00
Senior	Whittlesea and District Greek Elderly Citizens Club Inc	\$4,150.00
Senior	TURKISH WOMEN'S RECREATIONAL GROUP INC	\$6,100.00
Senior	Macedonian Women's Senior Citizens Group Lalor Inc	\$5,860.00
Senior	Macedonian Womens's Social Club of Whittlesea Inc.	\$6,400.00
Senior	MILL PARK GARDEN CLUB	\$3,190.00
Senior	Mernda Combined Probus Club Inc	\$3,730.00
Senior	Italian Welfare Association of Whittlesea Senior Citizens Club Inc.	\$3,528.09
Senior	The Palestinian seniors Club of Victoria incorporated	\$2,500.00
Senior	Northern Mauritians Seniors Club	\$1,543.82
Senior	Whittlesea Chinese Association	\$4,230.34
Senior	Whittlesea Malaysian Social & Senior Club Inc.	\$2,123.60
Senior	BORIS TRAJKOVSKI INC	\$2,741.57
Senior	Whittlesea Northern Cyprus Turkish Women's Group Inc	\$2,500.00
Senior	Whittlesea Turkish Elderly & Pensioners Association Inc.	\$8,359.55
Senior	Whittlesea Turkish Women's Association Inc	\$3,365.63
Senior	Whittlesea Men's Shed	\$2,530.00
Senior	Northern Egyptian Association Inc	\$2,348.31
Senior	Armenoro Senior Citizen's Association Inc	\$5,634.83
Senior	St Francis Filipino Senior Citizens Club Inc.	\$4,833.95
Senior	Lalor Thomastown Combined Pensioners Association	\$1,393.26
Senior	Greek orthodox Community of Whittlesea Women's Group	\$3,447.20
Senior	Mill Park Greek Elderly Citizens Club Inc	\$2,800.00
Senior	NORTHERN MELBOURNE VIETNAMESE ELDERLY ASSOCIATION INC	\$3,460.00
Senior	African Seniors Whittlesea	\$2,650.00
Senior	Seniors Citizens Group of the Greek Orthodox Parish Thomastown Lalor Transfig-	\$4,262.94
Senior	Greek Orthodox Community of Whittlesea	\$3,447.20
Senior	Soumela Melbourne	\$2,404.49
Senior	The Combined Probus Club of Whittlesea Inc	\$2,966.29
	TOTAL:	\$328,533.56

Grant Guidelines Approved

For further information go to [Community grants | City of Whittlesea](#)



Environmental Works Grant Program

Date Open: 25 September 2025

Date Close: 30 November 2025

This grant offers up to \$6,000 to support on-ground conservation projects that protect and enhance native vegetation on private rural land. Activities can include fencing, erosion control, weed management and re-vegetation works that improve biodiversity.



Business to Business Grant Program—Round 1

Date Open: 21 October 2025

Date Close: 30 December 2025

This grant program aims to provide support to local businesses to grow their presence and resilience in the municipality. Up to \$10,000 available for businesses to contribute to business improvement and innovation or to elevate a business.



Senior Citizens Club Grants

Date Open: 15 October 2025

Date close: 28 November 2025

The City of Whittlesea continues to support our Seniors Clubs to build social connections, be physically active, improve health and wellbeing, learn new skills and participate in civic life.

5.3 Youth Hub Business Case

Director/Executive Manager: Director Community Wellbeing

Report Author: Unit Manager Youth Development

In Attendance: Manager Community Strengthening
Unit Manager Youth Development

Attachments 5 and 6 have been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that they contain Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.

Executive Summary

This report responds to Council's resolution of 16 December 2025, which requested the preparation of a Business Case to identify a suitable site for the establishment of a Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea.

The Business Case evaluates four potential sites, informed by the 2024 City of Whittlesea Youth Needs Analysis and Youth Hub Feasibility Study, and considers delivery feasibility, financial sustainability and youth engagement outcomes.

The report recommends that Council endorse site Option 3b: which is located on Council's Civic Centre site, near the main vehicle entry from Ferres Boulevard.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

- 1. Resolve to approve Civic Centre (South), South Morang as the preferred site for the development of a Youth Hub, outlined as Option 3b in the Business Case at Attachment 1.**
- 2. Resolve to allocate \$4–6 million as part of the 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 financial year budget allocation process for detailed design and delivery of the Youth Hub.**
- 3. Note officers will continue advocating to the Victorian Government on behalf of Council for external funding to support the delivery of the Youth Hub.**
- 4. Note the Youth Hub will operate within a broader hub-and-spoke service model, with additional spoke locations to be explored and activated over time.**

Background / Key Information

Previous Council decisions

At its meeting in December 2025, Council resolved to: *“Endorse the development of a business case to assess sites for a youth hub, including potential sites in South Morang and Epping, to be brought to Council for consideration at the March 2026 Council meeting.”*

Why a Youth Hub is needed

In 2023-24, Council undertook a Youth Needs Analysis and Youth Hub Feasibility Study, informed by extensive engagement with young people and stakeholders. These studies identified:

- Increasing social isolation, mental health pressures and disengagement among young people.
- Significant current and projected youth population growth, particularly in Epping/Epping North.
- Limited access to free, inclusive, non-clinical youth spaces that support early engagement and prevention.

The Feasibility Study recommended a hub-and-spoke model, with a central Youth Hub supported by localised spoke sites and identified the need for at least two dedicated hubs over the long term.

Further detail regarding youth needs is provided in Youth Needs Analysis in Attachment 3, page 45-59.

Existing youth facilities

The City of Whittlesea currently operates one leased youth facility, the EDGE at Westfield Plenty Valley, South Morang. While the EDGE enables delivery of some programs and co-locates Headspace mental health services, it is not fit-for-purpose as a contemporary youth hub, offers limited scope for retrofitting, and is primarily configured for clinical and service delivery functions rather than open, drop-in youth engagement.

The facility does not meet the definition of a Youth Hub as outlined in the Youth Hub Feasibility Study, and its lease expires in May 2028, creating additional need to identify a suitable alternative.

Site options assessed

The Business Case (Attachment 1) assesses four site options, selected to reflect both interim and permanent opportunities and to align with the geographic priorities identified in the Youth Hub Feasibility Study:

- **Option 1:** Shop 111, Pacific Epping Shopping Centre (Interim option).
- **Option 2:** 72 Cooper Street, Epping (Interim option).

- **Option 3a:** Civic Centre (North), South Morang – near Plenty Rangers Art and Convention Centre (PRACC) precinct (Permanent option).
- **Option 3b:** Civic Centre (South), South Morang – near main vehicle entry access (Permanent option).

A detailed description of each site is provided in the Business Case in Attachment 1.

Each option was assessed and scored against criteria including safety, accessibility, youth-led design, engagement potential, integration with community, activation, equity, site conditions, long-term suitability and cost considerations.

The options evaluation is provided in the Business Case in Attachment 1.

Preferred Option

Following assessment of the four site options, **Option 3b – Council Civic Centre (South)** has been identified as the preferred site for a future Youth Hub.

Option 3b achieved a strong score due to its alignment with youth-identified priorities and Council considerations. The site was the most consistently supported location through youth consultation, with young people identifying its visibility, proximity to public transport, strong passive surveillance and opportunities for outdoor activation as key advantages. Its location within the Civic precinct, close to bus stops, the Mernda train line and surrounding community infrastructure, supports both structured programming and informal drop-in engagement.

While the site presents higher construction complexity than Option 3a, these factors can be addressed through detailed design and capital planning. The site offers permanent tenure, strong activation potential and a clear alignment with youth voice, making it the most appropriate and future-focused option for Council to deliver a safe, visible and youth-led hub for the municipality.

Details of preferred option is provided in the Business Case in Attachment 1 pg. 10-13 and Options Evaluation in Attachment 5 pg.12-15.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

The proposed Youth Hub aligns with:

- **Community Plan 2025–29** – Connected Communities and Liveable Neighbourhoods.
- **YouthPlan2030+** – youth voice, inclusion, safety and access to opportunity.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan** – mental health, connection and prevention.
- **Whittlesea 2040** – equitable access to community infrastructure.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020) Principles*

Financial and Risk Considerations

Cost estimates indicate that constructing a new Youth Hub at the preferred site would cost between \$4 million and \$6 million depending on whether the youth hub is a permanent, in situ build or a modular design.

This estimate includes enhanced street design and landscaping which reflect the site's prominent location within the Civic Precinct and help ensure the facility is welcoming, safe, and engaging - designed to actively attract young people, encourage their ongoing participation, and signal to the broader community its purpose and value.

Council will continue to advocate for funding from other levels of government to support the delivery of a new Youth Hub, as outlined in Community Plan. Strategic Priority 5 commits to advocating for investment to establish a dedicated Youth Hub and create additional youth friendly spaces where young people can thrive.

This advocacy includes seeking support through the Victorian Government's Youth Hub Funding Program. Funding for Council's Youth Hub and associated 'Spokes' is also identified as one of the 12 priority projects and initiatives in the City of Whittlesea Advocacy Prospectus 2025 - 29.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Extensive engagement was conducted with young people through the Youth Needs Analysis and Youth Hub Feasibility Study.

Young people were directly involved in identifying design principles, preferred locations and service models.

Further targeted consultation was undertaken for the Business Case, including:

1. Former and current Youth Council members.
2. Original Youth Hub Feasibility Study participants; and
3. Young people involved in City of Whittlesea Youth Development programs.

Further targeted engagement will occur as part of detailed design and implementation if Council endorses the development of a Youth Hub.

Service Performance

The proposal enables continuation and enhancement of youth programs beyond the EDGE lease expiry.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.
- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

Future design development will incorporate sustainable building practices consistent with Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Social, Cultural and Health

The proposed Youth Hub aligns with the following MPHWP priorities:

- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- Community Safety and Violence Prevention
- Social Inclusion and Equity
- Healthy Development Across the Lifespan

The Youth Hub aligns with the following Community Plan pillars:

- Connected Communities
- Liveable Neighbourhoods
- Thriving Local Economy

The Youth Hub directly advances the core themes identified in YouthPlan2030+ and reinforced through current Youth Plan engagement:

- Connection, Belonging and Community
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Safety and Inclusive Environments
- Participation and Youth Voice
- Development and Transitions

Economic

Investment in a dedicated Youth Hub represents preventative social infrastructure that strengthens workforce participation and reduces long-term public expenditure.

By supporting educational engagement, training pathways, life-skills development and connections to local employers, the Hub improves young people's transition from education to employment, particularly important in a rapidly growing municipality.

Early, accessible support in mental health, social connection and skill development reduces the likelihood of disengagement, justice involvement, homelessness and long-term welfare reliance, resulting in avoided costs across health, policing and social services. The Hub will also provide a platform for partnerships with TAFEs, local businesses and community organisations, attracting external investment and strengthening the local service ecosystem. By investing now, Council is supporting long-term economic resilience and reducing future demand on public systems.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

Throughout the planning, design and delivery phases, Council must ensure compliance with all relevant planning controls, zoning requirements, new service utility processes and building permit obligations. Appropriate due diligence will be required to identify and mitigate legal, financial and delivery risks.

Council must also ensure the selected site is safe, accessible and fit for purpose, enabling inclusive access and supporting long-term sustainability.

Consistent with Council's commitment to a youth co-led Youth Hub, the final site selection should clearly demonstrate that the views of young people have been meaningfully considered and incorporated. This includes ensuring their needs, priorities and lived experience inform both the chosen location and the future design of the hub.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Council will undertake further targeted engagement with young people and the broader community. Young people will be invited to provide feedback at key project stages, including on the draft concept design.

Communication and engagement activities will be delivered through Council channels, including social media, the Engage platform, Youth Council and outreach through existing youth spaces, to ensure continued youth participation and community awareness.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Youth Hub Business Case [5.3.1 - 14 pages]
2. Youth Hub Feasibility Study [5.3.2 - 44 pages]
3. Youth Needs Analysis [5.3.3 - 76 pages]
4. Youth Hub Consultation Report [5.3.4 - 5 pages]
5. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Options Evaluation [5.3.5 - 14 pages]
6. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Scoring Matrix [5.3.6 - 2 pages]



Business Case: Location for a future hub in the City of Whittlesea

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

This business case has been prepared in response to Council's resolution at the 16 December 2025 Council Meeting to *"Endorse the development of a business case to assess sites for a youth hub, including potential sites in South Morang and Epping, to be brought to Council for consideration at the March 2026 Council meeting."*

A youth hub will address identified gaps in current youth infrastructure, respond to significant population growth and the changing needs of young people aged 12–25. It will provide a fit-for-purpose, accessible and inclusive space aligned with the Youth Hub Feasibility Study and Youth Needs Analysis undertaken in 2024.

The business case provides an assessment of four sites for establishment of a youth hub.

Options assessed

Four site options were assessed, including two interim (10-15 years) sites in Epping and two permanent sites in South Morang. These include:

- **Option 1:** Shop 111, Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, Epping (Interim option)
- **Option 2:** 72 Cooper Street, Epping (Interim option)
- **Option 3a:** Civic Centre (North), South Morang – located near Plenty Rangers Art and Convention Centre (PRACC) precinct & Findon Road (Permanent option)
- **Option 3b:** Civic Centre (South), South Morang – located near main vehicle entry access off Ferres Blvd (Permanent option)

The site options were assessed using a scoring framework based on two key sets of criteria. The first reflect the eight youth-identified principles established through the Youth Hub Feasibility Study, which articulate what young people consider most important in a youth hub, including safety, accessibility, attractiveness and welcome, engagement, integration with community, activation and equity. The second set of criteria reflects Council's internal considerations, including relative capital and operational costs, site complexity and constructability, long-term suitability and tenure, capacity for future expansion, and access to outdoor space.

Recommended option

Following assessment of the four site options, **Option 3b – Council Civic Centre (South)** has been identified as the preferred site for the future Youth Hub. Option 1 - Shop 111 achieved the highest overall score under the assessment matrix; however, it is not viable to progress due to leasing constraints that do not provide the tenure certainty required for a long-term Council investment. While longevity was one of several criteria considered in the scoring, and Shop 111 ranked highest overall on balance, the uncertainty surrounding its suitability as a long-term solution means it is not the preferred option. Accordingly, Option 3b now represents the highest scoring viable site under the assessment matrix.



Option 3b achieved a strong overall score due to its alignment with youth-identified priorities and Council considerations. The site was the most consistently supported location through youth consultation, with young people identifying its visibility, proximity to public transport, strong passive surveillance and opportunities for outdoor activation as key advantages. Its location within the Civic precinct, close to bus stops, the Mernda train line and surrounding community infrastructure, supports both structured programming and informal drop-in engagement.

While the site presents higher construction complexity than Option 3a, these factors can be addressed within detailed design and capital planning. The site offers permanent tenure, strong activation potential and a clear alignment with youth voice, making it the most appropriate and future-focused option for Council to deliver a safe, visible and youth-led hub for the municipality.

Project Costs – Recommended Site (3b. Council Civic Centre (South))

The estimated cost to develop a Youth Hub on the Civic Centre (South) site is **\$ 4m - \$6m**. This includes:

- Demolition and earthworks
- New modular or permanent in situ building (cost range allows both options to be explored)
- External works, including landscaping & pedestrian accessways
- Trenching / boring for services connections, including preliminaries
- Contingencies & cost escalations
- Equipment & furniture
- Security & wayfinding

2. BACKGROUND AND NEED

The City of Whittlesea currently has one dedicated youth space, the EDGE at Westfield Plenty Valley, South Morang, which Council leases. Council delivers youth and middle years events, programs and workshops from the facility, and it also accommodates Headspace, a not-for-profit organisation that provides mental health and wellbeing services for young people. However, the facility is not fit-for-purpose as a contemporary youth hub, with significant structural and spatial limitations that restrict its ability to operate as a drop-in space or deliver skills-based, creative, digital or wellbeing programs. The EDGE is primarily configured for clinical and service delivery functions, offers limited opportunities for retrofitting, and does not meet the definition of a 'Youth Hub' as outlined in the Youth Hub Feasibility Study. Compounding this, the lease expires in May 2028.

In the 2023/24 financial year, Council received Victorian Government funding to undertake a Youth Needs Analysis (Attachment 3) and Youth Hub Feasibility Study (Attachment 2). The purpose of these studies was to identify current and future needs, recommend a service model that meets the diverse needs of young people aged 12–25 and explore suitable locations for a youth hub. The studies were guided by a co-design process involving a diverse group of local young people and stakeholders.

The Youth Needs Analysis highlighted a range of factors affecting young people in the City of Whittlesea, including:

- Higher rates of social isolation, mental health pressures, and school disengagement among young people.
- Strong demand in current population hotspots:



- Epping/Epping North – projected 75% youth population growth by 2041
- Doreen/Mernda – projected 19% decline in youth population by 2041
- Significant future growth in the northern part of the municipality:
 - Wollert – projected 370% youth population growth by 2041
 - Donnybrook – projected 494% youth population growth by 2041
- Limited access to free, inclusive, non-clinical youth spaces that support prevention and early engagement.

A hub-and-spoke model was identified as the most effective approach to future youth facility development. This would ensure that a central youth hub need not accommodate every program, activity, or service within a single building. While the hub would act as the main coordination point, housing core programs, partnerships, and specialist supports, the surrounding spoke sites provide flexible, localised spaces that extend the reach and diversity of youth service delivery.

The feasibility study recommended establishing at least two dedicated youth hubs, located in:

- Central West: Epping / Epping North
- Central East: South Morang

Epping / Epping North was identified as the priority location for the first youth hub due to its significant youth population and its role as a Metropolitan Activity Centre with excellent transport connections, including the Mernda Train Line and the major bus interchange at Pacific Epping. Following a preliminary review of multiple site options within the Epping/Epping North area, Council was unable to identify a suitable permanent site that met the needs and design principles established through the Youth Hub Feasibility Study. Only interim site options (10–15 years). As a result, permanent site options were subsequently explored within the second identified area, South Morang.

3. SITE REQUIREMENTS

When considering what should be included within the hub design, the Youth Hub Feasibility Study determined that the space should:

- Include a minimum building size of 360sqm. Further analysis determined that while the minimum Youth Hub building size is 360 sqm, a larger footprint of at least 380 sqm is required without space for external services or partners, increasing to approximately 500 sqm where co-location is included.
- Have a flexible design that enables the incorporation of the design principles identified through youth engagement and other relevant uses, including kitchen/activity, foyer, multi-purpose/meeting, consulting, quiet, pod cast/tech, office/admin storage and gender-neutral amenity spaces.
- Have access to outdoor space(s).

Through a co-design process to inform the Youth Hub Feasibility Study, young people identified eight key design principles for the development of a youth hub:

1. Safe: well-lit, supervised, designed for visibility.
2. Accessible: near public transport, walkable, free to use, open after school.
3. Attractive and welcoming: open plan, warm, non-clinical, modern.



4. Youth-led: co-designed, culturally respectful, creatively activated.
5. Engaging: spaces to create, connect, study and express themselves.
6. Integrated with community: located where other services and activity already happen.
7. Activated: dynamic events, programs, hangouts.
8. Equitable: welcoming for every young person across Whittlesea.

4. OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL SITES

Four site options have been assessed as potential locations for the Youth Hub. This section provides an overview of each option, with detailed evaluation and comparative analysis presented in the Options Assessment section of this business case.

Option 1 – Shop 111, Epping Plaza

Shop 111 at Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, 571-583 High Street is a 550 sqm space with an entrance from the shopping centre carpark. The site is owned by The Pacific Group and QIC, requiring Council to lease the space. To date, the owners have provided a written commitment to a five-year lease. See Figure 1 for site location.

Capital works would involve fully refurbishing the space to establish a fit-for-purpose youth hub.

Option 2 – 72 Cooper Street, Epping

72 Cooper Street is a 4,103 sqm vacant, Council-owned site located adjacent to the Epping Community Services Hub at and directly opposite the Pacific Epping Shopping Centre. See Figure 1 for site location.

Capital works would include the construction of a purpose-built building, along with a new car park, installation of underground services, security provisions, landscaping, and the establishment of formalised pedestrian connections to improve access and site integration.



Figure 1 – Locations of site options 1 and 2

Option 3a – Council Civic Centre (North)

This option is located at Council’s Civic Centre site in South Morang, near the Plenty Ranges Art and Convention Centre, opposite Findon Road. See Figure 2 for site location.

Capital works would include the construction of a purpose-built building, external activity/gathering spaces, new pedestrian access, lighting and wayfinding.

Option 3b – Council Civic Centre (South)

This option is at Council’s Civic Centre site in South Morang, locating the future Youth Hub near the main vehicle entry off Ferres Boulevard, directly opposite the Civic building, Council Chambers, and front water body. See Figure 2 for site location.

Capital works would include the construction of a purpose-built building, external activity/gathering spaces, new pedestrian access, lighting and wayfinding.



Figure 1 – Locations of site options 3a and 3b

5. FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Consultation was undertaken with 160 young people aged 8–25 in January 2026 that explored the four site options. Safety was consistently highlighted as the most critical factor influencing whether a youth hub would be used. Young people emphasised the importance of feeling safe both within the space and when travelling to and from it, particularly after hours. Key safety features identified included good lighting, visibility, passive surveillance, and well-used walking routes. While most locations were perceived as safe during the day, concerns about night-time safety, isolated paths and limited foot traffic were repeatedly raised, especially by younger participants and young women. Accessibility was closely linked to safety, with young people prioritising locations near public transport, disability-accessible paths and crossings, and sites that minimise long or unsafe walks.

Young people also placed strong importance on connection to everyday life. Sites located near shops, food outlets, schools, community facilities and existing youth hangout spaces were consistently viewed as more welcoming and appealing. While quieter or standalone sites were valued for calmness and reduced sensory overload, they were often seen as less attractive if they felt isolated or disconnected from places young people already spend time. Across all consultation phases, young people expressed a clear desire for a balance between activation and comfort, including chill spaces, outdoor areas, and flexible rooms for programs, events, study and social connection. Overly busy or noisy environments were identified as



barriers for some cohorts, particularly neurodivergent young people, while spaces that felt too formal, inactive or “adult-focused” were also viewed negatively.

When feedback from all consultation phases was considered together, Site Option 3B Civic Centre (South) emerged as the most consistently supported option. Young people valued this site for its perceived safety, calm environment, accessibility via public transport, proximity to community infrastructure, and flexibility to support both indoor and outdoor activation. While concerns were raised about lighting, pedestrian connections and night-time use, participants consistently indicated these issues could be addressed through targeted infrastructure upgrades and intentional activation. Importantly, young people emphasised that the success of the Youth Hub will depend not only on location, but on youth-led design, a welcoming atmosphere, and ongoing attention to safety, visibility and connection to everyday destinations.

Further information on young people’s feedback is provided in Attachment 4.

6. OPTIONS EVALUATION

The site options were assessed using a scoring framework based on two key sets of criteria. The first reflects the eight youth-identified principles established through the Youth Hub Feasibility Study (Attachment 3, Page 34), which articulate what young people consider most important in a youth hub, including safety, accessibility, attractiveness and welcome, engagement, integration with community, activation and equity. These have been incorporated into the first six scoring categories identified below in Table 1 – Site evaluation summary.

The second set of criteria reflects Council’s responsibility to deliver sustainable, value-for-money community infrastructure, including site complexity and constructability, long term use of site (tenure & capacity for future expansion) and consideration of capital costs.

The evaluation scores for each site and supporting rationale are summarised in Table 1 and detailed further in Attachment 5. See scoring matrix in Attachment 6 used to inform Table 1.

Table 1 – Site evaluation summary

Note: Maximum score for each criterion is 24.

	SITE 1 Shop 111 PE	SITE 2 72 Cooper St.	SITE 3a CIVIC (North)	SITE 3b CIVIC (South)
Safety	Surrounding retail precinct provides high passive supervision, lighting and safe access.	Isolated after hours & surrounding by industrial properties and main road, resulting in low passive supervision, lighting and safe access.	Surrounded by Council facilities & vegetation with limited safe access due to low passive supervision after hours, minimal external lighting and	Located near Civic Centre main entry providing regular passive supervision, external lighting and safe pedestrian access.



	SITE 1 Shop 111 PE	SITE 2 72 Cooper St.	SITE 3a CIVIC (North)	SITE 3b CIVIC (South)
	2.5	0.5	visual obstructions along accessways. 1.5	2
Accessible	Close to public transport (0-500m), safe surrounding pedestrian access & in priority suburb (Epping) 3	Close to public transport (0-500m), some pedestrian access via surrounding streets/roads & in priority suburb (Epping) 2.5	Close to public transport (0-500m), pedestrian access throughout Civic Centre site & in secondary priority suburb (South Morang) 2.5	Close to public transport (0-500m), pedestrian access throughout Civic Centre site & in secondary priority suburb (South Morang) 2.5
Attractive, Welcoming & Fit-For-Purpose	Surrounding retail/food/service spaces for youth gathering, shared with adult uses. Clear main entry and some reconfiguration required (refurbishment). 2	Few surrounding spaces for youth to gather, unless cross main road to Epping Plaza. High adult/industrial surrounding uses. Main entry part obscured due to site levels. New construction required. 1	Some surrounding spaces for youth to gather including parkland, PRACC & Westfield Plenty Valley, shared with adult users. Main entry obscured due to Civic Centre buildings & vegetation. New construction required. 1.5	Some surrounding spaces for youth to gather including parkland, PRACC & Westfield Plenty Valley, shared with adult users. Main entry visible as aligned with Civic Centre entry. New construction required. 2
Engaging	Vacant retail space supports large range indoor activities & opportunities. Spoke sites and surrounding external spaces (cafes, 72 Cooper St etc.) can be used for outdoor activities. 2	Vacant site supports large range indoor/outdoor activities & opportunities. 3	Vacant site supports large range indoor/outdoor activities & opportunities. 3	Vacant site supports large range indoor/outdoor activities & opportunities. 3
Activated	High number of surrounding active retail, food, services, amenities & gathering points.	Surrounding industrial precinct (low activity), except for Epping Community Services	Surrounding Civic Centre active during standard work hours, but isolated after hours.	Surrounding Civic Centre active during standard work hours, but isolated after hours.



	SITE 1 Shop 111 PE	SITE 2 72 Cooper St.	SITE 3a CIVIC (North)	SITE 3b CIVIC (South)
	3	Hub. Walkable to Epping Pacific (cross main road) to active retail, food, services, amenities & gathering points. 1.5	Walkable to Westfield Plenty Valley for active retail, food & amenities. Surrounding outdoor gathering opportunities. 1	Walkable to Westfield Plenty Valley (closer & more visually connected than Option 3a) for active retail, food & amenities. Surrounding outdoor gathering opportunities. 1.5
Site Conditions & Construction	Ready for refurbishment works once lease agreement is in place, high access to surrounding carparking, low planning requirements. Project delivery timeline of 1-1.5 years. 2.5	High site complexities including complex ground conditions & levels, limited construction access, low parking, some planning requirements. Project delivery timeline of 2.5-3 years. 1	Site mostly ready for construction works as vacant site, reasonable parking access however may require additional spaces, some planning requirements. Project delivery timeline of 2.5-3 years. 2	Site mostly ready for construction works as vacant site though likely requires power upgrade (in costings), reasonable parking access however may require additional spaces, some planning considerations including designing around ex Plenty Valley Town Centre Structure Plan. Project delivery timeline of 2.5-3 years. 1.5
Long-Term Use of Site	Limited longevity as currently 5 year commitment for future lease. Limited future physical expansion opportunity. 1	Site is strategic property asset of Council. Limited longevity certainty as future use or development of site to be confirmed. Physical space for future expansion as site is large & vacant. site 1.5	Site supports long term use & has physical space for future expansion due to vacant site. 2.5	Site supports long term use & has physical space for future expansion due to vacant site. 2.5



	SITE 1 Shop 111 PE	SITE 2 72 Cooper St.	SITE 3a CIVIC (North)	SITE 3b CIVIC (South)
Construction Budget	\$2.28m Some external grant or funding opportunities. 2	Modular: \$3.65m - \$4.0m In situ: \$3.7m - \$5.7m External grant & funding opportunities. 1.5	Modular: \$2.48m - \$2.57m In situ: \$2.5m - \$4.5m External grant & funding opportunities. 2	Modular: \$3.97m - \$4.2m In situ: \$ 4.0m - \$ 6.0m External grant & funding opportunities. 1.5
TOTAL	18	12.5	16	16.5
RANKING	1	4	3	2

Option 1 – Shop 111, Pacific Epping.

Total score 18 out of 24

Ranking: 1 out 4, however leasing constraints reduce viability as a medium or long-term option

Shop 111 scored highest overall due to its strong alignment with youth-identified principles, particularly safety, accessibility, visibility and integration with everyday activity. The retail environment provides high levels of passive surveillance, excellent public transport access and strong activation, making it attractive to young people and well suited to drop-in use. However, despite its higher performance across most assessment categories, its viability as a long-term solution is constrained by both leasing and functional limitations.

Current centre management has been unable to commit to a lease term beyond five years, which does not provide the tenure certainty required to justify significant Council investment in youth infrastructure. In addition, the absence of dedicated outdoor space limits the scope and flexibility of programs and events that could be delivered from the site.

While longevity was one of several criteria considered in the scoring, and Shop 111 ranked highest overall on balance, the combined tenure uncertainty and lack of outdoor capacity mean it is not the preferred long-term option.

Option 2 – 72 Cooper Street, Epping

Total score 12.5 out of 24.

Ranking: 4 out 4

The 72 Cooper Street site performed well in areas relating to youth-led design potential, future expansion and provision of outdoor space, benefiting from its large footprint and Council ownership. A purpose-built facility at this location could fully embed youth co-design principles and deliver a broad range of programs and activities. However, the site scored comparatively lower overall due to higher delivery risk and complexity, including site conditions, service connection requirements, and its location within an industrial context with limited passive surveillance. The site has been identified as a medium-term, interim solution, -



opposed to permanent option - as it is a strategic Council property asset with its long-term use yet to be determined, which could include large-scale redevelopment or sale with an approved permit.

Given the temporary nature of the site, combined with construction complexity and lower activation outside programmed hours, it has scored as the least preferable option.

Option 3a – Council Civic Centre (North)

Total score 16 out of 24

Ranking: 3 out of 4

Option 3a achieved a strong overall score and offers several practical advantages, including permanent Council ownership, lower construction complexity relative to other build options, and direct access to existing infrastructure within the civic precinct. The site provides tenure certainty and manageable delivery risk, and concerns raised during consultation relating to lighting, visibility and wayfinding could be addressed through targeted design interventions with some success. However, when assessed against youth consultation outcomes and broader activation potential, the site has limited visibility and prominence as well as restricted outdoor integration and spontaneous engagement opportunities compared to Option 3b. While viable and deliverable, it does not align as strongly with youth-identified preferences for activation, openness and prominence within the precinct.

Option 3b – Council Civic Centre (South)

Total score 16.5 out of 24

Ranking: 2 out of 4

Second to Option 1, Council Civic Centre (South) scored the next highest due to its alignment with design principles and consideration of youth consultation findings. The site was the most consistently supported location through youth engagement, with young people identifying its visibility, proximity to public transport, strong passive surveillance and opportunities for outdoor activation as key advantages. These attributes align closely with the youth-identified principles outlined in the Feasibility Study, particularly safety, accessibility, activation and integration with community life.

While the site involves higher construction costs and additional service and utility requirements, these factors are manageable through detailed design and capital planning. Importantly, the site provides permanent tenure, strong activation potential and long-term alignment with the civic precinct, making it the highest scoring option and the most future-focused location for Council to deliver a safe, visible and youth-led Youth Hub.



7. RECOMMENDED OPTION

7.1 Preferred Option

The options evaluation has identified **Option 3b – Council Civic Centre (South)** as the preferred site for a future Youth Hub. While Shop 111 achieved the highest overall score, there is not the security of tenure required for a significant Council investment in youth infrastructure. As such, Option 3b represents the best option.

Option 3b demonstrates strong alignment with the youth-identified principles outlined in the Youth Hub Feasibility Study and was the most consistently supported location through youth consultation activities. Young people identified the site’s visibility, proximity to public transport, strong passive surveillance, and opportunities for outdoor activation as key strengths. Its location within the Civic precinct, within walking distance of bus stops, the Mernda Train Line, retail, services, parkland and existing community infrastructure, supports both structured programming and informal drop-in engagement. The site’s prominence within the precinct also enhances the visibility of youth activity as a positive and integrated part of community life and civic activities.

While Option 3b involves higher construction complexity and cost than Option 3a, including additional service and utility extension and upgrades, these factors can be addressed through detailed design, staged capital planning and early technical investigation. Importantly, the site provides permanent tenure, long-term flexibility and the capacity to integrate indoor and outdoor activation in a way that reflects youth feedback and supports future growth. When assessed holistically across youth priorities, financial sustainability and long-term community benefit, Option 3b provides the strongest balance of strategic alignment, feasibility and impact.

Scope

The preferred option includes the design and construction of a purpose-built 385 sqm Youth Hub building at the preferred site, including:

- Utility services & site power upgrades (as required)
- Landscaping works, including external activity, growing and gathering spaces
- External lighting, pedestrian accessways, wayfinding, signage, security
- Furniture and equipment

Works may also include the construction of additional carparking, dependent on the planning requirements for site identified through detailed design.

The new Youth Hub facility is proposed to include the following internal spaces:

Space Type	Design Considerations
Secure and welcoming foyer and administration area	Enclosed administration/reception desk, clear sightlines, controlled access.
Large activity/ program room	Flexible layout to support structured programs and casual “drop-in” use (e.g. pool table, lounges, creative zones).
Multi-purpose room	Configurable for meetings, workshops, and community sessions with AV / screen fit out.



Kitchen	Equipped for program delivery (e.g. “Cooking Classes for Kids”, life-skills and wellbeing programs) and capacity for a social enterprise cafe.
Consultation rooms	Confidential spaces for small meetings and service partner agencies.
Open-plan office & enclosed meeting room	To support the planning, and activation of the service/s.
Prayer room	Quiet, respectful space for faith practice and mindfulness.
Sensory room	Calming, low-stimulus environment to support neurodivergent young people.
Support spaces	Adequate storage, amenities, laundry & adequate
Other considerations	Outdoor space, study areas and spaces that allow youth to express themselves through art/craft, technology and socialising.

8. CAPITAL COSTS

The estimated total cost to construct a new Youth Hub at the preferred site is between \$4 million and \$6 million depending on whether the youth hub is a permanent in situ build or a modular design.

Estimated project cost includes:

Works	Civic Site (South)
Demolition & Earthworks	\$31,000 - \$32,000
Modular Building OR	\$1.23m - \$1.35m
Permanent in-situ building	\$1.26m - \$3.14m
External Works	\$220,000 - \$230,000
Other Items (security, signage, blinds etc.)	\$63,000 - \$65,000
Trenching / Boring for Services Connections, including Preliminaries	\$1.02m - \$1.10m
Contingencies & Cost Escalations	\$630,000 - \$640,000
Other Project Allowances (professional fees, furniture, enhanced ESD etc.)	\$780,000 - \$790,000
Total – modular building	\$3.97m - \$4.2m
Total – permanent in-situ building	\$4.0m - \$6.0m

9 IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 - Indicative Timeline

The indicative timeline for delivery of the preferred option is approximately 2.5–3 years.

See below indicative timeline for delivery of preferred option, including additional allowance for permanent in situ construction:



Project Stage	Date Completed by
Planning & Site Assessments	June 2026
Initial Concept Design	October 2026
Design & Construction (incl. Procurement)	July 2028*
Furniture & IT Fit-out	August 2028*
Occupancy	September 2028*

**Dependent on site investigations/conditions, level of youth co-design, building approach (in situ or modular) & approval processes.*

9.2 - Risks and Mitigations

The following delivery risks – and mitigation strategies – have been identified for the preferred site option:

1. Passive surveillance

As the Youth Hub will host after-hours events, additional design measures can be incorporated to enhance passive surveillance and support safe movement to nearby car parks and public transport. These measures may include improved lighting, CCTV coverage, clearly defined pedestrian pathways, landscaping that avoids visual obstructions, and stronger visual connections to Ferres Boulevard. The preferred option already benefits from strong visual links to surrounding transport and infrastructure, and these measures would further enhance overall safety performance.

2. Unfavourable ground conditions:

Rock excavation for in-ground service pipes and conduits presents a potential cost and programme risk. Completing early site investigations, allowing for sufficient budget allowance for unknown underground conditions and adopting strategic service routing during early design stages will help reduce this risk.

3. Alignment to Plenty Valley Town Centre Structure Plan

The Plenty Valley Town Centre Structure Plan establishes a coordinated framework to guide development and investment within the Town Centre. To ensure alignment with potential future development, the Structure Plan will be referenced throughout all design stages and considered when determining the location of the Youth Hub. Modular construction could allow for potential future relocation if required, providing flexibility; however, the preferred outcome is for the Youth Hub to remain in a permanent location.



Feasibility Study / Business Case Report

CAMMS ID:	
Project Name:	Whittlesea Youth Hub
Sponsor:	Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing
W2040 Alignment	Connected Community
Document Author:	Merle Zierke, SGS Economics and Planning
Document Version:	V1

1. Executive summary

Problem or opportunity:	<p>The City of Whittlesea has a significant shortage of dedicated youth spaces. The lease on the only youth focused space in the LGA, the EDGE at Westfield, will end in 2028.</p> <p>This project investigates the feasibility of establishing a new purpose-built Youth Hub (the Hub) in the City of Whittlesea. The Hub would engage young people in activities that can aid in the prevention of issues that negatively affect young people.</p> <p>Social isolation and loneliness are exacerbated in growth areas¹ and young people in Whittlesea are negatively impacted by social isolation and loneliness, mental health issues, disengagement from school and higher rates of family violence. A focus on prevention would have the biggest impact on the largest number of young people in Whittlesea.</p> <p>The City of Whittlesea’s Youth Team has developed a ‘hub and spoke’ (outreach) model to extend the Youth Program’s reach across Whittlesea and provide access to young people across the LGA. The proposed Youth Hub would act as the locus for design and delivery of youth programming and allow for flexible programming that can evolve to the changing needs of young people.</p> <p>The way young people interact with and use youth infrastructure is changing and will continue to change into the future. The needs of young people, aged 12 to 22, are diverse and need to be reflected in Council’s youth service model.</p> <p>The Youth Co-Design Group convened by Council to inform the development of the new service model identified eight principles that should underpin the design of, and model for the new youth space: equitable; youth led and culturally appropriate; attractive; engaging; safe; integrated with the community; activated; and accessible. It is proposed that a Youth Reference Group would be convened to help design the space and inform program delivery.</p> <p>In summary, the proposed Hub would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Council can deliver an ongoing youth service • Increase the number of young people that can access youth programs from ~20 per week to up to ~150 young people per week • Enable Council to establish the hub in the ‘hub and spoke’ service model, extending the services reach to young people across the LGA. • Provide a space for Council’s youth service to develop and test programs which can then be delivered via the ‘spoke’ network (using spaces at existing facilities such as libraries) across the LGA.
--------------------------------	--

¹ Pope, J. (2023) A new youth space for Whittlesea: a model. Results of an engagement with young people and local agencies



	<p>program delivery begins in 2030.</p> <p>Options 2.1 and 2.2: Use of the vacant Council owned land at 72 Cooper Street, Epping to build a temporary 338m2 modular building to house the Whittlesea Youth Hub until the long-term use of the site for mixed use high-density is realised in 10+ years.</p> <p>Two construction and program delivery options were explored for options 1 and 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Option 2.1 assumes these options are delivered in full and full program delivery begins in 2027. - Option 2.2 models a staged approach with stage 1: site preparation, road access, services, reduced carpark scope and minimal modular delivery, followed by stage 2: remaining modular and carparking provision. Under this option partial program delivery begins in 2027 and full program delivery begins in 2030. <p>Option 3. Retrofit the existing EDGE at Westfield, to create a 248m2 space for use as the Whittlesea Youth Hub until end of the lease period in May 2028 (services would likely cease prior / in February 2028).</p> <p>Business as usual: ongoing operation of the current Youth Services in the EDGE at Westfield until the end of the lease period in May 2028 (services would likely cease prior / in February 2028). Under this model Council will continue to deliver some prevention activities, albeit at a far smaller scale.</p>
<p>Preferred option:</p>	<p>Of the three sites considered in the time available, Option 1.1: At Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping is the preferred option, to construct a permanent 357m2 modular building to house the Whittlesea Youth Hub (in full) and begin full program delivery in 2027. The land is owned by Melbourne Polytechnic and would need to be acquired. The sale of the site will occur in line with the State Government disposal process.</p>
<p>Recommendation:</p>	<p>To establish a Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea to enable the delivery of the proposed hub and spoke service model that enables the running of an ongoing youth program with a prevention-based approach. Hub to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A building of suitable size (~357 m²). - Located close to public transport, near shops and educational facilities (such as schools, TAFE) and accessible by a higher portion of youth. - Flexible design that enables the incorporation of the design principles identified by the Youth Reference Group and other relevant uses, including kitchen/activity, foyer, multi-purpose/meeting, consulting, quiet, pod cast/tech, office/admin storage and gender-neutral amenity spaces. - Access to outdoor space(s). - Dedicated staffing (6 FT Youth Development Officers) and recurring funding for youth programming. <p>Of the three sites considered in the time available, it is recommended that 33 Cooper Street, Epping is the most feasible site to house the Whittlesea Youth Hub, which would include construction of a 357m2 modular building and acquisition of the land, along with ongoing staffing and programming.</p> <p>There may be alternative, better suited sites in the future and it is recommended that the time is taken for further exploration, however 33 Cooper Street, Epping is recommended as the most feasible site option that was available - and feasible - to be explored within the timeframes of the relevant grant.</p>

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



<p>Risk profile of the solution:</p>	<p>High - Site acquisition risk: lack of certainty around cost, when site will come to market, and whether Council would be successful in acquiring the site opposed to other interested government agencies or buyers.</p> <p>Low – Site preparation risk: ability to gain approval to carry out the under-road works (from VicRoads).</p> <p>Medium – Demand risk: lack of certainty that the Hub can serve latent demand. This will be mitigated by delivering a Youth Hub/ Service that meets the design principles identified by the Youth Co-Design Group.</p> <p>Medium - Operational risk: Council’s ability to convene the Youth Reference Group and/or that the Youth Reference Group is able to effectively co-design the space and programming. To be mitigated by delivering a building that meets the design principles identified by the Youth Co-design group, meeting young people’s needs and signaling Council’s commitment to implement the proposed service model.</p> <p>Medium – Scope creep risk: changes to functional brief and scope by stakeholders and services areas will impact project timelines. Can be mitigated via effective project management from early on.</p> <p>Medium – Escalating cost risk: increased costs due to construction industry supply chain costs and unplanned cost escalation.</p> <p>Low - Safety risk. Can be mitigated by working with campus security.</p>
<p>Project timeframe and cost:</p>	<p>The total project cost for implementing Option 1.1: acquire 33 Cooper Street and build the modular building is \$7.2 million upfront and \$0.8 million per annum thereafter.</p> <p>Breakdown of project construction costs and annual maintenance costs (excluding lease costs of \$233,000 per annum):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FY2025/26 - Site acquisition and preparation, procurement process and construction (18 months) (\$7,365,000) ○ FY2027 - Construction completion and facility opening. Half year of operations (\$264,367) ○ FY2028 onwards - Ongoing operations - Staffing, site, programming, maintenance and utilities (\$517,733 p.a) ○ All of above is dependent on external funding availability.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



2. Purpose of document

This feasibility study / business case report presents the justification to deliver and operate the Whittlesea Youth Hub. It also completes the project baseline to proceed to the Plan, Deliver and Manage phase in line with the City of Whittlesea Project Management Framework.

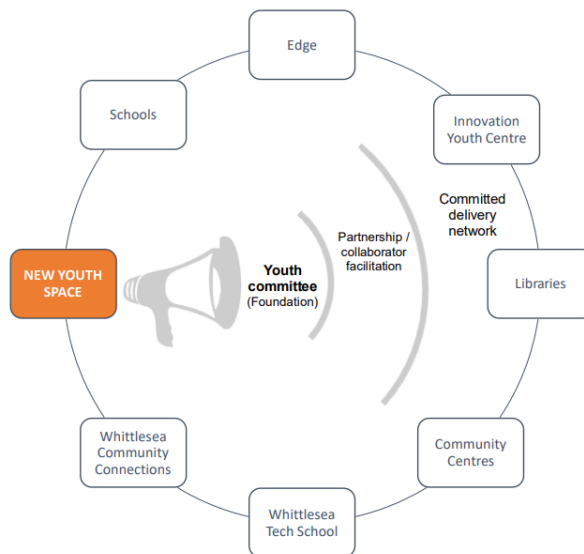
3. Site Information and Project Description

Project description

The City of Whittlesea’s Youth Team has developed a ‘hub and spoke’ (outreach) model to extend the Youth Program’s reach across Whittlesea and provide access to young people across the LGA. Under this model a central Hub acts as the locus for design and delivery of youth programming, as shown in Figure 1.

The proposed Whittlesea Youth Hub (the Hub) would be the central asset (the new youth space) that would support a broader program of youth engagement across the LGA. Under this hub and spoke delivery model, the Hub is supported by a range of ‘spokes’ which could be physical spaces and/or programming opportunities across the LGA, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: model for a networked youth space



Council has identified three potential sites for the Hub and provided concept designs for each location. The concept designs are informed by the eight design principles identified by the Youth Co-Design Group, convened by the City of Whittlesea.

The new Hub would expand the accessibility of youth programs, accommodating an increase in weekly attendance from approximately 21 to up to 150 young people. Additionally, activation of outdoor spaces at 33 Coope Street and 72 Cooper Street will allow an additional 20 young people to access the space during the warmer months.

The Youth Co-Design Group convened by Council to inform the development of the new service model

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
---------------------	------------------	-------------------------

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



identified eight principles that should underpin the design of, and model for the new youth space:

- Equitable – for all young people, ensuring different opportunities are available to different groups in different places.
- Youth led and culturally appropriate – through:
 - co-design of the space and its program of activities
 - a building design and workforce that allows different groups to see themselves reflected.
- Attractive – a high-quality open-plan space of zones that has a cozy, light, friendly, vibe with a large visible welcoming entrance. It should not feel like a school, office. or clinical/service setting.
- Engaging, with social connection at its heart – enabling young people to:
 - Make things, do things and express themselves: e.g. makers spaces (textile, art, upcycling, tech, music), cooking space, digital/social media content creation space, gaming space, events space, dance studio, theatre
 - Hang out and connect with others: e.g. outdoor space, movie/event space, chill out space, café/kitchen space, competitions/tournaments, active space
 - Study: with access to tutors and exam support
 - Find out about things that matter to them: jobs, micro-credentials (RSA, barista, barbering, first aid, etc), volunteering, life skills, outdoor skills, commercial creative and entrepreneurship skills, a library of things
 - Speak their minds, have a say, and work with others on change
 - Link to services when they need them (but the space should not be defined by services).
- Safe – supervised by good people
- Integrated with the community – using collaborations and partnerships to maximise its reach, use, and value across Whittlesea.
- Activated – with dynamic program of activities and events, that recognises young people’s interests/needs are different in different localities and will change over time.
- Accessible – by transport, technology (virtual connection), opening hours, capacity (not crowded), cost (free)

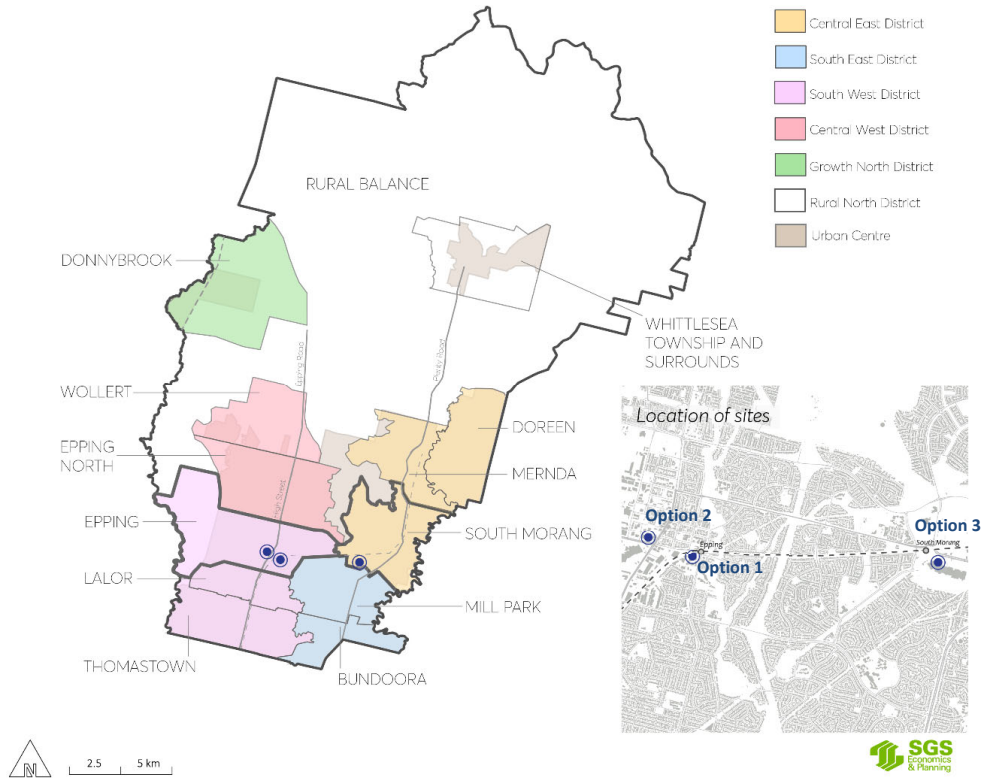
Site information

Within the timeframes for meeting the grant requirements the City of Whittlesea has identified three potential sites for consideration, as shown in Figure 2, and detailed further overleaf.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



Figure 2 Site options



W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Option 1: Melbourne Polytechnic site at 33 Cooper Street, Epping



Proposed site at 33 Cooper Street.

Located on the corner site of the Melbourne Poly Technic Campus in Epping, this site is approximately 1750 m². The site is currently vacant and has been identified as being surplus to Melbourne Poly Technic’s requirements. The sale of the land will be open to all government agencies. The land will be subdivided in early 2025 prior to being sold.

Located in the southern corner of the triangle site, the proposed permanent building is a modular building, with a building area of 357m². This proposal would provide one building and two outdoor areas, at 84m² and 22 m² respectively. The proposed building includes:

- Office 26 m²
- Quiet / Prayer Room 12 m²
- Consulting Room 12 m²
- Pod Casting Studio 25 m²
- Multi purpose room / Meeting room 49 m²
- Bathroom facilities
- Store 25 m²
- Staff Room 8 m²
- Foyer 28 m²
- Two outdoor areas, at 84m² and 22 m² respectively.

Site and concept plans are included in Appendix A.

Two construction and program delivery options were explored for option 1.

- Option 1.1 assumes these options are delivered in full and full program delivery begins in 2027.
- Option 1.2 models a staged approach with stage 1: site preparation, road access, services, reduced

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



carpark scope and minimal modular delivery, followed by stage 2: remaining modular and carparking provision. Under this option partial program delivery begins in 2027 and full program delivery begins in 2030.

Option 2: Council land at 72 Cooper Street, Epping



Adjoining site also owned by Council and currently home to the Epping Community Services Hub.

Proposed site at 72 Cooper Street.

Located at 72 Cooper Street, this site is owned by Council and is currently vacant. Council also owns the adjoining site (713 High Street) which is currently occupied by the Epping Community Services Hub. Both sites are within the area covered by the Epping Central Structure Plan. Council acquired the sites as both sites combined (6500 m²) would provide a unique opportunity in the long term for Council to pursue high-density mixed-use development as developer, under a joint venture or via sale of the land with permit conditions.

Located on the southern end of the site, with a frontage to Cooper Street, the proposed temporary building is a modular building, with a building area of 338m². The proposed building includes:

- Quiet / Prayer Room 10 m²
- Multi purpose room 48 m²
- Consult Room 10 m²
- Store 25 m²
- Pod Casting Studio 25 m²
- Office 25 m²
- Activity Room 80 m²

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



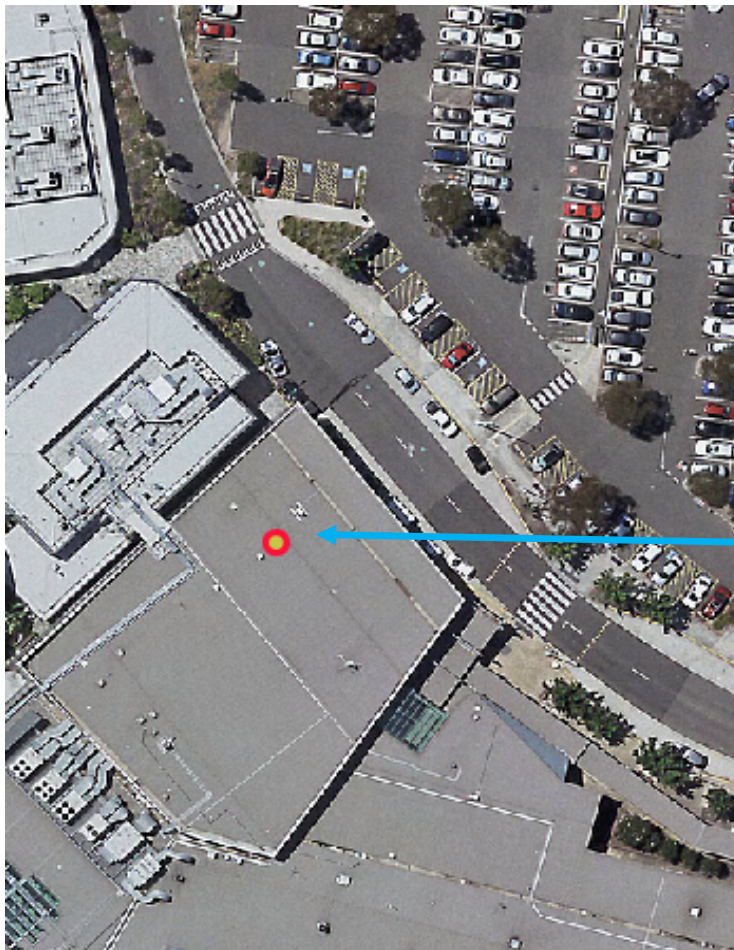
- Staff Room 11 m²
- Bathroom facilities
- Foyer / Corridor 26 m²
- one outdoor area of 62m².

Site and concept plans are included in Appendix A.

Two construction and program delivery options were explored for option 2.

- Option 2.1 assumes these options are delivered in full and full program delivery begins in 2027.
- Option 2.2 models a staged approach with stage 1: site preparation, road access, services, reduced carpark scope and minimal modular delivery, followed by stage 2: remaining modular and carparking provision. Under this option partial program delivery begins in 2027 and full program delivery begins in 2030.

Option 3: Retrofit of existing EDGE at Westfield Shopping Centre, South Morang



Location of the Edge, within the Westfield Shopping Centre.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



The EDGE is currently leased by Council and operates as a youth service hub. The site also houses headspace, a youth mental health service. Council’s lease runs to May 2028 and it is anticipated that operations at the site will cease in February 2028 if the lease is not renewed.

The proposed redevelopment of the EDGE would create a 248m² Youth Hub space and a separate space from which headspace would continue to operate via a separate entry. The proposed Youth Hub includes:

- Office 26m²
- Pod Casting Studio 10m²
- Activity Room 61m²
- Kitchen 29m²
- Multi purpose room / Meeting room 46 m²
- Consulting / Prayer Room 10m²
- Shared amenities with Headspace

The site and concept plans for the site are included in Appendix A.

Option 4: Business as usual at the EDGE in Westfield

Under this option Council will continue to run services and programming out of the EDGE in Westfield. As per Option 3, Council’s lease runs to May 2028, and it is expected that operations at the site will cease in February 2028 if the lease is not renewed.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



4. Problem and opportunity

Problem statement

Young people in Whittlesea are negatively impacted by social isolation and loneliness, mental health issues, disengagement from school and higher rates of family violence.

The City of Whittlesea has a significant shortage of dedicated youth spaces. The lease on the only youth focused space in the LGA, the EDGE at Westfield, will end in 2028. In the short term, Council is limited in the scope of prevention programs it can run in the EDGE in its current form.

There is an opportunity to work with a majority 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 aid in the prevention of issues that negatively affect them. A focus on prevention would have the biggest impact on the largest number of young people in Whittlesea.

This project would deliver a purpose-built Youth Hub, providing the physical space from which to provide programming designed to engage young people in the City of Whittlesea. Provision of the Hub will increase the reach from 21 young people per week to up to 150 young people per week. It would also enable Council to establish a ‘hub and spoke’ service model, servicing young people across the LGA. The youth service can develop and test programs in the Hub, which are then delivered via the ‘spoke’ network (using spaces at existing facilities such as libraries) across the LGA.

Evidence of problem

Four major issues impact young people in Whittlesea:

1. **Social isolation and loneliness**
2. **Mental health issues** 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 (see Figure 3 overleaf).
4. **Higher family violence rates** have been observed in Whittlesea, and these lead to a range of other issues for young people such as homelessness³.

In addition, many parts of the LGA are experiencing high levels of disadvantage, as shown in Figure 4 overleaf. Agencies and organisations that work with young people in Whittlesea 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.

Australian research has shown social isolation and loneliness are exacerbated in growth areas such as the City of Whittlesea, due to disconnection from community activities outside of school, as a result of:

- Fewer things to do
- A lack of transport (including because of smaller family networks), and
- More parents with longer commutes, leaving teenagers home alone or looking after siblings for longer periods after school⁴.

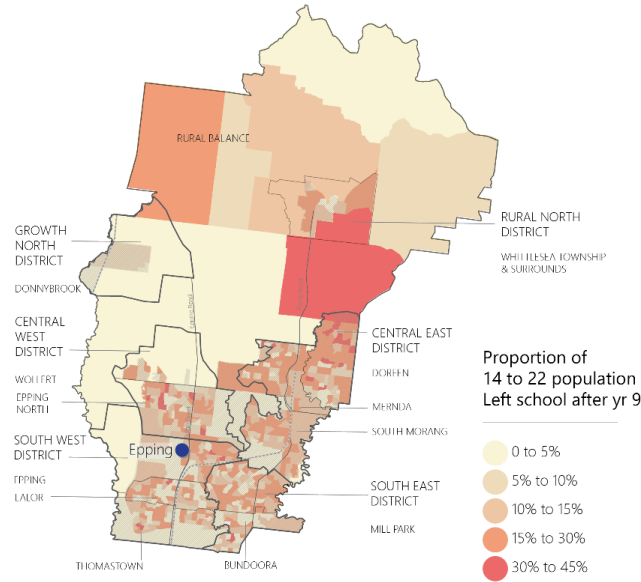
³ Pope, J. (2023) A new youth space for Whittlesea: a model. Results of an engagement with young people and local agencies.

⁴ Pope, J. (2023) A new youth space for Whittlesea: a model. Results of an engagement with young people and local agencies.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing

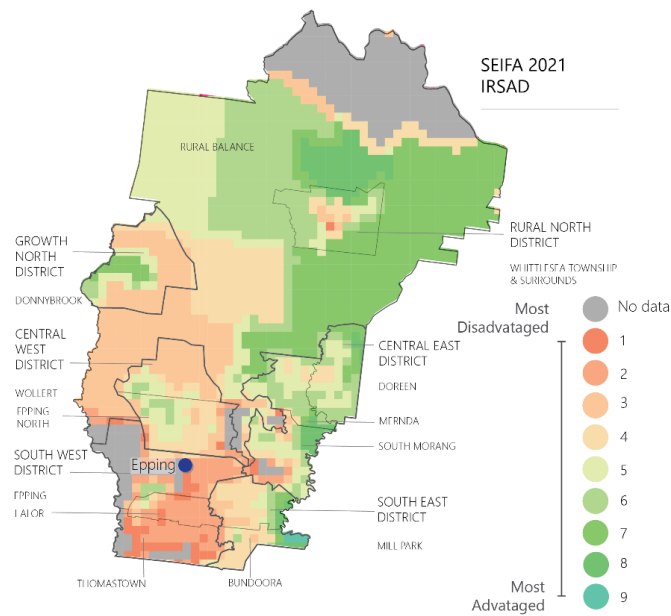


Figure 3: School disengagement



Source: ABS 2021

Figure 4: SEIFA Disadvantage



Source: ABS 2021

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Stakeholder consultation found that the service sector dealing with these issues in Whittlesea is overwhelmed. Service agencies and organisations reported they needed more staff to be able to service Whittlesea. “Despite this pressing need, local agencies/organisations were in consensus that a new youth space in Whittlesea should focus on prevention”⁵.

More broadly, young people and their parents identified a number of barriers facing young people accessing services:

- A lack of services and barriers to accessing services.
- 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, such as EDGE, 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 city, Collingwood or Seymour to use youth hubs they can access by train.

The Opportunity

In an effort to proactively intervene before young people reach the point of requiring service interventions, the Youth Hub would focus on prevention activities. Prevention activities deliver a broad range of positive benefits, as outlined in the following section.

Location of the Youth Hub in Epping (options 1 and 2) will ensure the Hub is:

- Accessible from the train station
- Purpose built to incorporate the design principles identified by the Youth Reference Group
- Accessible to the large number of young people located in the southern part of the LGA
- Near to schools and community groups.

Who will benefit?

The City of Whittlesea is one of Australia’s fastest growing municipalities and spans a large geographic area that includes established and growth area communities.

The LGA is forecast to see significant population growth over the next 20 years, with most parts of the LGA to see significant growth in young people aged 5-22 by 2041 (Figure 4 overleaf).

The ‘hub and spoke’ model is a response to the challenge of how best to meet the needs of young people in a large and dispersed local government area. No one asset can service the entire youth cohort.

The two new sites under consideration are located in Epping, in the established area in the southwest of the LGA. These sites in consideration are accessible to a high number of young people. This location aligns with the future community infrastructure needs noted in the Epping Central Structure plan.

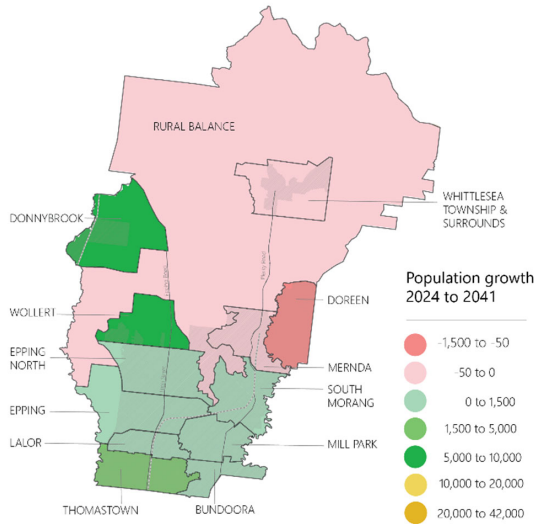
As shown in Figure 6 overleaf, Epping is currently in the most populated part of the LGA. A metropolitan activity centre, Epping is relatively well served by public transport. Stakeholder engagement found young people were accessing services outside the LGA, including in the City and Collingwood, and in Seymour. Location of the Youth Hub in a densely populated area, on the train line and near a public transport interchange, will enable the greatest participation, recognising that access is still limited for many young people.

⁵ Pope, J. (2023) A new youth space for Whittlesea: a model. Results of an engagement with young people and local agencies.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing

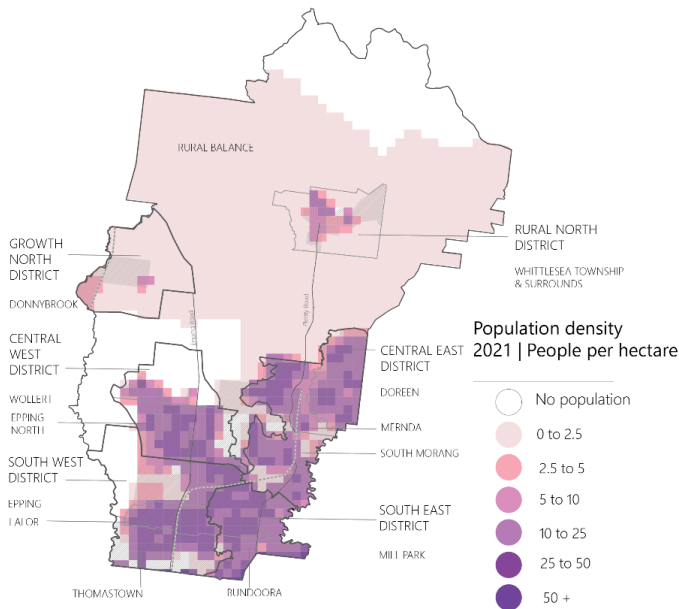


Figure 5: Population change, young people aged 5—22, 2024-2041



Source: SGS Economics and Planning, Profile.id 2024

Figure 6: Population density 2021



Source: ABS 2021

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



5. Options considered

Cost estimates (FY2024 values)

Option	Scope	Total up-front cost (excluding GST) (FY2024\$)	Ongoing annual cost
Option 1.1: Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping	<p>Purchase the site at 33 Cooper Street, Epping and build a 357m² permanent modular building to house the Whittlesea Youth Hub. Run an ongoing youth program with a prevention based approach.</p> <p>Construction is estimated to occur over 18 months, starting in FY2026. Service delivery will begin in approximately mid-FY2027.</p>	<p>A total of approximately \$7.2 million, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3.1 million for site acquisition \$3.8 million for capital works \$0.3 million for sewer connection⁷. 	<p>Approximately \$0.8 million per annum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$33,000 for utilities, planned maintenance and renewal works \$21,000 for site costs \$60,000 for operational programming \$404,000 for Hub Team staffing costs. \$233,000 for leasing cost of the Edge
Option 1.2: Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping)	<p>As above, however, Option 1.2 will be delivered in two stages. Stage 2 will occur over 6 months, starting mid-FY2030. Partial program delivery starts in 2027 with full program delivery to start FY2031.</p>	<p>A total of approximately \$7.6 million, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3.1 million for site acquisition \$2.7 million for Stage 1 capital works \$1.8 million for Stage 2 capital works 	<p>Partial roll-out will cost approximately \$0.4 million per annum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$22,000 for utilities, planned maintenance and renewal works \$14,000 for site costs \$40,000 for operational programming \$95,000 for Hub Team staffing costs. \$233,000 for leasing cost of the Edge <p>Full roll-out will cost approximately \$1.5 million per annum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$33,000 for utilities, planned maintenance and renewal works \$21,000 for site costs \$60,000 for operational programming \$404,000 for Hub Team staffing costs. \$233,000 for leasing cost of the Edge
Option 2.1: 72 Cooper Street, Epping	Use the vacant, Council owned land at 72 Cooper Street to build a temporary 338m ² modular	A total of approximately \$4.4 million, including:	Same as Option 1.1, with an additional \$11,000 per annum to service the septic connection.

⁷ Based on connecting to sewer main on the Eastern side of Dalton Road.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Option	Scope	Total up-front cost (excluding GST) (FY2024\$)	Ongoing annual cost
	<p>building to house the Whittlesea Youth Hub</p> <p>Run youth program focused on prevention for 10 years (until the long-term use of the site for mixed use high-density is realised).</p> <p>Construction is estimated to occur over 18 months, starting in FY2026. Service delivery will begin in approximately mid-FY2027.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3.8 million for capital works \$0.4 million for sewer. \$0.2 million for separate driveway 	
Option 2.2: 72 Cooper Street, Epping	<p>As above, however, Option 2.2 will be delivered in two stages. Stage 2 will occur over 6 months, starting mid-FY2030. Partial program delivery starts in 2027 with full program delivery to start FY2031.</p>	<p>A total of approximately \$4.5 million, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2.9 million for Stage 1 capital works \$1.6 million for Stage 2 capital works 	<p>Same as Option 1.2, with an additional \$11,000 per annum to service the septic connection.</p>
Option 3: refurbish the EDGE at Westfield, South Morang	<p>Retrofit the existing EDGE at Westfield, to create a 248m² space for use as the Whittlesea Youth Hub. The lease is currently set to expire May 2028 however a lease extension would be reviewed.</p> <p>Run youth program focused on prevention out of the EDGE until February 2028.</p> <p>Refurbishment is anticipated to begin in mid-FY2025, over a six month period. Service delivery will begin in start of FY2026.</p>	<p>Approximately \$0.4 million⁸.</p>	<p>Approximately \$0.7 million per annum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$27,000 for utilities, planned maintenance and reactive maintenance \$21,000 for site costs \$48,000 for operational programming \$330,000 million for Hub Team staffing costs. \$233,000 for leasing cost of the Edge
Option 4: business as usual	<p>Ongoing operation of the current Youth Services in the EDGE until the end of the lease period in May 2028 (services would likely cease prior / in February 2028).</p>	<p>\$0; No works required.</p>	<p>Approximately \$0.1 million per annum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$27,000 for utilities, planned maintenance and reactive maintenance \$21,000 for site costs \$48,000 for operational

⁸ Excludes costs associated with Landlord (Westfield) requirements, such as higher rates for after-hours work, landlord-approved designers/contractors, landlord's design checking, and coordination fees.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Option	Scope	Total up-front cost (excluding GST) (FY2024\$)	Ongoing annual cost
	Under this model Council will continue to deliver some prevention activities, albeit at a far smaller scale.		programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$233,000 for leasing cost of the Edge

Note: Under all Options, rental costs of \$233,000 per annum for the EDGE site are required through to May 2028.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Risk assessment

Option	Risk summary	Risk rating
Option 1.1: Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping	Site acquisition: risk related to Council’s ability to purchase land as there is a) no guarantee the Council will be successful in purchasing the site; and b) site acquisition costs may increase above cost estimates. Further, there is the risk that the subdivision and subsequent sale are delayed beyond 2025. Based on this above, this option represents the least certainty and highest risk to Council’s financially.	High
	Sewer connection: risk related to both identified sewer connections require approval from VicRoads to carry out the under road works.	Low
	Safety: risk that real and perceived safety concerns associated with the location of the site will deter young people / parents of young people. This can be mitigated by working with campus security.	Low
	Demand: risk Council is unable to serve latent demand effectively. This will be mitigated by delivering a Youth Hub and program that meets the design principles identified by the Youth Co-Design Group.	Low
	Operational risk: risk that Council is unable to convene the Youth Reference Group and/or that the Youth Reference Group is unable to effectively co-design the space and its programming. This risk is mitigated by delivering a building that meets the design principles identified by the Youth Co-design group, meeting young people’s needs and signaling Council’s ongoing commitment to implement the proposed service model.	Medium
Option 1.2	As above for option 1.1, along with the additional risks identified below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased construction costs: risk that splitting the delivery of the buildings will result in ongoing increasing construction costs. Service delivery: risk that prolonged delay of the full modular hub will limit service provision and the potential impact of the youth service and that services may need to be paused or revised during stage 2 construction works. Funding/ service delivery: risk that Council will be unable to obtain funding for the second stage of works. 	
Option 2.1: 72 Cooper Street, Epping	Lost asset potential: risk that building a community facility with a 10-20 year life span will be used for approximately only 10 years should Council then seek to develop the site.	Medium
	Reputation: risk of potential community backlash delivering a community facility that will then be removed / relocated to develop the land for its highest and best use. Risk mitigated through modular (temporary) building design and clear communication with stakeholders around the longer term aspirations for the site.	Low
	Safety: risk that isolated / industrial nature of the area will limit programming with area not considered safe for evening programming. This risk could be mitigated via installation of lighting, visual connection with the street and safety processes.	Medium

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



	Demand: risk Council is unable to serve latent demand effectively. This will be mitigated by delivering a Youth Hub and program that meets the design principles identified by the Youth Co-Design Group.	Low
	Operational risk: risk that Council is unable to convene the Youth Reference Group and/or that the Youth Reference Group is unable to effectively co-design the space and programming. This risk is mitigated by delivering a building that meets the design principles identified by the Youth Co-design group, meeting young people’s needs and signaling Council’s ongoing commitment to implement the proposed service model.	Medium
Option 2.2	As above for option 2.1, along with the additional risks identified below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delivery: risk that prolonged delay of the full modular hub will limit service provision and the potential impact. Risk that the length of time youth will be able to access the full service will also be limited, as this site is only temporary- if Council is to abide by the Epping Central Structure Plan and support the delivery of a medium/high density mixed-use development at this location in the long term. • Funding/ service delivery: risk that Council will be unable to obtain funding for the second stage of works. • Increased construction costs: risk that splitting the delivery of the buildings will result in ongoing increasing construction costs. 	
Option 3: refurbish the EDGE	Service delivery risk as Council will be left without a Youth Hub once lease expires in May 2028 unless it is extended.	Medium
	Demand: risk Council is unable to service latent demand effectively. Site and design limitations that may impact demand include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn’t meet the design principles identified by the Youth co-design group, including lack of open space and natural light. • Negative perceptions / stigma of young people around accessing programs in a space that is also a mental health space. • Parents concerns around access and safety associated with the site. • Broader community’s negative perception associated with young people hanging around the shopping centre. 	High
	Operational: risk that Council is unable to convene the Youth Reference Group and/or that the Youth Reference Group is unable to effectively co-design the space and programming.	High
Option 4: business as usual	Service delivery risk as Council will be left without a Youth Hub once lease expires in May 2028.	Medium
Options 1-3	Risk that changes to the functional brief and scope by stakeholders and/or service areas may impact delivery timeframe. Risk mitigated by accommodating minor revisions during the detailed design process, along with regular meetings and clear timelines to mitigate design over runs. Risk of increased costs due to construction industry supply chain costs and unplanned cost escalation.	Medium

Options evaluation and scoring

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Option 1.1: Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping

This option will enable Council to deliver the Hub as the first step in the Hub and Spoke model.

Benefits of this site include:

- Purpose built design can incorporate the design principles identified by the Youth Co-Design group.
- Highly visible location
- Proximity to schools (primary and secondary), Whittlesea Tech School and Melbourne Poly Technic and the potential utilisation of their facilities, such as sports facilities, library, study spaces, trade spaces and places to gather, subject to access being negotiated with these entities.
- Proximity to train station and bus interchange.

The site acquisition and preparation costs are a prohibitive factor.

Cost Benefit Analysis has identified a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.5 for this option (incremental to business as usual). When assessing service delivery alone (excluding capital costs), the option produced a BCR of 3.3.

This is considered the preferred option.

Option 1.2: 33 Cooper Street, Epping

This option will enable Council to deliver the Hub as the first step in the Hub and Spoke model via a two staged approach:

- Stage 1: site preparation, road access, services, reduced carpark scope and minimal modular delivery
- Stage 2: remaining modular and carparking provision.

While the long term benefits and prohibitive factors of this option are the same as option 1.1, in the short term this option will see a reduction in the service delivery and in turn the number of young people that can benefit from the service.

With a staged approach, the Cost Benefit Analysis has identified a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.5 for this option (incremental to business as usual). When assessing service delivery alone (excluding capital costs), the option produced a BCR of 3.6.

Option 2.1: 72 Cooper Street, Epping

This option will enable Council to deliver the Hub as the first step in the Hub and Spoke model.

Benefits of this site include:

- Purpose built design can incorporate the design principles identified by the Youth Co-Design group.
- Proximity to train station and bus interchange
- Proximity to other services, specifically the Epping Community Services Hub.

The temporary nature (10 years) of this option is a prohibitive factor, along with the site being located in an industrial area.

Cost Benefit Analysis has identified a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.0 for this option (incremental to business as usual). When assessing service delivery alone (excluding capital costs), the option produced a BCR of 2.3.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



Option 2.2: 72 Cooper Street, Epping

This option will enable Council to deliver the Hub as the first step in the Hub and Spoke model via a two staged approach:

- Stage 1: site preparation, road access, services, reduced carpark scope and minimal modular delivery
- Stage 2: remaining modular and carparking provision.

While the long term the benefits and prohibitive factors of this option are the same as option 2.1, in the short term this option will see a reduction in the service delivery and in turn the number of young people that can benefit from the service. Further, as the intention is for this site to be used for mixed use development in the longer term, the length of time youth will be able to access the full service is limited.

With a staged approach, the Cost Benefit Analysis has identified a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.1 for this option (incremental to business as usual). When assessing service delivery alone (excluding capital costs), the option produced a BCR of 2.8.

Option 3: refurbish the EDGE

This option will limit the extent to which Council to deliver the Hub as the first step in the Hub and Spoke model.

Benefits of this site include:

- Known location for young people and service providers
- On site security
- Proximity to train station and bus interchange.

The location of this option, and its limitations in meeting the design principles identified by Youth Co-design group, in addition to the lease constraints are prohibitive.

Cost Benefit Analysis has identified a BCR of 0.45 for this option (incremental to business as usual). When assessing service delivery alone (excluding capital costs), the option produced a BCR of 0.65.

Option 4: business as usual

This option limits council ability to deliver the Hub and Spoke service delivery model and limits the extent to which Council can provide preventative activities, recognizing a) the size of the space available to the Youth Services team, and b) the perceptions young people have around the EDGE in terms of providing a welcoming space for young people.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



Option	Evaluation summary	Social	Environment	Financial	Rank	Recommendation
Option 1.1: Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping	Medium benefit for cost, long-timeframe with no time constraints if Council is successful with the acquisition, high risk.	5	2	4	1	Preferred option
Option 1.2: Melbourne Polytechnic site 33 Cooper Street, Epping	Medium benefit for cost, long-timeframe with no time constraints if Council is successful with the acquisition, high risk. Reduced program impact compared to 1.1.	4	2	4	2	Do not consider further
Option 2.1: 72 Cooper Street, Epping	Medium benefit for cost, moderate timeframe of 10 years, medium risk.	4	2	4	3	Do not consider further
Option 2.2: 72 Cooper Street, Epping	Medium benefit for cost, moderate timeframe of 10 years, medium risk. Reduced program impact compared to 2.2.	3	2	4	5	Do not consider further
Option 3: Refurbish the EDGE	Low benefit for cost across a small timeframe of three operational years, low risk.	3	2	5	4	Do not consider further
Option 4: Business as usual	Medium benefit for cost across a small timeframe of five operational years, low risk.	2	2	5	6	Do not consider further

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



	Social	Environment	Financial
0	Very poor outcomes and/or doesn't address needs	Catastrophic negative impacts	Special consideration required (\$50M+)
1	Poor outcomes and/or doesn't address needs	Major negative impacts	May require or be reliant on borrowings (\$25M-\$50M)
2	Acceptable outcomes but doesn't address needs	Minor negative impacts	Very high investment (\$15M-\$25M)
3	Acceptable outcomes and addresses minimum needs	Minor positive impacts	High investment (\$10M-\$15M)
4	Good outcomes and addresses most needs	Major positive impacts	Moderate investment (\$5M-\$10M)
5	Very good outcomes and addresses all needs	Exceptional positive impacts	Low investment (\$1M-\$5M)

6. Recommended option

There may be alternative, better suited sites in the future and it is recommended that the time is taken for further exploration, however of the three sites considered in the time available, it is recommended that Option 1.1 33 Cooper Street, Epping is the most feasible site option.

Scope

Option 1.1: Site acquisition and development of a permanent modular building (the Whittlesea Youth Hub) at 33 Cooper Street, Epping. Run an ongoing youth program with a prevention-based approach.

Inclusions

Acquisition of the site at 33 Cooper Street, Epping and build a 357m² modular building to house the Whittlesea Youth Hub. Run the youth program with a prevention-based approach.

Construction is estimated to occur over 18 months, starting in FY2026 dependent on funding approval. With service delivery to begin approximately mid-FY2027.

Upfront costs: A total of approximately \$7.2 million, including:

- \$3.1 million for site acquisition
- \$3.8 million for capital works
- \$0.3 million for sewer connection⁹

Ongoing costs: Approximately \$0.8 million per annum, including:

- \$33,000 for utilities, planned maintenance and renewal works
- \$21,000 for site costs
- \$60,000 for operational programming
- \$404,000 for Hub Team staffing costs.
- \$233,000 for leasing cost of the Edge

Exclusions

The project costs **due not** include:

- Demolition cost beyond items listed

⁹ Based on connecting to sewer main on the Eastern side of Dalton Road. Alternative option will connect to the sewer main on the south boundary of Melbourne Polytechnic, which will cost approximately \$950,000. This alternative option is high risk, and will require approvals from Vic Roads to do works under the road and require Melbourne Polytechnic to provide an easement.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



- Site penalties including piling works, disposal of contaminated spoil (other than the Provisional Sum Allowance for decontamination – refer Appendix)
- Latent conditions including blinding concrete
- Contamination / Asbestos / Hazmat identification and removal (other than the Provisional Sum Allowance)
- Additional costs in overcoming adverse soil condition such as soft spots
- Upgrading and / or diversion of existing services
- Client/Building Owner contribution costs or ‘head works’ Supply costs/charges for services
- Out of hours working
- Effect of COVID-19 and supply disruptions on tender market conditions
- ESD items beyond allowance
- Additional planning costs
- GST

Constraints

In delivering the proposed project, the following is assumed:

- The site will be subdivided and then put on the market in 2025. Build to be completed in 2026 and programming to begin in 2027.

Assumptions

In delivering the preferred project (Option 1.1), the following is assumed:

Area	Description
Upfront costs	- 9% escalation costs included (tender/award within 24 months) - Rock removal allowance included as a Provisional Sum allowance due to unknown quantity. - This is a preliminary 'high level' estimate only based on a desktop review of site and assumed scope of works using precedents and sponsor advice. Functional brief not yet completed.
Operating budget	An annual operating budget of \$0.5m will be made available to support the operation of the Youth Hub
Resources	The proposed project will require an additional five staff members, consisting of: - 1x Band 6 Youth Development officer to oversee the running of the Hub - 2x Band 5 Youth Development officer to run programs -2x Band 4 Youth Development officer for the day-to-day running and drop-in programs.
Schedule	It is estimated the site will come to market in 2025 with the build to be completed in 2026. Programming is anticipated to begin mid-FY2027.

Social, economic and environmental impacts

Social impacts (positive, high): The Youth Hub will support the health and wellbeing of young people in the City of Whittlesea, by:

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



- Improving service access, increasing the capacity of youth support services, and expanding programming to reach a wider audience and, informed by the Youth Reference Group, better tailoring of the site/ programs to reflect the needs of young people.
- Boost participation of young people in public life, reducing social isolation and improving wellbeing outcomes. The Youth Hub will engage more young people that are at risk and provide early intervention to prevent issues from arising or worsening. That is, this service can redirect vulnerable young people who might have otherwise required more intensive intervention. In promoting social inclusion, this is expected to result in a better overall quality of life for individuals. As a result, this is likely to reduce crime and hospitalisation rates that are associated with low wellbeing (note, these are also 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 that is materially and positively impacted by the Youth Hub. With this calculation, it is expected that **Option 1.1 will generate the highest social benefit due to its extended service period, estimated at \$1.3 million in present day terms**. This is compared to \$0.6 million under Option 2.1 and \$0.04 million for Option 3. The staged options will generate slightly less benefit than their non-stage counterparts with \$1.1 million and \$0.5 million for Option 1.2 and Option 1.2, respectively. More details are outlined in Appendix C.

Economic impacts (positive, high): 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 either in work or with studies. This leads to improved economic outcomes for these participants, including reduced unemployment, increased productivity, and higher educational achievements that 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.

As with social benefits, **Option 1.1 is likely to produce the highest economic benefit at \$15.3 million in present value**. In contrast, \$7.1 million and \$0.5 million are anticipated to be generated by Option 2.1 and 3, respectively. The staged options will generate slightly less benefit than their non-stage counterparts with \$13.9 million and \$0.6 million for Option 1.2 and Option 1.2, respectively. More details are outlined in Appendix C.

Environmental impacts (neutral, low): This facility will be designed in accordance with Council’s Sustainable Design Guidelines for Capital Works – Buildings, which aims to facilitate improved environmental performance and resource efficiency in the design, construction, operation and maintenance of all Council buildings and infrastructure.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



Forecast budget

Currently there are no budget allocations in Council's Long Term Financial Plan

Table 1: Indicative budget (proposed)

Year	Project Status	Total capital cost	Proposed Capital Budget (excl GST)		Proposed operational budget
			Council funding	External funding	
2024/2025			N/A	N/A	N/A
2025/2026	Site acquisition	\$3.1 million	TBC	TBC	N/A
2026/2027	Construction commences: capital works and sewer connection	\$4.1 million	TBC	TBC	N/A
2027/2028 onwards	Ongoing operations: staffing, programming, site costs, utilities and maintenance.	N/A	TBC	TBC	\$0.8 million per annum

Procurement

Procurement of the design and construction phases of this project will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Procurement Procedures. Dependent on funding approval, the design stage would ideally be tendered in the 2025 calendar year and the construction contract tendered by public advertisement upon completion of the detailed design by early 2026. Project staging for delivery of this project will not be required.

7. Approval 2

This document requires Project Control Group approval:

Project Control Group Member	Name	Title	Date approved
Project Sponsor representative	Stephen McKay	Manager Community Strengthening	19/7/24
Project Manager- Delivery	Nick Mazzarella	Manager Capital Delivery	19/7/24

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



8. Appendices

Appendix A: Site information and proposed designs



Appendix B: Financial analysis

Inputs and assumptions

Key inputs relating to capital works and ongoing costs are documented in Section 4.1 cost estimates. Additional assumptions that underpin the financial analysis are provided below.

Table 2 Financial analysis assumptions

Parameter	Assumption details
GST	Not accounted for in the modelling
Nominal discount rate	7.4 per cent; 4 per cent real discount rate, adjusted for CPI at 3.6 per cent
Escalation rate	2.5 per cent for operating costs; Mid-point of RBA’s inflation targets 4.8 per cent for retained land value; Valuer-General Victoria data (2022–23)
Evaluation period	20-year evaluation period (FY2025 to FY2044)
Values	Nominal FY2024

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

Results

The table below shows the financial impact over a twenty-year assessment period for each Project Option, compared to the Base Case, factoring in escalation and discounting.

Option 1.1 is anticipated to generate the largest financial loss out of the three options, producing a net impact of -\$9.6 million in present day terms. Option 1.2 generates a net impact of -\$8.4 million. In contrast, a net loss of \$7.0 million, \$5.7 and \$1.2 million are expected to be generated from Option 2.1, Option 2.2 and 3, respectively.

Option 1.1 and Option 1.2 produce a larger deficit due to site acquisition costs, more significant capital works, and longer period of operations than the other options. Despite the cost involved in acquiring land, this is expected to result in a financial surplus for Council as the asset is likely to grow in value over the twenty years (residual land value). This is shown as a financial surplus for Council.

There is no revenue generated by the Youth Hub with any of the other options.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Table 3 Financial analysis results by project options (incremental to Base Case)

	Forward Estimates (nominal dollars)																					
	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	FY32	FY33	FY34	FY35	FY36	FY37	FY38	FY39	FY40	FY41	FY42	FY43	FY44	
Option 1.1 (incremental)																						
Capital Cost	0	5,943,333	1,421,667	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-7,972,966
Operating Cost	0	0	113,603	465,772	585,767	600,412	615,422	636,899	652,822	669,142	685,871	703,018	727,486	745,673	764,315	783,423	803,008	823,083	843,660	864,752		
Total Financial Deficit	0	5,943,333	1,535,269	465,772	585,767	600,412	615,422	636,899	652,822	669,142	685,871	703,018	727,486	745,673	764,315	783,423	803,008	823,083	843,660	864,752		
Total Financial Impact (NPV)																						-9,551,020
Option 1.2 (incremental)																						
Capital Cost	0	4,866,667	883,333	0	0	1,750,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-7,972,966
Operating Cost	0	0	40,699	83,432	193,870	198,717	615,422	636,899	652,822	669,142	685,871	703,018	727,486	745,673	764,315	783,423	803,008	823,083	843,660	864,752		
Total Financial Deficit	0	4,866,667	924,032	83,432	193,870	1,948,717	615,422	636,899	652,822	669,142	685,871	703,018	727,486	745,673	764,315	783,423	803,008	823,083	843,660	864,752		
Total Financial Impact (NPV)																						-8,442,268
Option 2.1 (incremental)																						
Capital Cost	0	3,100,000	1,550,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Operating Cost	0	0	233,129	477,913	598,213	613,168	634,441	650,302	666,559	683,223	674,062	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Financial Deficit	0	3,100,000	1,783,129	477,913	598,213	613,168	634,441	650,302	666,559	683,223	674,062	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Financial Impact (NPV)																						-6,991,477
Option 2.2 (incremental)																						
Capital Cost	0	2,000,000	1,000,000	0	0	1,600,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Operating Cost	0	0	44,647	91,527	202,167	207,221	634,441	650,302	666,559	683,223	674,062	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Financial Deficit	0	2,000,000	1,044,647	91,527	202,167	1,807,221	634,441	650,302	666,559	683,223	674,062	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Financial Impact (NPV)																						-5,655,141
Option 3 (incremental)																						
Capital Cost	0	400,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Operating Cost	0	-13,718	346,414	355,075	363,951	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Financial Deficit	0	386,282	346,414	355,075	363,951	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Financial Impact (NPV)																						-1,214,745

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

Note: Retained land value is shown as a financial surplus in FY2044 in Option 1.1 and Option 1.2 of \$8.0 million.



Appendix C: Cost benefit analysis

Inputs and assumptions

The key assumptions that underpin the cost benefit analysis are provided in Table 4.

Table 4 Cost benefit analysis assumptions

Parameter	Assumption details
Discount rate	4 per cent
Evaluation period	20-year evaluation period (FY2025 to FY2044)
Values	Real FY2024

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

Users

Based on Council inputs, it is assumed the following Hub user numbers per week, assuming that the Youth Hub will be open Mondays to Fridays (five days a week).

Table 5 Regular Users of the Youth Hub

Options	Regular Weekly Users and Rationale
Base Case	21 users per week; Provided by Council.
Option 1.1	150 users per week; Assumed by SGS to result in 20 per cent greater visits than Option 2 due to locational advantages, such as proximity to station and the Polytechnic.
Option 1.2	Assumes 2/3rds of programming and 2/3rds of full capacity
Option 2.1	125 users per week; Provided by Council based on 25 daily visits.
Option 2.2	Assumes 2/3rds of programming and 2/3rds of full capacity
Option 3	42 users per week; Assumed by SGS that the refurbishment and programming will lead to doubling utilisation compared to existing numbers.

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

Based on these figures, it is assumed that the beneficiaries of the Youth Hub are the individuals who regularly attend the site on a weekly basis. These regular users are at higher risk of experiencing social isolation and are likely to benefit from the Youth Hub, deriving both social and economic benefits. No benefits are modelled for visitors who use the Hub occasionally. While they would gain some benefits, the effects are considered negligible.

It is assumed that these weekly users engage with the Youth Hub for an average duration of three years. To calculate the number of annual unique beneficiaries, the total user numbers have been scaled down by a third. The Project Options have been compared with the Base Case to calculate the incremental uplift in users, in which, benefits 1-3 have been applied.

A 50:50 split across children (<18 years old) and young adults (aged 18 and older) has been applied across the project options.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



- Benefit 1: Health benefits for young people

The Youth Hub is expected to improve mental health outcomes for vulnerable young people. Improving these outcomes improves wellbeing for young people in the form of reduced disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), and results in avoided health system and care costs associated with mental health.

To derive the annual value per young person, the change in the rate of mental illness due to the development of the Youth Hub has been calculated (the probability of the onset of a mental health condition has been multiplied by the probability of reducing mental health). This result has then been multiplied by the days lost in terms of disability-adjusted life years. Finally, this has been multiplied by the health system costs and the value of statistical life years to calculate the associated cost savings.

The following parameters have been used.

Table 6 Health Benefit assumptions and calculations

Reference	Parameters	Value	Source and Calculations
A	Probability of mental illness, general youth population	26%	Deloitte (2022): Youth Work Matters Social Return on Investment Study
B	Reduced probability of mental illness from delivering the Youth Hub	22% (B)	As above – proxy based on the effectiveness of youth work in improving mental health
C	Wellbeing cost (loss in DALYs per person aged 15-24 years) due to mental health illness	0.15, or 55 days (C)	As above
D	Health system and care costs associated with mental illness	\$7,582 (D)	As above
E	Value of a statistical life year	\$231,310 (E)	As above
F	CPI (2022 to 2024)	110% (F)	ABS CPI (Melbourne; Health)
Total benefit per young person per annum (\$2024)		\$2,271	A × B × C × (D + E)

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

- Benefit 2: Education and employment benefits for children

The Youth Hub is expected to improve education attainment or accelerate employment outcomes for children who attend regularly. Some of these children would have otherwise would have been early leavers without the Hub, and would not tap into their earning potential. Others may have found it hard to seek employment after finishing year 12.

The uplift in lifetime earnings for children is calculated as the additional earnings associated with completing year 12 compared to leaving school early, for the course of their work lives.

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



This has been discounted back to present day value. The result is then multiplied by the probability of not completing year 12 and the effectiveness of the Youth Hub in increasing school completion rates.

To calculate improved employment outcomes, SGS has looked at the remaining children who would go on to complete Year 12 regardless of the Youth Hub developing. The probability of unemployment has been applied to these children. We have then assumed that these children benefit as their length of unemployment is reduced by six months. That is, we have assumed that all students who would have faced unemployment without the Youth Hub will gain accelerated employment (i.e. by six months).

The following parameters have been used.

Table 7 Lifetime earnings (children) assumptions and calculations

Reference	Parameters	Value	Source and Calculations
A	Average annual earnings – Year 12 completion	\$53,534	\$988 weekly earnings tied with ‘no non-school qualification’, sourced from ABS (\$FY2023); Inflated as per WPI
B	Average annual earnings – Early leavers	\$46,959	SGS has derived based on SINSW guidance material ¹⁰
D	Incremental change in lifetime earnings	\$114,398	A – B Factoring in 4 per cent discount rate over 40 years of working life; 2-year delay
E	Probability of not completing year 12, general youth population	16% ¹¹	Deloitte (2022): Youth Work Matters Social Return on Investment Study ⁷
F	Effectiveness of Youth Hub to lift school completions	32%	Research & Policy Centre (2023): Outcomes from a longitudinal study of Education First Youth Foyers Sourced from the above study used as a proxy for the Youth Hub’s potential success in increasing school completions.
Total lifetime earnings benefit per child (\$2024)		\$5,821	D × E × F

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

¹⁰ SINSW guidance suggests that Year 12 completion leads to 15.7% lifetime earnings for males and 12.3% for females as opposed to not completing Year 12. SGS has taken the average.

¹¹ Note: To take a conservative approach, the average completion rate across the youth population has been applied. However, the Youth Hub will likely capture more at-risk youth with a higher probability of not completing year 12.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Table 8 Employment benefits (children) assumptions and calculations

Reference	Parameters	Value	Source and Calculations
A	Probability of completing year 12, general youth population	84%	(1 – 16%); As used in Table 7
B	Probability of unemployment, no post school qualifications	44%	Deloitte (2022): Youth Work Matters Social Return on Investment Study
C	Average annual earnings	\$53,534	\$988 weekly earnings tied with ‘no non-school qualification’, sourced from ABS (\$FY2023); Inflated as per WPI
D	Opportunity cost	\$19,830	Jobseeker, single, no children
E	Period accelerated (years)	0.5	SGS Assumption
Total employment benefit per child (\$2024)		\$6,238	A × B × (C – D) × E

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

- **Benefit 3: Education and employment benefits for young adults**

These benefits are like Benefit 2. However, they consider the benefits generated for young adults who are on different study or employment pathways than children. The Youth Hub is anticipated to assist young adults who might otherwise find it difficult to obtain a certificate-level qualification or encounter challenges in seeking employment after obtaining post-school qualifications. The method in Benefit 2 has been applied to calculate uplift in lifetime earnings and improved employment outcomes for young adults with the parameters detailed below.

Table 9 Lifetime earnings (young adult) assumptions and calculations

Reference	Parameters	Value	Source and Calculations
A	Average annual earnings – certificate-level qualification	\$68,158	Average of \$1342 and \$1174 weekly earnings tied with for ‘Cert I/II’, and ‘Cert III/IV’ obtainment, sourced from ABS (FY2023); Inflated as per WPI
B	Average annual earnings – Year 12 completion	\$53,534	\$988 weekly earnings tied with ‘no non-school qualification’, sourced from ABS (\$FY2023); Inflated as per WPI
D	Incremental change in lifetime earnings	\$272,347	A – B Factoring in 4 per cent discount rate over 38 years of working life; 2-year delay
E	Probability of not completing VET per enrolment, general youth population	47% ¹²	AIHW (2023): VET Completions

¹² Note: To take a conservative approach, the average completion rate across the youth population has been applied. However, the Youth Hub will likely capture more at-risk youth with a higher probability of not completing year 12.

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



F	Effectiveness of Youth Hub to lift school completions	32%	Research & Policy Centre (2023): Outcomes from a longitudinal study of Education First Youth Foyers Sourced from the above study used as a proxy for the Youth Hub's potential success in increasing school completions.
Total lifetime earnings benefit per young adult (\$2024)		\$40,705	D × E × F

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

Table 10 Employment benefits (young adult) assumptions and calculations

Reference	Parameters	Value	Source and Calculations
A	Probability of completing year 12, general youth population	53%	(1 – 47%) ; As used in Table 7
B	Probability of unemployment, post-school qualifications	21%	Deloitte (2022): Youth Work Matters Social Return on Investment Study
C	Average annual earnings	68,158	Average of \$1342 and \$1174 weekly earnings tied with for 'Cert I/II', and 'Cert III/IV' obtainment, sourced from ABS (FY2023); Inflated as per WPI
D	Opportunity cost	19,830	Jobseeker, single, no children
E	Period accelerated (years)	0.5	SGS assumption
Total employment benefit per young adult (\$2024)		\$2,639	A × B × (C – D) × E

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Results

When viewed from a service delivery perspective (costs include operating costs only), both Option 1 and 2 will deliver a net benefit for the community with a BCR exceeding 1 and a positive NPV. This implies that the benefits for young people outweigh the ongoing costs associated with operating an expanded Youth Hub. Option 1.1 is the most favorable scenario, boasting a higher NPV of \$12.97M and a higher BCR of 3.25, followed by Option 1.2 with a NPV of \$12.52 and BCR of 3.63.

When capital costs are factored in, Option 1.1 is the most favorable scenario, with a NPV of \$6.4M and a BCR of 1.5, followed by Option 1.2 with an NPV of \$6.0 and BCR of 1.5.

Table 11 provides the discounted cost-benefit analysis results for developing the Youth Hub across various project options. It presents the benefits when compared to total costs (capital plus operations), and operation costs only.

Table 11 Cost benefit analysis results (incremental to Base Case) (\$M)

	Option 1.1	Option 1.2	Option 2.1	Option 2.2	Option 3
Costs					
Capital Cost	6.63	6.54	4.10	3.87	0.37
Operating Cost	5.76	4.76	3.29	2.27	0.87
Rental costs	0	0	0.00	0.00	0
Total discounted costs	12.40	11.30	7.39	6.14	1.24
Benefits					
Health benefits for all users	1.25	1.14	0.58	0.49	0.04
Education and employment for children	3.32	3.03	1.54	1.30	0.11
Education and employment for young adults	11.94	10.88	5.54	4.67	0.40
Retained land value	2.22	2.22	0	0	0
Total discounted benefits	18.73	17.28	7.66	6.45	0.56
Capital works and service delivery					
NPV	6.34	5.98	0.27	0.31	-0.68
BCR	1.52	1.53	1.00	1.1	0.45
Service delivery only*					
NPV	12.97	12.52	4.38	4.18	-0.31
BCR	3.25	3.63	2.33	2.84	0.65

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2024

Note: Retained land value measured as real increase in value, after subtracting the cost of acquiring land.

*Does not include retained land value benefit

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Appendix D: Business Case Review Panel – Checklist (to be completed by the assessor after you have completed the business case)

The primary purpose of the Business Case Review panel will be to provide a quality assurance function to the Business Case. Panel members are to use this document to record their feedback to assist business case writers and assessors/approvers.

2. Assessment checklist

Business case title:	
1. Is it clear what the problem is that needs to be addressed - both the cause and the effect?	
2. Is there sufficient evidence to confirm both the cause and effect of the problem?	
3. Does the problem need to be addressed now and by this government?	
4. Does the defined problem capture is full extent/scope including source of future uncertainty?	
5. Have the benefits that will result from fixing the problem been adequately defined?	
6. Are the benefits of high value to the government?	
7. Are the KPIs SMART and will they provide strong evidence that the benefits have been delivered?	
8. Have the sources of uncertainty and key dependencies critical to benefit delivery been considered?	
9. Has a reasonable spread of interventions been	

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



identified and packaged into sensible response options?	
10. Is there evidence to demonstrate that the response options are feasible and can respond to future uncertainty?	
11. Were the options evaluated fairly to reflect their ability to respond to the problem, deliver the benefits?	
12. Is the preferred response option the most effective way to address the problem and deliver the benefits?	
13. Consistent with the preferred response option, has a reasonable spread of project options been analysed?	
14. Is the recommended solution the best value for money action, and have opportunities for building flexibility to deal with uncertainty been considered?	
15. Is the solution specified clearly and fully and have opportunities for adding value been identified and costed?	
16. Can the solution really be delivered (cost, risk, timeframes etc?)	

Other comments:	
Overall recommendation:	Proceed to approval stage via the Sponsor and Delivery Manager (Yes/No):
	Proceed to approval subject to the following changes as outlined below:

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Assessor name:	
Assessment date:	

<Insert any relevant attachments here, such as an ILM if required, concept plan for preferred option, location plan etc.>

16 questions to assist in completing your business case:

W2040 Key Direction	Date of Adoption	Directorate Responsible
1.1 A socially cohesive community and 1.3 A participating community	July 2024	Community and Wellbeing



PROBLEM	BENEFITS	RESPONSE	SOLUTION
1. Is it clear what the problem is that needs to be addressed - both the <i>cause</i> and <i>effect</i> ?	5. Have the benefits that will result from fixing the problem been adequately defined?	9. Has a reasonable spread of <i>interventions</i> been identified and packaged into sensible response options?	13. Consistent with the preferred response option, has a reasonable <i>spread of project options</i> been analysed?
Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No
2. Is there <i>sufficient evidence</i> to confirm both the cause and effect of the problem?	6. Are the benefits of high value to the government?	10. Is there evidence to demonstrate that the response options are feasible and can respond to future uncertainty?	14. Is the recommended solution the <i>best value for money</i> action, and have opportunities for building flexibility to deal with uncertainty been considered?
Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No
3. Does the problem need to be addressed <i>now</i> and by this government?	7. Are the KPIs SMART and will they provide strong evidence that the benefits have been delivered?	11. Were the options <i>evaluated fairly</i> to reflect their ability to respond to the problem, deliver the benefits?	15. Is the solution <i>specified clearly and fully</i> and have opportunities for adding value been identified and costed? (all business changes and assets)
Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No
4. Does the defined problem capture its full extent/scope including sources of future uncertainty?	8. Have the sources of uncertainty and key dependencies critical to benefit delivery been considered?	12. Is the <i>preferred response option</i> the most effective way to address the problem and deliver the benefits?	16. Can the solution really be delivered (cost, risk, timeframes etc.)?
Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No	Yes Partial No

W2040 Key Direction

Date of Adoption

Directorate Responsible

1.1 A socially cohesive community and
1.3 A participating community

July 2024

Community and Wellbeing



Whittlesea Youth Hub

Future Needs Analysis

May 2024

Contents

	Glossary of Terms	P04
01	Introduction	P05
02	Current and Future Profile of Young People	P09
03	Policy Context & Key Strategic Drivers	P24
04	Insights from Young People	P28
05	Current and Future Need	P36
06	Future Delivery Model	P45
A	Appendix A: Policy Overview	P67
B	Appendix B: Youth Population Forecasts	P73



© SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd 2024

This report has been prepared for Jeanette Pope for Whittlesea City Council. However, SGS are not liable to any person or entity for any damage or loss that has occurred, or may occur, in relation to that person or entity taking or not taking action in respect of any representation, statement, opinion or advice referred to herein.

SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd
ACN 007 437 729
www.sgsep.com.au

OFFICES IN CANBERRA, HOBART, MELBOURNE, AND SYDNEY ON THE COUNTRY OF THE
NGAMBRI/NGUNNAWAL/NGARIGO, MUWININA/PALAWA, WURUNDJERI, AND GADIGAL PEOPLES.

Glossary of Terms

Term / Acronym	Definition
Accessibility	The extent to which facilities and services are easy to reach, enter, afford, or participate in.
Community Infrastructure	Infrastructure that provides services, activities and opportunities for the community, including arts, cultural, educational, sporting and recreation, and health and wellbeing facilities.
Development Contributions	Contributions that developers are responsible for providing to support the provision of shared infrastructure.
District	The six geographic catchments that Whittlesea is divided up into for planning purposes.
MAC	Major Activity Centre or Metropolitan Activity Centre
NMIT	Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (now Polytechnic)
Precinct Structure Plans (PSP)	Refers to comprehensive land use and infrastructure planning document to guide the development of a specific area or precinct over time,
PT	Public Transport
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas: ABS ranking of areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage based on Census data.
TC	Town Centre
YS	Youth Services

01

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Project Context

Whittlesea is one of Australia’s fastest growing municipalities and spans a large geographic area that includes established and growth area communities.

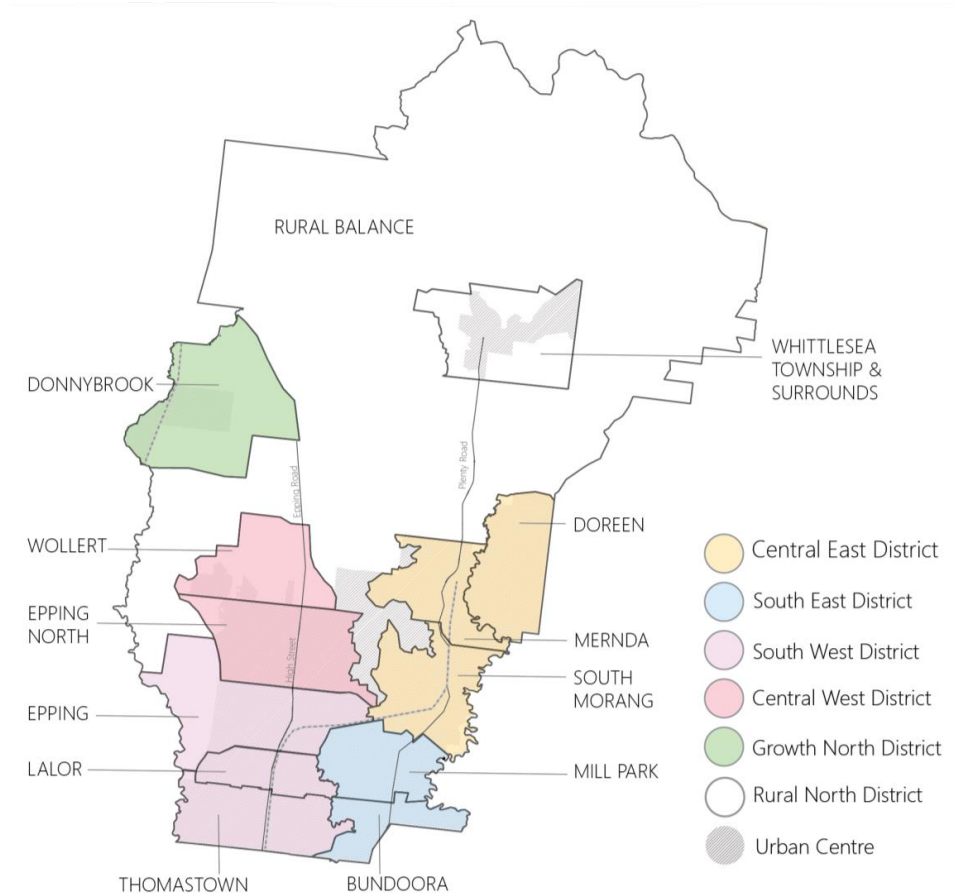
Located on the southern periphery of Melbourne's north, Whittlesea includes six districts for this project:

- Growth North (Donnybrook)
- Rural North (Whittlesea Township, Rural Balance)
- Central East (South Morang, Mernda, Doreen)
- Central West (Wollert and Epping North)
- South East (Mill Park, Bundoora)
- South West (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown)

Over the next couple of decades, Whittlesea’s population will increase significantly, with much of this growth forecast in the new communities of Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook.

With rapid growth, Council will need to ensure that future services and infrastructure adequately address community needs.

This project will need to ensure that the specific needs and interests of young people and families are considered, as well as to the operational needs of service providers.



Introduction

Project overview

The City of Whittlesea is leading the development of the Whittlesea Youth Hub in collaboration with Jeanette Pope, with funding from the Victorian State Government.

To inform this work, SGS Economics and Planning (SGS) has been engaged to analyse the current and future need for a potential youth hub.

This scope of work will assess current and future demand for youth infrastructure in the City of Whittlesea (CoW). This report develops and articulates a clear vision for Council’s future youth hub in terms of future location and potential delivery model. It also identifies key considerations and opportunities relating to spatial, design and governance matters.

This analysis includes:

- Developing an understanding of the current and projected youth profile
- Providing an overview of key demand and service trends relating to youth infrastructure and services
- Identifying potential future gaps or shortfalls in youth infrastructure
- Nominating a preferred district location for a potential future youth hub
- Proposing a potential future delivery model including consideration of the potential mix, size and configuration of spaces needed, as well as other spatial and design considerations
- Identifying a potential governance model including potential service partners.

This project forms part of a broader scope of works - see graph below.

This report has been heavily informed by previous analysis undertaken by the lead consultant (Jeanette Pope) including consultation with young people and service providers, as well as a best-practice review of other youth facilities.

Following this report, SGS has also been engaged to prepare a Business Case, based on Council’s agreed service model for the future youth hub.

Whittlesea Youth Hub – Project Stages



Introduction

Current Delivery Model

Council's Youth Services (YS) runs on a 'place based preventative model based on social inclusion and participation'. Currently it has youth development officers assigned to local areas supporting young people, parents and service agencies working with young people.

The Service also runs a limited program of group activities (for example, Invigorate, FREEZA, a young women's leadership program, Mental Health First Aid). Council's Youth Services works alongside a range of agencies in the youth space including:

- » **Internal (Council)** : Sport and Recreation, Community Development Team, Office of the CEO
- » **External:** Libraries, Belgravia Leisure, YMCA, HWLLEN, Headspace, and Whittlesea Community Connections.

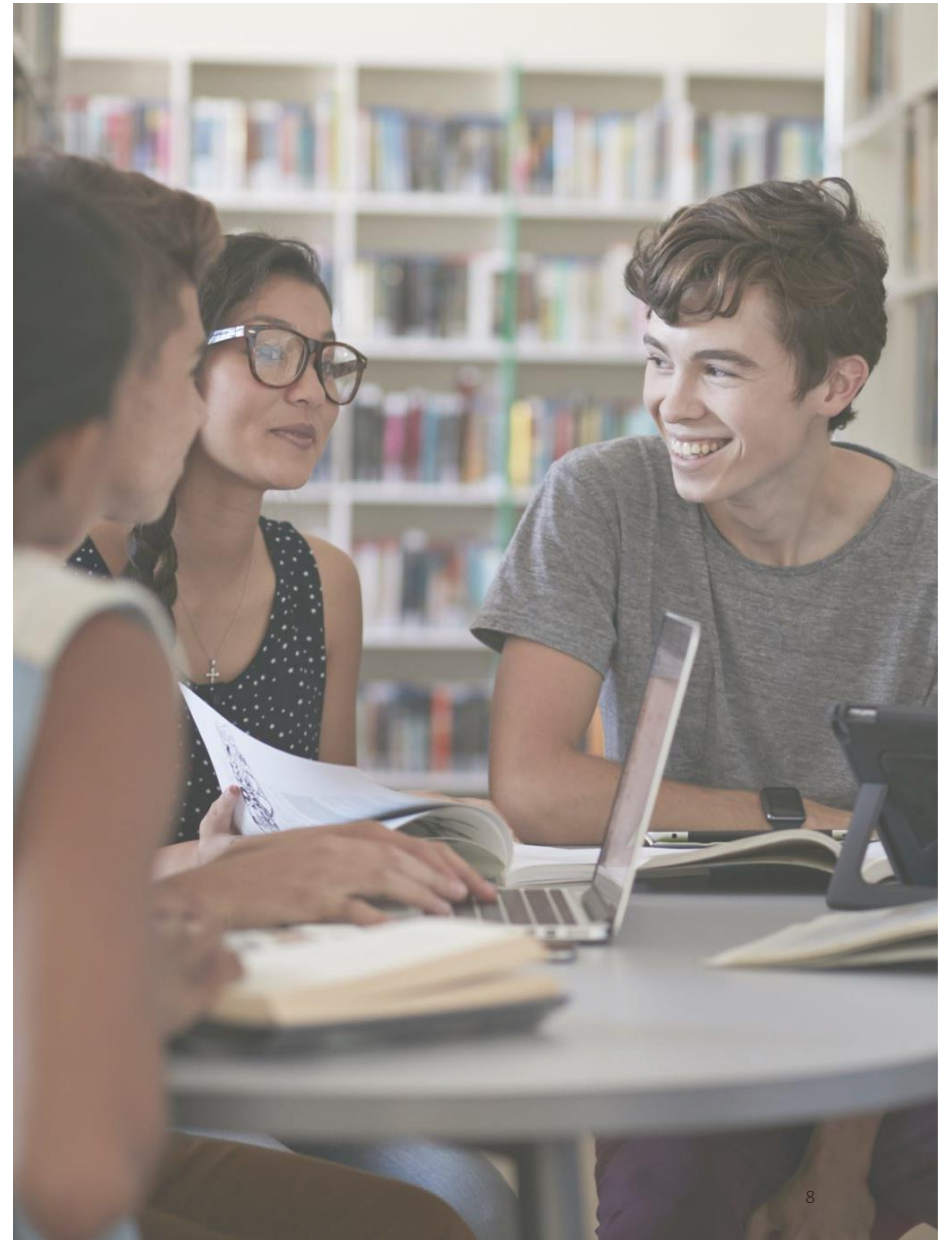
In 2024 Council also established its first Youth Council which operates out of the Office of the CEO, with support of the youth team.

Chapter Overview

This report documents the analysis findings in the following sections:

- **Chapter 2** presents the profile of young people in Whittlesea across the different youth cohorts.
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the policy context and key strategic drivers impacting young people and youth services in Whittlesea
- **Chapter 4** presents key insights from consultation with young people and service providers
- **Chapter 5** highlights current and future needs for youth services and infrastructure
- **Chapter 6** provides key considerations and recommendations for the future development of the Whittlesea Youth Hub in terms of mix of spaces and design.

SGSEP.COM.AU



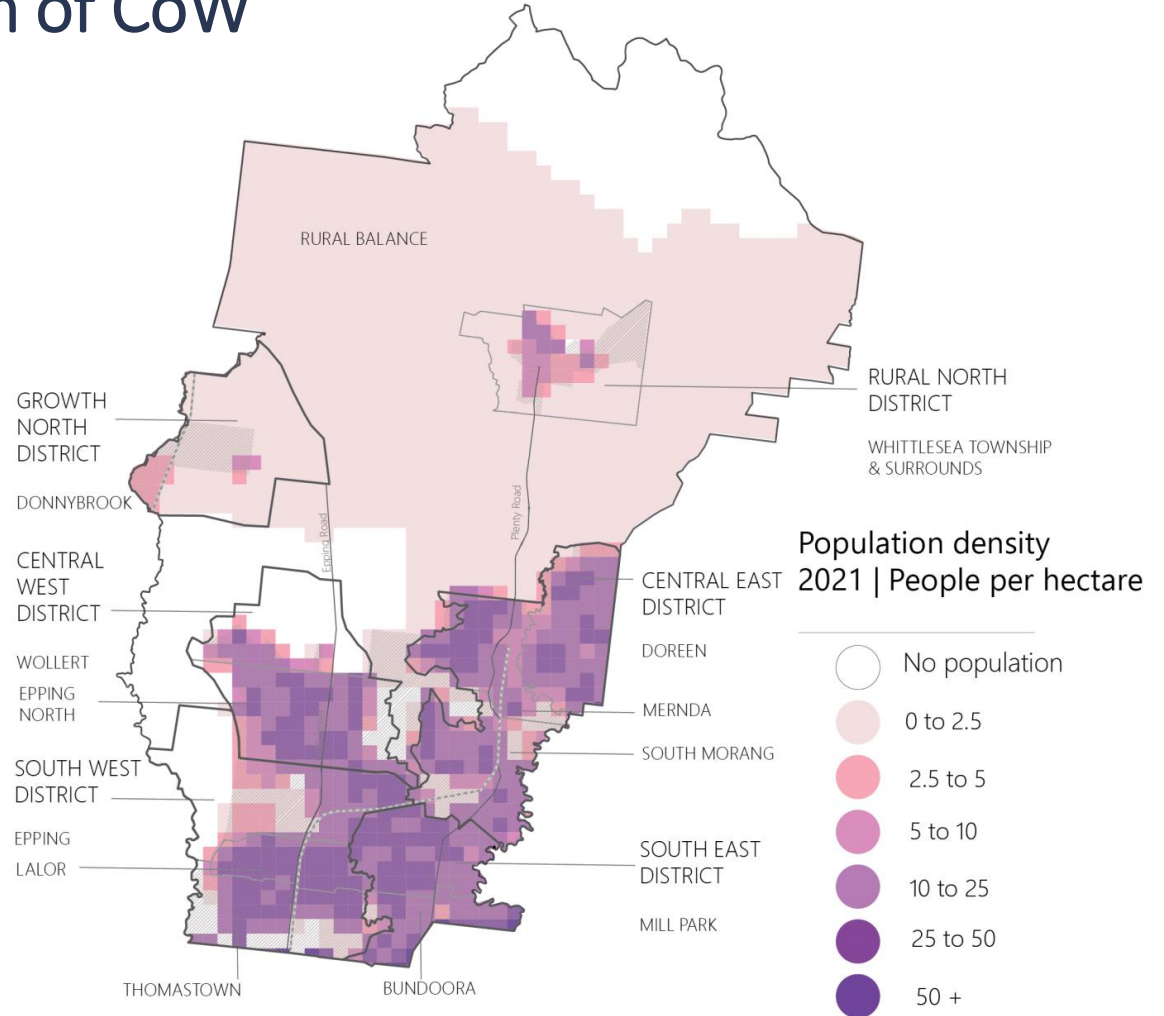
02

CURRENT AND FUTURE PROFILE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Current population of CoW

Current distribution and density

- Current population is concentrated in established suburbs of Epping, Lalor, Thomastown, Bundoora and Epping.
- In addition, there are established growth corridors in Doreen, Mernda, South Morang and Epping North.

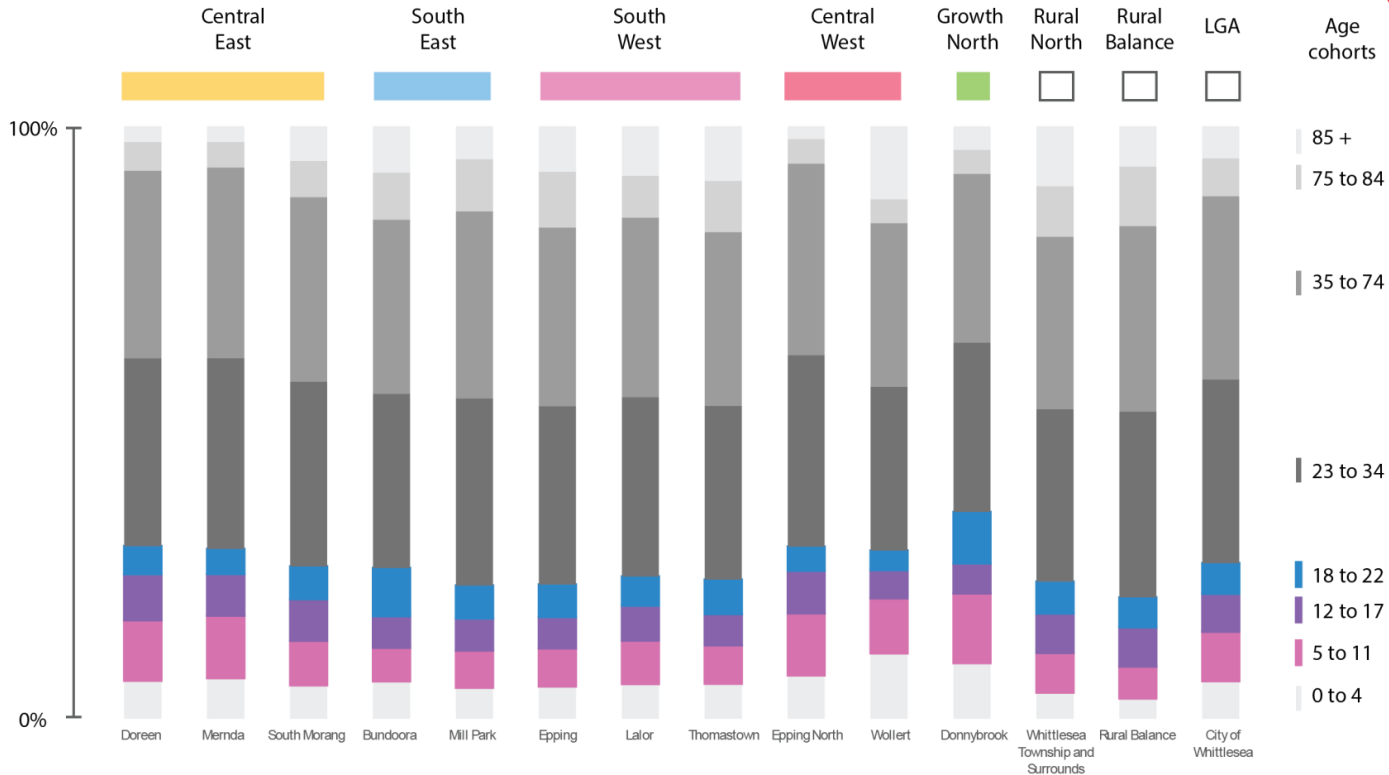


Source: ABS Census, 2021

Current population of CoW and districts

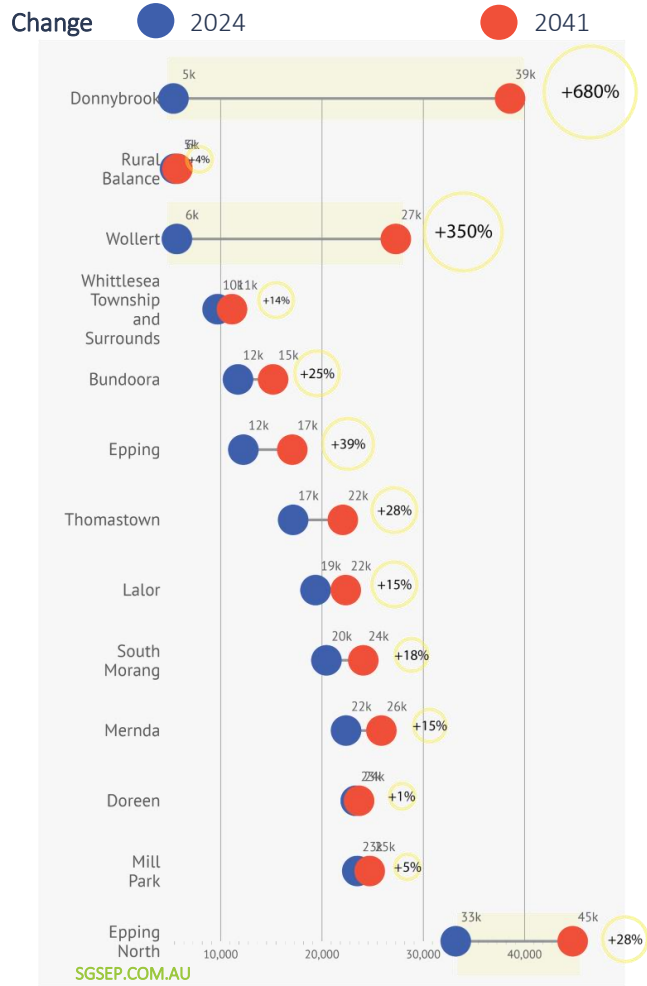
Current distribution and % of population and youth cohorts

Graph shows the proportion of age cohorts across the suburbs with youth sub-cohorts

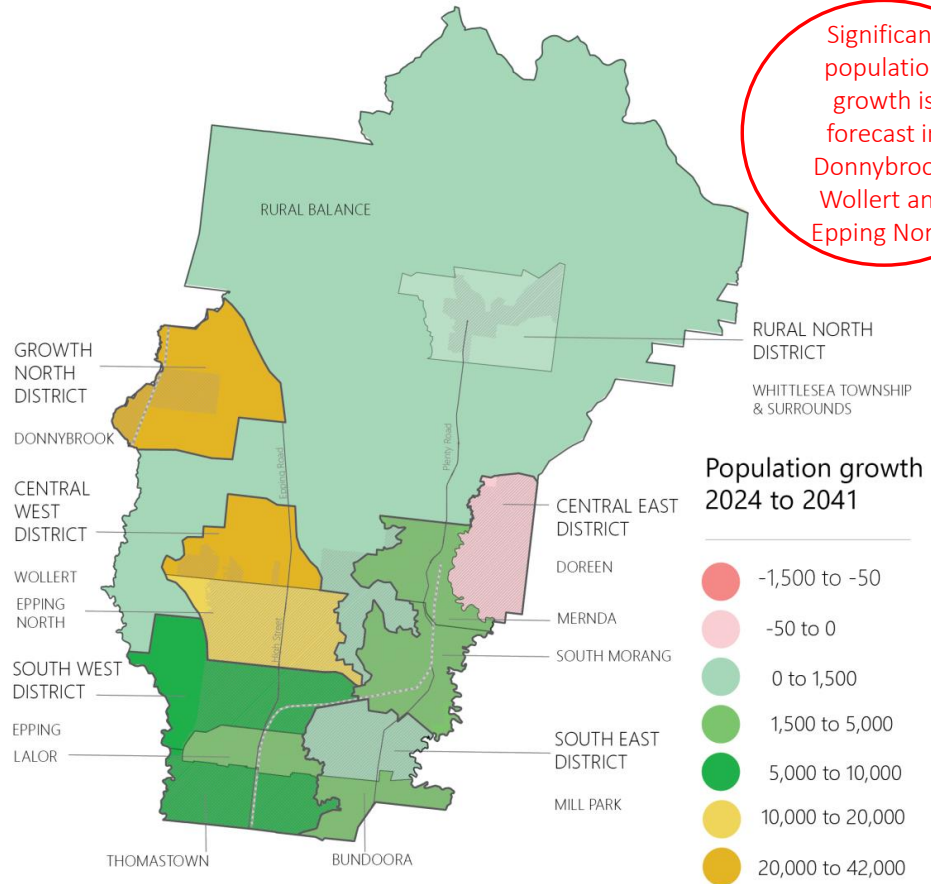


Population growth

Total population change, 2024-2041



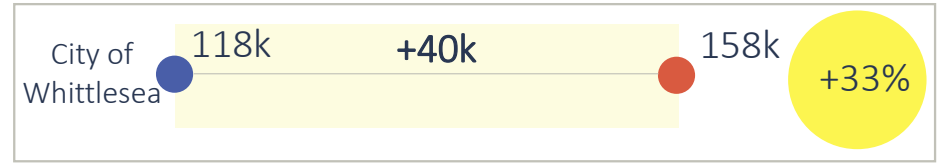
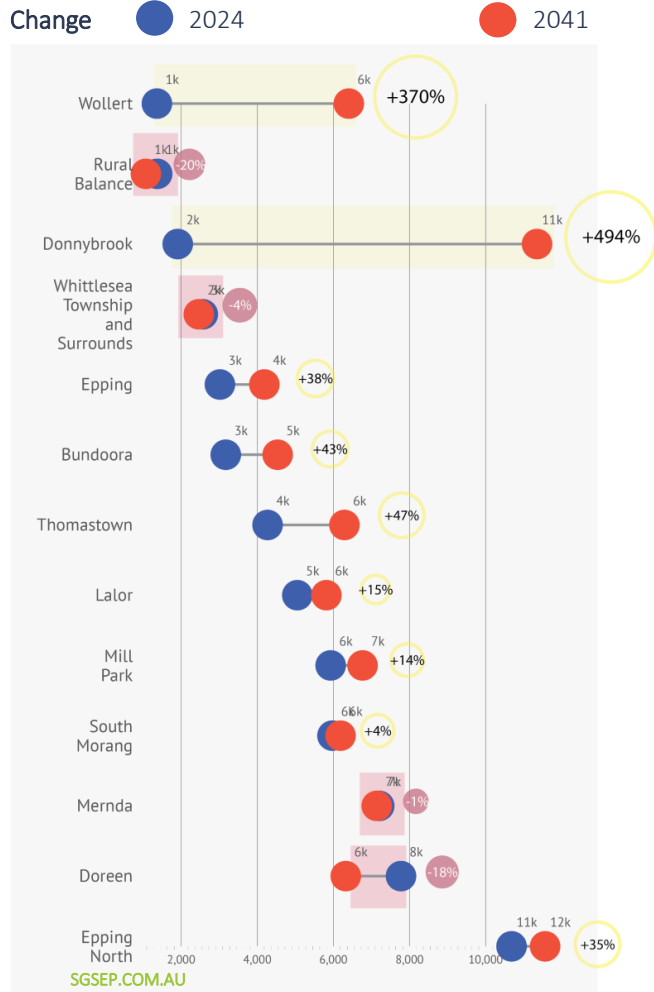
Significant population growth is forecast in Donnybrook, Wollert and Epping North



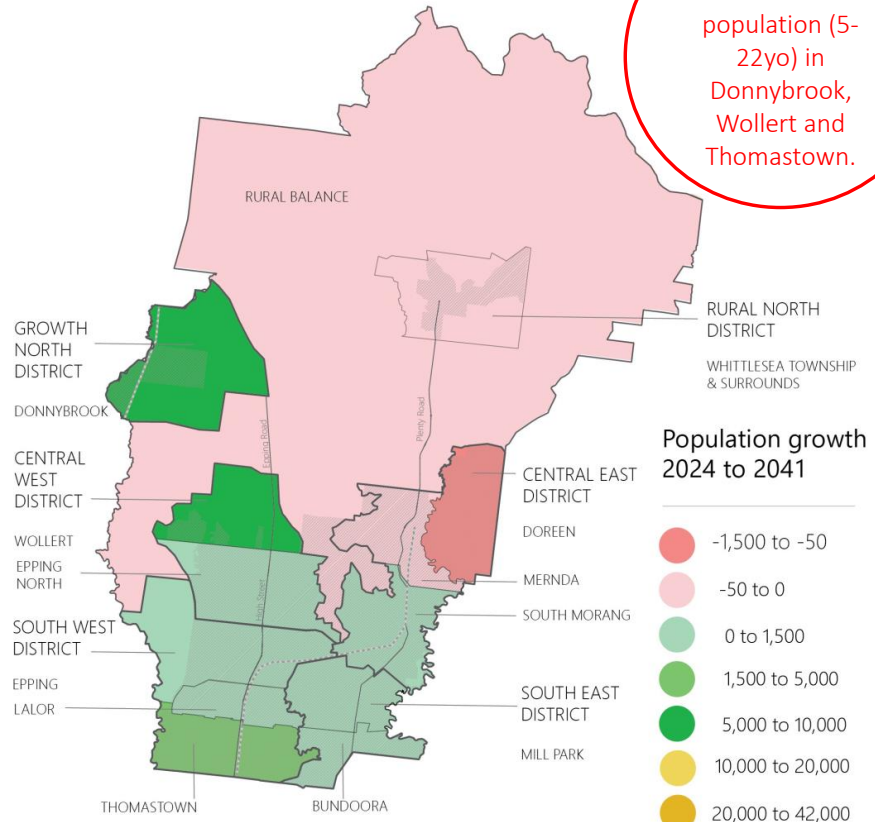
Source: Profile.id, 2024

Youth population growth

Youth (5-22 yo) population change, 2024-2041



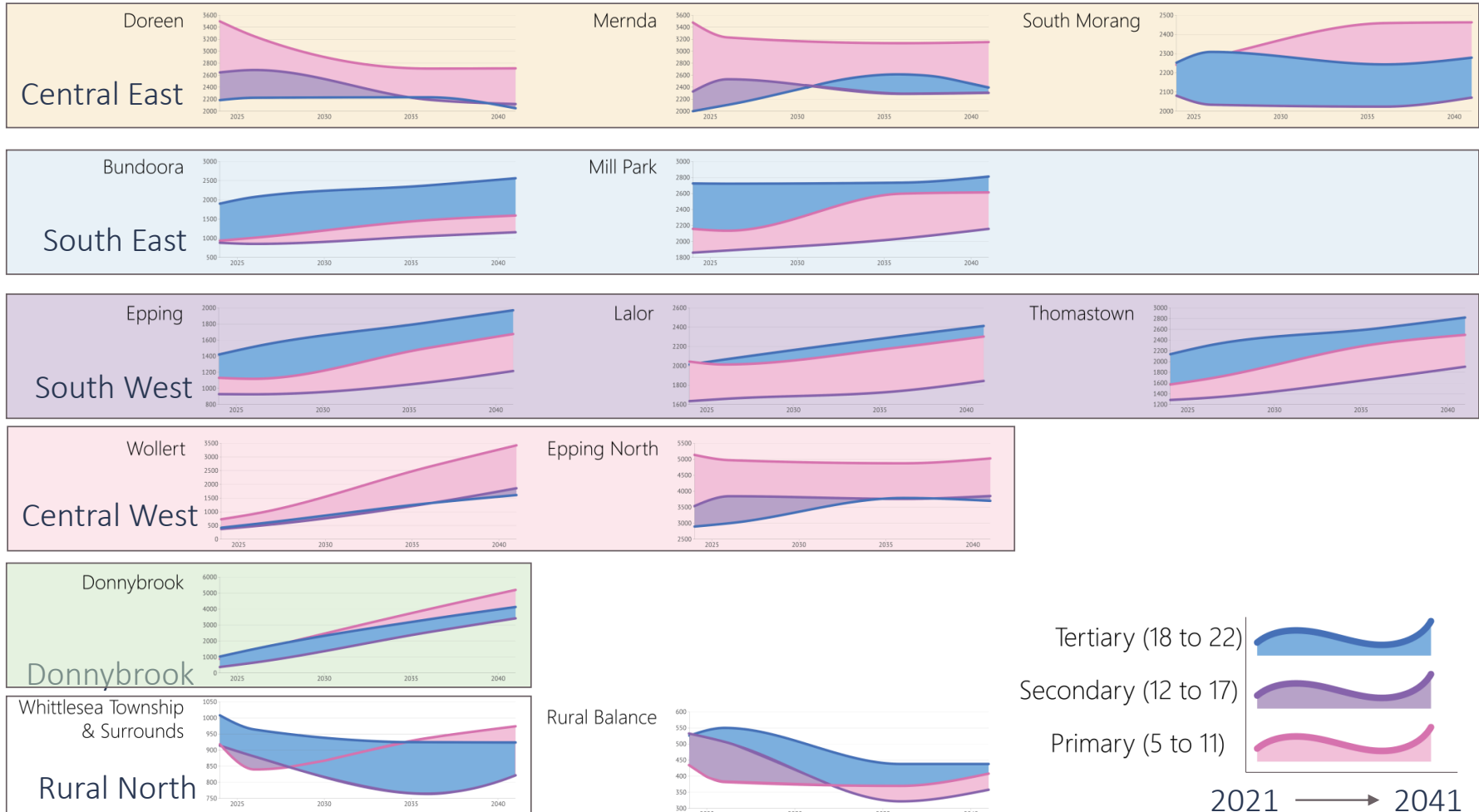
Significant forecast population (5-22yo) in Donnybrook, Wollert and Thomastown.



Source: Profile.id, 2024

Youth population over time by district

Current and future youth population (by sub-cohort)



SGSEP.COM.AU

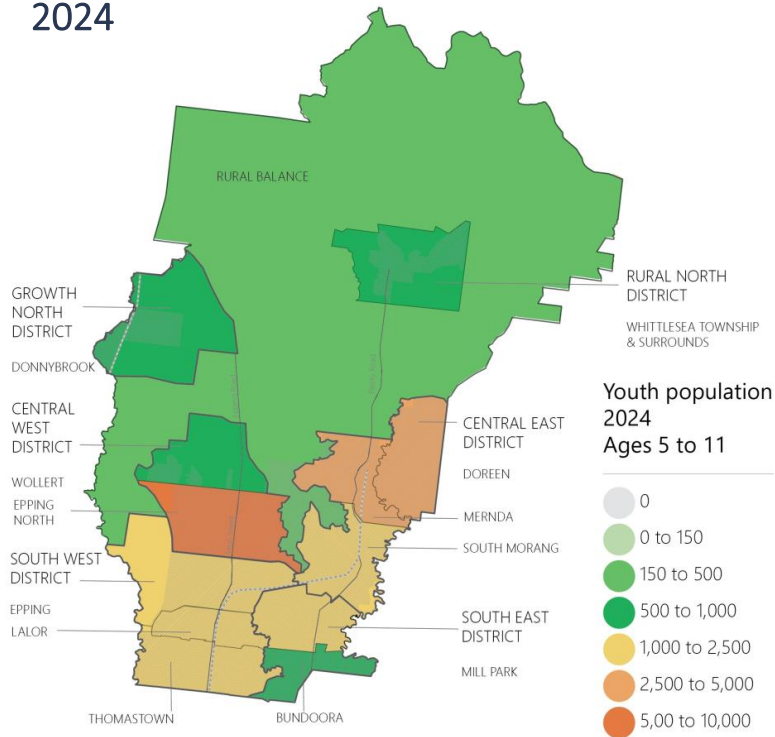
2021 → 2041
 Source: Profile.id, 2024

Population growth – ages 5-11 years

Population change, 2024-2041

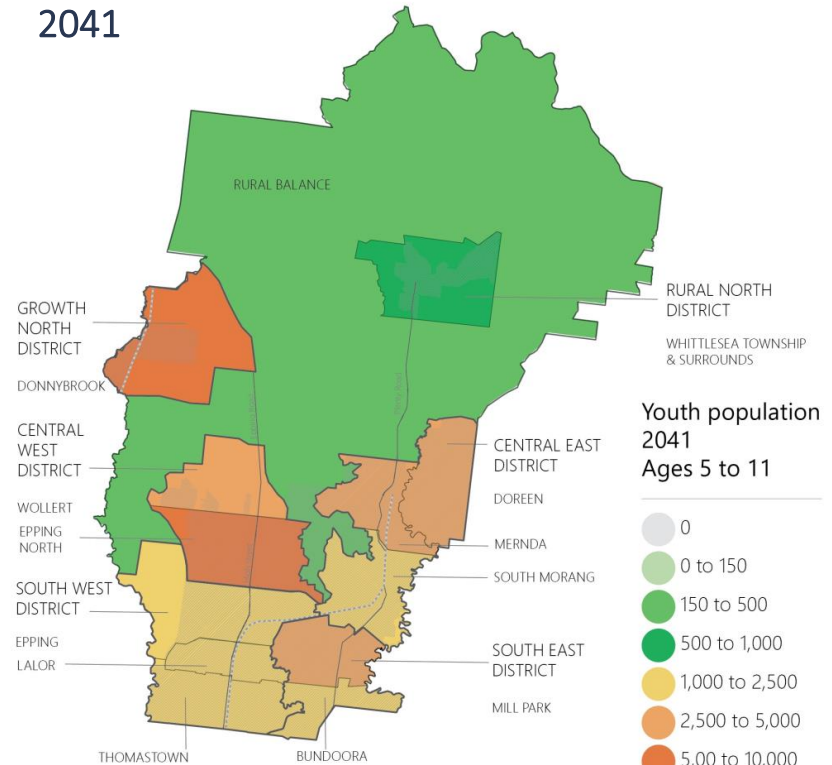
Currently Epping North, Doreen and Mernda have highest population of 5–11-year-olds. In 2041, this will transition to Donnybrook, Epping North and Wollert. Refer to Appendix B for population numbers.

2024



SGSEP.COM.AU

2041



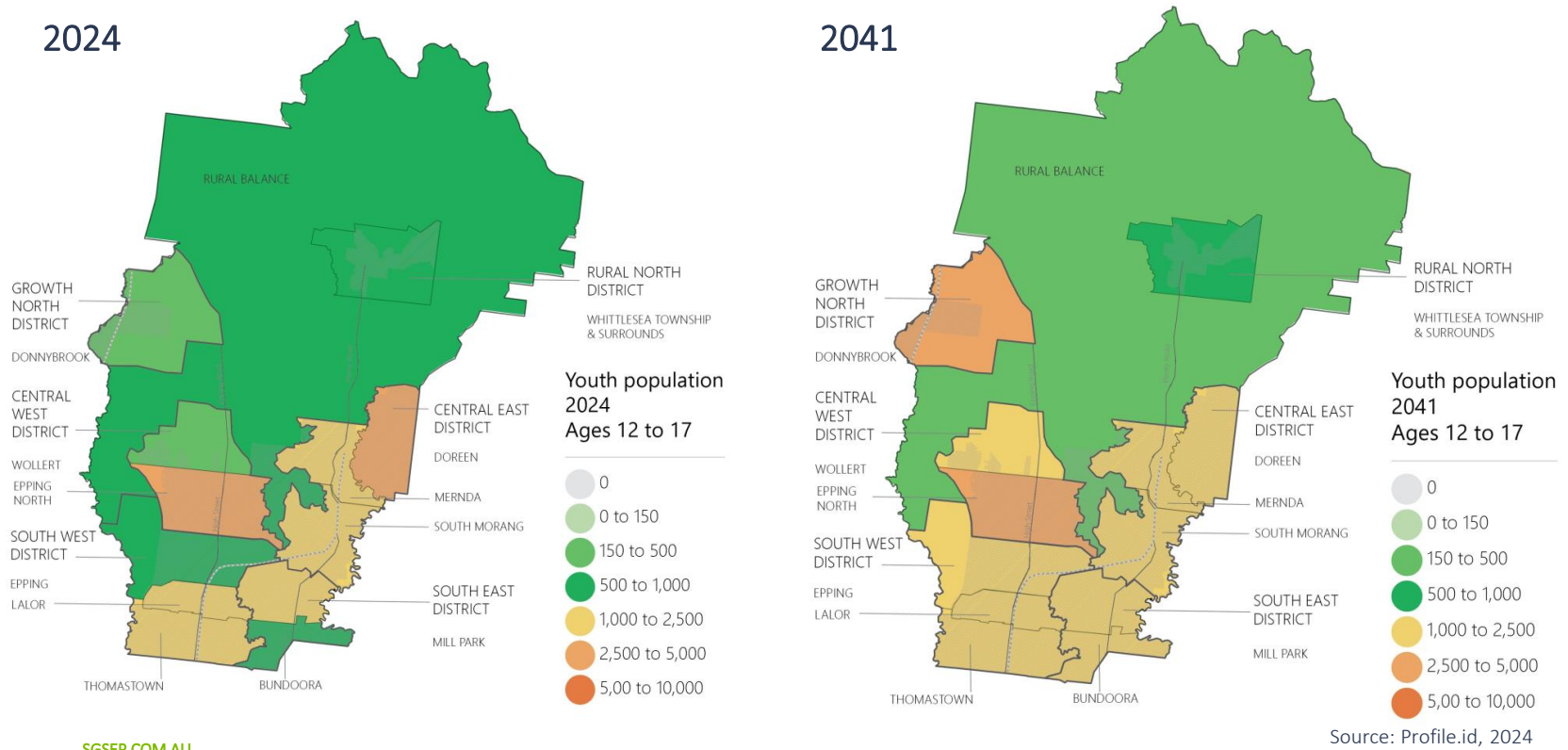
Source: Profile.id, 2024

15

Population growth – ages 12-17 years

Population change, 2024-2041

Currently Epping North and Doreen have the greatest number of 12–17-year-olds. In 2041, this will transition to Epping North, Donnybrook, Mernda and Mill Park. This growth is relatively dispersed across the Growth North, South East and Central West Districts. *Refer to Appendix B for population numbers.*

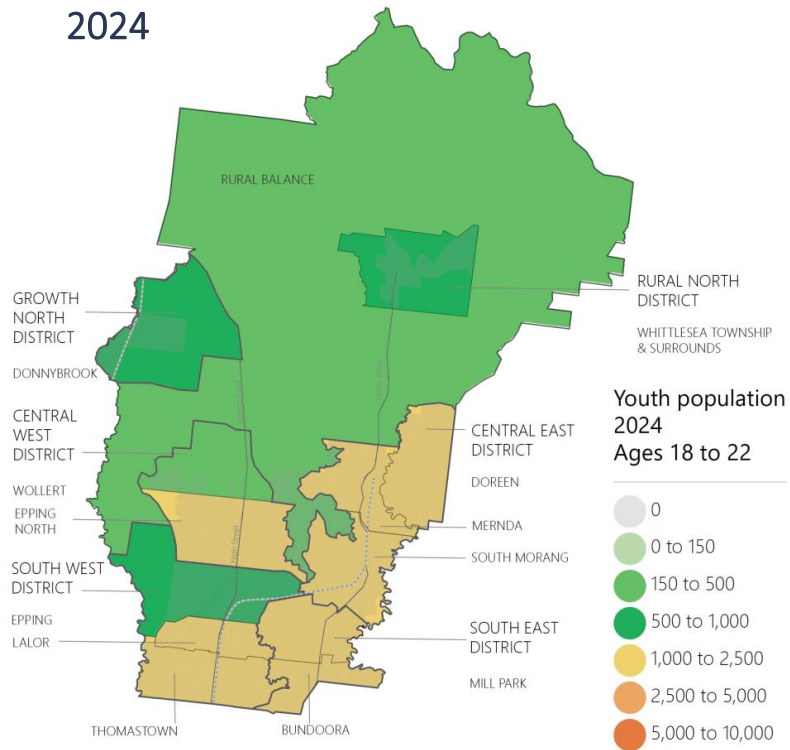


Population growth – ages 18-22 years

Population change, 2024-2041

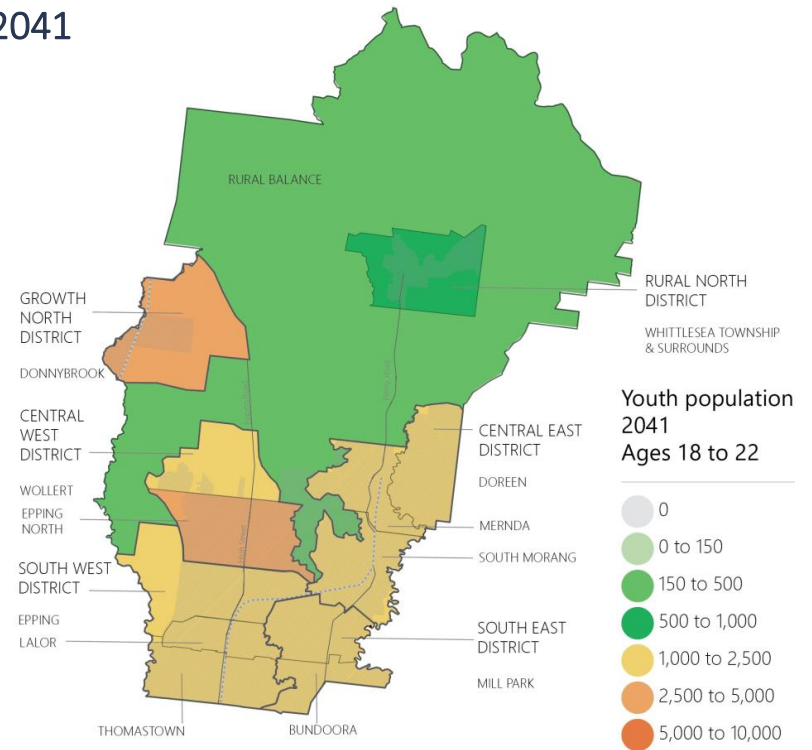
Currently Epping North and Mill Park have the greatest number of 18-22yo. In 2041, this will transition to Donnybrook, Epping North and Mill Park. Concentration of this age cohort in the South- East District likely reflects tertiary facilities in this location. Refer to Appendix B for population numbers.

2024



SGSEP.COM.AU

2041



Source: Profile.id, 2024

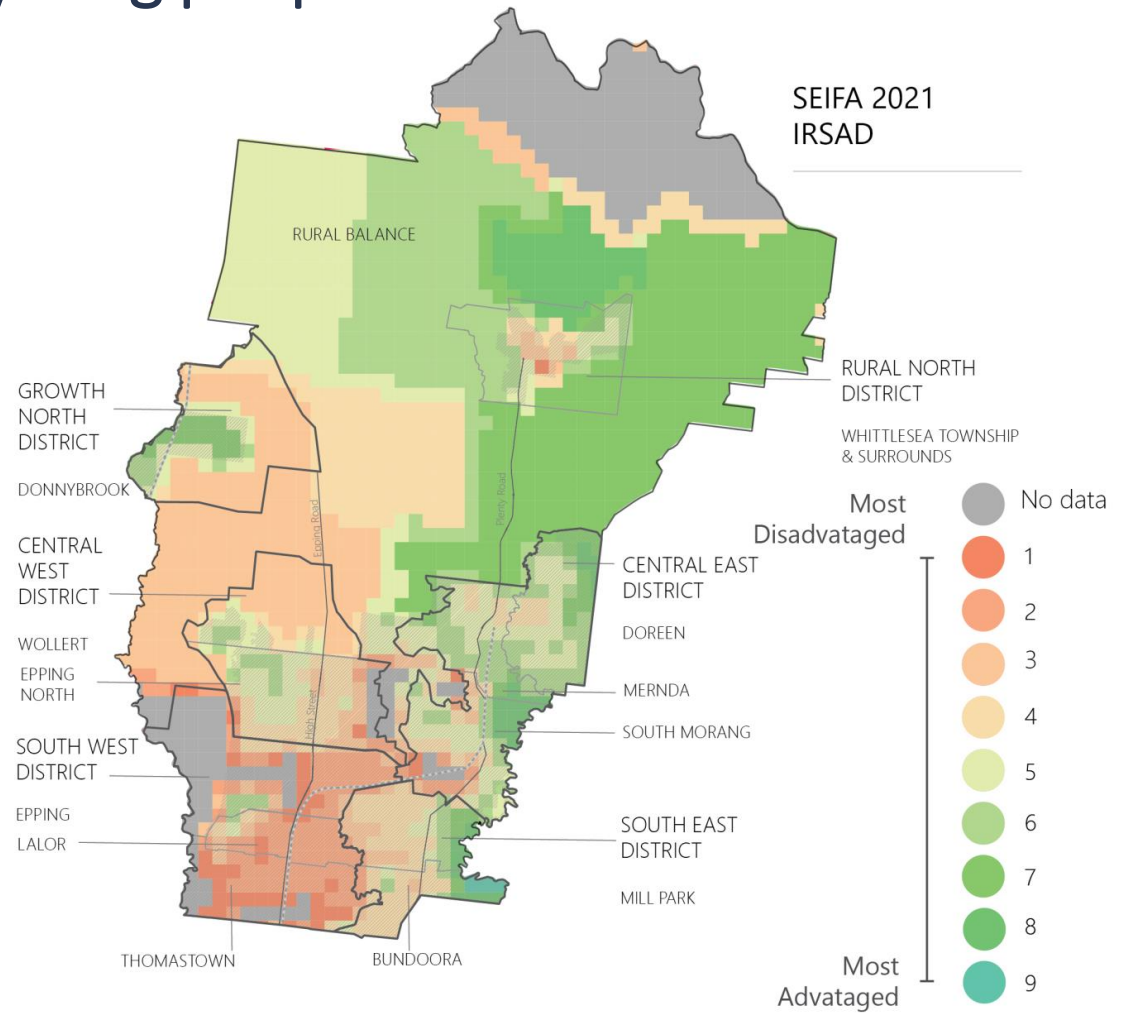
17

Mapping profiles of young people

SEIFA Disadvantage

Greatest area of SEIFA disadvantage is concentrated in the South West District (Lalor, Thomastown), parts of Central East and Central West.

The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) summarises information about the economic and social conditions of people and households.



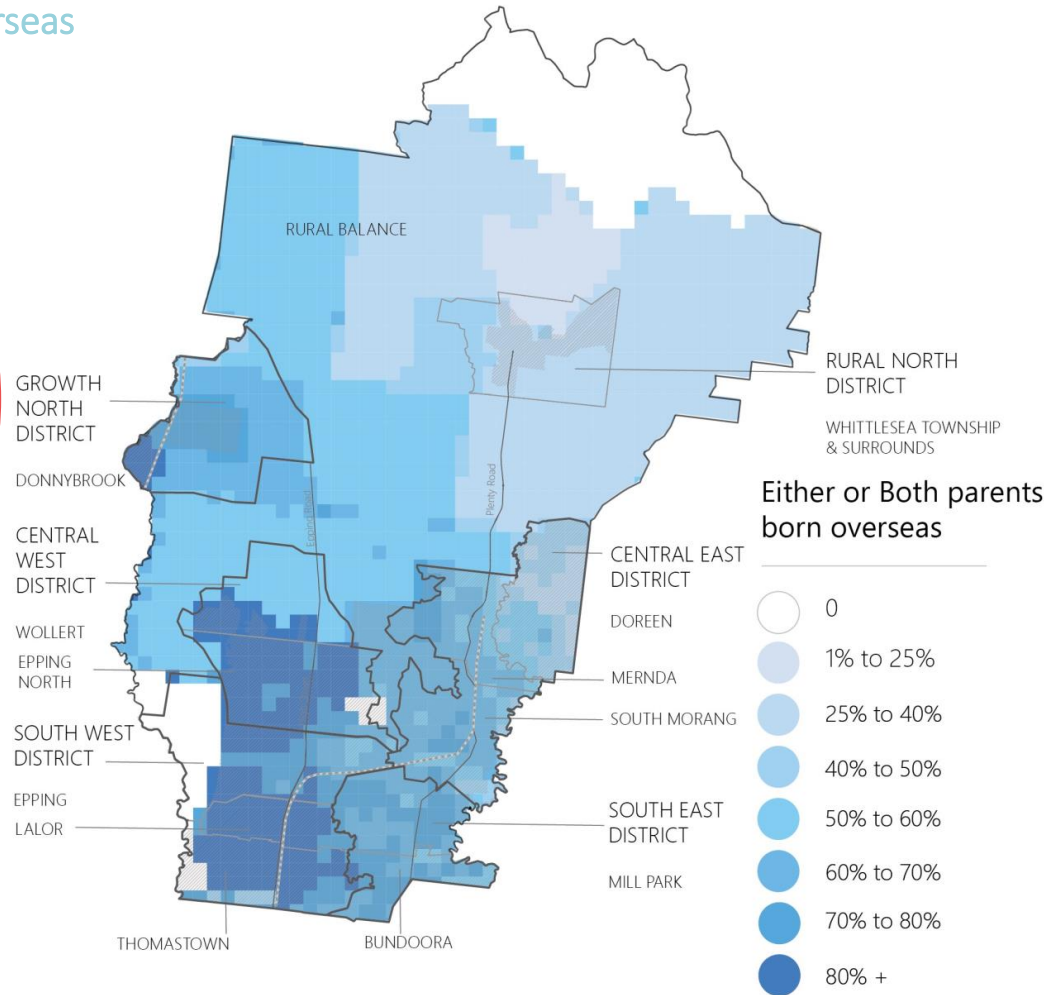
Source: ABS Census, 2021

Mapping profiles of young people

Cultural Diversity- Parents Born Overseas

There is a strong concentration of households in South West and Central West Districts (and pockets of Donnybrook) of either or both parents born overseas (80%+), suggesting strong cultural diversity of households with different cultural backgrounds and heritage.

Dataset applied to total population.

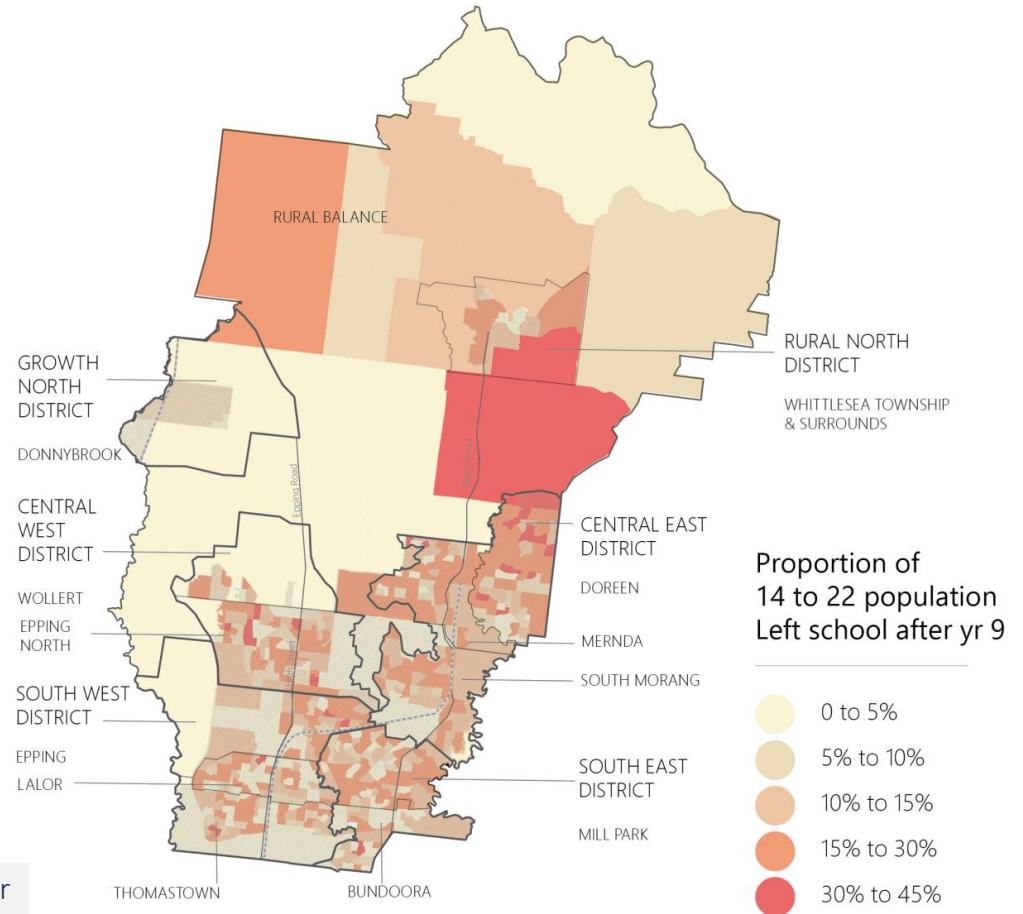


Source: ABS Census, 2021

Mapping profiles of young people

School Disengagement

Dispersed population of school leavers in Epping North, Thomastown, Bundoora, Doreen and Mernda. Could suggest disengagement from school or pursuit of vocational training opportunities.



Dataset applied to % of population of 14 to 22 year olds who left school after year 9. Red and dark orange shaded area is driven by small denominator (small population number) and could be skewing results.

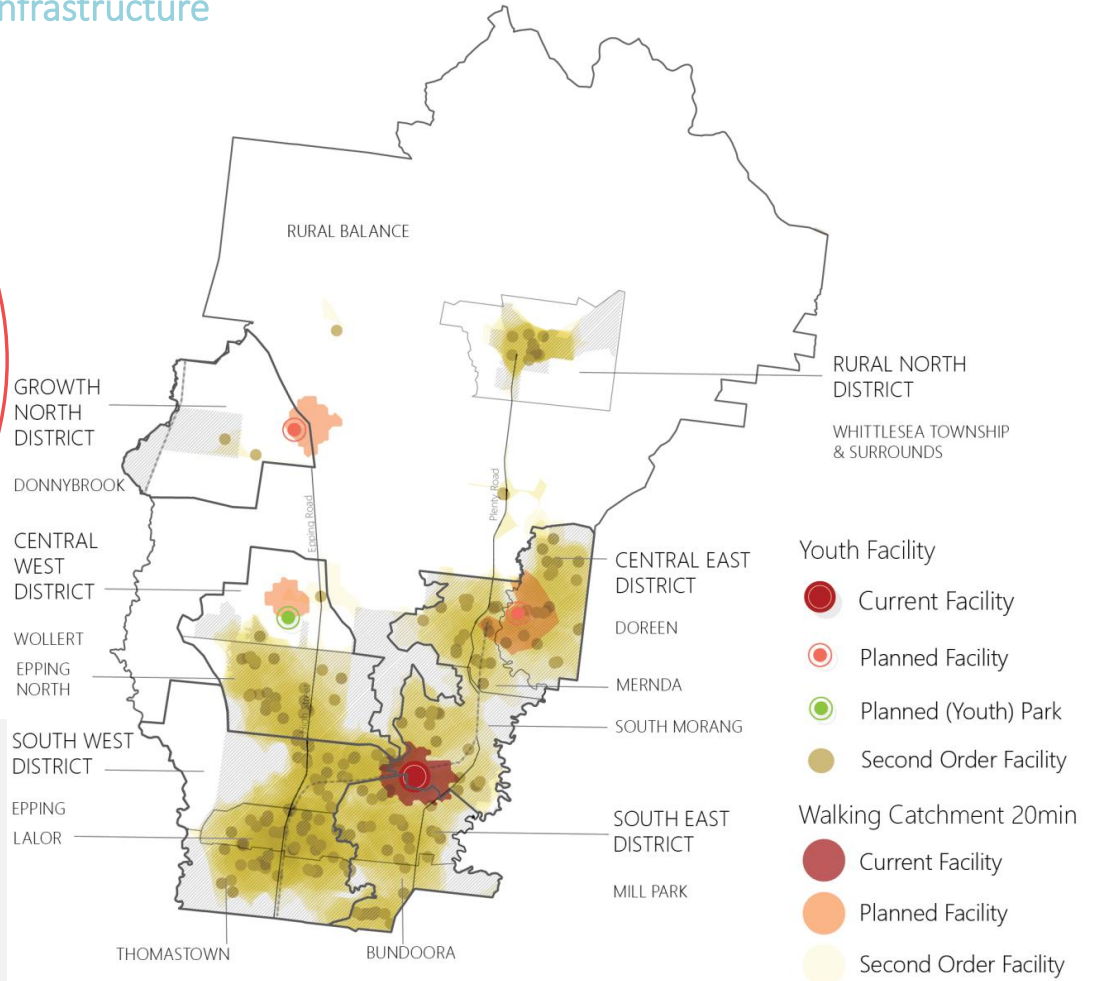
Source: ABS Census, 2021

Mapping profiles of youth infrastructure

Access to current and planned youth infrastructure

This map highlights current access to dedicated youth facilities to the South and parts of Central East districts. Currently there is poor access to existing centres in South West District and parts of Central East districts, however a number of second order facilities exist. Growth North and Central West are generally lacking in either dedicated or second order facilities.

Second order facilities refers to non-dedicated or informal spaces or centres that young people use including libraries, schools, tertiary facilities, recreational facilities, community centres and parks. A 20 minute walkable catchment has been applied.



Mapping profiles of young people

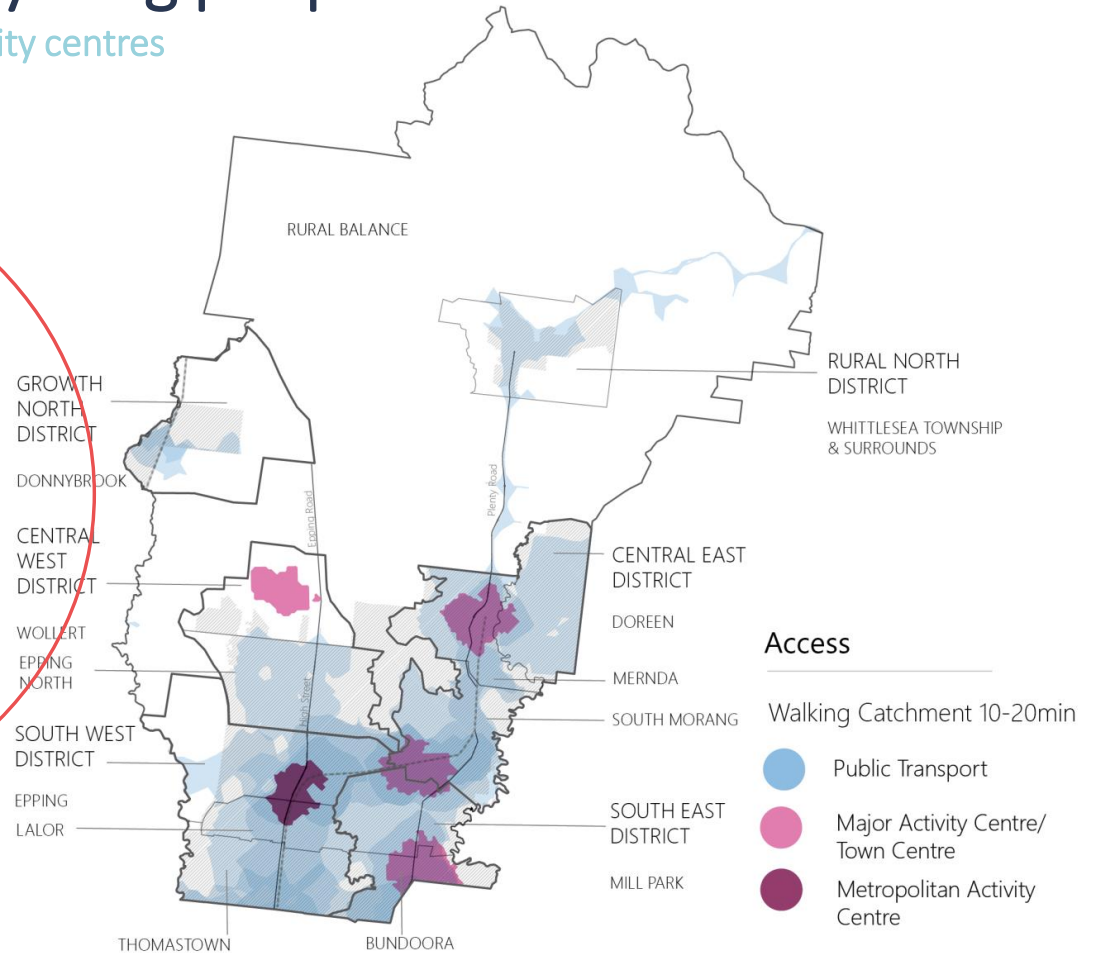
Access to public transport and activity centres

North Growth (and Rural North): Poorly serviced by PT with poor access to TC.

Central West: Some access to the Wollert TC but limited PT access.

South West: Moderately serviced by PT and other amenities/ recreational opportunities for young people. Includes Epping Central, Lalor/ Thomastown TCs.

South East and Central East: Moderately well serviced by public transport and TCs, noting that some gaps in central South Morang, Mernda and Doreen.



PT = Public Transport
 TC = Town Centre

Principal Public Transport Network: 20 min walkable catchment
 Local Bus Routes: 10 min walkable catchment
 Town Centres: 20 min walkable catchment

Summary of youth profile analysis

Summary of key demographic change across each district

District	Key findings
Central East (South Morang, Mernda, Doreen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance of primary school aged children, which will reduce over time. • South Morang will see growth in tertiary population. • Secondary school aged children dominant in Doreen and Mernda but forecast to decline over time. • Parts of the district well serviced by PT. Central East is poorly serviced by Town Centre. • Has existing Edge Youth Facility noting that this is proposed to close in 2028. It is noted that a planned dedicated youth facility is proposed to be delivered in 2032 in Mernda.
South East (Mill Park, Bundoora)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance of tertiary cohort reflecting tertiary facilities in this location (RMIT, Latrobe campuses), as well as access to employment opportunities. • Parts of the district well serviced by PT and Bundoora and South Morang Town Centre, noting that the latter is on border of South East/ Central East districts.
South West (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All youth cohorts forecast to grow over time. Dominance of tertiary cohorts in 2041, particularly within Thomastown. • Parts of the district well serviced by public transport and existing urban area including Metropolitan, Major and Neighbourhood Activity Centres/ Town Centres, suggesting density of recreational facilities and support for young people. • Strong cultural diversity and area of greatest disadvantage.
Central West (Wollert, Epping North)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epping North has current highest population of 5-11yo and 12-17yo and will continue to be one of the highest concentrations in 2041. Wollert is forecast to have high population of 5-11yo in 2041. • Dominance of primary school aged children. • Strong cultural diversity • Poorly serviced by PT. Town Centre in Wollert-a potential future location for future youth hub.
Growth North (Donnybrook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant growth across entire youth population, dominated by primary school aged children. • In 2041, it will have very high (or highest) population of 5-11yo, 12-17yo and 18-22yo. • Limited PT, Town Centre and other amenities. Potential opportunity for future youth hub- noting that a proposed Youth Facility is proposed in 2036. • Strong cultural diversity.
Rural North (Whittlesea Township, Rural Balance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will see decline across all cohorts, suggesting young people moving out of area, reflecting ageing population in rural areas. • Poorly serviced by PT.

03

POLICY CONTEXT & KEY STRATEGIC DRIVERS

Policy context

Policies impacting Whittlesea’s youth and the provision of youth services and infrastructure

State Government Youth Strategy 2022-2027 sets out a framework that will inform the Government’s work over the next five years, including how it will work with young people and the youth and community sectors to improve young people’s outcomes.

Whittlesea 2040 is a high-level document that sets out the overarching vision for Whittlesea community in 2040. The Vision is guided by four goals, including a *connected community* which accounts for the availability of community infrastructure and services for children.

Community Plan 2021-2025 shapes the future for the City of Whittlesea and clearly articulates Council plans and strategies. Relevant initiatives under the Plan include developing a long-term community infrastructure plan.

Youth Plan 2030+ includes a Wellbeing Outcomes Framework outlining Council’s goals for young people. With three focus areas, the Plan identifies key concerns and desires of young people, including mental health, respect, safety and connection to services. Council’s existing youth service is place- based and preventative model based on social inclusion and participation.

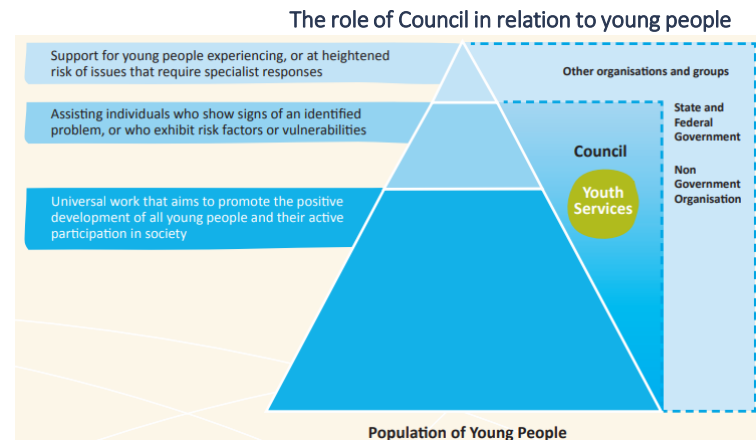
Youth Services Profile Summary provides a broad overview of the youth services and infrastructure in Whittlesea as well as the design and layout of a new youth hub.

The State of Whittlesea Children and Young People brings together data to provide insights into children and young people’s development, health

and wellbeing, and experiences.

Youth Engagement Strategy provides a summary of findings from a workshop with young people, identifying their concerns and ideas for future youth services. The overarching themes include accessibility, location proximity, connection, safe spaces, and awareness of services.

Refer to Appendix A for a full list of relevant Council policies and strategies.



Source: Youth Plan 2030+ (Whittlesea Council, 2018)

Key strategic drivers

There are a range of challenges facing the City of Whittlesea, and local governments generally.

Given the extent of challenges identified, Council will need to consider its future role in community infrastructure in terms of traditional models of delivery, funding, operation and servicing.

The key strategic drivers for the Whittlesea youth hub are outlined in the following pages.

Timely delivery of infrastructure in growing communities

In a growth area such as Whittlesea, community infrastructure, and specifically youth infrastructure can bring a new community together, as well as provide essential services, and critical social connections for young people.

This is critical in the establishment of new communities which often have no other or limited access to other infrastructure or services.

Due to challenges in service viability (having enough community members to make them viable), land constraints and/ or financial or funding constraints, the delivery of infrastructure in growing communities can be delayed, putting communities, and in particular young people, at risk of social isolation, worsened by no or poor access to services or transport.

Another critical factor is that the land for community infrastructure has not yet been secured through the PSP process. The high cost of upfront works, and the shortfall of DCP funds in the early stages of the development, can make it difficult to finance the works required. This means that young people in these areas (for example Donnybrook and Wollert) are left without key infrastructure until well after the community is established.

Varying demand across the municipality

While Council's growth areas will continue to require new infrastructure, this will need to be closely managed with the demand of its established communities.

Council will need to carefully manage competing demands of its established communities, often with ageing infrastructure, and growth area communities that may have no infrastructure.

It will be important for Council to ensure an equitable distribution and access to service and facilities across both communities. As part of this, Council may need to explore opportunities to upgrades and modernise its existing community centres to be more youth friendly and adaptable to the changing demands of young people in these locations.

Potentially Council will also need to adapt infrastructure delivery levels (e.g. increase levels or type of service) for areas that are more vulnerable or need additional support.

Key strategic drivers

Cont.

Growth areas municipalities are financially constrained

Local governments have largely been tasked with financing the delivery, servicing and management of community infrastructure.

In growth areas, such as Whittlesea, this infrastructure not only needs to be delivered in a timely way (given the lack of existing infrastructure) but also act as an important anchor to support the connection of new communities.

A number of new assets need to be delivered, which is contributing to an overall increase in asset management, renewal and redevelopment costs.

While growth area councils have access to development contributions and state infrastructure grants, there are increasing financial pressures as a result of increasing service demands, increasing infrastructure costs, in addition to rate capping. It is also important to note that typically developer contributions only cover a small portion of total costs and are prone to cost overruns due to initial under costings and changing standards.

This financially constrained environment is important when considering the future funding of a youth hub/s.

Growing asset pool and ageing assets

While many of the growth area assets are in a good condition (new), there are also likely to be a number of ageing assets within Council's established areas. And the infrastructure that is being built today will all need significant renewal and redevelopment in next 20 to 50 years.

In addition, there are also a number of state infrastructure projects that are handed over for Council to own and manage.

All of this will place significant strain on Council's capital budgets now and into the future.

Changing, diverse needs of young people

The way in which young people interact and want to use youth infrastructure is changing and will continue to change in the future.

The varying needs of young people from 8 years old to 24 years old is diverse and the service model will need to reflect that.

The design and use of infrastructure will need to be able to adapt to current and future changes.

04

INSIGHTS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Consultation overview

Previous consultations

This section will consider the gaps in provision and barriers that young people are currently experiencing in accessing services delivered by Council (and other service providers) identified in previous consultation. It will also consider key service demand pressures and trends.

A number of previous consultations have been undertaken regarding the preferred youth facility in the municipality.

In August 2022, Council undertook a workshop with young people to understand their experience of living in Whittlesea, their concerns and specific ideas about future youth services, to help support Council's place-based approach to youth services planning.

(It should be noted that only 9 people participated in the workshop and may not reflect the broader needs of young people in the municipality).

More recently, Jeanette Pope worked closely with a Youth Reference Group to understand their vision, needs and preferences for a future youth hub.

August 2022

September -
December 2023

Council workshop to understand young people's experiences, concerns and ideas about youth services.

Jeanette Pope worked with Youth Steering Group to understand needs and preferences and explore best practice examples. Local service providers and agencies were also consulted.

SGSEP.COM.AU



Insights from local service providers (2023)

Local agencies and organisations in Whittlesea reported the following major issues impacting young people



Rates of family violence

High levels of family violence and aggressive behaviors, including bullying and a negative response towards groups like LGBTQIA+, are prevalent in Whittlesea. The elevated incidence of family violence in the area contributes to various challenges for young individuals, such as an increased risk of homelessness.



Disengagement from school

Including reported school refusal and behavioural issues in school.



Mental health issues

Ranging from relatively minor anxieties to serious conditions such as disordered eating and self-harm.



Social isolation and loneliness is impacting young people's wellbeing

According to Australian research, social isolation and loneliness are heightened in growth areas due to a disconnect from community activities outside of school. This is attributed to:

- fewer recreational options
- limited transportation options, and
- the increased prevalence of parents with longer commutes.

Consequently, teenagers in these areas often find themselves alone or responsible for looking after siblings for extended periods after school.

In addition to the challenges posed by remote learning during COVID-19, young people in the area are encountering difficulties in developing social cues, finding their social groups, and building networks. Despite being busy, they are still experiencing feelings of loneliness.

Insights from young people and service providers(2023)

Based on consultation with Jeanette Pope this includes key insights from the Youth Reference Group, as well as from service providers in relation to service barriers.



A lack of services

There are insufficient services, with existing services currently understaffed and overwhelmed (e.g., child and family services, Navigator, mental health services, etc.).

Additionally, certain services, like Orange Door, operate on a voluntary basis with parental or guardian agreement, leading to potential complications for young individuals.



A lack of prevention options and things for young people to do

There is a lack of preventive measures and recreational activities for young people, including drop-in facilities and programs.

Many community centres are oriented towards young families or are primarily service-focused, such as Edge, which concentrates on mental health services.



Parental concern

Some parents are concerned about the types of places that young people can attend. They are concerned about safety in the design and access of these spaces.



A large diverse area to service, with a lack of transport

Whittlesea is a large and diverse area that will require a network of places for young people. Some young people travel into the city, Collingwood or Seymour to use youth hubs. With a lack of transport options in the area, access to youth services is a challenge.

Insights from young people (2022)

Key feedback from the Council Workshop in August 2022



What infrastructure are young people currently using?

- **Public Transport**, especially buses, to reach local destinations such as parks, cinemas, schools, libraries, and shopping centres. Trains are also used to travel to the city.
- **Shopping Centres**, including Pacific Epping and Westfield Plenty Valley, for socialising with friends, eating, working and shopping.
- **Libraries**, as they offer a safe, quiet and free space for individual or group study, particularly after school. Libraries serve as a "third space" for individuals who may lack confidence to venture out alone but still want to be in the company of others.
- **Parks and Recreational Facilities** are frequently visited by young people for walks, physical activities and relaxation.
- **The EDGE and council buildings**.

Participants specifically indicated that the **EDGE** doesn't feel accessible, rather, 'cold and intimidating', due to the closed off entrance which makes the space feel 'private'.



What do young people require from services and spaces?

Spaces and services should be:

- **Accessible** by public transport, have car parking and be close to homes and schools.
- **Open after school** until 8pm or 9pm for afterhours study **and on weekends**.
- **Sensory** friendly with warm lighting.
- **Quiet** enough to study, while providing recreational spaces.
- **Inclusive** and inviting to all, with minimal barriers.

They should include:

- Access to indoor and outdoor spaces
- A public kitchen
- Flexible spaces and rooms
- Information resources
- Access to technology.



What are the key spaces and services needed by young people?

- Accessible professional services including mental health support.
- Multicultural hub to share culture and identify and learn about others.
- Study/library facilities, including PCs and internet access.
- Creative spaces for music and art.
- Social/recreational space, including board games, sofas, and spaces for chilling.
- Career support to apply for jobs, write CVs, and get career advice.
- Peer support groups.
- Tutoring.

Insights from young people (2023)

Key insights from the Youth Reference Group relating to the design and types of spaces

Young people identified the following design elements and spaces as important to the new youth hub:

- Café or kitchen
- Event space
- Maker spaces
- Digital lab
- Gaming lab
- Outdoor space
- Study space.

Young people preferred open plan spaces and did not like the presence of small office spaces/meeting rooms considered important by some agencies.

Design features identified by young people



Source: Jeanette Pope and the Whittlesea Youth Co-Design Group, 2023

Insights from young people (2023)

Key feedback from the Youth Reference Group – principles for a new youth space

Culturally appropriate

by ensuring the building design and workforce allows different groups to see themselves reflected.

Youth led

through co-design of the space and its program of activities.

Attractive

a high-quality open-plan space of zones with a cosy, light and welcoming vibe.

Engaging

by enabling young people to connect, be creative, learn about things that matter to them, and have a say.

Safe

and supervised by good people.

Integrated with community

through collaborations and partnerships across Whittlesea.

Activated

with a dynamic program of events and activities that respond to young people's needs.

Accessible

by transport, technology, opening hours, capacity and cost.

Equitable

for all young people, ensuring different opportunities are available to different groups in different places.

Summary of key insights from stakeholder consultation

Key service barriers and gaps

Barriers young people are currently experiencing

The engagement identified a number of barriers that young people experience in accessing services.

- **Geographical barriers:** young people in parts of the municipality, particularly to the north, expressed concern accessing services due to lack of transport options, limited-service availability or having to travel long distances.
- **Stigma and discrimination** based on age, gender, race, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status was cited as creating barriers to accessing existing services, making young people hesitant to seek services due to fear of judgment, discrimination or social exclusion. There was also discussion of how the stigma surrounding mental health can prevent young people from accessing necessary mental health services (for example Headspace). Fear of judgment or social repercussions may discourage individuals from addressing mental health concerns.
- **Cultural or Language Barriers:** Young people from diverse cultural backgrounds experienced language barriers or encounter services that may not be culturally sensitive or responsive to their needs, making it difficult for them to access and use these services effectively.
- **Financial barriers:** Limited financial resources was cited as a potential reason that restricts young people from accessing certain services, especially if there are associated costs such as transport fees, service fees, or the cost of required materials.

Lack of formal recreational or youth friendly spaces

Formal recreational spaces for young people to gather was identified as a key gap.

- Services that are not designed or adapted to the specific needs and preferences of young people may discourage their use.
- In addition to dedicated youth facilities, creating youth-friendly spaces within other buildings or centres can help make services more accessible and welcoming for young people. This project needs to consider all aspects of contemporary youth service provision.
- Other gaps identified included inconvenient operating hours for young people for example during school hours, inadequate capacity, age restrictions, costs and feeling a place might be unsafe.

05

CURRENT AND FUTURE NEED

Benchmarking future need for young people

Benchmarks and methods

This section seeks to benchmark current and future requirements for youth infrastructure to understand areas of greatest need in the City.

This analysis is based on the application of industry-standard planning provision benchmarks to current and future populations of young people. We have assessed future need across the municipality for each district area based on Council's planning timeframes of: short (2028), medium (2034) and long term (2041).

Planning benchmarks

In the absence of Council-agreed benchmarks, we have applied two sets of planning benchmarks to provide a useful comparison to understand potential future need. They provide different triggers for delivery, discussed in further detail in the following pages.

The first benchmark is the State government-endorsed benchmark for a dedicated youth facility from the *Planning for Community Infrastructure in Growth Areas Guideline* (ASR Research 2008).

We have also modelled the *Western Australia Guidelines for Community Infrastructure* benchmark prepared by Parks and Leisure Australia (WA, 2020), as this is widely considered an industry best practice.

Benchmarks or planning provision ratios provide a useful starting point to understand potential future supply and demand, however there are several limitations which are discussed below. More detailed analysis, such as stakeholder engagement and policy and literature reviews are also important for understanding the potential demand resulting from

the needs and interests of young people.

A cautionary note about the use of benchmarks:

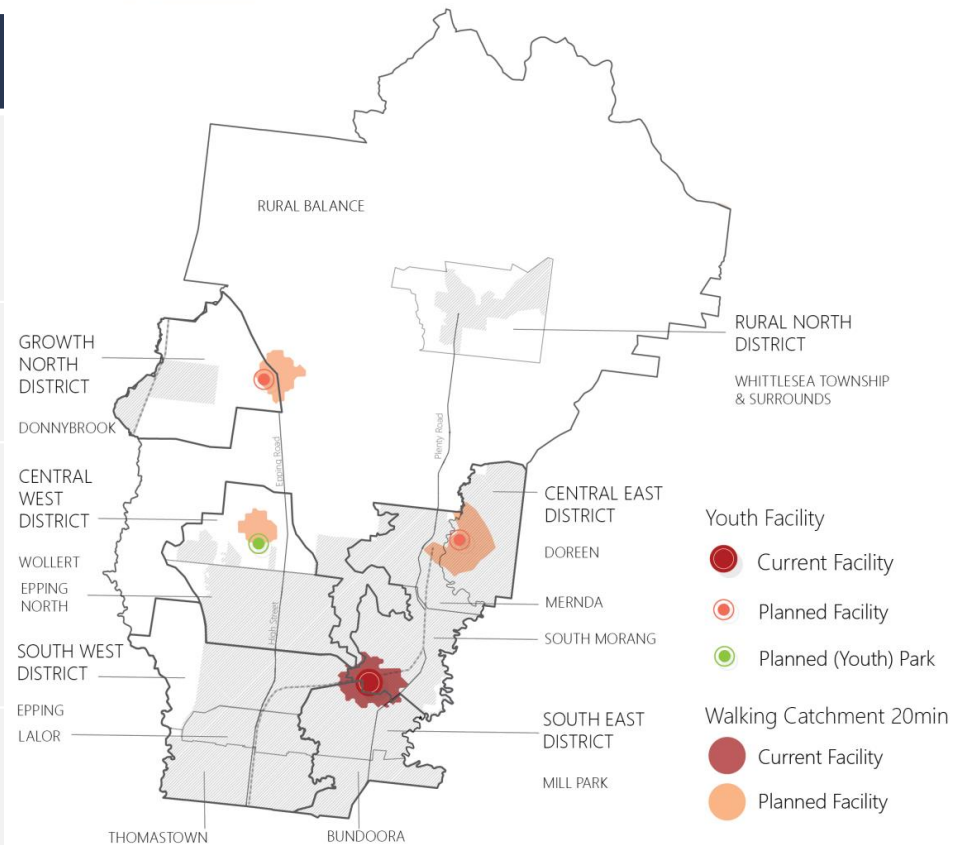
- The benchmarks used in this analysis apply a total population trigger which does not capture the spatial variation of the youth population across districts.
- The benchmarks can provide a misleading picture of future need as they do not consider the current use, condition and functionality of existing facilities.
- Benchmarks assume a single use facility and typically do not take into account contemporary or shared use delivery models. The benchmarks also fail to consider the more informal spaces that young people use or access.
- The benchmarks assume defined catchments that do not reflect the true nature of how and where people access services. For example, young people may attend facilities in neighbouring municipalities or closer to their school, or the city centre.
- The gaps assessment assumes that all existing youth infrastructure provides the same level of service.
- It does not consider changes to existing service levels or facilities.

Note: the needs assessment considers proposed youth facilities with exception of the proposed Urban Youth Park in Wollert.

Youth infrastructure and services

Current and planned dedicated youth Infrastructure and services

Facility	Status	Provider	Description	Included in Needs Assessment
The Edge	Existing	Council	Council's existing (and only) dedicated youth centre in the municipality. It also includes Headspace and YSAS. This is proposed to close in 2028 when lease expires.	Yes. Included until is proposed to close in 2028 .
Youth Park	Planned	Council	Wollert PSP (2017, amended 2022) identifies an urban youth park in the Wollert Town Centre Central Play Space.	No as it is not a dedicated youth facility.
Youth Facility	Planned	Council	Donnybrook- Woodstock PSP (2017) identifies a youth facility including flexible meeting and activity space and storage, public amenity, district level admin/office space. It is part of a youth family space . This will be co-located on Council land.	Yes. Included in 2036 when it is proposed to be delivered.
Youth Facility	Planned	Council	Mernda Strategy Plan (2008) identifies a 'dedicated youth facility' comprising an activity room and amenities room.	Yes. Included in 2032 when it is proposed to be delivered.



Note: A 20 minute walkable catchment has been applied to existing and planned facilities.

Current and future need - WA Benchmark

WA Benchmark- Dedicated Youth Space (District Level Facility)

This needs assessment is based on the *Western Australia Guidelines for Community Infrastructure* prepared by Parks and Leisure Australia in 2020.

Benchmark: **1 district level Youth Centre/Youth Space to be provided for every 20-30,000 people. This is averaged here to 1:25,000 people.**

This benchmarks assumes that space should be provided for a youth worker, employment training programs, drop- in areas, formal areas and outreach programs.

District	Current (2024)	Short (2028)			Medium (2034)			Long (2041)		
	Supply	Supply	Demand	Gap	Supply	Demand	Gap	Supply	Demand	Gap
District 1: Growth North (Donnybrook)	0	0	0.6	-0.6	0	1.3	-1.3	1***	1.9	-0.9
District 2: Rural North (Whittlesea Township, Rural Balance)	0	0	0.4	-0.4	0	0.4	-0.4	0	0.4	-0.4
District 3: Central East (South Morang, Mernda, Doreen)	1*	0	3.3	-3.3	1**	3.5	-2.5	1	3.5	-2.5
District 4: Central West (Wollert, Epping North)	0	0	2.4	-2.4	0	2.9	-2.9	0	3.5	-3.5
District 5: South East (Mill Park, Bundoora)	0	0	1.8	-1.8	0	1.9	-1.9	0	2.0	-2.0
District 6: South West (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown)	0	0	2.6	-2.6	0	2.8	-2.8	0	3.1	-3.1
Total	1	0	11.1	-11.1	1	12.8	-11.8	2	14.4	-12.4

* Current Edge facility proposed to close in 2028. ** Planned Mernda facility to open in 2032. *** Planned Donnybrook facility to open in 2036.

Current and future need - ASR Benchmark

ASR Benchmark - Youth Hub

This needs assessment is based on the *Planning for Community Infrastructure in Growth Areas Guidelines* prepared by ASR in 2008.

Benchmark: 1 Youth Hub to be provided for every 45,000 people.

Note that this benchmark assumes that the dedicated youth space is incorporated within a “level 3” multi-purpose community centre on a minimum of 1.5ha of land, adjacent to open space, schools and public transport. The facility includes offices, consulting rooms, flexible meeting space, interview room, dedicated youth training space with wet space, a community café and reception.

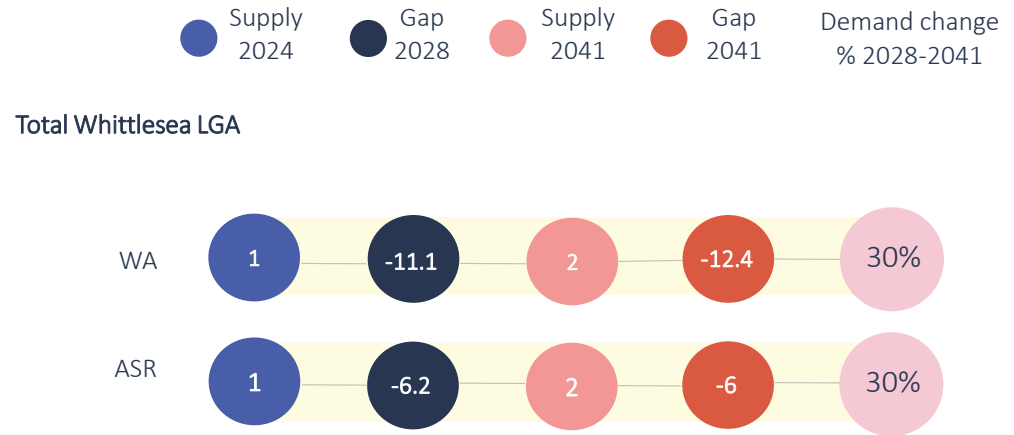
District	Current (2024)	Short (2028)			Medium (2034)			Long (2041)		
	Supply	Supply	Demand	Gap	Supply	Demand	Gap	Supply	Demand	Gap
District 1: Growth North (Donnybrook)	0	0	0.4	-0.4	0	0.7	-0.7	1***	1.1	-0.1
District 2: Rural North (Whittlesea Township, Rural Balance)	0	0	0.2	-0.2	0	0.2	-0.2	0	0.2	-0.2
District 3: Central East (South Morang, Mernda, Doreen)	1*	0	1.9	-1.9	1**	1.9	-0.9	1	2.0	-1.0
District 4: Central West (Wollert, Epping North)	0	0	1.3	-1.3	0	1.6	-1.6	0	1.9	-1.9
District 5: South East (Mill Park, Bundoora)	0	0	1.0	-1.0	0	1.0	-1.0	0	1.1	-1.1
District 6: South West (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown)	0	0	1.4	-1.4	0	1.6	-1.6	0	1.7	-1.7
Total	1	0	6.2	-6.2	1	7.1	-6.1	2	8.0	-6.0

* Current Edge facility proposed to close in 2028. ** Planned Mernda facility to open in 2032. *** Planned Donnybrook facility to open in 2036.

Current and future need- Total municipal

Summary of key need – needs assessment results

Under both benchmarks, significant additional youth facilities will be required: between 6-12 additional youth facilities.



Current gap (2028)

- WA Benchmark: 11 (11.1) additional youth facilities
- ASR Benchmark: 6 (6.2) additional youth facilities

Forecast gap (2041)

- WA Benchmark: 12 (12.4) additional youth facilities.
- ASR Benchmark: 6 additional youth facilities.

Current and future need- Greatest district need

Summary of key need – needs assessment results

Central West (Epping North, Wollert)

CW will have **the highest total** demand for youth facilities.

- By 2041, the district will require an additional:
 - WA Benchmark: 3-4 (3.5) facilities
 - ASR Benchmark: 2 (1.9) facilities

South West (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown)

SW will have **the next highest** demand for youth facilities. By 2041, the district will require an additional:

- WA Benchmark: facilities: 3 (3.1) facilities
- ASR Benchmark: 1-2 (1.7) facilities

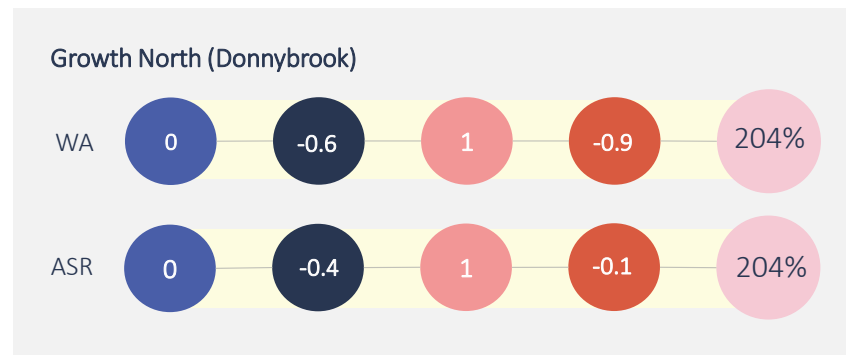
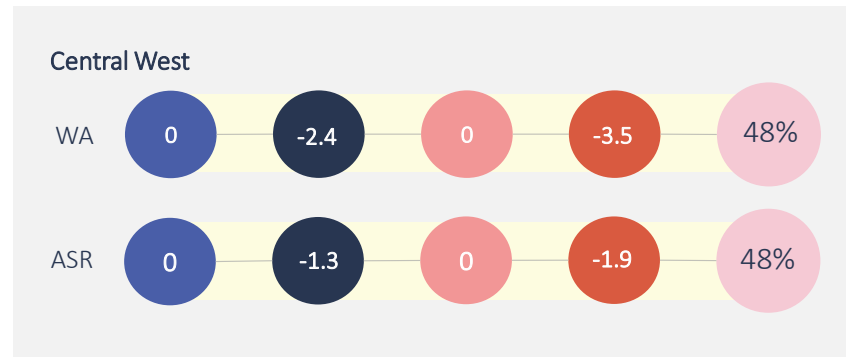
Central East (South Morang, Mernda, Doreen)

CE will have the third highest **total demand** for youth facilities.

- By 2041, the district will require an additional:
 - WA Benchmark: 2-3 (2.5) facilities
 - ASR Benchmark: 1 (1.0) facility

Growth North (Donnybrook)

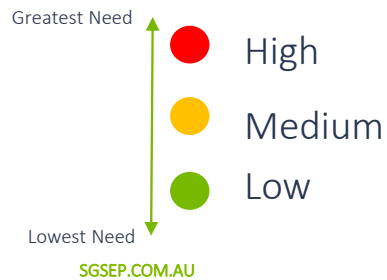
- Donnybrook is forecast to experience the **largest percentage increase in demand**.
- It will also have one of the highest population of youth sub-cohorts (by suburb/not district). This need is not necessarily reflected in the benchmark results as they apply a total population trigger. A planned youth facility will respond to future demand in this location..
- By 2041, the district will require an additional:
 - WA Benchmark: 1 (0.9) youth facilities
 - ASR Benchmark: None (0.1)



Summary of key results

Comparison of analysis results across each district

District	Pop 5-11yo	Pop 12-17yo	Pop 18-22yo	Planning Benchmark	Cultural Diversity	SEIFA	Access PT	Access Amenities
Central East	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Central West	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
South East	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
South West	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Growth North	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rural North	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●



Current and future need

Summary of needs assessment results

Service gap resulting from Edge closure

Council's existing youth facility, the EDGE, located in South Morang, services a significant population in the Central East district and beyond. However this facility is planned to close in 2028, leaving a sizeable service gap in the area, and the municipality more generally.

The Central East district currently has, and is forecast to have, a significant youth population (across all-sub cohorts). Following the closure of the Edge, a new youth hub in this location would be ideal to service this district, in addition to the South West (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown), accessible along the train corridor. Whilst it is noted that there is currently a small dedicated youth space in the Mernda Library, this has limited capacity and reach.

Significant growth forecast in areas where there are no facilities

Central West District, in particular Epping North, is forecast to have some of the highest populations of young people in the municipality. Whilst a dedicated youth facility is proposed to be operational in Donnybrook in 2036, it is clear that the emerging growth corridors to the north west will have significant needs as there are limited other options for young people in these areas, and geographically they are quite isolated.

One youth hub will not be sufficient – a different model is required

With demand for youth facilities forecast across the municipality, one youth hub will not be sufficient to service the large and diverse districts. A different model that includes smaller youth spaces incorporated into other community centres and spokes will need to be explored.

Strategic opportunities will need to be explored

Given the extent of gaps forecast, greater consideration will need to be given to strategic opportunities to repurpose or upgrade existing and/ or planned community facilities. This is something that has been identified as a potential opportunity for the South West district, where there are several Council owned sites. Opportunities to partner with other service providers, for example State Government to deliver assets may be required – discussed further in sections below.

Accessibility is a critical factor

While need is lower in areas with lower population, accessibility issues increase as development is generally more dispersed and public transport is not as well provided. This needs to be considered particularly for newer growth areas to the north of the municipality, particularly Central West and Growth North districts. Council should explore other models such as smaller youth spaces, temporary pop ups or service vans to address the gap in these locations. As noted earlier, Council will also need to consider the accessibility of the youth hub along transport corridors and public transport access.

06

FUTURE DELIVERY MODEL

Future delivery model

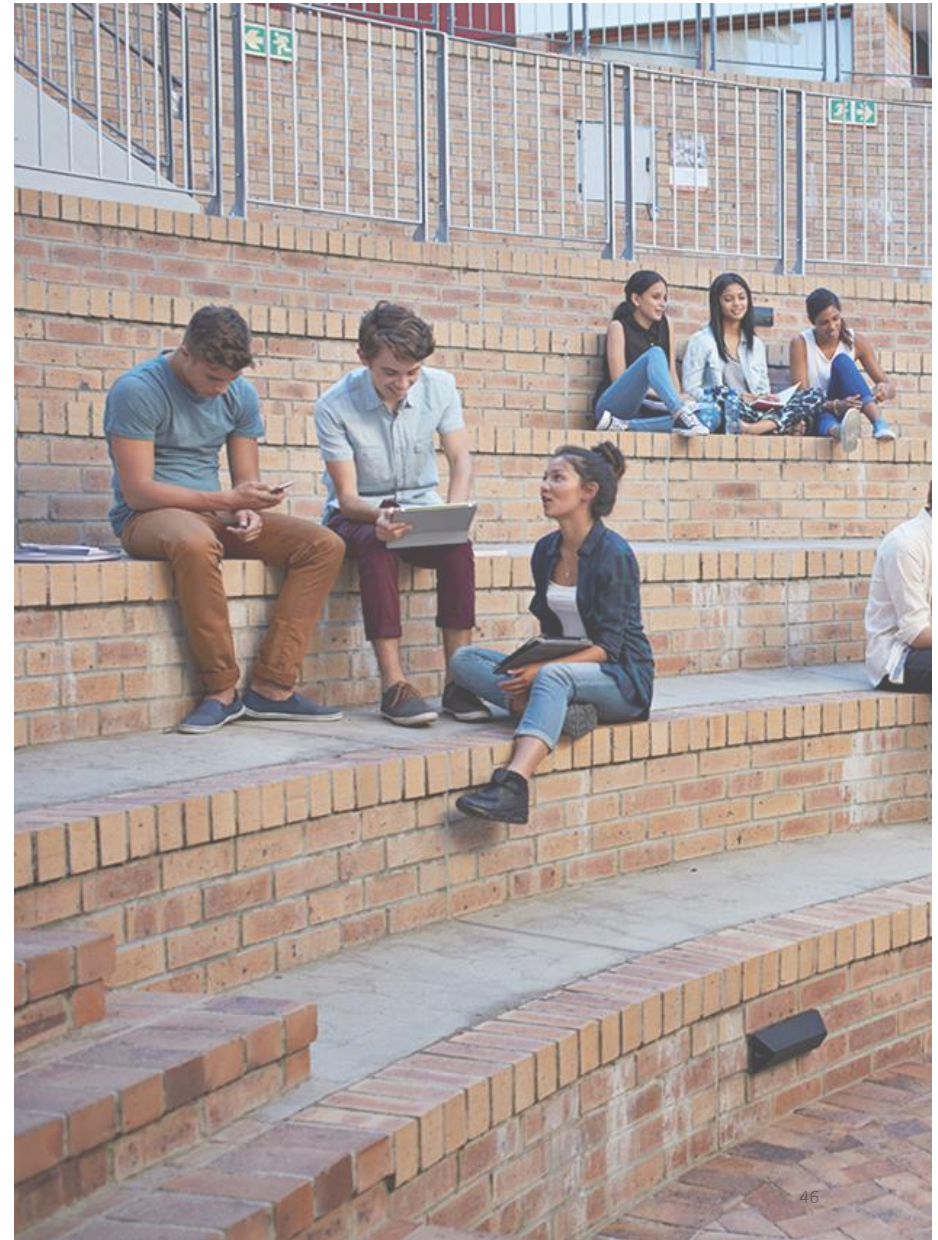
Section overview

This section discusses the key asset considerations that are required to respond to the service delivery model proposed.

This section will identify the potential service delivery model. This includes recommendations of how the future youth hub might be delivered within a stressed service system. It will then focus on identifying the key functional and spatial requirements for the proposed youth hub, informed by earlier analysis including feedback from young people and site visits of other youth facilities.

This section will address the following key aspects:

- **Location and accessibility**
- **Mix , size and configuration of spaces** for the proposed youth hub and associated spoke including consideration of how these spaces might changes over time. These are sourced from Council’s specification and best practice examples.
- **Other design and spatial considerations** including but not limited to storage, parking, furniture, access etc.
- **Governance model** including potential service partners.



Future delivery model

Asset response to future service delivery overview



This key strategic proposition is the future youth hub (or hubs) will support a cluster of specialised and interdependent youth spaces which could include both buildings as well as other non-assets responses (e.g. a service van) to support a range of functions for a changing and growing population of young people across the City.

Future delivery model

Asset response to future service delivery- Key Principles

Integrated with other services and co-location with other providers including links to universities and VET providers – particularly Polytechnic (formerly NMIT) – from a perspective of research and collaboration as well as capitalising on opportunities for future youth employment.

Less intervention, more prevention – a key tenet of the proposed youth hub is one that focuses *more* on providing opportunities for young people to create, gather and mix rather than specialised intervention services. The preventative model (as opposed to intervention) was determined by Council to be the most appropriate role for Council. In response, the new youth hub should primarily focus on drop-in and activities and events that address social isolation and loneliness. The mix, design and fit out of space in the hub should reflect diversity of the users.

Efficient

with the right level of clearly defined service and at the right time and place

A **'hub and spoke model'** which concentrates primary or core functions of the youth ecosystem/ service into the proposed youth hub, supported by a number of smaller more informal youth spaces or 'activations' that are able to respond to emerging youth needs over a vast geographic area. Spokes are especially important in municipalities that cover a large geographic area such as Whittlesea, with multiple growth fronts, where a dedicated youth centre in every larger suburb is not practical or feasible.

Integrated

moving from standalone facilities to multipurpose facilities

Accessible

to all that require them in, considering both adaptability and service requirements

Responsive

to changing community need

Proposed youth hub to be located within one of the key growth districts to support the significant population of young people forecast. While the established communities have the current critical mass of young people and supporting amenities such as cafes, restaurants, bars and clubs and entertainment etc, the growing population of young people in the northern growth areas is driving demand. It is clear that one new facility cannot fill the demand. Young people identified the opportunity to have vehicles (vans or trucks) that could connect and activate spaces across the network to extend its reach to young people. A community bus services could also be instigated to enable young people to connect with the network.

Future delivery model

Hub and Spoke Model



HUB

- **Vision/ Role and Function:** Core destination for young people. Provides a range of recreational, social, creative opportunities.
- **Common Elements:** Large open/ foyer area, small gallery/ function/ event space, multipurpose community rooms, community offices and general creative spaces, mixture of open flexible spaces and maker spaces, study area/ passive spaces/ quiet workspaces, kitchen, storage, amenities, open space, café/ social enterprise. Some outreach support by other service providers.
- **Key Considerations:** Flexible spaces that allow for a range of uses and activities, integrated design of public space. To operate as a dedicated youth centre and feel like youth-owned space.
- **Building Floorspace:** 200-400sqm.
- **Preferred Delivery Model:** Standalone or co-located with similar uses.
- **Preferred Scale of Facility:** Medium to large.
- **Initial Design Principles:** Flexible space that can service multiple functions and evolve over time, mix of quiet and interactive spaces, integrated inside and outside area, safe and accessible location. Youth led design that feels fun and playful, welcoming and inclusive.
- **Potential Locations:** Central East (South Morang), Central West (Epping North).



SPOKE/s

- **Vision/ Role and Function:** Smaller supportive or temporary youth spaces co-located with activated other uses such as library or community centres. Should allow for some Council staff desks and consulting rooms for outreach support by other service providers. Each spoke could have a different focus as required.
- **Common Elements:** Kitchenette, general multipurpose area, meeting rooms, consulting rooms.
- **Key Considerations:** In active part of town centre or district, adjacent or co-located with other community uses.
- **Building Floorspace:** 100-150sqm.
- **Preferred Delivery Model:** Co-located as part of broader community hub or facility - this could include shopping centre or TAFE campus. This spoke could also take the form of a non-asset response such as a service van.
- **Preferred Scale of Facility:** Small to medium.
- **Initial Design Principles :** Integrated with other services, safe and accessible location, friendly and welcoming space for young people to gather and interact (café, comfortable furniture).
- **Potential Locations:** This is dependent on ultimate hub location but could be located in South-West, Central West (Epping North), Central East (Mernda/Doreen).

Mix and quantity of spaces

Key considerations

Creating a future youth hub requires thoughtful planning to cater to the diverse needs of young people.

The following pages considers the potential mix and quantity of spaces or zones needed for the proposed youth hub and smaller spaces (“spokes”) that might be delivered as part of a shared community facility.

Each space or zone outlines key attributes in terms of functionality, location and size/ configuration. These have been informed by stakeholder feedback and best practice examples.

Allowing for flexibility and adaptability

Youth spaces need to be able to accommodate a range of uses (for example consulting rooms, staff offices, program space) and should be adaptable to meet changing needs.

Young people want a mix of spaces - both informal and formal. These spaces should provide opportunities for young people to create and express themselves. Success will be ultimately be in how these spaces are programmed.

Considering the mix of users

An ongoing challenge with any dedicated youth space will be to ensure an appropriate consideration is given to the range of users and to balance the privacy/safety of visitors, particularly vulnerable youth, with the need to create a vibrant, activated centre.

Consideration of end user experience is a crucial ingredient for success in all aspects of designing a future youth hub. Council’s youth team services a broad cohort of young people and their needs will be quite different. Careful consideration needs to be given to their specific needs and preferences in hub design.





SGSEP.COM.AU

Oxygen Youth Space, Coburg







Source: Merri-bek City Council





Mix and quantity of spaces – Youth Hub

 DESCRIPTION	 FUNCTIONAL/DESIGN ATTRIBUTES	 LOCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES	 SIZE AND CONFIGURATION
<p>Large Event/ Activity Space</p> <p>Large open foyer area that could be used for a range of activities including as a function/ event space, art gallery or for more informal socialising.</p>	<p>This will be the core space of the hub. It needs to be open, light, inviting and fun. Sufficient provision of furniture, storage and equipment to allow for informal recreation (e.g. couches, large communal tables, table tennis/ pool tables) as well as more formal events (such as functions/ exhibitions, film screenings).</p>	<p>Accessible and active frontage both within the hub itself and on the street. It should be the first space that you walk into. Kitchenette/ formal commercial kitchen located within this space and, potentially, a social enterprise café.</p>	<p>Minimum area of 80sqm – see further detail below/following pages for supporting amenities spatial requirements.</p>
<p>Maker Spaces</p> <p>Series of smaller and medium maker spaces that can accommodate “wet” arts and crafts, as well as more technical “dry” creative activities such as 3D printers and laser cutters. Meeting rooms can be repurposed for other smaller group discussions or meetings. Smaller music studios or podcast pods.</p>	<p>Medium art space should be able to accommodate wet art activities and include sinks, adequate storage etc.</p> <p>Smaller podcast studios will need appropriate technological and acoustic equipment.</p>	<p>Meeting rooms to be adjacent to each other so that they can be combined into one larger meeting room.</p> <p>Smaller spaces do not require access to natural light.</p>	<p>Minimum 50sqm</p> <p>Studios/ Pods: Minimum 10sqm</p>
<p>Quiet Spaces</p> <p>These spaces will support passive activities such as study and work. At other times they could also potentially support gaming activities such as online competitions and tournaments, as well as training/ employment opportunities.</p>	<p>These rooms would be equipped with computers, ports for laptops, large screens for gaming and interactive online events, printers etc. Sufficient technology provision in this location (for example good access to site WIFI).</p>		<p>Minimum 15sqm</p>

Mix and quantity of spaces – Youth Hub cont.

 DESCRIPTION	 FUNCTIONAL/ DESIGN ATTRIBUTES	 LOCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES	 SIZE AND CONFIGURATION
Staffing Requirements / Front Desk This will be dependent on the proposed number of Council staff based at the hub. Could function as staff area/ reception desk or used by other service providers/ Council staff as a “hot desk” at different times as required.	Will not be a formal office space but open desk area for staff.	Will need to be based close to the front entrance. More dedicated staff seating could be accommodated more flexibly within the building,	15sqm hot desk for visiting staff 30sqm office for staff (TBC by Council)
Kitchen (Optional) Communal kitchen space to make tea/ coffee and prepare food for events held in large open activity space. This potentially could be shared by a social enterprise café.	Access to hot water and fridge, microwave/ oven. Adequate kitchen storage.	Adjacent to large foyer.	Kitchen: 15sqm Kitchenette: 6 sqm
Supporting Amenities Including but not limited to circulation space, toilets, cleaner’s storage.	Accessible and gender-neutral toilets.	Accessible location within the building.	Circulation: Allow for 10% total floor area Toilets: 25sqm Cleaner’s Storage: 6sqm
Social Enterprise Café (Optional) A social enterprise café could help to activate the space, provide local employment opportunities and support and/or employ at risk youth.	Shared commercial kitchen area and seating area could activate the indoor foyer and outdoor space. Adequate storage would be required.	Ground floor, adjacent to the open foyer/ activity area. Ideally it would have a direct street frontage to encourage people to visit the hub.	
Outdoor Space It would be used similarly to the large event/ activity space that would host a range of formal and informal events and activities .	Direct connection with open foyer area. Sufficient provision of furniture, storage and equipment to allow for informal recreation (e.g. outdoor couches, large communal tables, table tennis/ pool tables).	Adjacent to open foyer area.	Site dependant
Mobile Youth Service Van Parking	To support parking of mobile youth service van.	Accessible location within the building.	Min. area: 13m x 4m by Council.

Mix and quantity of spaces – Spoke/s

 DESCRIPTION	 FUNCTIONAL/ DESIGN ATTRIBUTES	 LOCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES	 SIZE AND CONFIGURATION
<p>Medium Activity Space</p> <p>Medium activity space that can be used for range of activities including smaller events, meetings or informal recreational and group discussions.</p>	<p>Ideally space could be divided up to be repurposed for smaller group discussions. As this space will form part of a larger community hub/ other building, it will need to be designed and fitted out to be “youth friendly”; i.e. designed by young people, not corporate, playful and casual.</p> <p>Potentially each spoke could have a different focus, e.g. one spoke could focus on outreach services and another on creative or outdoor recreational spaces.</p>	<p>Ideally it would be located on the ground floor, safe and accessible frontage.</p>	<p>Minimum 80sqm</p>
<p>Consulting Rooms (Optional)</p> <p>A number of smaller consulting rooms which could support Council staffing requirements, and other outreach service providers to conduct private and confidential conversations.</p>	<p>They should be sound proofed for confidential conversations.</p>	<p>Will require a reception waiting area.</p>	<p>Consulting rooms: Minimum 10sqm (per room)</p>
<p>Shared Amenities</p> <p>To be shared with the remainder of the building.</p>	<p>Includes kitchette, storage, accessible and gender neutral toilets.</p>	<p>To be shared with the remainder of the building.</p>	<p>This will be dependent on the site.</p>

Location and accessibility

Key considerations and opportunities

Location to maximize reach and accessibility

Locating a future youth hub in an accessible location is vital for ensuring easy access to resources and support for young people. The challenge lies in securing a suitable, central and safe location for such a large service area. It should be accessible via public and active transport, as most young people are of non-driving age.

However, this presents a number of challenges for parts of the municipality that have limited transport options.

Any new youth hub will need to be close to other spaces that young people frequent (e.g. schools, libraries, recreation and other community facilities).

Consideration of peak demand, where and when the proportions of young people will be highest, is critical.

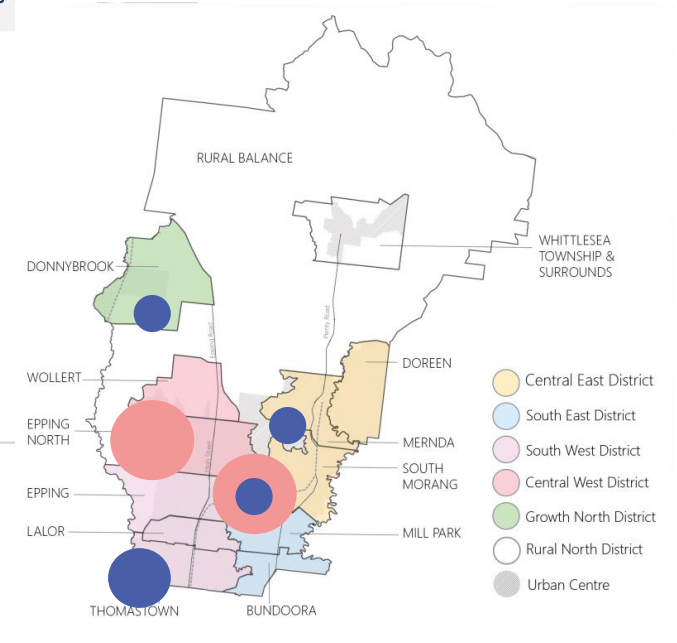
Young children are more likely to travel with a parent, so co-location or proximity to other services is also an important consideration.



Location and accessibility

Key considerations and opportunities

District	Key opportunities	Potential location/ sites
<p>Dedicated Youth Hub</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the extent of centres needed, it is proposed that at least two dedicated youth hubs are provided . The hub in the Central East (South Morang) area has been identified in the first instance because it has the greatest need (in terms of current and future population of young people). It also considered to be relatively central and can service populations to the north (Doreen and Mernda), as well as to south (Epping, Lalor and Thomastown). Over the medium to longer term, priority should be given to a dedicated youth hub in Central West, in particular Epping North. This will provide a critical space for young people in this growth corridors and will help shape the vibrancy of the district more generally. It is envisaged that this hub would service the Donnybrook area until the dedicated hub is delivered there in 2036. These two hubs could provide complementary service offerings. 	<p>Central East – somewhere close to train station so that it can service the entire corridor, for example adjacent/ on Council’s Civic Centre</p> <p>Central West (Epping North)</p>
<p>Spoke/s</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of smaller more informal youth spaces or ‘activations’ that can respond to emerging youth need. This is especially important as Whittlesea spans a large geographic area, with multiple growth fronts, where a dedicated youth centre in every larger suburb is not practical or feasible. Different spokes could be temporary activations or have a non-asset focus such as a service bus. They might include partnerships with other tertiary facilities. A more short to medium term focus might be upgrades to an existing Council owned/ Govt site in the South West or Mernda/ Doreen, to service the existing population of young people. Need is quite high in South West so potentially this could be a larger spoke/ smaller dedicated youth hub. A more medium terms focus might be Epping North though this really depends on where the dedicated youth hub is proposed to go. 	<p>Council owned site in South West District or TAFE site which would service established areas, particularly along the train line. This could be a larger spoke/ smaller dedicated hub.</p> <p>Mernda/ Doreen or Epping North- depends on future hub location</p> <p>Youth van to service rural north and Township and emerging need in growth fronts</p>



Design considerations

Key considerations and opportunities

A youth hub involves careful consideration of various design and spatial considerations including but not limited to storage, parking, furniture and access.

Consideration needs to be given to the range of different spaces that young people use including the role that a dedicated youth hub might have compared with more informal social spaces that young people use.

Useful, flexible spaces will be critical in any location.

Feeling and appearance

It is important to consider how the spaces are going to look and feel. The proposed youth hub will need to consider all aspects of contemporary youth service provision. The design and fit-out of spaces will need to meet the needs of young people, their families, youth service providers and council staff. It should provide flexibility and be able to simultaneously host a range of different activities and programs.

The spaces need to be attractive with high-quality open-plan design appeal to young people. Importantly, the hub should not feel clinical or like a school or office. It should look and feel playful.

Warm lighting and an open and visible entrance are key to creating a welcoming space. By creating vibrant and dynamic spaces, the hub can encourage creativity and social interaction. This includes indoor/outdoor spaces and design that allows for both quiet and recreation.

Youth led design

How each private or public space feels will be a core consideration for the interior fit outs: activities and services that welcome new people must be visible and prominent, with spaces for referrals and appointments more discreet. Young people want to feel that the space reflects them and the diversity among their peer groups. Youth led design engages youth in the design process to ensure the hub reflects their preferences and needs.

SGSEP.COM.AU

Don't underestimate the value of good of storage!

Effective storage is crucial for the organisation and accessibility of equipment, supplies and materials. A well-managed storage system ensures the smooth functioning of the hub, especially one that is proposed to include several programs and events.

Council design standards

Council will have its own service model/ design standards that will need to be factored into the design. Future more detailed architectural concept plans will need to be developed.

City of Melbourne Digital Maker Space



Source: City of Melbourne

Design considerations

Specific design and spatial requirements

Design Element	Key considerations
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Location: The hub should be in a central and easily accessible location, preferably close to public transport and other key uses such as schools, shops and residential areas. ▪ Universal Accessibility: Design the hub to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, and accessible and gender-neutral toilets. ▪ Transportation: Consider providing bike racks and designated drop-off zones to accommodate various modes of transportation. Collaborate with local transport authorities to enhance accessibility - for example locate local bus stops close by. Provision of parking for mobile service van. ▪ Visible/Separate Entrance: Design a clear and welcoming entrance to make the hub easily identifiable. Ensure the hub is in a visible area, preferably with an active frontage. For example, access should <i>not</i> be through a car park.
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lighting: Ensure well-lit areas both inside and outside the hub to improve safety. ▪ Secure Entrances: Implement controlled access points to monitor who enters and exits the facility, particularly for after hours use or for youth spaces (spokes) within shared buildings.
Storage	<p>Each space will need adequate provision of storage to work successfully, specifically if it is to accommodate a range of uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large foyer/ activity area: Minimum 15sqm. This will need to store large tables, chairs, large film screen etc. ▪ Maker space: Approx 15sqm to store different equipment and supplies. ▪ Kitchen storage: 5sqm ▪ Cleaners' storage: 5sqm ▪ Secure storage: Outreach service providers/ Council staff may have requirements for confidential storage.
Furniture Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flexibility: Use modular or multifunctional furniture that can be easily rearranged to accommodate different activities and group sizes. Incorporate furniture on wheels or lightweight pieces that can be moved easily to create dynamic spaces. Design tables that accommodate group work and collaborative activities. Alternatively, include semi-private or enclosed seating options for individuals who need quiet and focused workspaces. ▪ Durable and Comfortable: Chairs and sofas that provide proper support and comfort, considering the varying needs and preferences of young people. Include a mix of seating options such as bean bags, floor cushions and lounge chairs for a relaxed atmosphere. ▪ Playful and expressive: Incorporate art and design elements into the furniture that encourage self-expression and creativity. It is critical that young people feel that they have ownership over the space. Use vibrant and color palette to create energy.
Technology Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internet: Fast and secure connection for WIFI will be important for young people to use the space for study, work and recreational purposes. Provide accessible charging stations for electronic devices. ▪ Equipment: Provision of technology equipment was identified as key requirement for youth space to be successful. This included adequate provision of computer lab/s, laptop ports, screens for gaming and workshops, 3D printers and laser cutters.

Governance

Key considerations and opportunities

Youth led governance

A clear direction identified during consultation was the need for the youth space programming to be led by young people. This could be achieved through a youth steering committee or advisory group or even a more formal arrangement like a Youth Foundation (that could be a subcommittee of the Library Corporation) or co-operative, that links it to a broader set of youth members.

As well as programming, the group could involve local young people in youth-led, Council community programs, casual work opportunities. The group could also assist in developing the set up and detailed design of the youth space. The newly formed Whittlesea Youth Council could also run out of this space to strengthen local opportunities for youth leadership - in all its forms including political, volunteering and entrepreneurial.



Governance

Key considerations and opportunities

Confirming Council's future role and delivery model

It is clear from the analysis that the needs and interests of young people are changing, with demand for activities and services changing. In many instances, this is mismatched with Council's traditional service offering, and/ or what is most financially viable.

Council's future role in the delivery of the youth hub (and model more generally) will ultimately determine the level of service offering, as well as the more site-specific governance considerations.

There are a range of delivery and operational models that Council might wish to explore for the proposed youth hub (and associated spoke/s) model.

Each model will have different resourcing and financial implications that will need to be explored further. A summary of the potential benefits and costs of each are discussed in more detail on the following pages.

While it is expected that Council will continue to play a key role in direct youth service delivery, there is an opportunity for greater collaboration between internal and external stakeholders in how the service is delivered in future.

Partnerships with other service providers

Partnerships with other service providers will be critical to ensure successful service delivery by providing a service response that is able to adapt to changing and diverse needs of young people.

Whatever form the partnership takes, it will be important for Council to get agreement early in the process on what the vision will be for the hub and spokes, in terms of how the facilities might be shared and to identify which service partners will be most effective and capable in achieving that vision. Critically, there should be no duplication or conflict with existing service models.

Establish clear governance frameworks

Even with a strong vision in place, there is often limited capacity (due to funding and resourcing constraints) at Council and among service providers to deliver on a shared vision and implement governance frameworks to manage tensions.

Adequate resourcing for establishing governance frameworks and managing relationships needs to be factored in, at least for the first twelve months to two years of the hub's development.

Governance

Key considerations and opportunities

Look at potential partners to help activate space

A more short-term aim for the hub will be to establish a dynamic program of activities and events to activate the space and make it a key destination for young people.

Partnerships with other service providers to provide outreach services can be a successful way to activate the space, without necessarily defining it. Working together with other agencies such as Headspace and Live Free Project could help to activate the space by providing regular pop-up services. These services can be programmed to attend the youth hub or other spoke spaces at different times to address specific gaps or needs or various youth sub-cohorts.

Council should also explore opportunities to encourage social enterprises or creative activities to be based at the hub to bring it to life. For example, a café on site could be run by a social enterprise, such as in Bellfield Community Centre.

The following pages identify key service partners to assist with delivery and activation of the hub, as well as potential co-location.

For Change Café, Bellfield Community Centre



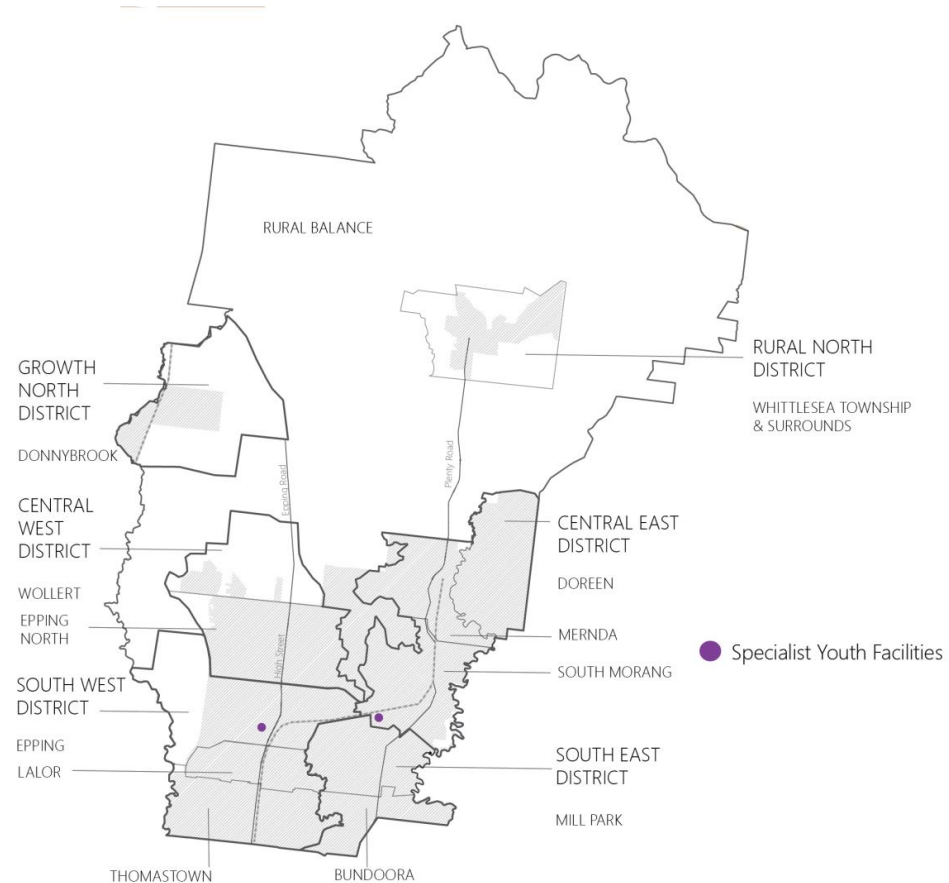
Source: For Change Co

Partnership Opportunities – Specialist Youth Services

Key opportunities for the delivery of outreach services, spoke or smaller youth spaces and land for a dedicated youth hub

Key opportunities

- Build on existing specialist youth services within the municipality (and surrounding) to design and deliver services at the youth hub.
- Whittlesea Community Connections for intercultural and social enterprises.
- Headspace (located at The Edge and Greensborough) for mental health services

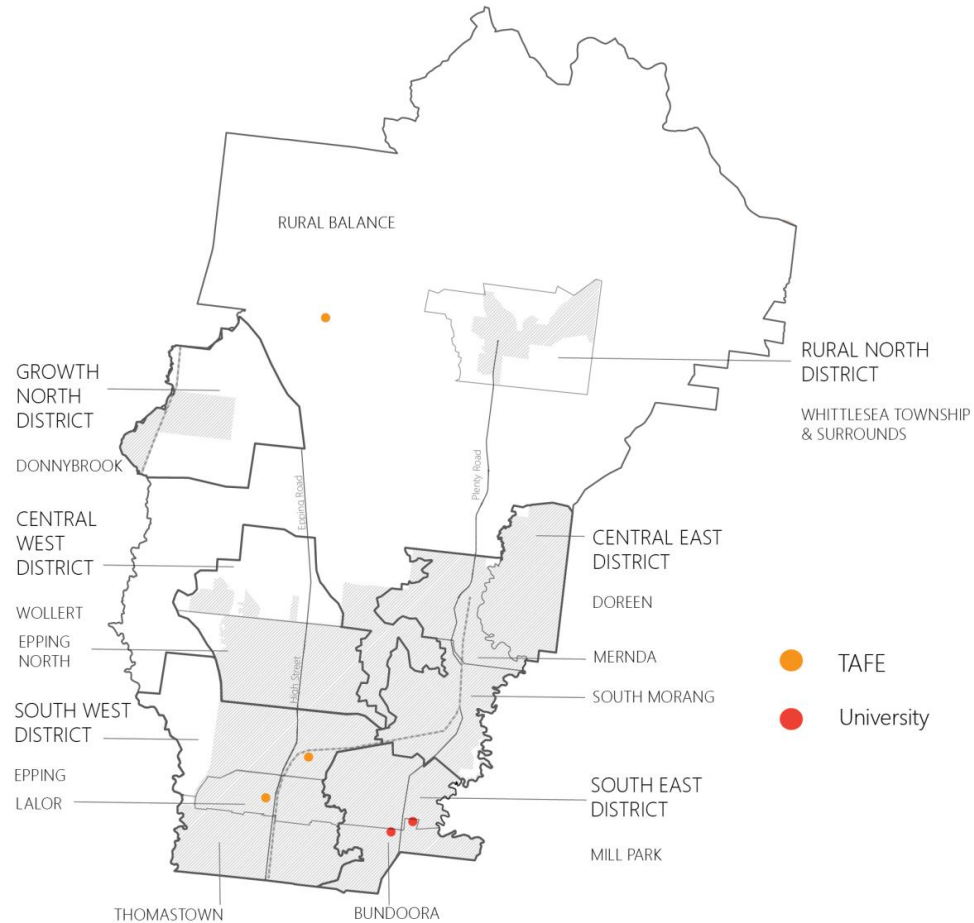


Partnership Opportunities – TAFE and Universities

Key opportunities for the delivery of outreach services, spoke or smaller youth spaces and land for a dedicated youth hub

Key opportunities

- Establish links to local TAFE and university providers (such as RMIT and Latrobe Bundoora campuses, Melbourne Polytechnic) for potential research and collaboration as well as future employment opportunities.
- Explore opportunities with TAFE and universities for potential delivery partners for future youth hub – for example Council to construct a hub on or adjacent to campuses. This could include a smaller spoke which supports the tertiary youth in the municipality. This has been identified as a key opportunity within the South West District (Epping, Lalor, Thomastown).



Partnership Opportunities – Libraries, Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres

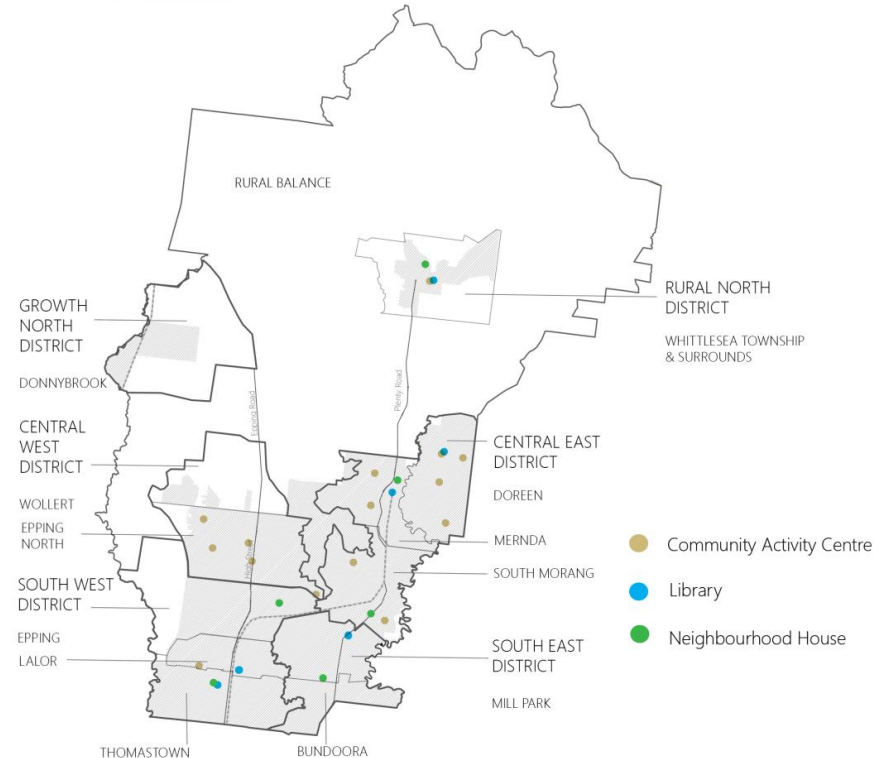
Key opportunities for the delivery of outreach services. spoke or smaller youth spaces and land for a dedicated youth hub

Libraries

- There are several existing and proposed libraries within the municipality. Libraries provide a critical anchor facility for young people as they provide access to technology, as well as hosting events, workshops and recreational activities.
- Libraries are increasingly important as makerspaces or media labs for young people. These spaces encourage innovation, artistic expression and the development of technical skills for potential employment or education.
- Explore opportunities with Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YRPL) for interim or permanent youth spokes or spaces in South West, as well as the potential youth outreach services.
- Meet with YRPL to learn more about their youth governance models which could assist in the establishment of the youth governance model.

Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses

- Explore opportunities in existing community centres for informal or interim youth spaces.
- Explore opportunities in proposed community centres within Epping North, or Mernda/ Dooreen to incorporate a dedicated youth space.
- Explore opportunities to partner with youth social enterprises to be delivered at the proposed youth hub.

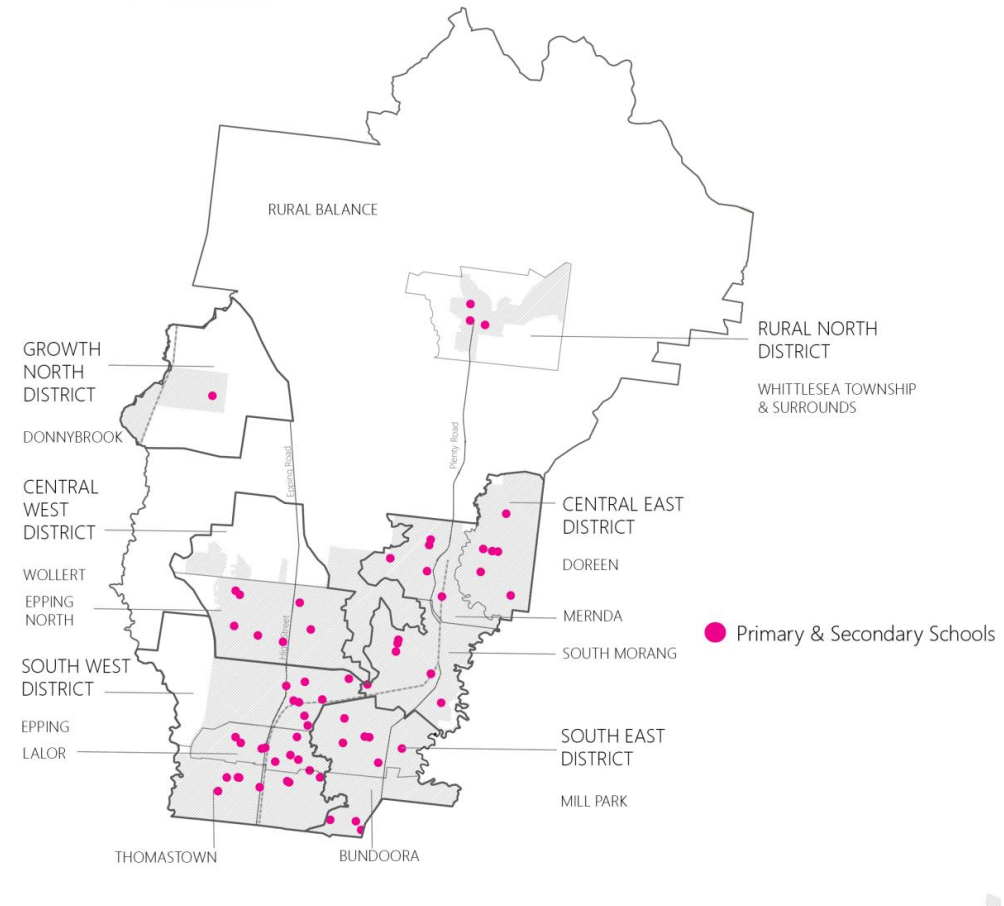


Partnership Opportunities – Schools

Key opportunities for the delivery of outreach services, spoke or smaller youth spaces and land for a dedicated youth hub

Key opportunities

- Build on existing school network for engagement and outreach services.
- Explore opportunities for potential partnerships including smaller spoke spaces or service vans to address geographic gap in the north. For example, Whittlesea Tech School – School and After School Programs.



APPENDIX

Appendix A

Policy Overview

POLICY

Youth policy summaries



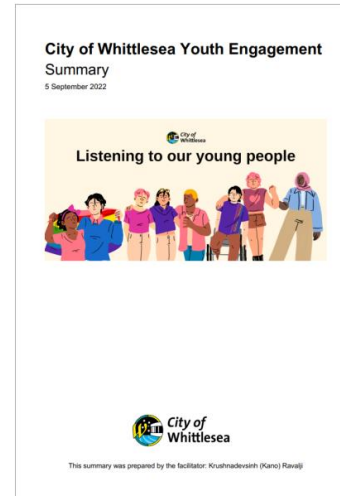
Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022-2027, Victoria State Government (2022)

Purpose: Sets out a framework that will inform the Government's work over the next five years, including how we work with young people and the youth and community sectors to improve young people's outcomes.

The strategy is not very specific in terms of concrete outcomes but is quite general and aspirational.

This strategy is focused on services and outcomes rather than facilities. Priorities of the strategy are that young people:

- are healthy and well
- are safe and secure
- achieve their goals through education, training and employment
- respected and involved in decisions in their communities
- are confident and strong in their identity and culture and are supported in their communities
- have services that are coordinated, responsive and accessible



Youth Engagement Summary, Whittlesea City Council (2022)

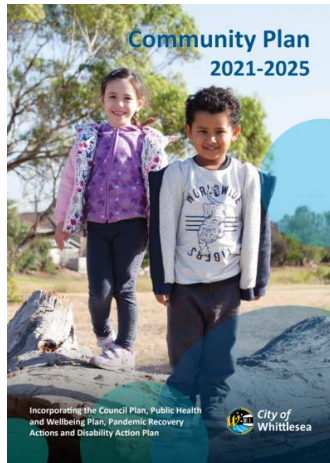
Purpose: Provides a summary of findings from a workshop with young people to hear about their experience of living in the council, current concerns, and specific ideas about future youth services to help support the council's place-based youth services planning.

Identifies current experiences of young people, most used facilities or spaces, what makes a place safe vs. unsafe, opinions about their ideal youth hub, which youth services they had accessed and suggestions for new services, what Council's ideal role should be in young people's lives.

The overarching themes include accessibility, location proximity, connection, safe spaces, and awareness of services. It includes best-practice delivery criteria.

POLICY

Youth policy summaries



Community Plan 2021-2025, Whittlesea City Council (2021)

Purpose: The Community Plan incorporates the Council Plan, Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Pandemic Recovery Actions and Disability Action Plan. It shapes the future for the City of Whittlesea and clearly articulates what Council plans to achieve between 2021 and 2025.

The Plan is aligned under the same four goals as Whittlesea 2040. Key initiatives under Goal 1: Connected community are to:

- Develop a long term community infrastructure plan responding to community service and infrastructure needs for sport, leisure, recreation, arts, heritage and culture, youth, older adults, families and children and libraries, and to
- Transition the Youth Advisory Committee to a Whittlesea Youth Council.



A Place For All



Whittlesea 2040 – A Place for All, Whittlesea City Council (2018)

Purpose: This high-level document sets the overarching vision for the kind of community Whittlesea will be in 2040. It is informed by research, forecasts, workshops and consultation with councillors and the community.

The Vision is guided by four goals:

- A connected community (includes the availability of community infrastructure and services and programs for children), measured by social cohesion, physical activity, safety in public areas, and civic participation
- Liveable neighbourhoods (includes the availability of facilities like parks, playgrounds, libraries), measured by ease of walking and cycling and access to services and facilities
- A strong local economy
- A sustainable environment

POLICY

Youth policy summaries



Youth Plan 2030+, Whittlesea City Council (2018)

Purpose: This plan includes a Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Young People outlining Council’s goals for young people. It also presents data representing how young people in the City of Whittlesea are faring, which will be monitored over time.

There are not a lot of concrete actions identified in this plan, which is more about identifying the concerns and desires of young people and generally seeking to provide programs and services that can address them. It includes no spatial analysis or particularly specific outcomes.

The Youth Plan presents qualitative data on the wellbeing of young people and monitors this over time, outlines what young people want from council, identifies strengths and vulnerabilities, and guides identification of priority areas for action. It brings together what youth, parents, the youth sector say about the needs of young people, and statistics on a variety of health and wellbeing outcomes.

The actions stemming from Focus Area 1 (Development and Transition) include providing programs, events, activities and projects that respond to challenges and aspirations of young people; facilitating partnerships; advocate for social and physical infrastructure that responds to needs of young people. Key issues include mental health, connection, and safety.

With regard to infrastructure, Focus Area 2 (Relationships and Settings) is concerned with healthy relationships and the settings domains where young people go about their daily lives within the community (home, school, etc.). Key issues include positive and nurturing relationships, that young people are respected and safe, and that they are connected and engaged with the services available to them.

Focus Area 3 (Environments and Conditions) is concerned with the domains of social and physical infrastructure, where “Young people have access to a full spectrum of services, and welcoming public places, spaces and facilities that respond to their complex and diverse needs and supports their wellbeing”.

It notes that young people want access to infrastructure, but it doesn’t provide much further insight about this. It seeks to provide public places that are inclusive.

The Baseline for Young People is Council’s Youth Service and its service delivery is based on participatory strategies and development with young people, targeting all young people, is preventative and responsive to local trends and needs, and includes young people in all Council business.

POLICY
Youth policy summaries

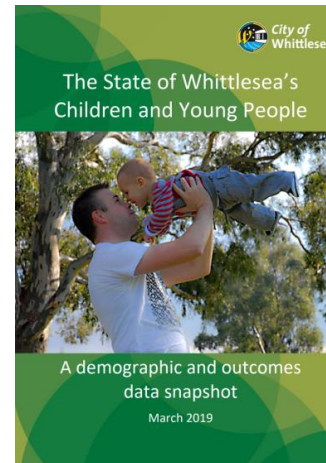


Youth Services Profile Summary, Whittlesea City Council (2023)

Purpose: This profile provides a broad and thorough overview of the services and infrastructure provided for young people in Whittlesea. While the other documents are quite high-level and speak to the concerns and aspirations of young people, this document covers the actual programs and facilities that deliver the services, as well as the demand. It also offers specific feedback about service gaps and programs, barriers and opportunities, and provides a prioritised list of service and infrastructure needs. Finally, it includes the design and layout of a new youth hub.

It identifies:

- Existing services and programs
- Factors influencing future demand and delivery of services and programs
- Council’s service model, including role, service level by area, services and programs delivered and target audiences, and how they will be delivered.
- Demand analysis
- Priorities (services, programs, projects)
- Infrastructure needs and priorities (identifies 3)
- Infrastructure model



The State of Whittlesea’s Children and Young People, Whittlesea City Council (2019)

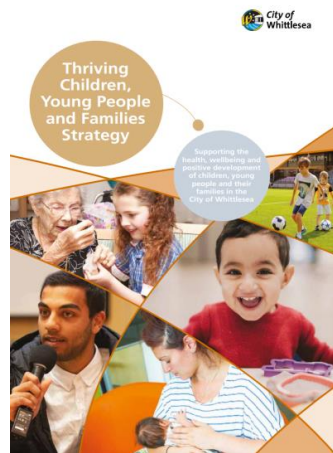
Purpose: This brings together data to provide insights into children and young people’s development, health and wellbeing, and experiences. This report provides a demographic summary followed by data available on outcomes for children and young people from birth to 25 years in the City of Whittlesea.

This provides demographic data on children and young people, and reports on the health and wellbeing of children and young people within the categories of:

- Loved and Safe
- Material Basics
- Healthy
- Learning
- Participating
- Positive Sense of Identity and Culture.

POLICY

Youth policy summaries



Thrivng Children, Young People and Families Strategy, Whittlesea City Council (2020)

Purpose: Whereas The State of Whittlesea’s Children and Young People provides the data of how young people are fairing, this document provides the strategy on how to respond to this. It outlines the City of Whittlesea’s evidence-based approach to supporting the health, wellbeing and positive development of children, young people and their families in the municipality from before birth to 25 years. There is nothing specific in terms of how and where to provide facilities and services.

The analysis is grouped by age groups to better describe the target community and their needs: 0-8, 8-12, and 13-25 years.

The Strategy is built around four strategic objectives that include seven priority actions:

1. Deliver quality programs and services that promote children, young people and families’ health, safety and connection
2. Advocate for more access to local specialist services in response to emerging issues
3. Seek opportunities and funding to coordinate projects, planning, and frameworks, and highlights a need to focus on the middle years.

4. Facilitate and advocate for well-planned, integrated infrastructure that supports access, participation and connection.
5. Use data more effectively for better decision making, measuring outcomes, and sharing insights.
6. Engage with children, young people and families
7. Develop fast and user-friendly ways of sharing information



Appendix B

Youth population forecasts

Sourced from ID Forecasts Website for City of Whittlesea, March and April 2024

Population forecast 2024

Youth population forecast by district

District	5-11 years	12-17 years	18-22 years	Total youth
Growth North	879	379	652	1910
Donnybrook	879	379	652	1910
Rural North	1352	1446	1140	3938
Whittlesea Township and Surrounds	918	914	736	2568
Rural Balance	434	532	404	1370
Central East	9218	7057	4676	20951
South Morang	2242	2081	1651	5974
Mernda	3478	2329	1395	7202
Doreen	3498	2647	1630	7775
Central West	5865	3913	2263	12041
Wollert	729	374	260	1363
Epping North	5136	3539	2003	10678
South East	3097	2745	3257	9099
Mill Park	2158	1861	1908	5927
Bundoora	939	884	1349	3172
South West	4748	3849	3742	12339
Epping	1131	929	958	3018
Lalor	2044	1635	1372	5051
Thomastown	1573	1285	1412	4270

Population forecast 2028

Youth population forecast by district

District	5-11 years	12-17 years	18-22 years	Total youth
Growth North	1915	1000	1132	4047
Donnybrook	1915	1000	1132	4047
Rural North	608	629	562	1799
Whittlesea Township and Surrounds	430	412	362	1204
Rural Balance	178	217	200	595
Central East	8435	7283	5095	20813
South Morang	2355	1990	1709	6054
Mernda	3085	2622	1687	7394
Doreen	2995	2671	1699	7365
Central West	5960	4664	2830	13454
Wollert	1180	618	460	2258
Epping North	4780	4046	2370	11196
South East	3465	2760	3456	9681
Mill Park	2293	1915	1927	6135
Bundoora	1172	845	1529	3546
South West	5044	4047	4152	13243
Epping	1193	940	1095	3228
Lalor	2033	1702	1486	5221
Thomastown	1818	1405	1571	4794

Population forecast 2034

Youth population forecast by district

District	5-11 years	12-17 years	18-22 years	Total youth
Growth North	3451	2182	1893	7526
Donnybrook	3451	2182	1893	7526
Rural North	644	544	497	1685
Whittlesea Township and Surrounds	463	380	332	1175
Rural Balance	181	164	165	510
Central East	8282	6648	5256	20186
South Morang	2465	1995	1623	6083
Mernda	3091	2368	1922	7381
Doreen	2726	2285	1711	6722
Central West	7063	4905	3584	15552
Wollert	2264	1104	789	4157
Epping North	4799	3801	2795	11395
South East	4019	2942	3527	10488
Mill Park	2591	1952	1924	6467
Bundoora	1428	990	1603	4021
South West	5834	4316	4445	14595
Epping	1431	1026	1164	3621
Lalor	2156	1704	1584	5444
Thomastown	2247	1586	1697	5530

Population forecast 2041

Youth population forecast by district

District	5-11 years	12-17 years	18-22 years	Total youth
Growth North	5198	3420	2730	11348
Donnybrook	5198	3420	2730	11348
Rural North	1382	1180	976	3538
Whittlesea Township and Surrounds	974	822	668	2464
Rural Balance	408	358	308	1074
Central East	8331	6497	4821	19649
South Morang	2463	2071	1653	6187
Mernda	3153	2306	1679	7138
Doreen	2715	2120	1489	6324
Central West	8450	5711	3803	17964
Wollert	3424	1859	1121	6404
Epping North	5026	3852	2682	11560
South East	4207	3316	3777	11300
Mill Park	2614	2158	1993	6765
Bundoora	1593	1158	1784	4535
South West	6475	4964	4850	16289
Epping	1675	1216	1294	4185
Lalor	2303	1844	1668	5815
Thomastown	2497	1904	1888	6289



Youth Consultation

Findings & Recommendations

A place for all



Between 5 January and 2 February 2026, Youth Services engaged 160 young people aged 8–25 through three consultation phases:

- **Part A – Community Pop-Up Engagements**
141 participants aged 8-25 engaged through dot-board voting activities at youth programs and community facing pop-ups.
- **Part B – Targeted Youth Focus Group**
8 participants aged 16-25 engaged in facilitated group and individual activities comparing the four proposed sites.
- **Part C – Youth Council Individual Consultation**
11 Youth Council members aged 14–20 completed an individual, site-comparison activity using satellite and on-ground imagery.

Collectively, these engagements captured both broad participation data and in-depth, qualitative insights, ensuring representation across age groups, abilities, and lived experiences.

Key Insights Across All Consultation Phases

1. Safety is the primary factor:

Across all phases, young people consistently identified safety as the most critical factor influencing whether they would use a youth hub.

This included:

- Feeling safe while in the space
- Feeling safe travelling to and from the site, particularly at night
- The importance of lighting, visibility, passive surveillance, and nearby activity

While most sites were perceived as safe during the day, night-time safety and walking routes were a consistent concern, particularly for younger teens and young women.

2. Accessibility and walkability are priorities:

Young people prioritised locations that are:

- Close to public transport
- Disability-accessible, including safe paths and crossings
- Not reliant on long or isolated walks

Youth Council and focus group participants highlighted that even minor barriers (such as poor lighting, uneven paths, or traffic crossings) could significantly reduce their likelihood of attending.



3. Connection to everyday life:

Sites that were close to existing shops, food options, schools, community facilities, and existing youth spaces were consistently viewed as more welcoming and appealing. While quieter, standalone locations were valued for comfort and reduced sensory overload, they were often seen as less attractive if they felt isolated or disconnected from places young people already spend time.

4. Young people want a balance of activation and calm:

Across all consultation methods, young people expressed strong demand for:

- Chill and quiet spaces
- Outdoor areas
- Flexible spaces for programs, events, and social connection

Overly busy or noisy environments were identified as barriers for some, particularly neurodivergent young people, while spaces that felt too formal, inactive, or “adult-focused” were also viewed negatively.

Assessment of Sites Against Key Principles

Site 1 - Shop 111 Epping Plaza

Theme	Key Feedback
Safety / Comfort	Presence of people increases safety; overstimulating; many unknown people; late-night shopping; sketchy areas; reduced surveillance after hours; unsafe walking routes when shops are closed.
Access / Transport	Close to bus hub; walking distance from train station; pathways described as unsafe; less accessible for South Morang residents.
Welcome Vibe	Existing informal hangout; not welcoming; acceptable during the day.
Connection to Everyday Life	Strong connection to shops, school, and friends.
Key reason site works well	Existing activity and foot traffic; shopping centre connection.
Key reason site doesn't work	Limited indoor and outdoor space; concerns around safety and welcome.



Site 2 - 72 Cooper St Epping

Theme	Key Feedback
Safety / Comfort	Better than Plaza due to lower foot traffic; suitable with security; traffic and petrol station risks; mixed safety perceptions; improved lighting and visibility needed.
Access / Transport	Generally accessible; safety concerns at night; further from transport; concerns about crossing busy road for younger people and those with limited access (wheelchair, etc).
Welcome Vibe	Building would need to stand out; suitable with outdoor space; isolated; comfort increases with more people present.
Connection to Everyday Life	Connected to Epping amenities; close to Plaza but not directly within it; less visible and unfamiliar.
Key reason site works well	Proximity to Epping; flexibility of space.
Key reason site doesn't work	Distance from transport; isolated walking routes; industrial setting.

Site 3a - Civic Centre South Morang (North)

Theme	Key Feedback
Safety / Comfort	Similar to other civic site (south) but further away; trees and wildlife appealing; secluded by trees; improved safety if more people near PRACC; additional lighting required.
Access / Transport	Further distance, particularly for accessibility needs; complex connections; bus access available but further from station.
Welcome Vibe	Welcoming environment; feels less safe than Site 1.
Connection to Everyday Life	Proximity to PRACC valued; limited surrounding services.
Key reason site works well	Close to PRACC; available indoor spaces.
Key reason site doesn't work	Less accessible and visible than Site 1; further from transport.



Site 3b - Civic Centre South Morang (South)

Theme	Key Feedback
Safety / Comfort	Isolated compared to shopping centre but better lighting near Council; accessible; "I like the area because of its closeness to shops and housing"; "Yes its accessible"; "Near the council buildings is well lit so thats good"; only suitable with improved lighting; car drop-off/pick-up needed; security cameras; dark walk to station.
Access / Transport	Multiple transport options; accessibility improvements needed to paths; informal cut-through across grass to station.
Welcome Vibe	Quiet, not sensory overload; "We dont like the government buildings"; welcoming if youth-focused; well-maintained near Council.
Connection to Everyday Life	Close to shops, housing, and popular areas; some distance to food options.
Key reason site works well	Accessible location; flexible space for noise and activity.
Key reason site doesn't work	Lighting and safety at night; distance from food and amenities.

Recommendations from Young People

When findings from all three consultation phases are considered together, **Site 3b - Civic Centre South Morang (South)** emerged as the most consistently supported location. Young people valued this site for:

- Its perceived safety and calm environment
- Proximity to existing community infrastructure
- Accessibility via public transport
- Flexibility to support both indoor and outdoor activation

While concerns were raised regarding night-time lighting, pedestrian connections, and foot traffic, young people consistently indicated that these issues could be addressed through targeted infrastructure upgrades and intentional activation. Based on the entirety of youth consultation undertaken, young people recommend that Council prioritise **Site 3b - Civic Centre South Morang (South)** as the preferred location for the future Youth Hub, supported by targeted improvements to lighting, pedestrian accessibility, and outdoor activation to enhance safety and night-time use. Young people further emphasised that the success of the Youth Hub will depend not only on location, but on:

- Youth-focused, welcoming design
- A balance of chill and activated spaces
- Ongoing visibility, safety, and connection to everyday destinations.

5.4 Planning Scheme Amendment C287 - Heritage Overlay at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda - Exhibition Outcomes

Director/Executive Manager: Director Planning & Development

Report Author: Strategic Planner

In Attendance: Unit Manager Strategic Planning
Strategic Planner

Executive Summary

This purpose of this report is to inform Council of the outcomes of the public exhibition of Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea (Amendment C287) which proposes to apply heritage controls to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda (refer *Attachment 1*). The report recommends that Council adopts the amendment and submits it to the Minister for Planning for approval.

Amendment C287 proposes to apply a permanent Heritage Overlay to the house located at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda and its surrounding curtilage. The proposed Amendment will provide permanent protection to conserve a heritage place identified as being of local aesthetic and historic significance in accordance with a heritage assessment prepared for the site by an independent heritage advisor (refer *Attachment 2*).

Built in circa 1891, the house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda was one of the first substantial houses to be built in Mernda. It was home to the first resident doctor and later the first Methodist parsonage in the settlement. It is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing.

At its meeting on 17 December 2024, Council resolved to seek authorisation of Amendment C287 and noted that interim heritage controls had been requested for the subject site via Planning Scheme Amendment C286wsea (Amendment C286). Authorisation of Amendment C287 was granted by the Minister for Planning on 14 October 2025. Following review from the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), the extent of curtilage was reduced slightly prior to exhibition of the Amendment.

Interim heritage controls were approved by the Minister for Planning on 1 October 2025. The interim controls were applied for a period of 12 months to provide protection to the heritage place while permanent controls are being progressed via Amendment C287. Amendment C287 was exhibited between 8 December 2025 and 16 January 2026. This included notice in the local newspaper and the Government Gazette as well as notification to the property owner and occupier, and prescribed Ministers.

No submissions were received in response to the public exhibition of the Amendment. Therefore, it is recommended that Amendment C287 be adopted by Council and submitted to the Minister for Planning for approval as contained in *Attachment 4* of this report.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

- 1. Note there were no submissions received through the exhibition process for Amendment C287wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, which proposes to apply a Heritage Overlay to 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.**
- 2. Adopt Amendment C287wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as contained in Attachment 4 of this report.**
- 3. Submit Amendment C287wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to the Minister for Planning for approval.**
- 4. Note officers will advise the landowner of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda of Council's resolution.**

Background / Key Information

Background

The house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda and shown in Figure 1, is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea. The independent heritage assessment (*Attachment 2*) prepared for the site, identified the house as exhibiting particular aesthetic significance as a superior example of a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the facade. The house and its past residents are associated with the early development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea railway in 1889.

The City of Whittlesea sought interim heritage controls for 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda via Amendment C286 after a request to demolish the house was received and subsequent inspections of the property indicated that the condition of the house had deteriorated. Interim heritage protection was approved by the Minister for Planning on 1 October 2025, 11 months from the date of submission. The interim controls have been approved to be in place for a period of 12 months while the permanent controls are progressed via Amendment C287.

Amendment C287 proposes to apply a permanent Heritage Overlay to the site and received authorisation from the Minister for Planning on 14 October 2025. The authorisation was subject to several conditions requiring minor administrative updates to the controls and mapping prior to exhibition of the Amendment. The Amendment was subsequently placed on statutory exhibition for approximately six weeks from 8 December 2025 to 16 January 2026. No submissions were received during the exhibition period.

Figure 1 – 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda (east) elevation



Source: David Helms, 2023

Planning Scheme Amendment C287

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme is the primary statutory document that sets out objectives, policies and provisions relating to the use, development, protection and conservation of land in the City of Whittlesea. To change the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, Council must undertake a Planning Scheme Amendment in accordance with the process outlined in the Planning and Environment Act, 1987 (refer *Attachment 3*).

Amendment C287 seeks to apply a permanent Heritage Overlay under Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to the house and nominated curtilage at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda. The extent of the area affected by the Heritage Overlay is shown on the Whittlesea Planning Scheme overlay map as HO204 (*Attachment 4*). This is commonly referred to as 'curtilage'. Following review from the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), the extent of curtilage was reduced prior to exhibition of the Amendment to align with the adjoining property boundary to the south and decommissioned Old Plenty Road (refer *Attachment 4* for the Amendment C287 documentation).

A Statement of Significance acts as a reference for the heritage place and identifies the site's contributing features. It is used to guide the assessment of future applications against the heritage criteria identified for the site.

Application of the Heritage Overlay will provide permanent heritage protection to the heritage place and enable Council to ensure that any proposal to use and/or develop the site does not adversely impact or irreversibly alter the heritage value of the place. Standard planning permit requirements are set out in Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme for all places to which the Heritage Overlay applies. This generally requires a planning permit to:

- Demolish or remove a building, including part of a building.
- Construct a building, including part of a building.
- Externally alter a building.
- Construct or display a sign.
- Other specific planning controls as identified in the Schedule to Clause 43.01.

It is important to note that the Heritage Overlay does not:

- Prohibit development.
- Require landowners to restore, update or maintain their properties.
- Require a planning permit for routine maintenance or repairs that does not change the appearance of a heritage place.
- Allow public access to private properties.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2025-2029:

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Response:

Proposed Amendment C287 will implement planning controls to conserve a heritage place identified as being of aesthetic and cultural significance within the City of Whittlesea.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The cost of processing the Planning Scheme Amendment is included in the current budget.

Community Consultation and Engagement

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requires notice to be given of a Planning Scheme Amendment.

Amendment C287 was placed on statutory exhibition for approximately six weeks from 8 December 2025 to 16 January 2026. This was an extended notice period noting that it crossed over the new year holiday period.

Letters were sent to the owner and occupier of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda and prescribed Ministers. The letters contained the Amendment notice and information about where the Amendment documentation could be accessed.

A notice appeared in the Northern Star Weekly on 9 December 2025 and the Government Gazette on 11 December 2025. A webpage was also published on the City of Whittlesea website and Amendment documentation was made available for viewing at the Council Offices.

No submissions were received during the exhibition period.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.
- (b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.
- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Council Policy Considerations**Environmental Sustainability Considerations**

The Amendment will support the preservation and adaptive reuses of an existing building, therefore minimising the need for new materials, maintaining embodied energy and reducing construction waste.

Social, Cultural and Health

The proposed Amendment is expected to have a positive social and cultural effect on the community by protecting a local heritage place of identified significance. Heritage places serve as meaningful links to the past and strengthen local identity.

Economic

The Amendment proposal will provide for the use and development of the site with consideration of the conservation and enhancement of a heritage place.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

If approved by the Minister for Planning, the Heritage Overlay (HO204) for 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda will be included under Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

Planning Policy and LegislationPlanning and Environment Act 1987

As the Planning Authority, Council must give effect to the objectives of planning in Victoria, including:

- *to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value* (Section 4(d)).

Section 6B of the Act specifically references to heritage buildings, noting a planning scheme may make provision to further the objectives of planning in Victoria within the area covered by the scheme including:

- *to deter persons from unlawfully demolishing heritage buildings or allowing heritage buildings to fall into disrepair* (Section 6B(b)).

Ministerial Directions

The Amendment has been prepared according to the following Ministerial Directions:

- Ministerial Direction: The Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
- Direction No. 11: Strategic Assessment of Amendments.

Planning Practice Notes

The Amendment documents have been prepared considering the following Planning Practice Notes:

- PPN01: Applying the Heritage Overlay.
- PPN46: Strategic Assessment Guidelines.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

The Amendment is supported by the following clauses of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme:

Clause 15.03-1S (Heritage Conservation) seeks to ensure the conservation of places of heritage significance. Strategies include:

- identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme;
- retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place; and
- encourage the conservation and restoration of contributory elements of a heritage place.

Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage conservation in Whittlesea)

Relevant strategies include:

- Identify and protect local heritage and other cultural features in development and subdivision.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

The landowner will be notified of Council's resolution.

Critical Dates

N/A.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea Site Context Plans [5.4.1 - 2 pages]
2. Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea Heritage Assessment [5.4.2 - 17 pages]
3. Planning Scheme Amendment Process [5.4.3 - 1 page]
4. Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea Documents [5.4.4 - 11 pages]



Figure 2: 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda



COPYRIGHT 2019
The State of Victoria and the City of Whittlesea does not warrant the accuracy and completeness of information on this map. The State of Victoria and the City of Whittlesea shall not bear any responsibility or liability for errors or omissions in the information. Reproduction of the plan is possible only with permission from the City of Whittlesea.

N
Map Scale: 1 : 1595
Date: 07/11/2024
Produced By: aof

David Helms
HERITAGE PLANNING

21 July 2023

Linda Martin-Chew
Coordinator - Strategic Land Use Planning
City of Whittlesea
25 Ferres Boulevard
SOUTH MORANG VIC 3752

Dear Linda

Heritage assessment –1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda

Please see attached the heritage assessment for the houses at 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road at Mernda.

Based on the assessment, it is my opinion that:

- The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of local historic (Criterion A), and aesthetic (Criterion E) significance for the reasons set out in the statement of significance in Attachment 1 to the attached report, and justifies inclusion in the HO, as recommended in section 8.
- The house at 4 Station Road does not satisfy the threshold of local significance under any of the heritage criteria, and does not justify inclusion in the HO, for the reasons discussed in section 7.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Fond regards



David Helms

PO Box 1225 Chapel Street, Windsor 3181
e: info@davidhelmsheritage.com m: 0416 126 323

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Assessment of heritage significance: 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda and 4 Station Road, Mernda

1. Purpose

This report has been prepared by David Helms Heritage Planning for the City of Whittlesea. The purpose is to assess the cultural heritage significance of the houses at 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road in Mernda to determine if either or both would satisfy the threshold of local significance as an individual place and justify the inclusion in the heritage overlay (HO) of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. Figure 1 shows the location of the two houses.

The City of Whittlesea has requested this heritage assessment, as it is currently assessing a Development Plan (Station Road Development Plan) for the area comprising eight properties bounded by Plenty Road to the west, Station Lane to the south and Station Road to the east. As part of this process, Council was provided with a Memorandum of Heritage Advice for each property. These indicated that further assessment is required for 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road. In addition, the dwelling at 1470 Plenty Road has been subject to a Section 29A Demolition application which was suspended on the basis that the Development Plan requires a Heritage Assessment as an application requirement of DPO5 and that the application is premature.

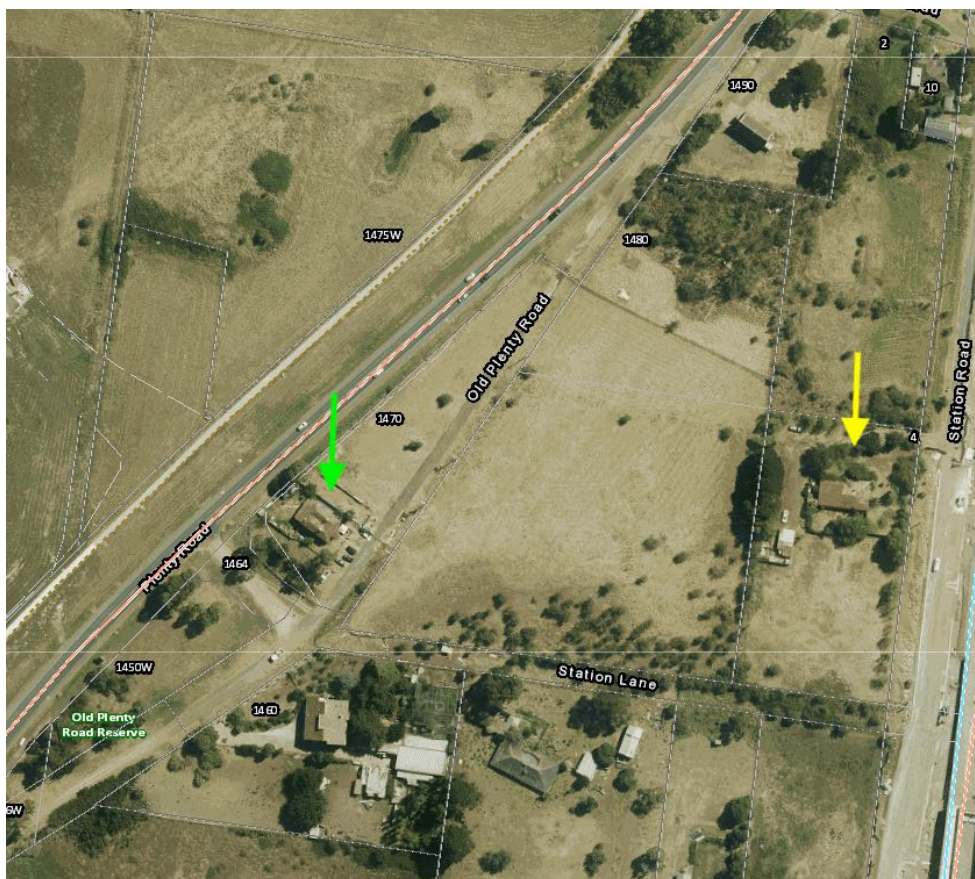


Figure 1: Locality map showing 1470 Plenty Road (green arrow) and 4 Station Road (yellow arrow) (Source: Vicplan).

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

2. Methodology

This heritage assessment has been prepared in accordance with the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 2013 (the *Burra Charter*) and its guidelines, and in accordance with relevant guidelines including Planning Practice Note 1: *Applying the heritage overlay* (PPN1). All terminology is consistent with the *Burra Charter*.

In preparing this assessment I have:

- Inspected both houses, accompanied by Linda Martin-Chew, Coordinator Strategic Land Use Planning, City of Whittlesea. 1470 Plenty Road was inspected from the adjoining streets and roads. 4 Station Road was inspected on-site with the assistance of the current owner.
- Undertaken historic research using selected primary (land title information, Whittlesea Shire rate books, newspaper articles) and secondary (heritage studies and local histories) sources.
- Undertaken a 'desktop' comparative analysis with other heritage places in the City of Whittlesea. This comparative analysis has also drawn on relevant comparative assessments forming part of a separate heritage study that I am currently preparing for the City of Whittlesea, which is reviewing and updating the citations and statements of significance for more than 70 heritage places currently included in the HO.
- Assessed the houses using the Hercon criteria and prepared a statement of significance in accordance with PPN1, as required.

3. Existing heritage listings and studies

The two houses are not included in the heritage overlay and are not included on any other heritage listing or register.

The two houses were not identified in the previous municipal heritage studies including the *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study*, prepared by Meredith Gould in 1990 and the *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study*, prepared by Context Pty Ltd in 2013-15.

The two houses were included in the 'Preliminary heritage assessment: Mernda township' prepared by Ray Tonkin for the City of Whittlesea in June 2017 (the Tonkin report). The purpose was to determine 'whether the building and features of the township warranted any further heritage recognition than currently provided in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.'

The Tonkin report included a site inspection and some historic research for each house, which were among several places included in the assessment. The report concluded:

At this stage no attempt has been made to complete a formal heritage assessment of the Mernda Township

The area identified for this study is a very small part of the original township and the question to be considered before a final assessment is completed is how extensive the township area is and does the extended area warrant application of a Heritage Overlay

This preliminary assessment would indicate that the section subject to this study has sufficient remnants to warrant heritage identification. However, the area of land to the south of Bridge Inn Road (including the Bridge Inn and the saleyards as well as the extensive Mayfield property) and the former Yan Yean Water Reserve subdivision could be added to any future heritage precinct for Mernda. This would enable the existing individual heritage overlays to be considered as part of a broader precinct.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

On this basis, the Tonkin report recommended a formal assessment of the heritage significance of the whole Mernda Township.

In 2023 Bryce Raworth Conservation & Heritage prepared a 'Memorandum of heritage advice' for each property. These were prepared on behalf of the owner of 1470 Plenty Road, and a developer who owns land adjacent to the two properties and comment upon whether the dwellings have 'potential heritage significance that would warrant a comprehensive assessment at planning permit stage'.

In relation to 1470 Plenty Road, the memorandum concluded:

The subject site remains a handsome and recognisable example of a late 19th century brick farmhouse. Its level of intactness is generally high, although the property would benefit from some general conservation works. The most significant alteration is its modern porch; this could be removed, and the original profiled verandah reinstated, utilising evidence on the brickwork to inform the profile. The house could be a suitable building for adaptive re-use, subject to other planning matters.

The limitations of the heritage study may have been sufficient to exclude this property from previous assessment, however, it is this office's view that, considering the age of the property and its level of intactness, coupled with some comparable brick farmhouses that have been assessed for the study and found to warrant heritage protection, Council are likely to deem this property as requiring further heritage assessment if it is brought to Council's attention. There is also a likelihood that the building will require retention with a reasonable curtilage around it also subject to the Heritage Overlay.

In relation to 4 Station Road, the memorandum concluded:

It should be noted that, due to accessibility limits, research on the property has been limited and our commentary reflects this. To the extent it was visible, the subject site is a typical example of an early 20th century weatherboard cottage, or possibly a farmhouse. Whilst it appears to have undergone some alterations to its rear, the front of the house appears relatively unaltered.

A number of early twentieth century properties that are broadly comparable to the subject site in terms of age and construction have been identified as requiring heritage protection within the latest heritage study. These include:

- *Wildwood Farm, 425 Wildwood Road, Whittlesea, weatherboard cottage, c.1900.*
- *25 Gingles Road, Humevale, weatherboard cottage c.1910.*
- *41 Recreation Road, Yan Yean, weatherboard cottage c.1908.*
- *2 Walnut Street, Whittlesea, weatherboard cottage c.1908.*

The limitations of the City of Whittlesea Heritage Study (2013-2015) may have been sufficient to exclude this property from assessment to date, insofar as previously unidentified properties have not been sought out by in that review. However, it is this office's view that the age and reasonable integrity of the building, coupled with the number of comparable weatherboard cottages that have been assessed for the study and found to warrant heritage protection, suggest there is some likelihood that Council might deem this property appropriate for further heritage assessment if it is brought to Council's attention by a permit application process or similar. If that were to be the case, there is also some potential that the building will require retention with a reasonable curtilage around it.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

4. History**Thematic context**

Victoria's Framework of Historic Themes

6. Building towns, cities, and the garden state: 6.1 Establishing Melbourne Town, Port Phillip District, 6.5 Living in country towns, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

City of Whittlesea Thematic Environmental History

5. Building settlements and towns: 5.2 Land speculation, 5.3 Towns that grew with the Yan Yean Reservoir

Contextual history

Within the City of Whittlesea, the earliest settlements developed around facilities provided for travellers, which were often situated near creek and river crossings. As settlers began to arrive the demand for houses and facilities increased and schools, churches, shops, inns, and other community infrastructure was developed. Other settlements grew because of the timber industry. The arrival of the railway in the township of Whittlesea in 1889 linked the township of Whittlesea to the City to Melbourne and sparked a further period of growth (Context 2015).

The district of Mernda (originally known as Morang and South Yan Yean), situated at the northern extreme of the Plenty Gorge, developed around the site of a crossing over the Plenty River, which from 1841 was served by the first Bridge Inn (described at the time as a wattle and daub hut). The construction of the Yan Yean Reservoir contributed to the area's growth. Between 1853 and 1857 up to 1,000 men were employed in building the reservoir and in 1853 the first school was opened, followed by a Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1856, a Presbyterian Church in 1860, and a post office in 1861. The Bridge Inn was rebuilt in 1856 and relocated by 1868 to the present site at the corner of Bridge Inn and Plenty roads and by the 1870s there were four hotels/inns along the Plenty Road at Morang within a square mile. The foundation stone for a Catholic church was laid in 1879, and after some delays the building was opened in 1884 (Context 2015).

The opening of the railway to Whittlesea in 1889 led to a minor development boom, as reported in the 31 July 1891 edition of the *Evelyn Observer and South and East Bourke Record*:

It is worthy of remark that within a radius of about a mile of the South Yan Yean railway station there is undoubted signs of progress since the railway to Whittlesea was opened. The most prominent buildings so far that have been erected being the splendid residence at Yan Yean of Mr. John Horner, the residence of Dr Sutherland erected by Dehnert Brothers ... the residence of Mr. E. Perkins also the residences of Messrs. Bradford, Johnstone, McCurdy, and others, all of which is proof of the rapid progress being made in the district ... while recently there has been just finished the most costly building so far erected here, viz., the new Bridge Inn.

It was estimated that in the five years from 1887 to 1892 more than £15,000 was expended in the construction of new buildings in Mernda within a two-mile radius of the railway station (*Evelyn Observer and South and East Bourke Record*, 7 October 1892, p.2). This included two new civic buildings, which opened in 1888 - the Wesleyan Methodist Church on the west side of Plenty Road (now Schotters Road) and the Mechanics' Institute and Library on the corner diagonally opposite the Bridge Inn - and the new brick bakery, built c.1891 by Charles and Stephenson Turner in Schotters Road.

By 1895 the district had changed its name to South Yan Yean, but by 1913, the experiment had been abandoned and the name was changed to Mernda. In 1915 when the Shire of Whittlesea was joined with the Shire of Epping, the new Council had begun conducting its meetings within the Mechanics' Institute, a practice that continued until 1939.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

After the period of growth in the early 1890s, further development was slow, and it was said that a house built in 1923 was the first for 15 years (Payne 1973:117). Nonetheless, by 1928, when Mernda was officially declared a township, there were over 200 houses, two Savings Banks, three general stores, a bakery, five churches, a hotel, a post office, a school and the Mechanics' Institute and Council Chambers (*Advertiser*, 4 May 1928, p.2 'Proclaiming Mernda a township').

Place history – 1470 Plenty Road

1470 Plenty Road forms part of Crown Portion Four, Section Three, Parish of Yan Yean, County of Bourke. Bridge Inn Road formed the south boundary and Schotter's Road the east, while the original route of the Plenty Road, which travelled in a diagonal line across CP4 from the southwest corner to the northeast where it intersected with Schotter's Road, divided it into two almost equal halves. The northern section formed part of the Preston Hall farm, established c.1865 by Michael McLaughlin, while the southern part was gradually subdivided into several irregularly shaped parcels.

Figure 2 contains part of a plan prepared in 1887 for the survey of the Whittlesea Railway showing the pattern of the development on CP4. At that time the subject property formed part of the Preston Hall estate on the north side of the former alignment of Plenty Road.



Figure 2: Extract of 1887 Whittlesea Railway Survey Plan with my annotations showing key roads and buildings and the site of 1470 Plenty Road indicated by red star (Source: Reproduced in Mills, 2017)

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

The house on the subject property was built c.1891 by the Dehnert Brothers as the residence of Dr. Alexander Sutherland. The residence was one of several cited in the July 1891 newspaper article cited above about the development of Mernda following the opening of the railway station.

In the 1894-95 Shire of Whittlesea rate book, 'Alexander Sutherland M.D.' is identified as the person rated for a house in Yan Yean, owned by 'R. Dehnert' valued at £20. Dr. Sutherland was still the occupier in 1900-1901 rate book, when it was more specifically described as a brick house, then valued at £25.

As noted by Tonkin (2017:10) there were 'obvious advantages' for the growing district in attracting a doctor to live there, and it appears the Dehnerts built the house to facilitate this. Dr Sutherland came to the district in c.1891, setting up practice from this house and from a hotel in Whittlesea, and assumed the role of health officer for the Whittlesea Shire by 1892 (Tonkin 2017:10; Jones 1992:135). Dr. Sutherland left the area in 1902, dying shortly after, and was replaced as Shire health officer by Dr. F. Peipers (*Evelyn Observer and South and East Bourke Record*, 24 October 1902, p.2). Peipers took over renting the house on Plenty Road – he is identified as living there in 1904. He also consulted from Mr Timm's hotel in Whittlesea (*ibid*, 12 September 1902, p.2). The last reference in newspapers to Peipers is in December 1906 (Tonkin 2017:10).

In 1918 the house and just over three acres of land was purchased by the trustees of the Mernda Methodist Church to become the first parsonage (LV). The need for a parsonage arose after a division of the Preston circuit made in 1913, when the northern section comprising the churches at South Yan Yean (Mernda), South Morang, Whittlesea, Wollert, Hazelglen and Glenvale, became the Yan Yean South Circuit, with a Probationer based at Mernda. The first Probationer, Rev. B.L. Semmins stayed at Hazelmere, the home of John Horner, in Hayes Road. He was followed by Rev. Henry Clarke and later by Rev. Wesley Hobbs (Mernda Uniting Church booklet).

By July 1918 the house had been purchased and renovated and furnished at a cost of £670, of which £400 had been raised by the Furnishing Committee formed by the Ladies' Guild. The first resident minister was Rev. J. McIlroy and his wife (*ibid*).

The house remained the home of Ministers, Home Missionaries and Student Pastors until 1977 when it was acquired by the Country Roads Board at the time Plenty Road was realigned to the west behind the house (*ibid*).

Place history – 4 Station Road

4 Station Road also forms part of Crown Portion Four, Section Three, Parish of Yan Yean, County of Bourke. Bridge Inn Road formed the south boundary and Schotter's Road the east, while the original route of the Plenty Road, which travelled in a diagonal line across CP4 from the south west corner to the north east where it intersected with Schotter's Road divided it into two almost equal halves. The northern section formed part of the Preston Hall farm, established c.1865 by Michael McLaughlin, while the southern part was gradually subdivided into several irregularly shaped parcels (see Figure 2, above).

Several of the lots within the southern part of CP4 on the east side of Plenty Road were owned by James and Maria Ryan who arrived in the district in the early 1850s. James Ryan Snr. was the Whittlesea Shire Secretary from the 1870s and upon his death in 1899 he was succeeded by his son James Jnr. who served until 1939. The Ryan family were members of the St Joseph's Catholic Church congregation and in the 1870s donated the land for St Joseph's Church on Plenty Road, which after some delays eventually opened in 1884. The family home was situated just to the north of the church.

James Snr. played an important role in the early development of the district and was said to have 'given a great deal of stability to local government in the region'. One of his proudest achievements was obtaining the railway for Whittlesea in 1888 for which he received a gold watch and purse of

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

sovereigns. Though James Jnr. served for as long as his father, his achievements were not as great, and his tenure ended in controversy after he was accused of 'sloppy administration' and of 'grooming' his son John to take over as Secretary when he retired. The situation worsened and Whittlesea Shire Council gave notice terminating James Ryan's position in February 1939 (Jones 1992:176).

Following the death of Maria Ryan in 1903 ownership of the land owned by the family in Plenty Road passed to James Jnr and another son, Patrick (LV). In 1908 James married Violet Kate Adelaide Riordan, and in 1922 a one-acre allotment was excised from the Ryan property and registered in Violet's name. This is the present 4 Station Road.

The house at 4 Station Road was built in about 1923. Violet Ryan is listed as the owner of 'land, part of Lot 4, Sec 3, Mernda valued at £9 in the 1922-23 rate book, and then as the owner and occupier of a House and land valued at £35 in 1924-25. It appears that this was the residence of James and Violet, although James continued to be listed in the rate books as the person rated for the original Ryan house. The house and land remained in Violet's ownership until her death in 1963.

Sources

Context Pty Ltd, *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study. Volume 1 – Thematic environmental history*, 2013

Jones, Michael, *Nature's Plenty. History of the City of Whittlesea*, 1992

Land Victoria (LV) Certificates of Title:

- 1470 Plenty Road: Vol. 4058 Fol. 591 (1918)
- 4 Station Road: Vol. 2390 Fol. 962 (1892); Vol. 4576 Fol. 196 (1923)

Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study*, 1990

'Mernda Uniting Church 1888-1988'. Booklet prepared c.1988 by the Mernda Uniting Church congregation.

Mills, Peter, 'History of Mernda township', unpublished report prepared for City of Whittlesea, 2017

Payne, J.W., *The Plenty. A centenary history of the Whittlesea Shire*, 1973

Shire of Whittlesea rate books:

- 1470 Plenty Road: 1894-95 (No. in rate, 162); 1895-96 (328); 1896-97 (375), 1897-98 (381); 1898-99 (174); 1899-1900 (394); 1900-1901 (418).
- 4 Station Road: 1922-23 (no. in rate, 448); 1924-25 (467)

Tonkin, Ray, 'Mernda Township preliminary heritage assessment', unpublished report prepared for City of Whittlesea, June 2017

5. Description

5.1. 1470 Plenty Road

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is a Victorian brick villa. Symmetrical in plan, it is constructed of red brick on bluestone foundations, with white tuckpointing to the façade, and has a M-hip roof clad in corrugated iron, painted red. The central entrance contains a panelled timber door with a simple toplight and is flanked by timber sash windows with segmental brick arches and there are similar windows in the side elevations. On either side of the windows are small arched niches. The windows and niches have rendered sills that form part of a continuous rendered band and there is a second rendered band that aligns with the top of the entry door. Other details include:

- Eaves brackets separated by flat rectangular panels framed by a rendered band (see Figure 4).

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

- Three chimneys. The front pair of chimneys are rendered with elaborate decoration including a bracketed cornice above a stringcourse and surmounted by half-circular caps with a clam imprint (see Figure 4). The rear chimney is of brick with simple corbelling.

Condition and integrity

On the north side, it appears the house has been extended by one room at an early date, as the brickwork and bluestone have been extended and a similar window installed. Much later alterations and additions include:

- The replacement of the original front verandah (the outline of which can still be seen on the front wall) with the low pitch gable-fronted porch supported by thin posts set on brick piers.
- The rear weatherboard section and verandah (see Figure 3).

Overall, the house appears to be in good condition. The garden contains no significant trees. Along the south boundary of the property, which adjoins Station Lane is a dry stone retaining wall. This is likely to date to c.1977 when Plenty Road was realigned to the west and Station Lane was extended.



Figure 3: 1470 Plenty Road showing front (east) elevation at left and north and west side elevations at right (Source: David Helms, 2023)



Figure 4: Detail showing eaves and rendered band decoration, segmental arch window and niches, and evidence of original verandah profile, and chimneys at right (Source: David Helms, 2023).

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD



Figure 5: Detail of front door, niche and cills, and wall showing white tuckpointing (Source: David Helms 2023)



Figure 6: South and west elevations of the house and the dry stone retaining wall along the north boundary of Station Lane (Source: David Helms 2023).

5.2. 4 Station Road

The house at 4 Station Road is an interwar, weatherboard bungalow. Asymmetrical in plan, it has a hipped roof with a gablet that extends to form the verandah, which is contained between projecting bays to the front and north sides. There are two plain brick chimneys with terracotta pots. The timber framed windows have multi-pane upper sashes.

The house has a prominent position on a low hill and is highly visible in views along Station Road. It is surrounded within a garden that contains several mature and semi-mature exotic and native trees including pines, cypresses, and a Silky oak.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Figure 7: View of house from Station Road (Source: David Helms 2023)

Condition and integrity

The integrity of the house is fair. There is a large gabled addition at the rear. Alterations include:

- Replacement of all the external cladding.
- Partial enclosure of the verandah
- Replacement of some windows and doors.

6. Comparative analysis

6.1. 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda

The house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is an example of a late Victorian brick villa.

The late Victorian houses in the City of Whittlesea are all in the form of the ubiquitous double-fronted house constructed of timber, brick or stone with an M-hip roof and a separate verandah across the front that springs from below the eaves, which sometimes returns on one or more sides. There are two clear subsets of this type:

- The block-fronted house with a symmetrical façade: central front door flanked by windows with a verandah across the entire facade, sometimes returned to the side elevation(s); and
- The asymmetrical version with an M-hip roof punctuated by a projecting front bay (gabled or hip) to one side, and a verandah that does not continue across the projecting bay.

In some cases, the asymmetrical type was created in two stages, with the addition of a gable-fronted wing to an earlier house.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Superior Victorian examples are distinguished by Italianate detailing, which can include timber or cement ornamentation to walls and chimneys, ornate cast iron verandahs, imitation Ashlar boards to timber examples, and the use of decorative bi-chrome brick. Windows are often single pane sash, either as a single window or a tripartite arrangement in superior versions.

Examples of this type range from the 1880s through to the 1910s, although some examples were built as late as the early to mid 1920s. The asymmetrical version was particularly popular after the turn of the century in the Federation/Edwardian period, embellished with Queen Anne-style details, such as half-timbering to the projecting gable and casement windows with highlights.

In the City of Whittlesea perhaps the finest example of this type is Wolserey, 340 Wallan Road, Whittlesea (HO150). Built c.1880 Wolserey is a rare example of an architect-designed house in the municipality and is distinguished by fine detailing, which includes imitation Ashlar boards, rendered chimneys with heavy cornices and string courses, eaves brackets and a return verandah with an elaborate cast iron frieze.

Other superior examples include:

- Moorilla, 1175 Plenty Road, South Morang (HO76). Asymmetrical in plan, it is built of bi-chrome brick and is distinguished by fine details including the projecting three-sided bay with compressed arch windows, decorated eaves, bracketed cornices and stringcourses to the chimneys, and the return verandah with cast iron decoration. The tiles to the roof and verandah are not original, but otherwise it has good integrity.
- Hazelmare, 32-36 Hayes Road, Mernda (HO15). Large (at least four rooms deep) and well-detailed example. Symmetrical with bi-chrome tuckpointed brick walls (decorative quoining to windows, doors, and wall corners, diaperwork below windows and to eaves), paired eaves brackets set within a string course, slate roof, and bi-chromatic chimneys with rendered cornices, panelled front door with sidelights and highlights and tripartite windows to main elevation. An elegant (reconstructed) ogee profile verandah with cast iron frieze returns on both sides.
- Le Page Homestead, 64 Gordons Road, South Morang (HO26). Typical and intact example. Symmetrical with bi-chrome tuckpointed brick walls (decorative quoining to windows and doors), paired eaves brackets set within a string course, front verandah, part slate roof, and rendered chimneys with cornices and string courses.
- Moorilla, 1175 Plenty Road, South Morang (HO76). Asymmetrical in plan, it is built of bi-chrome brick and is distinguished by fine details including the projecting three-sided bay with compressed arch windows, decorated eaves, bracketed cornices and stringcourses to the chimneys, and the return verandah with cast iron decoration. The tiles to the roof and verandah are not original, but otherwise it has good integrity.

Simple examples included in the HO include:

- HO119, 100 Cravens Road, Mernda. Brick. Typical of the style. Good integrity.
- HO72, Linton Park, 265 Hazel Glen Drive, Mernda. Weatherboard. Typical of the style. Moderate integrity due to visible additions and alterations to verandah.
- HO71, Clydebank, 31-35 Johnsons Road, Mernda. Bi-chrome brick. Typical of the style. Moderate integrity due to removal of verandah.
- HO20, Mernda Mechanics' Institute Caretaker's Residence (former), 1438 Plenty Road, Mernda. Bi-chrome brick. Typical of the style. Moderate integrity due to alterations to verandah.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Discussion

The house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is a superior example of a late Victorian brick villa that is distinguished by the quality of the detailing, especially to the chimneys, which are comparable to those at Wolserey. The arched niches are a rare and unusual detail, which is not found in any other examples in the municipality. While the original verandah has been lost, the house otherwise has good integrity, with all the original detailing intact.

Historically, the house is one of several that were built immediately following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 when the village began to develop and take shape around the intersection of Plenty and Bridge Inn roads. It compares with Hazelmare, Clydebank and the Mernda Mechanics' Institute Caretaker's Residence.

6.2. 4 Station Road

The house at 4 Station Road is a simple example of an interwar timber bungalow with typical form and detailing. However, the integrity of the building has been diminished by a large rear additions and alterations including replacement of all external cladding, some windows, and enclosure of the verandah.

There are relatively few interwar houses when compared with Victorian and Federation houses in the City of Whittlesea. This illustrates the limited development that occurred during the interwar period. In Mernda, one example is 635 Bridge Inn Road (HO116) which has a transverse gable roof with overhanging eaves but has been adapted from an earlier building. It nonetheless has relatively good integrity. Other examples are both in Whittlesea: 6 Lime Street (HO145) and 44 Walnut Street (HO153). Like 635 Bridge Inn Road they are simply detailed and have good integrity.

When compared to these places 4 Station Road has lower integrity and does not have any features that elevate it as a fine or representative example at the local level. The house has some aesthetic qualities due to its location on a prominent hill, but this does not elevate it to the level of local significance.

7. Analysis against Hercon criteria

Having regard to the analysis carried out for this report it is my opinion that the house at 1470 Plenty Road satisfies Criterion A and Criterion E at the local level.

Criterion A

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is associated with the development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 and demonstrates how this encouraged the building of more substantial houses for prominent residents. It has associations with Dr. Alexander Sutherland who was the first resident doctor in the district and acted as the Health Officer for the City of Whittlesea from c.1890 to c.1902 and his successor Dr. Pieper. Following the creation of the Yan Yean South Methodist circuit in 1913 the Mernda Methodist Church purchased it in 1917 and from 1918 it became the first Parsonage until it was sold in 1977.

While the house at 4 Station Road is now almost 100 years old, it is not associated with an important period of growth in Mernda. The association with the Ryan family is of some interest but does not elevate it to the level of local significance. While James Ryan Jnr. was a long-serving Shire Secretary, he did not play an important role in the establishment and development of Mernda when compared to his father, James Snr.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Criterion B:

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion C:

Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding our cultural or natural history (research potential).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion D:

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Not satisfied at the local level for either house.

Criterion E:

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices and half circular caps, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the façade.

The house at 4 Station Road, has some aesthetic interest due to its prominent location surrounded by a mature garden, but this does not elevate it to the level of local significance.

Criterion F:

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion G:

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion H:

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

Not satisfied at the local level for either house. The associations of 1470 Plenty Road with two doctors and the Mernda Methodist Church are better recognised as part of Criterion A.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

The former doctor's residence and parsonage built c.1891, at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea and justifies inclusion in the HO of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as an individual place. No specific HO controls (External paint, internal controls etc.) are required. Attachment 1 contains the statement of significance (SoS).

The following changes to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme are recommended:

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

- Apply an individual HO to the part of 1470 Plenty Road containing the house and a small curtilage, as shown in Figure 8. In accordance with PPN1, the curtilage has been applied to provide a suitable buffer to manage development that could affect the setting of the house, while avoiding applying the HO to land containing no heritage fabric.
- Inclusion of the 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda SoS in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as an incorporated document.



Figure 8: Proposed HO curtilage for 1470 Plenty Road. Green indicates the current property boundary, yellow shows the proposed HO extent (Source: Vicplan with my annotations)


While the house at 4 Station Road is of some historic interest as house built in 1923 for the Ryan family, it does not satisfy the threshold of local significance as it is not associated with a key period of growth in Morang, and has been altered, reducing its integrity. Accordingly, application of the HO to this property is not recommended.

Other recommendations

Replacement of the gabled porch at 1470 Plenty Road with a period-appropriate verandah is strongly encouraged. The original roof profile is evident in the front wall and other detailing should be simple and based on typical verandahs of the period.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Attachment 1 – 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda Statement of Significance

Heritage place:	House (former doctor’s residence and parsonage), 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda	PS ref no:	HOXXX
		INSERT MAP	

What is significant?

The former doctor’s residence, later Methodist parsonage, built c.1891, at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is significant. The brick house to the extent of the nineteenth century fabric, including an early addition at the north-west corner, contributes to the significance of the place.

The gabled porch to the front, and the timber section and verandah to the rear of the house are not significant.

How is it significant?

The former doctor’s residence and Methodist parsonage at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the house at 1470 Plenty Road is associated with the development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 and demonstrates how this encouraged the building of more substantial houses for prominent residents. It has associations with Dr. Alexander Sutherland who was the first resident doctor in the district and acted as the Health Officer for the City of Whittlesea from c.1890 to c.1902 and his successor Dr. Pieper. Following the creation of the Yan Yean South Methodist circuit in 1913 the Mernda Methodist Church purchased it in 1917 and from 1918 it became the first parsonage until it was sold in 1977. (Criterion A)

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices and half circular caps, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the façade. (Criterion E)

Primary source

David Helms
HERITAGE PLANNING

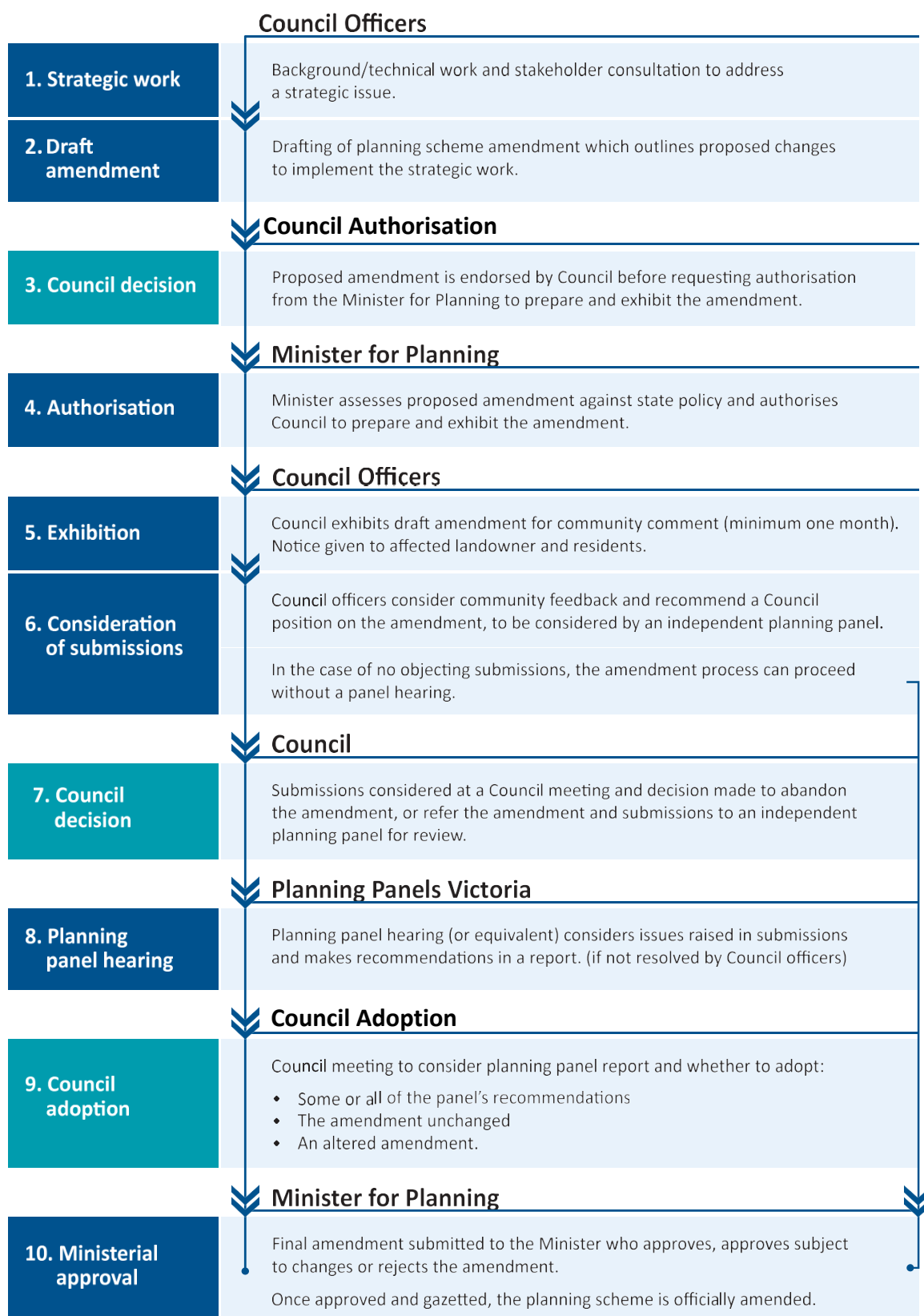
ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

David Helms Heritage Planning, Assessment of heritage significance: 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda 2023

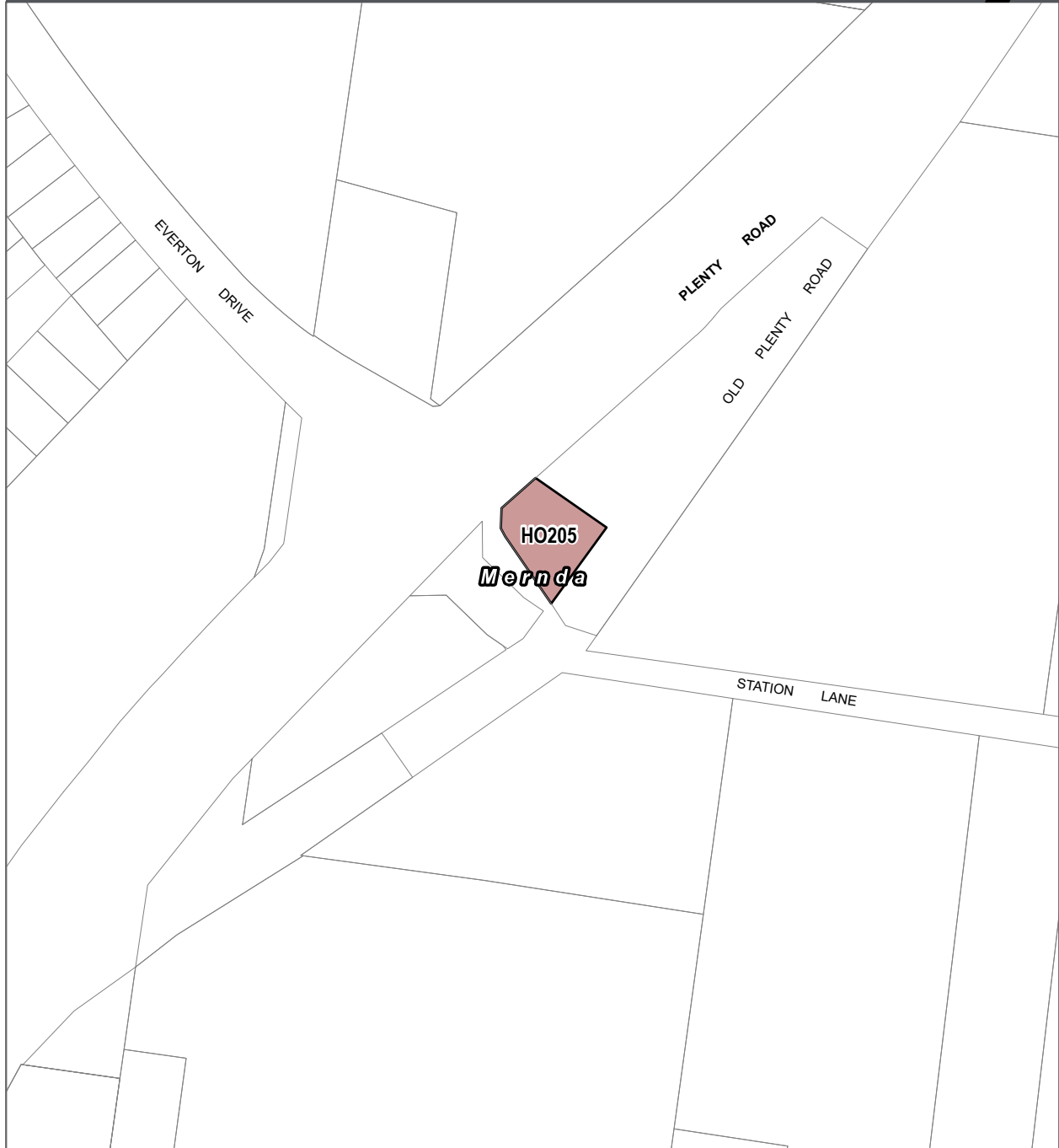
This document is an incorporated document in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

Planning Scheme Amendment statutory process



Council-led amendments

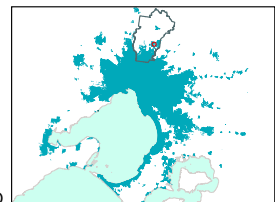


WHITTLESEA PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION AMENDMENT C287wsea



LEGEND

-  HO - Heritage Overlay
-  Local Government Area



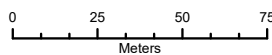
Part of Planning Scheme Map 13HO

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

© The State of Victoria Department of Transport and Planning 2025

Planning Spatial Services
Print Date: 06/08/2025
Amendment Version: 1



Planning and Environment Act 1987

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

Amendment C287wsea

Explanatory Report

Overview

The amendment proposes to apply the Heritage Overlay (HO205) to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda on a permanent basis.

The proposed amendment will provide permanent protection to conserve a heritage place of local aesthetic and historic significance. The house exhibits aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing (refer Figure 1). The house and its past residents are associated with the early development of the Mernda district.



Figure 1. 1470 Plenty Road showing front (east) elevation (Source: David Helms, 2023)

Where you may inspect this amendment

The amendment can be inspected free of charge at the City of Whittlesea website at: www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/building-planning-development/planning-scheme-and-amendments/

The amendment is available for public inspection, free of charge, during office hours

at the following places:

City of Whittlesea
Civic Centre,
25 Ferres Boulevard,
South Morang

The amendment can also be inspected free of charge at the Department of Transport and Planning website at www.planning.vic.gov.au/public-inspection by contacting the office on 1800 789 386 to arrange a time to view the amendment documentation.

Details of the amendment

Who is the planning authority?

This amendment has been prepared by Whittlesea City Council which is the planning authority for this amendment.

The amendment has been made at the request of Whittlesea City Council.

Land affected by the amendment

The amendment applies to part of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, (Figure 1) including the dwelling and curtilage to provide a suitable buffer to manage development that could affect the setting of the house.

The subject site is in the General Residential Zone – Schedule 1.



Figure 2. Land affected by Whittlesea Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea

What the amendment does

The amendment applies the Heritage Overlay, on a permanent basis to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

Specifically, the amendment:

- Amends the Schedule to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) to include HO205.
- Amends Planning Scheme Map No. 13HO to apply the Heritage Overlay HO205 to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.
- Amends the Schedule to Clause 72.04 (Incorporated Documents) to include the statement of significance for 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

Strategic assessment of the amendment

Why is the amendment required?

The amendment is required to provide heritage protection to the dwelling and its curtilage at 1470 Plenty Road Mernda.

On 28 September 2022, council received an application under Section 29A of the *Building Act 1993* to demolish the dwelling at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda. The request for demolition was suspended on 19 October 2022. Whilst permanent controls are pursued, an interim heritage overlay for the site has been approved with an expiry date of 1/09/2026.

A report prepared in 2023 by David Helms for the City of Whittlesea titled 'Heritage Assessment - 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda' provides justification to place a heritage control on 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

The house at 1470 Plenty Road has been identified as having local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea. The house is one of several that was built immediately following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway when the Mernda village began to take shape. The house at 1470 is associated with the development of the Mernda district and has associations with prominent community members including Dr. Alexander Sutherland, the first resident doctor of the district and his successor. The house is an example of a 19th century Victorian brick villa. It is considered to be a superior example of a late Victorian brick villa distinguished by the quality of the detailing and good integrity.

The amendment will ensure that any future use, development and subdivision of the subject land is considered having regard to the purpose and decision guidelines of the Heritage Overlay at Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

How does the amendment implement the objectives of planning in Victoria?

The amendment implements the following objectives as set out in Section 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*:

- Section 4(1) (a) – to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of the land.
- Section 4(1) (d) – to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value via the Heritage Overlay.
- Section 4(1) (g) – to balance the present and future interests of all Victorians.

The amendment implements these objectives by applying a Heritage Overlay that seeks to retain an historically and aesthetically significant building for the benefit of current and future communities of Whittlesea.

How does the amendment address any environmental, social and economic effects?

The amendment will have no adverse effect on the natural environment, while ensuring that elements of the built environment that are of heritage significance are conserved via the Heritage Overlay.

The amendment provides positive social and economic outcomes by ensuring that the historic and aesthetic identity of the site is protected for current and future communities of Whittlesea.

Does the amendment address climate change?

Ministerial Direction 22 Climate Change Consideration is not applicable to this amendment as no changes to the land use or built form outcomes are proposed.

Does the amendment address relevant bushfire risk?

The amendment meets bushfire policy in Clause 13.02 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme because the amendment does not allow for the intensification of the land or change the use of the land. Therefore, it is unlikely to result in any significant increase to the risk to life as a priority, property, community infrastructure or the natural environment.

Does the amendment comply with the requirements of any other Minister's Direction applicable to the amendment?

The amendment complies with the requirements of *Ministerial Direction – The Form and Content of Planning Schemes* (section 7(5) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*) by including an additional heritage place in Schedule to Clause 43.01 in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

The amendment complies with the requirements of *Ministerial Direction No 11 – Strategic Assessments of Amendments* under section 12 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The Strategic Assessment Guidelines outlined in this Direction are incorporated into this Explanatory Report.

Ministerial Direction No 12 – Urban Growth Areas requires planning authorities to consider how an amendment responds to a Growth Area Framework Plan applying to land. The Incorporated Plan Overlay – Schedule 1 which implements the Mernda Strategy Plan applies to the site. The Mernda Strategy Plan nominates the subject site for medium density residential. Whilst the proposed Heritage Overlay may limit the number of dwellings that could be provided on the site, the benefit of retaining the building for future generations is considered to outweigh the negative impact of reduced development of land. The site also forms part of a larger precinct for which a Development Plan has been approved to support additional housing. Further, it is not considered that application of the Heritage Overlay to the site will have any impact on the ability of City of Whittlesea to meet our housing targets.

How does the amendment support or implement the Planning Policy Framework and any adopted State policy?

Clause 15

The amendment supports the Planning Policy Framework including Clause 15 (Built Environment and Heritage) by supporting the objective that 'planning should protect places and sites with significant heritage, architectural, aesthetic, natural, scientific and cultural value'. The amendment identifies and protects a place of historical and aesthetic significance in accordance with Criteria A and E of the Hercon criteria.

Clause 15.03-1S (Heritage Conservation) seeks to ensure the conservation of heritage places as well as their setting and context. The proposed amendment is consistent with this directive, seeking to ensure the application of the Heritage Overlay to the dwelling and curtilage within the subject site that is identified as having heritage significance.

The amendment is also consistent with Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage conservation in Whittlesea) by providing for the protection of a local heritage place.

Is the amendment consistent with the delivery of the relevant housing target set out in the Planning Policy Framework?

The amendment will not have any discernible impact on the delivery of the proposed housing target for City of Whittlesea as set out in Clause 16.01-1S of the Planning Policy Framework. While the amendment may affect the development potential of the subject site, it only affects a small portion of the property.

How does the amendment support or implement the Municipal Planning Strategy?

The amendment is consistent with the Municipal Planning Strategy, in particular at Clause 02.03-5 (Built environment and heritage) through protecting and maintaining the integrity and historic character of Whittlesea's heritage places.

Does the amendment make proper use of the Victoria Planning Provisions?

The amendment makes proper use of the Victoria Planning Provisions by applying the Heritage Overlay to part of the site including the dwelling. The Heritage Overlay is the most appropriate planning tool to identify places of heritage significance. The Heritage Overlay requires a planning permit to be granted for buildings and works, including demolition and provides a framework to manage heritage values of the place.

How does the amendment address the views of any relevant agency?

The views of relevant agencies will be sought through the public exhibition of the amendment.

Does the amendment address relevant requirements of the Transport Integration Act 2010?

The proposed amendment is not expected to have any significant effect on the transport system as defined by Section 3 of the Transport Integration Act 2010.

How does the amendment have regard to the principles set out in the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong)* Act 2017 in relation to Yarra River land and other land, the use or development of which may affect Yarra River land?

The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong)* Act 2017 is not relevant to this amendment.

Resource and administrative costs

What impact will the new planning provisions have on the resource and administrative costs of the responsible authority?

The amendment will have minimal impact on resource and administrative costs on the responsible authority, as it only includes one additional place under the Heritage Overlay for consideration.

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

Amendment C287wsea

Instruction sheet

The planning authority for this amendment is the City of Whittlesea.

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme is amended as follows:

Planning Scheme Maps

The Planning Scheme Maps are amended by a total of 1 attached map sheet.

Overlay Maps

1. Amend Planning Scheme Map No. 13HO in the manner shown on the 1 attached map marked "Whittlesea Planning Scheme, Amendment C287wsea".


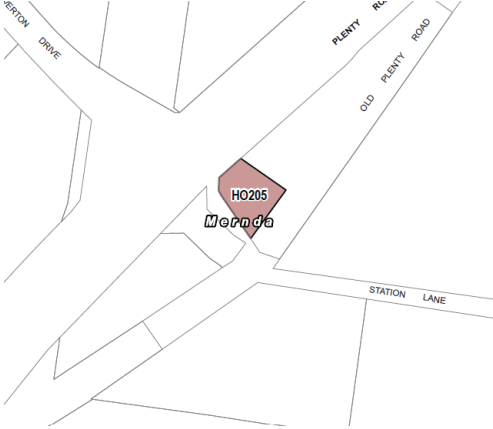
Planning Scheme Ordinance

The Planning Scheme Ordinance is amended as follows:

2. In **Overlays** – Clause 43.01, replace Schedule with a new Schedule in the form of the attached document.
3. In **Operational Provisions** – Clause 72.04, replace the Schedule with a new Schedule in the form of the attached document.

End of document

**House (former doctor’s residence and parsonage) 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda
Statement of Significance (David Helms, July, 2023)**

<p>Heritage place: House (former doctor’s residence and parsonage), 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda</p>	<p>PS ref no: HO205</p>
	

What is significant?

The former doctor’s residence, later Methodist parsonage, built c.1891, at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is significant. The brick house to the extent of the nineteenth century fabric, including an early addition at the north-west corner, contributes to the significance of the place.

The gabled porch to the front, and the timber section and verandah to the rear of the house are not significant.

How is it significant?

The former doctor’s residence and Methodist parsonage at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the house at 1470 Plenty Road is associated with the development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 and demonstrates how this encouraged the building of more substantial houses for prominent residents. It has associations with Dr. Alexander Sutherland who was the first resident doctor in the district and acted as the Health Officer for the City of Whittlesea from c.1890 to c.1902 and his successor Dr. Pieper. Following the creation of the Yan Yean South Methodist circuit in 1913 the Mernda Methodist Church purchased it in 1917 and from 1918 it became the first parsonage until it was sold in 1977. (Criterion A)

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices and half circular caps, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the façade. (Criterion E)

Primary source

David Helms
HERITAGE PLANNING

David Helms Heritage Planning, Assessment of heritage significance: 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda 2023

This document is an incorporated document in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

5.5 2017-75A: Awarding of Contract Variation for Kerbside Garbage, Recycling and Green Waste Collection Services

Director/Executive Manager: Director Infrastructure & Environment

Report Author: Unit Manager Resource Recovery

In Attendance: Manager Sustainable Environment
Unit Manager Resource Recovery

This attachment has been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—

- (i) relates to trade secrets; or
- (ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Executive Summary

Contract 2017-75A Landfill Waste, Recyclables and Green Organics Collection is Councils' primary service contract for the collection of kerbside bins. We are seeking a financial variation to cover the costs of collections for the endorsed contract up until 30 June 2028.

It is proposed that contract number 2017-75A for Landfill Waste, Recyclables and Green Organics Collection is varied to suit operational requirements including:

- Municipal growth over the life of the contract;
- Roll out of mandatory Food and Garden Waste collection service, from July 2026; and
- Ongoing operational service improvements.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. **Note at the 31 October 2017 Council meeting, Contract 2017-75A Landfill Waste, Recyclables and Green Organics Collection was awarded to JJ Richards. A subsequent contract extension was approved by Council at its meeting on 27 June 2022, taking the contract end date to 30 June 2028.**
2. **Note the performance under the contract to date has been exceptional, demonstrating consistently high standards and achievement of all Key Performance Indicators.**

- 3. Resolve to approve a financial variation in the amount of \$26,028,740 ex GST for the remaining two years of Contract 2017-75A Landfill Waste, Recyclables and Green Organics Collection, to incorporate the extension of the Food and Garden Waste bin service, allowance for growth and service improvements.**

Background / Key Information

Contract 2017-75A Landfill Waste, Recyclables and Green Organics Collection was awarded to JJ Richards by Council at the 31 October 2017 Council Meeting. A summary of the financial performance of the contract is provided in the confidential attachment.

This contract has had three previous variations approved.

- Additional funds for the early commencement of the contract at the 6 February 2018 Council Meeting.
- A time extension of this contract to align with the completion of the glass bin collection contract 2021-140A at the 27 June 2022 Council Meeting; and
- A variation to facilitate the capital delivery of the red bin lid change over program.

This contract has been approved until 30 June 2028 and performed satisfactorily to date.

Over the life of this schedule of rates contract, the City of Whittlesea has experienced ongoing growth in the municipality, as well as rising costs due to the consumer price index and increasing commodity prices. As a result, there is a shortfall in the original contract sum for the remainder of this contract.

Since the commencement of this contract eight years ago, the municipality has faced many financial challenges. Covid lockdowns directly contributed to a rise in the amount of material that was collected across all streams, having a direct impact on collection costs. Collection costs rose 32.08% from the 2019-20 to 2022-23 financial years. Increases in inflation and commodity costs were unprecedented, adding further pressure to collection costs. Successful promotions and the continued growth of the opt-in food and garden waste bin service also saw Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) bin collections increase from 43,275 to 59,608 tenements, which is an increase of 37% in participating properties.

The City of Whittlesea has been progressing towards completing the transition requirements of the Victorian Government Recycling Victoria Policy since its release in February 2020. To be compliant with the Victorian Government Recycling Victoria policy, council is required to provide a four-bin kerbside collection service to all residents within the municipality. This consists of the garbage bin, recycling bin, FOGO bin and glass bin. We have rolled out a kerbside glass bin and changed the garbage bin lids from dark green to red. Council's food and garden waste bin service commenced in July 2020, and we currently have 59,608 residents that utilise this opt-in service.

Extending the FOGO bin municipal wide is the remaining step in finalising the transition. The capital investment associated with the roll out has been budgeted under CW-11062 - Extension of the FOGO bin – municipal wide and will be completed by the end of June 2026.

Once complete, this will see an additional 35,000 bins collected fortnightly and as a result increasing Councils collection costs ongoing.

To facilitate the variation based on the reasons outlined above, a total financial variation of \$26,028,740 is now required for completion of the contract, the collection of the mandatory food and garden waste bin service municipal-wide and to future proof ongoing operational service improvements.

This variation will ensure that we can continue to collect residential bins and uphold the high standards of Councils waste contractor and provide a cost effective, efficient and reliable service to the community.

Further details of the requested variation and a summary of the financial performance of the contract are provided in the confidential attachment.

The contractor's prices have been checked and are considered competitive.

Council's glass bin collection service is managed via a separate contract 2021-140A. It is currently forecasted to have sufficient funds to see out the glass collection contract until 30 June 2028.

Council officers will commence the preparation of a new collection contract in the 2026-27 financial year, with consideration to continuous improvements in service delivery for the community.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2025-2029:

Sustainable Environment

We prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green space and address climate change.

The project directly connects to Theme 5 within the Community Plan 2025-29. This is via our ongoing work to provide waste management services, including the collection, disposal and recycling of household and commercial waste and the delivery of kerbside waste, recycling and organics collection services to comply with Victorian Government requirements.

The roll out of the FOGO service municipal wide connects to Strategy Priority 14: Deliver the food and garden waste service to all households in the municipality and trial new waste and recycling collection services for waste such as soft plastics.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

Sufficient funding for this contract is available in the operational budget for the current financial year and will be budgeted for in future years for the operation of this service.

Community Consultation and Engagement

No community consultation and engagement is proposed as part of this contract variation. Community consultation was undertaken as part of the budget preparation for the community plan action plan 2025-26 which included the universal FOGO service.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

Public Transparency Principles

- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

Council's kerbside collection services allow residents to conveniently dispose of household waste and recyclables. The implementation of a glass recycling service is identified as a priority action within Council's Rethinking Waste Plan 2021-30, with service commencement to occur during 2022-23.

Economic

The collection contractor's depot and waste receipt locations (recycling, FOGO and rubbish) are all located within the Northern Council Alliance region.

This service is at full cost recovery through the waste charge and the draft budget for this service for 2026-27 includes these cost estimates.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

Councils are required under the Circular Economy (*Waste Reduction and Recycling*) Act 2021 to provide waste and recycling services. Council kerbside service to be compliant with associated draft regulations is the universal FOGO roll out. Council has progressed on the basis that these draft regulations show a prescribed date of 1 July 2027 for all services.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

A decision to award the financial variation for 2017-75A for Landfill Waste, Recycling, & Green Waste Kerbside Collection Services will be communicated via the standard communication channels for Council Meeting outcomes.

The communication plan associated with the extension of the Food Organics and Garden Organics service municipal wide has been developed as part of the Capital Work program CW-11062-Extension of FOGO bin – Municipal Wide.

Critical Dates

Food and garden waste municipal-wide collection will commence on 1 July 2026.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Confidential Contract Variation Details [5.5.1 - 2 pages]

5.6 Governance Report

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Unit Manager Council Governance

Executive Summary

In accordance with best practice, good governance principles, transparent and accountable reporting, officers deem it appropriate to consolidate governance and administrative reports into one standing report to provide a single reporting mechanism for a range of statutory compliance, transparency and governance matters. This also ensures compliance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council's Governance Rules and related regulations.

The purpose of this report is to provide information and endorsement for the following governance related matters:

- Cost of Whittlesea Commission of Inquiry; and
- Summary Minutes of 24 February 2026 Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting.

Further information on the above listed matters is located within the body of this report.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council note:

1. **The Governance Report for March 2026.**
2. **On 18 February 2026 Council received an invoice for the Commission of Inquiry (Col). The total cost to Council incurred for the Col was \$552,639.82 ex GST.**
3. **The 24 February 2026 Audit and Risk Committee unconfirmed summary of minutes at Attachment 1.**

Background / Key Information

Cost of Whittlesea Commission Inquiry

On 16 April 2025, the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Nick Staikos announced a Commission of Inquiry into the City of Whittlesea in accordance with section 200 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Ms Prue Digby was appointed as the Chair and Mr Jim Gifford was appointed as Commissioner. The Commission of Inquiry ran from 19 May 2025 until 19 September 2025 with the report being tabled in Parliament on 14 October 2025.

On 18 February 2026, Council received a tax invoice in the amount of \$552,639.82 exclusive GST (\$607,903.80 incl. GST).

Summary Minutes of 24 February 2026 Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) Meeting

The ARC, an independent advisory committee of Council, has the responsibility of reporting to the Council and offering expert advice and recommendations on matters brought before it. The ARC fulfills this role by monitoring, reviewing, and providing guidance on issues relating to financial matters, risks and supporting the Council in meeting its governance obligations to the community.

The ARC discussed the following matters at the scheduled meeting of 24 February 2026:

- The quarterly Risk Management Report detailing risk treatment plans for both strategic and operational risk along with Business Continuity activities, public liability insurance claims, and occupational health and safety performance activities.
- The IT and Cybersecurity Risk Report detailing Council's cybersecurity profile, overview of Council's AI Policy and status, and Councils' server management model.
- The Disaster Recovery Plans and the Outcomes of Tests of Disaster Recovery Plans Report.
- The fraud and corruption risk report detailing the corruption risks contained in the risk register and fraud and corruption environment.
- Corporate Performance Report.
- The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) including an update on Quarter 2 2025-26 and the summary changes to the LGPRF for the 2026-27 financial year.
- The Key Policies and Procedures Report detailing Councils' internal control environment, focusing on key policies and procedures.
- The CX/DX Program Report outlining the completion of the CX/DX Program.
- The Internal Assurance Report outlining the progress of the Assurance Audit Plan.
- The progress of the 2025-26 Annual Internal Audit Program, including one completed internal audit report, one internal audit scope, actions arising from previous audits and internal audit service contract extension.
- The draft Audit Strategy Memorandum for the financial year ended 30 June 2026.

- Compliance and governance matters as detailed in the ARC's Annual Work Plan.

To provide transparency and to comply with the requirements of the ARC's Charter, the unconfirmed meeting summary minutes is provided at Attachment 1 for noting by Council.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2025-2029:

High Performing Organisation

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

Not applicable.

Community Consultation and Engagement

There is no community consultation or engagement required for this report.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.
- (i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.
- (b) Council information must be publicly available unless—
 - (i) the information is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act; or
 - (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.
- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health

No implications.

Economic

No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No implications.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Not applicable.

Critical Dates

There are no other critical dates associated with the report.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Unconfirmed Summary Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee 24 Feb [5.6.1 - 14 pages]

Unconfirmed

Summary Minutes

Audit and Risk Committee

Tuesday 24 February 2026 at 1pm

Council Chamber,
25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



Attendees

Present

Members

Independent

Bruce Potgieter, Chairperson

Lisa Tripodi (*left 2:42pm and returned 2:44pm*)

Suzie Thoraval (*attended 1:04pm*)

Councillors

Cr Martin Taylor (*left 3:00PM and returned 3:05pm*)

Cr David Lenberg

Council Officers:

Craig Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer (*left 4:00pm and returned 4:02PM*)

Sarah Renner, Director Customer and Corporate Services

Aaron Gerrard, Chief Financial Officer

Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO

Bobbie Bright, Unit Manager Governance Compliance

Monitor:

Steven Kingshott (*left 2:54pm and returned 2:58pm; left 4:00pm and returned 4:03pm*)

Invited Guests:

Natasha Volpe, Coordinator Risk and Insurance

Damien Kook, Unit Manager Safety and Wellbeing

Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing

Lisa Raywood, Manager Ageing Well

Kristen Taylor, Coordinator Quality and Compliance

Debbie Wood, Director Infrastructure and Environment

James Walden, Manager Maintenance and Operations

Asaad Qureshi, Chief Information Officer

Chaminda Samararatne, Enterprise Security Architect

Nehme Tabet, Unit Manager Technology Infrastructure & Support

Adrian Napoleone, Manager EPMO and Change

Nick Mazarella, Manager Capital Delivery

Phoebe Maprock, Unit Manager Financial Compliance and Control

External Attendees:

Jordan McFadden, Director – Aster Advisory

Graham Noriskin, Director – Aster Advisory

Nick Walter, Partner – HLB Mann Judd (*attended at 3:20pm and left 3:25pm*)

Hui Ping Teoh, Manager – HLB Mann Judd (*attended at 3:20pm and left 3:25pm*)

Minutes

Ilker Destan, Compliance and Governance Officer

Apologies

Nil



Table of Contents

Attendees2

1 In-Camera Discussion.....5

2 Previous Meeting.....6

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting6

2.2 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings6

3 Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan6

3.1 Progress of Annual Work Plan.....6

4 CEO’s Update7

5 Risk Management7

5.1 Risk Management Report – Quarter Ending 31 December 20257

5.2 Presentation on Directorate Risk Profile.....8

5.3 IT and Cyber Security Risk8

5.4 Disaster Recovery Plans and Outcomes of Tests of Disaster Recovery Plans8

5.5 Review Awareness Fraud and Corruption Risk.....9

6 Financial and Performance Reporting9

6.1 Corporate Performance Report9

6.2 2025-26 Q2 LGPRF Results and 2026-27 Significant Changes to Reporting.....9

7 Systems of Internal Control10

7.1 Review of Key Policies and Procedures.....10

7.2 CX/DX Program.....10

8 Internal Assurance10

8.1 Internal Assurance Report10

9 Internal Audit.....11

9.1 Internal Audit Plan Delivery Status Report11

9.2 Internal Audit Reports on Completed Reviews11

9.3 Internal Audit Review Scopes for Endorsement11

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



9.4 Internal Audit Open Actions Report.....	12
10 External Audit Report	12
10.1 External Audit Report.....	12
11 Compliance	12
11.1 Review Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Register	12
11.2 Review Key Personnel Expenses	13
12 Governance.....	13
12.1 Integrity Body Reports	13
12.2 Report to Council on Committee Activities.....	14
13 Other Matters	14
14 Meeting Reflection	14

UNCONFIRMED

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



1 In-Camera Discussion

The meeting commenced at 1:03pm with members of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Monitor only. Independent member Suzie Thoraval attended at 1:04pm.

In-camera session with the CEO and Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO commenced at 1:21pm.

Welcome

All other officers and external listed in attendance joined the meeting from 1:36pm.

The Chair opened the formal section of the meeting, welcoming all attendees.

The Chair welcomed the Monitor.

The Chair noted that the following reports to be taken as read:

- Item 2.2 – Matters Arising from Previous Meetings
- Item 6.2 – 2025-26 Q2 LGPRF Results and 2026-27 Significant Changes to Reporting
- Item 7.1 – Review of Key Policies and Procedures
- Item 7.2 – CX/DX Program
- Item 8.1 – Internal Assurance Report
- Item 11.1 – Review Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Register
- Item 11.2 – Review Key Personnel Expenses
- Item 12.1 – Integrity Body Reports

The Chair noted that taking these reports as read reflects the Committee's confidence in their completeness and that no further discussion was required.

Lisa Tripodi provided a reminder that her membership on the Audit and Risk Committee at Nillumbik Shire Council be added in the Personal Interest Register.

Suzie Thoraval provided a reminder that her membership on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee at Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing be removed from the Personal Interest Register.

Apologies

No apologies.

Conflict of Interest

Internal auditors disclosed a conflict of interest regarding the internal audit service contract as included in Item 9.1 – Internal Audit Plan Delivery Status Report.

2 Previous Meeting

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the meeting minutes from the 9 December 2025 Committee meeting for confirmation.

Committee Resolution

The 9 December 2025 Committee meeting minutes be confirmed.

Moved: Councillor Martin Taylor

Second: Lisa Tripodi

CARRIED

2.2 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Risk Committee on the status of actions arising from previous meetings, detailing those that have been completed and those currently in progress.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the status of actions arising from previous Audit and Risk Committee meetings at Attachment 1 to the report.

CARRIED

3 Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan

3.1 Progress of Annual Work Plan

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive update on the status and progress of the Annual Work Plan (AWP) and to provide confirmation that all planned activities to date have been reported and reviewed in alignment with the AWP.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the status of the Annual Work Plan, as detailed in Attachment 1 to the report.

CARRIED

6 | 14

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



4 CEO's Update

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

This report has been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 on the grounds that it contains Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released. The report contains information regarding potential regulatory proceedings.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a verbal CEO's update and quarterly CEO questionnaire.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the CEO questionnaire at Attachment 1 and the verbal update provided by the CEO.

CARRIED

5 Risk Management

5.1 Risk Management Report – Quarter Ending 31 December 2025

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Coordinator Risk and Insurance

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) on the status of risk management activities during the quarter ending 31 December 2025.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted:

1. Actions associated with the review of the Risk Management Framework.
2. The status of the risk treatment plans as at 31 December 2025.
3. Risk Management activities associated with emerging risks.
4. The overview of insurance claims for the 2025 calendar year.
5. The Business Continuity activities undertaken and those scheduled for 2025.
6. The Occupational Health and Safety performance activities undertaken during the reporting period.

CARRIED

5.2 Presentation on Directorate Risk Profile

Director/Executive Manager: Director Community Wellbeing

Director Infrastructure and Environment

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is verbally present the legislative changes in aged care, including Council's position and the progress made in preparing for these changes, and ineffective management of contractors with a focus on the ineffective control of inspection and audits and the associated treatment plans in Operational Risk 39.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the verbal presentation provided in relation to the legislative changes in the aged care, and the Operational Risk 39.

CARRIED

5.3 IT and Cyber Security Risk

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer and Corporate Services

Report Author: Chief Information Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on quarterly cyber dashboard, an overview of Council's AI Policy and status, and an overview of Council's server management model and status.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the IT and Cyber Security Risk Report.

CARRIED

5.4 Disaster Recovery Plans and Outcomes of Tests of Disaster Recovery Plans

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer and Corporate Services

Report Author: Chief Information Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the outcomes of the annual disaster recovery tests.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the Disaster Recovery Plans and Outcomes of Tests of Disaster Recovery Plans Report.

CARRIED

5.5 Review Awareness Fraud and Corruption Risk

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO

Report Author: Unit Manager Governance Compliance

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on all current fraud and corruption risks contained in the risk registers and fraud and corruption environment.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the update provided on the current fraud and corruption risks as provided in Attachment 1,2 and 3 to the report.

CARRIED

6 Financial and Performance Reporting

6.1 Corporate Performance Report

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Report Author: Unit Manager Financial Strategy and Performance

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Performance Report for the quarter ended 31 December 2025 to the Committee for information.

M

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the Corporate Performance Report for the period ended 31 December 2025 at Attachment 1.

CARRIED

6.2 2025-26 Q2 LGPRF Results and 2026-27 Significant Changes to Reporting

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Report Author: Unit Manager Corporate Planning

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform the Audit and Risk Committee about key results of the Service Performance and the Financial Performance indicators of Council as measured by the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) for Quarter 2 of 2025-26 and the summary of changes to the LGPRF 2026-27 Financial Year.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the 2025-26 Q2 LGPRF Results and 2026-27 Significant Changes Report.

CARRIED

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



7 Systems of Internal Control

7.1 Review of Key Policies and Procedures

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's internal control environment, focusing on key policies and procedures.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted:

1. The progress of the review of key policies and procedures.
2. Council's compliance with the Overarching Governance Principles.

CARRIED

7.2 CX/DX Program

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer and Corporate Services

Report Author: Chief Customer Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update of the completion of the CX/DX Program and a successful transition to an operational approach to ongoing enhancements to Council's customer experience deliverables.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the CX/DX Program is now complete.

CARRIED

8 Internal Assurance

8.1 Internal Assurance Report

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Assurance Audit Plan.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the update on the Assurance Audit Program outlined in the body of this report.

CARRIED

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



9 Internal Audit

9.1 Internal Audit Plan Delivery Status Report

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

This report updates the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) on the status of internal audit activities for the 2025-26 program and internal audit service contract extension.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the Internal Audit Plan Delivery Status Report at Attachment 1.

CARRIED

9.2 Internal Audit Reports on Completed Reviews

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) with the completed Capital Project Management audit for review and acknowledgement.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted:

1. **The Internal Audit Reports on completed reviews.**
2. **The internal audit report of Capital Project Management at Attachment 1.**

CARRIED

9.3 Internal Audit Review Scopes for Endorsement

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the scope of the internal audit on Sporting Facility Agreements and Contracts.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee:

1. **Noted the Internal Audit Review Scopes for Endorsement Report.**
2. **Approved the internal audit scope for Sporting Facility Agreements and Contracts at Attachment 1.**

CARRIED

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



9.4 Internal Audit Open Actions Report

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of audit actions.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the Internal Audit Open Actions Report.

CARRIED

10 External Audit Report

10.1 External Audit Report

Director/Executive Manager: Director Customer and Corporate Services

Report Author: Unit Manager Financial Compliance and Control

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Audit Strategy Memorandum for the financial year ended 30 June 2026 for noting.

Committee Resolution

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the draft Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 30 June 2026.

CARRIED

11 Compliance

11.1 Review Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Register

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Risk Committee with an update on the management of gifts, benefits and hospitality accepted or declined by Councillors and Council staff between the period 1 June 2025 to 31 December 2025.

Committee Resolution

The Audit & Risk Committee noted:

- 1. The Staff Gift Register attached at Appendix 1 to this report relating to gifts, benefits or hospitality received or declined by staff during the period 1 July to 31 December 2025.**

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



2. **The Councillor Gift Register attached at Appendix 2 to this report relating to gifts, benefits or hospitality received or declined by Councillors during the period 1 July to 31 December 2025.**
3. **A copy of the Gift Register will be made available on Council’s website.**

CARRIED

11.2 Review Key Personnel Expenses

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Risk Committee with an update on detailed account of expenses and reimbursements for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the CEO’s Executive Assistance (EA) and Councillor for the period 1 October to 31 December 2025.

Committee Resolution

The Audit & Risk Committee noted:

1. **The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Assistant expenses incurred during the period of 1 October to 31 December 2025 as detailed in Table 1 of the report.**
2. **Reimbursements and expenses incurred during the reporting period as detailed within the Table 2 – Councillor Expenses of the report.**
3. **The information is being presented in accordance with section 40(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.**

CARRIED

12 Governance

12.1 Integrity Body Reports

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Audit and Risk Committee with an overview of integrity body publications from October to December 2025, highlighting key findings relevant to local government and sector-specified issues.

Committee Resolution

The Audit & Risk Committee noted the integrity body report for the period October to December 2025 at Attachment 1.

CARRIED

SUMMARY MINUTES – Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 24 February 2026



12.2 Report to Council on Committee Activities

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Compliance and Governance Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Audit and Risk Committee's Bi-Annual Report for the period 10 September 2025 to 24 February 2026 for approval.

Committee Resolution

The Audit & Risk Committee:

1. **Approved the Audit and Risk Committee's Bi-Annual Activity Report for the period 10 September 2025 to 24 February 2026.**
2. **Noted the Audit and Risk Committee Chair will present the Bi-Annual Activity Report at the next available Council Briefing.**

CARRIED

13 Other Matters

The Chair of the Committee requested that the running sheet be circulated to all Committee members before the meeting.

14 Meeting Reflection

Lisa Tripodi thanked the Chair.

Lisa Tripodi also noted that both she and Suzie Thoraval are new to the Committee and are familiarising themselves with the Council, its operations and performance.

The Chair thanked the team for providing the Docs on Tap training to the independent Committee members outside of the scheduled sessions.

The Unit Manager Governance Compliance noted that she will reach out to Committee members to determine which additional documents they would like to have shared with them on Docs on Tap.

The Chair closed the meeting at 4:05pm.

6 Notices of Motion

No Notices of Motion

7 Urgent Business

8 Reports from Councillors and CEO Update

9 Tabled Reports

9.1 Gender Equality Letter from the Minister for Local Government

The Minister for Local Government, Hon Nick Staikos MP has written to Council's inviting them to play a leading role in advancing gender equality across Victoria, letter is tabled for information.

Attachments

1. Letter to Mayors re Gender Equality (BMI N-260200713) [9.1.1 - 2 pages]



The Hon Nick Staikos MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Local Government

Level 1, 2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

BMIN-260200713

Dear Mayor

Local governments play a vital role in shaping inclusive and representative communities. As we celebrate International Women's Day 2026, I am writing to invite your council to play a leading role in advancing gender equality across Victoria.

Councils play a significant role in commemorative naming of public places, streets, parks and art installations. These decisions shape who we collectively acknowledge and remember.

Despite the vital contributions women make across community, cultural and professional life, only one in ten commemorative place names in Victoria honour women. Increasing representation is essential. Visibility shapes aspiration and acknowledging women publicly helps counter limiting gender stereotypes.

The Victorian Government is committed to addressing this imbalance and has developed several initiatives to support councils in this work.

In 2022, the Naming Rules for Places in Victoria were updated to include a new principle requiring naming authorities to consider gender equality in their naming proposals.

In 2023, *Our Equal State: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027* set a target for 70% of new commemorative naming of roads, place names and landmarks to be named after women by 2027.

To support this target, Geographic Names Victoria (GNV), part of the Department of Transport and Planning, partnered with Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) on the *Put Her Name on It* campaign to help achieve equality in place naming and public art.

This work is already driving change. Last year, 57% of all new commemorative names honoured women—clear evidence of strong momentum. We have grown from just eight places named after women in 2022, to 17 in 2023, and now 31 in 2024.

I am encouraging every council to contribute to this important statewide effort. By committing to naming at least one place after a woman in 2026—and continuing to do so each year—your council can play a meaningful role in ensuring women's achievements are recognised and celebrated across Victoria.

Your details will be dealt with in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973* and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*. Should you have any queries or wish to gain access to your personal information held by this department please contact our Privacy Officer at the above address.



More information on gender equality in commemorative naming can be found here:
<https://www.land.vic.gov.au/place-naming/commemorative-place-naming/commemorative-naming>.

Thank you for your continued leadership within your community. I look forward to seeing the ways in which your council helps advance gender equality through commemorative naming.

Sincerely



The Hon Nick Staikos MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Local Government

6 / 03 / 2026

cc: Chief Executive Officer

10 Confidential Business

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Recommendation

THAT the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to confidential matters in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.

10.1 Family Day Care Service Review Findings & Recommendations

11 Closure