# MINUTES

## Meeting of Council

## Held at the
## Civic Centre
## 511 Burwood Highway
## Wantirna South
## On
## Monday 29 September 2025

The Agenda for the Meeting of Council, Monday 29 September 2025, forms part of these Minutes and is attached in full at the end of the Minutes.

These Minutes are considered draft until adopted and confirmed at the next Meeting of Council.

The meeting commenced at 7:00pm.

**PRESENT:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Cr Lisa Cooper (Mayor) | Scott Ward |
| Cr Glen Atwell (Deputy Mayor) | Tirhatuan Ward |
| Cr Chris Duncan | Collier Ward |
| Cr Robert Williams | Dinsdale Ward |
| Cr Meagan Baker | Dobson Ward |
| Cr Parisa Considine | Friberg Ward |
| Cr Peter Lockwood | Baird Ward |
| Cr Susan Pearce | Taylor Ward |
| Cr Paige Kennett | Chandler Ward |
| | |
| Bruce Dobson | Chief Executive Officer |
| Grant Thorne | Director – Infrastructure |
| Jonathan McNally | Acting Director - City Livability |
| Judy Chalkley | Director – Connected Communities |
| Matt Kelleher | Interim Director - Customer and Performance |
| Navec Lorkin | Chief Financial Officer |
| Andrew Dowling | Manager, Governance and Risk |
| Saskia Weerheim | Head of Governance |

**THE MEETING OPENED WITH A STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

**Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land, and meets on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. We pay our respects to elders both past and present.**

**Order of Business**

1 Apologies And Requests For Leaves Of Absence ..... 6

2 Declarations Of Conflict Of Interest ..... 6

3 Confirmation Of Minutes ..... 6

4 Presentations, Petitions And Memorials ..... 6

5 Reports By Councillors ..... 8

6 Planning Matters ..... 14

6.1 Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 ..... 14

7 Public Question Time ..... 15

8 Officer Reports ..... 18

8.1 Community Engagement Feedback for the Annual Budget 2026-2027 ..... 18

8.2 Knox Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 Review and Development of Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028 ..... 19

8.3 Waste Services Community Engagement Plan ..... 21

8.4 2026 Council Meeting Schedule ..... 23

8.5 Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025 - Final Report ..... 24

8.6 Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 Review ..... 26

8.7 Knox Disability Advisory Committee Membership Recruitment and Annual Report ..... 27

8.8 Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy ..... 28

8.9 2025-26 Amended Budget ..... 30

8.10 Infrastructure Capital Works Program Annual Report 2024-25 ..... 32

8.11 Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy Review ..... 33

8.12 Biannual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee ..... 35

8.13 Climate Response Plan Annual Report 2024/2025 ..... 36

8.14 School Focused Youth Service Advocacy ..... 38

9 Supplementary Items ..... 40

10 Notices Of Motion ..... 40

10.1 Notice of Motion No. 187 - Domestic Animal Management Plan ..... 40

10.2 Notice of Motion No. 188 - Knox News ..... 43

10.3 Notice of Motion No. 189 - Keeping Knox Safer Forum ..... 44

11 Urgent Business ..... 46

12 Questions Through The Chair ..... 46

13 Confidential Items ..... 48

# 1 Apologies And Requests For Leaves Of Absence

Nil.

# 2 Declarations Of Conflict Of Interest

Nil.

# 3 Confirmation Of Minutes

The Chairperson, Councillor Lisa Cooper invited Councillors to raise any opposition to the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on Monday 25 August 2025. There being none, the Chairperson declared the Minutes be confirmed.

# 4 Presentations, Petitions And Memorials

**NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY**

The Chairperson acknowledged that today is National Police Remembrance Day noting the following:

On 29 September every year, Australia marks National Police Remembrance Day, an opportunity for our nation to honour the lives and service of fallen police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice while on duty, or as a result of their duties.

It is appropriate that we pause for a moment to pay tribute to their courage, commitment, and dedication, and to acknowledge the ongoing service of those who protect our community each and every day.

This year's reflections feel particularly close, as we recently acknowledged the tragic loss of police officers at Porepunkah. Their passing reminds us, in the most sobering way, of the risks and challenges that police officers willingly face in the service of our communities.

National Police Remembrance Day is not only an opportunity to honour those who have died, but also a time to extend our respect and gratitude to their families, colleagues, and the wider policing community. We recognise the enduring grief carried by loved ones, and the impact such losses have on those who continue to serve with courage and commitment despite the risks.

On behalf of Council, we express our deep appreciation to all police officers for their service, their bravery, and their commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our community.

**MEMORIAL - ED LEMARCHAND**

Councillor Pearce extended Council's condolences to the wife and family of Ed Lemarchand who recently passed away.

Councillor Pearce highlighted that Ed was a well-loved and active member of the Rowville Men's Shed and joined in 2014. Councillor Pearce noted she spoke to him when the Men's Shed presented to Council.

Ed was an active member of the Rowville Men's Shed and he was described by Councillor Pearce as a true gentleman with a witty sense of humour who will be sadly missed.

**MEMORIAL - GRAEME McEWIN**

Councillor Pearce extended Council's condolences to the family of Graeme McEwin OAM who recently passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on 27 August 2025 after a long illness.

Councillor Pearce outlined that Graeme:

- Was a long term resident of Rowville with his wife Maureen and was an active member of the Rowville Uniting Church and the Liberal Party.
- Supported the Melbourne Football Club and was the Chairman of the Rowville-Ferntree Gully Bendigo Bank.
- Was recognised for his tireless volunteer work in 2016 when he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to the Rowville community. His generosity will be remembered for years to come.

Councillor Pearce conveyed Council's condolences to Graeme's wife, 4 children (Glynis, David, Andrew and Iain) and 10 grandchildren.

# 5 Reports By Councillors

### 5.1 Councillor Baker

Councillor Baker reported attending the following:

- 1st Ferntree Gully ARAP meeting
- Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan Onsite Engagement with Officers from the Governance team, Cr Pearce and Cr Duncan
- Special Olympics Australia Eastern Ranges Bocce Fundraising Night at the Knox Italian Club
- Knox Active Ageing Committee Meeting
- Ray Priestly Awards Night for the Ferntree Gully Football and Netball Club
- Knox Scouts ARAP Meeting
- Knox Historical Society Annual General Meeting at Ambleside
- Municipal Association Victoria Masterclass - Councillor's Role in CEO Performance Masterclass

### 5.2 Councillor Kennett

Councillor Kennett reported attending the following:

- 'Food is Free' Project Annual General Meeting which provides free locally grown food for residents.
- The Basin Wildcats Basketball 50th Anniversary Event.
- Meeting with Transit Police with Cr Duncan, Cr Lockwood and the Director Infrastructure to discuss antisocial behaviour near the Boronia Train Station, noting that work between Council officers and Transit Police to improve safety around the station is continuing, and work to upgrade the station is about to commence.
- The Boronia Basin Newspaper Event with Cr Lockwood where bound copies of the last 4 years of The Basin-Boronia Newspaper were donated with Boronia Library.
- Knox Environment Advisory Committee Meeting.
- Meeting with residents to discuss antisocial behaviour and a rise in crime and graffiti in The Basin.
- Meeting with The Basin Temple and Council Traffic and Transport staff to discuss safety improvements at the site.

- Meeting with Boronia Police officers with the Acting Director City Liveability and Council officers to look at strengthening Council's relationship with Boronia Police. Councillor Kennett also:
- Advised residents to report any suspicious behaviour and take precautions in locking doors, windows and entrances to houses to prevent opportunistic crime.
- Received enquiries from residents regarding graffiti, parking issues, fines and questions regarding the Domestic Animal Management Plan.
- Also received a number of enquiries and complaints about the current kindergarten enrolment process which is being investigated for improvements.

### 5.3 Councillor Atwell

Councillor Atwell reported attending the following:

- Sharespace Spring Market at Arcadia Reserve in Rowville which was a great form of community engagement with hundreds in attendance. Cr Atwell thanked volunteers and stallholders for bringing the Market to life with food trucks (such as Cypriot Street Grill and Sundays and Chill Soft Serve), the Lizard Wizard who brought snakes and turtles, live music, Angi Craft Creations, Izzy Bicky Dog Treats, Rowville Swim School and Rowville Hawks Junior Football Club.
- Wellington Village Grand Final Community Celebration which was well attended with presence from the Rowville CFA, Rowville and Lysterfield Rotary Club. There was a sausage sizzle, cupcake decorating and face painting along with artwork from Rowville Primary School.
- Opening of the new Yarning Circle built by students at the West Campus of Rowville Secondary College with a fantastic Smoking Ceremony led by Indigenous Elder, Perry Wandin. The Yarning Circle will serve as a place to share wisdom and knowledge for students and staff.
- National Citizenship Day on 17 September with 280 new Australian citizens, attended by Mary Doyle MP, Daniela De Martino MP, Assistant Minister for Citizenship Julian Hill and Cr Peter Lockwood, noting the delight of seeing the smiling faces of families who have chosen Knox and Australia as their home.

Councillor Atwell also:

- Congratulated Rowville Primary School who had two sold-out nights of their School Production 'Moana Jnr' at the Drum Theatre in Dandenong, with The Hon Kim Wells MP in attendance.
- Congratulated Scoresby Football Club for winning the Division 3 Grand Final in the Eastern Football Netball League for back-to-back flags, congratulating Coach Craig McKenzie and captain Tim De Geest, along with the Rowville Hawks Reserves winning their Premiership.

### 5.4 Councillor Considine

Councillor Considine reported attending the following:

- Opening of the Recreation for All Expo alongside volunteers from the Knox Disability Advisory Committee, Active Aging Advisory Committee, senior exercise park champions and stallholders at Carrington Park Leisure Centre which provides recreational and leisure activities in Knox for people of all ages and abilities to foster community connection, health and wellbeing.
- Knox Churches Soccer and Cricket Clubs Volunteer Thank You Dinner to recognise and celebrate the contributions of their passionate volunteers.
- Knox Baseball Club Grand Finals with 3 senior flags, 2 junior flags and 2 junior runners-up results for teams within Knox.
- Knox Active Ageing and Advisory Committee Meeting with Cr Baker where the Knox Draft Mobility Access and Action Plan were presented. The Draft Plan aims to create a safer and more connected community - the presentation was engaging and insightful.

### 5.5 Councillor Duncan

Councillor Duncan reported attending the following:

- Knox Recreation and Leisure Sub-Committee Meeting with Cr Atwell.
- Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan Community Engagement Event with Cr Pearce and Cr Baker.
- 'Recreation For All' Expo at Carrington Leisure Centre to speak to clubs; noting the Special Olympic Swimming Squad attended with a raft of medals.
- Meeting with officers to look at the options regarding a pavilion upgrade at Templeton Reserve.
- Public Speaking Event at the Youth Advisory Committee Meeting with Cr Williams.
- Meeting with Jackson Taylor MP to discuss sporting club funding arrangements.
- Wantirna South Junior Football Club Best and Fairest Awards with Jackson Taylor MP.

Councillor Duncan also:

- Noted that Carrington Park and Rowville Leisure Centre are hosting basketball clinics with basketballs donated by the Ferntree Gully Falcons Basketball Club.

### 5.6 Councillor Williams

Councillor Williams reported attending the following:

- Knox Junior Football Club Presentation Day, with exciting news regarding the growth of teams.
- Youth Advisory Committee Meeting.

- Meeting with the Executive of the Eastern Football Netball League.
- Bayswater Library Opening, praising the work of the Connected Communities team.
- Orana Neighbourhood House Annual General Meeting.
- ARAP Rowville Scouts Meeting with Cr Pearce and Cr Baker.
- Bayswater Strikers Junior Presentation Night, presenting the Club Member of the Year award to Allan Clark at this growing club.
- Knox Historical Society Annual General Meeting with Cr Cooper, Cr Baker and Cr Pearce to look at their new merchandise.
- Eastern Football Netball League Final at Bayswater Oval with Cr Lockwood where Balwyn won the Premier Division Grand Final.
- Meeting with CHAMPION representatives Martina and Manager Nicole Seymour (former Councillor).

Councillor Williams also:

- Noted he has received parks requests from residents which have been passed to the Director Infrastructure.
- Noted the daylight robbery at Fran's Bakery, highlighting growing concerns about local crime, with several similar incidents reported in Studfield in recent months. Acknowledged the work of The Hon Kim Wells MP who will be soon be stepping down as the Member for Rowville.
- Acknowledged the 10 years of public service of Jackson Taylor MP.

### 5.7 Councillor Lockwood

Councillor Lockwood reported attending the following:

- Boronia Basin Newspaper Event presentation where bound copies of the last 4 years of The Basin-Boronia Newspaper was launched. Meeting with Transit Police at Boronia Police Station to discuss issues such as young offenders.
- Your Library Board Meeting.
- National Citizenship Day with Mary Doyle MP, Daniela De Martino MP and the Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Julian Hill.
- Environment Advisory Committee Meeting which included a presentation and lively discussions.
- Eastern Transport Coalition Meeting which is finalising advocacy submissions to the Government
- ANZAC underground train station.
- Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance Meeting which is forming advocacy for affordable housing.
- Knox Arts and Culture Advisory Committee Meeting.

- Meeting with the Eastern Raptors Rugby League team regarding break-ins where offenders have used wheelie bins to conceal and remove stolen items. Meeting with local residents to discuss the Domestic Animal Management Plan.
- Premier Division Eastern Football Netball League Grand Final.

Councillor Lockwood also:

- Noted he is looking forward to the opening of the new metropolitan underground train lines.
- Congratulated the Melbourne Storm and Brisbane Lions for their football success.
- Congratulated Kim Wells MP and Jackson Taylor MP for their service, recognising that he was the first opponent of Kim in 1992.

### 5.8 Councillor Pearce

Councillor Pearce reported attending the following:

- Knox Audit and Risk Committee Meeting, with our new member, Suzie Thoroval.
- Rowville Knights Gala Dinner at the Rowville Italian Club. Rowville Knights continues to grow with boys and girls teams. Councillor Pearce congratulated the Committee and John Boccari for the Volunteers Award being named in his honour.
- Meeting with the Rowville Hawks Junior Football Club to discuss maintenance and lighting concerns at Seebeck Hall and the Number 2 Reserve.
- Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan Community Engagement, which is a fantastic historical Cemetery.
- Rowville Quarry Community Reference Group.
- Rowville Scouts ARAP with Cr Williams, Cr Baker, The Hon Kim Wells MP and Jackson Taylor MP; recognising the meetings of scout members from all over the world where Rowville members attended.
- Knox Historical Society Annual General Meeting with Cr Baker, Cr Williams, and Cr Cooper.

Councillor Pearce also:

- Encouraged people to attend a Rowville Quarry Safari Open Day on 16 November 2025 with face painting and consultation regarding the quarry.
- Noted she had been contacted by former Councillor Tony Kamitsis who raised issues relating to Council arborists, street sweeper frequency, trees and the representation of Taylor Ward members on Committees which have been referred to Council officers.
- Noted there have been complaints regarding parking, trees and waste collection, including rubbish being left over her own yard which has been reported and is widespread in Taylor Ward.

### 5.9 Councillor Cooper

Councillor Cooper reported attending the following:

- 'Feed One Feed All' event hosted by Lillie Giang, acknowledging the amount of work undertaken by the team and the level of resources, volunteers and spacing needed to serve a vast number of people in the community.
- Knox Historical Society 60th Annual General Meeting with Cr Wiliams, Cr Baker and Cr Pearce, noting they received a small grant from the State Government for digital scanning.
- Municipal Association of Victoria Masterclass: Councillor's Role in CEO Performance Masterclass with Cr Baker.

Councillor Cooper also:

- Noted the Opening of the Knox Seniors Festival is coming up at Carrington Park Leisure Centre on 1 October.
- Acknowledged the Public Budget submissions are coming up on 1 October.
- Outlined that Inflatable World will be operating out of the State Basketball Centre.
- Acknowledged that upcoming consultations will be held in October where participation and feedback can be booked through Council's 'Have Your Say' online portal, including engagement on the following:
    - Community Signage on Councils Open Spaces Policy
    - Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan
    - Marie Wallace Playground
    - Ferntree Gully Train Station Shared Path options
    - Draft Mobility Access and Action Plan
    - Draft Stormwater Asset Management Plan (closing soon)
    - Draft Road Management Plan (closing soon)
- Acknowledged the years of service from The Hon Kim Wells MP and Jackson Taylor MP in the Knox community.

# 6 Planning Matters

## 6.1 Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025

SUMMARY
Details of planning applications considered under delegation are referred for information. It is recommended that the items be noted.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council note the planning applications decided under 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 as set out in the officer report.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Williams**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Baker**

**That Council note the planning applications decided under 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 as set out in the officer report.**

**CARRIED**

# 7 Public Question Time

Question Time commenced at 7:40pm.

The following questions were raised with Council:

## 7.1.1 Question One - Ashlley Morgan-Shae

**Why has the Knox Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) Agenda 8 Sept 2025, not included the scientific evidence on Community Cat Programs, which was in the public submissions emailed from residents' group Knox AdvoCats, and from The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation?**

**The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation is the peak research body and advocate for pet welfare in Australia, specialising in evidence-based solutions to prevent euthanasia of healthy and treatable companion-animals in shelters and pounds, and the associated mental-health damage to staff and community residents.**

**Wherever Community Cat Programs (CCP) are used in Australia, they prove to be effective, low-cost, and saving many animals' lives - including wildlife, and also preventing harm to human lives.**

**Banyule ran a Community Cat Program for eight years during 2013 to 2021 - successfully decreasing cat intake: by 66%, euthanasia: 82%, complaints: 51% in the target-area, 36% citywide. Increasing reclaimed cats by 10%. After managerial staff had left, Banyule went backwards - tripling cat-impounds within two years, and rising costs to Council.**

**CCP is used successfully across the USA, and in Europe.**

**Free desexing has to be intensive and targeted specifically to the most-affected postcodes. Examples of successful programs are from the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation and also in peer-reviewed science papers in international MDPI Animals.**

The Acting Director City Liveability, Jonathan McNally responded:

- Acknowledged the question regarding the publication of submissions from earlier phases of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) consultation.Noted that the phase 1 consultation for the development of the draft DAMP 2026-2029 included a number of channels for community members and organisations to share their views. As part of that, Council's standard privacy collection and terms of use were in force as part of the 'Have Your Say' site. Council's Terms of Use specifically say: *"Information that identifies you will typically be removed from your responses when they are being analysed and before your responses are shared in any way. If your responses will be personally identifiable, we are committed to informing you of this."* Submitters were not specifically informed that Council would be sharing their personally identifiable data.
- Council was therefore provided with a de-identified summary of the key issues and engagement report for this reason, to support Council in making its decision in relation to endorsing the draft DAMP, which it endorsed at the 8 September 2025 Council Meeting. While it may be possible that the two organisations referenced are comfortable to have their submissions published, we had another 20 or so submitters who may not be

comfortable and the expectation their submissions would be published has not been established. It would also be inappropriate to publish just two of the submissions received.

### 7.1.2 Question Two - Ashlley Morgan-Shae

**Why are all the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2026-2029 questions only on dogs?**

**Rather than continue Knox's punitive, expensive, divisive, direction, AdvoCats urge you to consider the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation's One-Welfare approach - which optimises the well-being of people, animals and their environment.**

**Community Cat Programs reduce the number of stray cats in pounds and shelters, and free up more resources to care for and re-home dogs.**

**Community Cat Programs are low-cost, help both dogs and cats, rescuers, shelter volunteers, and Council's own Animal Management Officers.**

**Please consider the enormous cost-savings of a Community Cat Program. Casey Council currently spends an estimated $1.8million annually on 24-hr cat curfew. Impoundments in Casey have risen 680percent - more than double the rate of human population growth, and complaints have increased.**

**Community Cat Programs are evidence-based, science-proven, effective cat management; and are low cost.**

The Acting Director City Liveability, Jonathan McNally responded:

- The questionnaire currently published on Council's Have Your Say page as part of consultation on the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is targeted at gaining feedback on specific significant actions that have been included in the draft DAMP 2026-2029. The draft DAMP has been developed following considerable community involvement in the Phase 1 consultation completed in March and April 2025 which identified specific opportunities to review programs that relate to dogs within our community.

### 7.1.3 Question Three – Drazenka Ostojic

**For over two and a half years our elderly parent has been on a waiting list for Aged Care gardening services, to no avail. The numerous private providers we've contacted claim they receive no funding, their books are full, they're not accepting referrals and cannot help. They apparently turn away numerous people in need and have done so for the last 3 years at least. Knox City Council stopped providing services in question to the detriment of its elderly population. They are now in the hands of private providers whom aren't providing the services our government claims are available to the eligible elderly population.**

**Why did Knox City council stop providing this essential service to its vulnerable elderly?**

**What is Knox Council planning on doing to address this matter affecting their rate payers?**

**My Aged Care and the providers LINK, United Age Well and all the many other providers say "Sorry we can't help," does Knox City Council care to help?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

- Acknowledged the question regarding access to aged care gardening services and also acknowledged the frustration and difficulty experienced while seeking supports for their parent.
- Knox City Council ceased direct delivery of home support services, but this did not include gardening services, as Knox has never been funded to provide this service. Knox does still provide Home Maintenance which includes a one-off garden service when there are identified safety issues.
- Council acknowledges that demand for services such as gardening currently exceeds provider capacity, and that this is creating long wait times and difficulties for older residents and their families.
- Council has been actively advocating to the Commonwealth Government to highlight these service gaps and the significant impact they have on our community.
- While Council no longer provides the majority of aged care services directly, we remain committed to supporting our older community members. This includes through:
    - Advocacy
    - Information and referral – through our Short-Term Support Team.
    - Community connections – we continue to invest in programs and initiatives that reduce isolation, promote wellbeing, and help older residents stay connected and supported
- We encourage you to remain in contact with My Aged Care as they are the gateway to funded aged care services. We can reach out to you with our Short-Term Support Team's details and they can also assist by providing further guidance on navigating the system.
- Council will continue to advocate strongly for improved access and outcomes for older residents in Knox.

Question Time Concluded at 7:54pm.

# 8 Officer Reports

## 8.1 Community Engagement Feedback for the Annual Budget 2026-2027

SUMMARY
The Annual Planning Cycle for 2026-27 is currently underway. In August 2025, a Community Engagement Program was undertaken to offer insights into the services most valued by the community and actions required to better align with community needs and desires.

Engagement activities included an online survey, pop-ups at locations across the municipality and targeted activities including engagement at our Childhood and Family Centres and representation from all nine Advisory Committees through a Multi-Advisory Committee Workshop.

The engagement process resulted in 594 responses from the community, with eight members of the community seeking to make formal submissions to councillors.

The Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) and formal submissions (Attachment 2) will provide input into the next annual planning cycle, including the Annual Budget 2026-27, the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan Year Two Actions and Performance Measure targets and annual organisation service planning.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to:
1. Receive and note the Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1).
2. Receive and note the eight formal submissions received (Attachment 2).

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Atwell**
**SECONDED: Councillor Baker**

**That Council resolve to:**

**1. Receive and note the Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1).**

**2. Receive and note the eight formal submissions received (Attachment 2).**

**CARRIED**

## 8.2 Knox Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 Review and Development of Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028

SUMMARY
Knox has the second largest First Nations population in Melbourne's east and is home to places of historical significance to the Kulin Nation, which is a nation of Aboriginal Tribes with territory extending across Victoria and beyond. For thousands of years, the creeks, hills and plains now known as the City of Knox have been cared for by the Traditional Custodians. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the Traditional Knowledge of the First Peoples and the traumatic stories of colonisation. Cultural sites in Knox include campsites, stone tools, scar trees, travelling routes, and song lines that would have been a place of meeting between the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people before settlement.

In 2020, Council consulted with members of the local First Nations communities as part of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Needs Analysis. A key recommendation was to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are developed and monitored within a framework supplied by Reconciliation Australia, the lead body for reconciliation nationally.

Based around the core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities, RAPs provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations, increasing economic equity and supporting First Nations self-determination.[1]

The Knox City Council, "Innovate" Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023-2025 (refer to Attachment 1) was endorsed by Council in June 2023 to strengthen relationships between First Nations and the wider community through meaningful steps to advance reconciliation. The RAP was developed with the local First Nations community and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Elders.

This report provides a review of the Knox RAP 2023–2025 achievements and provides recommendations for developing the next iteration of Knox's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2026–2028 as indicated in the current RAP Action 20, "Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP". This is again reflected in our current Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan under Theme 2, "Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity" as a 2025-2026 action, "Review the RAP 2023-2025 and develop the next iteration of the Plan."

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to:
1. Receive and note the review of the Reconciliation Action Plan 2023–2025.
2. Approve the recommendations for developing the Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–2028 as set out in the officers report.

[1] Reconciliation Australia

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Kennett**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Atwell**

**That Council resolve to:**

1. **Receive and note the review of the Reconciliation Action Plan 2023–2025.**
2. **Approve the recommendations for developing the Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–2028 as set out in the officers report.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.3 Waste Services Community Engagement Plan

SUMMARY
At the Council meeting held on 26 May 2025, Council resolved to request officers prepare a proposal for a community-wide engagement process relating to waste services. This report presents an approach to this engagement process for Council endorsement including:

- Survey scope.
- Supporting information within the survey.
- Survey questions.
- Delivery methodology.
- Timeframes for communicating, conducting and completion the survey.

A further report will be presented at a Council meeting in early 2026 detailing the results of this engagement process.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to:

1. Endorse the community engagement process for the Waste Services Survey, including:
    a. The proposed scope and methodology
    b. The supporting information within the survey
    c. The timeline as outlined in section 1.2.
2. Approve the survey questions detailed in Attachment 1.
3. Note that the engagement results will be presented to Council in early 2026.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Baker**
**SECONDED: Councillor Atwell**

**That Council resolve to:**

1. **Endorse the community engagement process for the Waste Services Survey, including:**
    a. **The proposed scope and methodology**
    b. **The supporting information within the survey**
    c. **The timeline as outlined in section 1.2.**
2. **Approve the survey questions detailed in Attachment 1.**
3. **Note that the engagement results will be presented to Council in early 2026.**

**CARRIED**

A Division was called by Councillor Baker.

| | |
|---|---|
| For the motion: | Councillor Baker, Councillor Atwell, Councillor Kennett, Councillor Cooper, Councillor Considine and Councillor Duncan. |
| Against the motion: | Councillor Pearce. |
| Abstention: | Councillor Lockwood and Councillor Williams |

CARRIED 6:1:2

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**ADJOURNMENT**

| | |
|---|---|
| **MOVED:** | **Councillor Cooper** |
| **SECONDED:** | **Councillor Atwell** |

**That Council adjourn the Meeting until 8:40 pm.**

**CARRIED**

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:28pm and resumed at 8:40pm with all Councillors present.

## 8.4 2026 Council Meeting Schedule

SUMMARY
The current arrangements for meetings are set out in Council's Meeting Structures and Cycles Policy. This report outlines the proposed meeting schedule for the 2026 calendar year, in alignment with this Policy.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to adopt the proposed 2026 Council Meeting Schedule set out in Attachment 1.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Baker**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Duncan**

**That Council resolve to adopt the proposed 2026 Council Meeting Schedule set out in Attachment 1.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.5 Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025 - Final Report

SUMMARY
The Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025 (Knox CYS Plan) was approved by Council in February 2022. The Plan responded to the five key directions outlined in the Knox Council Plan 2021-2025, applying a life course lens to identify the differing interests, needs and priorities of children, young people and seniors. The Plan reached the end of its life cycle in June 2025.

The report provides details of all actions and key achievements from July 2021 to June 2025 with the plan now at conclusion (refer Attachment 1). All actions within the Knox CYS Plan have been completed, successfully delivering important outcomes for each of the targeted life stage cohorts.

The final Knox CYS Plan report provides an overview of how outcomes aligned with community needs have been delivered, showcasing the breadth of work undertaken across the 4-year term.

The Knox Child Youth and Seniors Plan was our commitment to an integrated and intergenerational approach to services. The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, which has been shaped by our community and reflects the vision, values and aspirations of the people of Knox, has been developed with the awareness of the importance of the key life stages of the community. The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 will guide where we focus our services and support the Knox community, with the life stages of children, youth and seniors represented in this Plan.

While the formal lifespan of the Child Youth and Seniors Plan concluded in June 2025, Council remains committed to ongoing actions that address issues impacting the community across all life stages – children, young people, and seniors. However, with these life stage cohorts embedded in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 as well as Service Plans for Early Years, Youth and Seniors, a new standalone plan is not required. These Service Plans will be an integral part of guiding the way in which we continue to deliver programs and services that meet the needs of Knox residents, demonstrating our shared commitment to long term outcomes for children, young people and seniors.

To ensure accountability in achieving the goals outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 and associated service plans, a biennial report aligning with the financial year will be completed and presented to Council. The report will provide transparency and demonstrate progress across each cohort, reinforcing our commitment to delivering measurable outcomes for children, young people and seniors.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council:

1. Note the final report of the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025, provided as Attachment 1.
2. Endorse that Officers provide to Council a report every two years to demonstrate the ongoing impact of our services and share insights into effective service delivery, regarding Child, Youth and Seniors.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Atwell**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Baker**

**That Council:**

1. **Note the final report of the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025, provided as Attachment 1.**
2. **Endorse that Officers provide to Council a report every two years to demonstrate the ongoing impact of our services and share insights into effective service delivery, regarding Child, Youth and Seniors.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.6 Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 Review

SUMMARY
The Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 (Action Plan) was developed in response to results from the "Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey" which was conducted in July 2020. The Survey showed that poor mental health and social isolation resulting in feelings of loneliness to be the most pressing issue for the community. The purpose of the Action Plan was to provide a once-off strategic framework to address the then current and emerging mental health needs of the Knox community during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the years immediately following, and to assist in the coordination of interventions moving forward. The Action Plan is, therefore, not ongoing as any incomplete recommendations have been elevated to the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 to ensure a whole-of-Council response.

The Action Plan is comprised of 30 recommendations, sub-categorised into the four key areas of:

- Health Promotion;
- Community Education;
- Sector Coordination and Collaboration; and
- Advocacy.

The sub-categories were identified by partner organisations in Mental Health forums held in December 2020 and February 2021. The aim of the Action Plan was that it would form the basis of strong partnership efforts, collective goals, and actions that would improve the mental health of residents and ensure that poor mental health is prevented at the earliest stage.

This report provides a summary of key achievements of the Action Plan across its lifespan, and an insight into the future direction of work to support mental health and wellbeing in Knox.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to receive and note the final report for the Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Baker**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Lockwood**

**That Council resolve to receive and note the final report for the Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.7 Knox Disability Advisory Committee Membership Recruitment and Annual Report

SUMMARY
The Knox Disability Advisory Committee assists Council by advising on strategic disability related issues, contributing to inclusive policy development, ensuring Council practices consider the needs and rights of people with disabilities and their carers and promoting disability awareness in the community.

This report seeks approval for the reappointment of five Committee members for a two-year term from September 2025 to September 2027.

This report also provides an overview of the Committee's achievements over the past 12 months.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council:
1. Appoint the following current Knox Disability Advisory Committee member for a second term for the period September 2025 to September 2027 as presented in Confidential Attachment 2.
2. Note the achievements of the Committee over the past 12 months.
3. Thank the outgoing member of the Knox Disability Advisory Committee for their valuable contribution: Vicki Morrow – Community Representative.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Baker**
**SECONDED: Councillor Pearce**

**That Council:**
1. **Appoint the following current Knox Disability Advisory Committee members for a second term for the period September 2025 to September 2027 as presented in Confidential Attachment 2.**
2. **Note the achievements of the Committee over the past 12 months.**
3. **Thank the outgoing member of the Knox Disability Advisory Committee for their valuable contribution: Vicki Morrow – Community Representative.**

| Name | Category |
|---|---|
| 1. Dean Niven | Community Representative |
| 2. Emily Dive | Community Representative |
| 3. Carmen Wang | Community Representative |
| 4. Rachel Holmes | Service Provider / Industry Representative |
| 5. Bronwyn Stephen | Service Provider / Industry Representative |

**CARRIED**

## 8.8 Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy

SUMMARY
Council first adopted a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy and Procedure at the Council Meeting held on 24 June 2019. Revisions to the Policy and Procedure were adopted at the Council Meeting held on 22 March 2021. The Policy was first introduced to establish a strategic framework for addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in Knox. It outlines the Council's commitment to proactive leadership through awareness, education, and cross-sector collaboration to prevent homelessness, enhance access to housing and deliver essential support services to those experiencing homelessness.

This report also outlines the current situation for people sleeping rough in Knox, Council's response, and the complex challenges involved in supporting this vulnerable community.

The last Census occurred in 2021 when states and territories were under COVID-19 Pandemic related restrictions. State and territory governments, including the Victorian government, also worked with service providers to give temporary accommodation to people sleeping rough or in crisis situations to help protect them and the community from pandemic spread.

As such, 2021 homelessness estimates reflect the unique accommodation circumstances of those experiencing homelessness at the time of the Census. Despite this, homelessness in Knox increased by nearly 20% from the 2016 Census. Additionally, 2025 has seen a substantial increase in demand for food and essential items, driven by increasing cost-of-living pressures, including rent and mortgage stress, increasing rates of family violence, rising use of alcohol and other drugs, and more mental health needs; factors also reported by local agencies and members of the Knox Emergency Relief Network.

The current Policy and Procedure had a review date of March 2024, at which point a review was initiated. A cross-Council Working Group was established to review the documents and provide input to enhance the process for those responding to individuals sleeping rough. This resulted in clear, coordinated guidance tailored to the diverse responsibilities across Council, and other agencies.

The review identified the current Policy and Procedure did not clearly articulate the responsibilities for specific Council Departments and teams when responding to notifications for people sleeping rough and was not clear on circumstances that can trigger an Amenity Local Law 2020 response for public amenity and safety issues. Throughout 2024 to now, the Working Group focused on the procedure supporting Policy implementation. As a result of the Working Group's efforts, there has been a more coordinated approach to responding to notifications of people sleeping rough.

The Short Term Support team have led the pilot of these proposed revisions in 2025 and now collaborate more closely with stakeholder Council teams including: Community Laws, Open Space, Facilities Maintenance and Sport and Leisure Services to ensure a more integrated and effective response.

Only minor updates are proposed for the drafted Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy. (Refer to Attachment 1 with tracked changes and Attachment 2 – draft Policy with revisions included).

Through this review process it was identified it has been an anomaly for Council to adopt an operational procedure. As such, Council is now requested to rescind the current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure included for reference as Attachment 3.

Operational procedures exist to provide organisation guidance on the means to affect implementation of the policy. Through the review of the Policy, the updated operational procedure now outlines a coordinated and best -practice response, informed by benchmarking with other councils and stakeholder agencies.

Upon endorsement of the revised Policy, communication will occur to impacted Departments and teams to share this information.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council:

1. Endorse the Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy provided as Attachment 2.
2. Rescind the Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure provided as Attachment 3.
3. Note Council's ongoing commitment to a coordinated and best practice response in responding to homelessness and rough sleeping.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Lockwood**
**SECONDED: Councillor Williams**

**That Council:**

1. **Endorse the Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy provided as Attachment 2.**
2. **Rescind the Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure provided as Attachment 3.**
3. **Note Council's ongoing commitment to a coordinated and best practice response in responding to homelessness and rough sleeping.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.9 2025-26 Amended Budget

SUMMARY
The 2025-26 Amended Budget is presented for consideration. This report recommends Council adopt the 2025-26 Amended Budget, including updates to capital works, for management reporting purposes.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council:

1. Adopt the Amended Budget (Attachment 1), which will be used for management reporting purposes.
2. Allocate the funding identified for the "Pavilion Upgrade" project in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program to the development of the detailed design for the Lewis Park Pavilion.

Councillor Williams requested that the motion be put in separate parts under Governance Rule 34. The Chairperson agreed under Governance Rule 35 and put the motion to the vote in separate parts.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Atwell**
**SECONDED: Councillor Baker**

**That Council:**

1. **Adopt the Amended Budget (Attachment 1), which will be used for management reporting purposes.**

**CARRIED**

A Division was called by Councillor Cooper

For the motion: Councillor Cooper, Councillor Lockwood, Councillor Williams, Councillor Duncan, Councillor Considine, Councillor Atwell, Councillor Kennett and Councillor Baker.

Against the motion: Councillor Pearce.

Abstention: Nil.

CARRIED 8:1

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Atwell
SECONDED: Councillor Baker

That Council:
2. Allocate the funding identified for the “Pavilion Upgrade” project in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program to the development of the detailed design for the Lewis Park Pavilion.

LOST

A Division was called by Councillor Duncan.

For the motion: Councillor Cooper, Councillor Baker and Councillor Considine.

Against the motion: Councillor Kennett, Councillor Atwell, Councillor Duncan, Councillor Williams, Councillor Lockwood and Councillor Pearce.

Abstention: Nil.

LOST 3:6

## 8.10 Infrastructure Capital Works Program Annual Report 2024-25

SUMMARY
This report provides an update on the delivery outcomes of the 2024/25 Infrastructure Capital Works Program. A total of 157 projects and renewal programs were scheduled for delivery. Of these, 133 projects (85 per cent) have been completed or remain on schedule, while 24 projects are behind schedule. The amended program budget was $67.79 million, with expenditure of $55.04 million.

Key highlights from the program include an investment of $6.9 million across 419 community building renewal projects and $9.1 million directed to improvements in Council's network of local roads. A further $5.4 million was allocated to the major upgrade at the Knox Athletics Track, and $4.1 million was invested in footpath and shared path improvements. Environmental outcomes were also achieved through the creation of new wetlands at Gilbert Park and Egan Lee Reserve, and the conversion of 1,657 major road streetlights to energy-efficient LED technology.

Program performance reflects strong delivery outcomes and effective financial management. Asset renewal achieved a 98 per cent completion rate, with 95 per cent of the budget expended. Overall project delivery indicates that 84.7 per cent of projects and programs have been completed or remain on schedule, with project expenditure reaching 81.2 per cent of the amended budget. Both delivery performance and expenditure outcomes continue to demonstrate steady improvement since 2021.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council receive and note the Infrastructure Capital Works Annual Report for 2024/25.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Baker**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Lockwood**

**That Council receive and note the Infrastructure Capital Works Annual Report for 2024/25.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.11 Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy Review

SUMMARY
A draft Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy has been developed (refer to Attachment 1) following a review of Council's Electronic Gambling Machine Policy 2020 (refer to Attachment 2). This draft Policy was informed by community and stakeholder engagement, benchmarking, desktop data capture and analysis, as well as local and State policy context review.

The draft Policy adopts a public health approach and responds to the emerging needs in the community by broadening the focus from Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) to address other forms of gambling harm.

The draft Policy aligns with, and responds to, the key health and wellbeing priority "Reduce harm from alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling" outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029.

Council recognises that gambling is a legitimate form of entertainment in Australia and many people can participate without experiencing harm, however, research consistently shows that gambling can, and does, lead to significant harm for some individuals, families and the wider community.

Knox residents face greater financial losses from EGMs than Metropolitan Melbourne. In 2024-2025, $79 million was lost to 771 EGMs across 11 venues, averaging $217,000 per day. Gambling losses/amount lost is defined as the amount wagered (bet) by gamblers less the amount won by gamblers.

In Knox the average loss per adult per annum was $586.24, which is higher than the Metropolitan Melbourne average of $548.12 per adult. This highlights a greater prevalence of gambling-related harm in the region.

There is also growing concern about the harm caused by other forms of gambling such as sports betting and online gambling. In 2022–2023, the total losses in Victoria to all forms of gambling was $7.4 billion, with 46% of gambling losses to EGMs and 35% from wagering.

Recent trends, such as the widespread availability of mobile internet devices, have exacerbated the risks of technology-based gambling, including online sports betting.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy for the purposes of community consultation;
2. Notes that community consultation on the draft Policy will occur from the 30 September for a three-week period, and that feedback will be considered prior to finalising the Policy.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Williams**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Baker**

**That Council:**

1. **Endorses the draft Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy for the purposes of community consultation;**
2. **Notes that community consultation on the draft Policy will occur from the 30 September for a three-week period, and that feedback will be considered prior to finalising the Policy.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.12 Biannual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

SUMMARY
This report presents to Council, the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report – August 2025 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to receive and note the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report - August 2025, as set out in Attachment 1 to the report.

*Councillor Cooper noted that the Chairperson of the Knox Audit and Risk Committee meeting has, reluctantly, decided to resign from the Committee earlier than the end of their appointed term which was due to conclude at the end of next year. Council acknowledged their valuable contribution as a member and Chairperson of the Committee and thanked them for their service.*

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Pearce**
**SECONDED: Councillor Cooper**

**That Council resolve to receive and note the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report - August 2025, as set out in Attachment 1 to the report.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.13 Climate Response Plan Annual Report 2024/2025

SUMMARY
Local Government is identified as having a role and responsibility to respond to climate change and its impacts on our community through the following State Government legislation:

- *Local Government Act 2020*: Councils are required to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks
- *Climate Change Act 2017*: local government must consider climate change when preparing a municipal public health and wellbeing plan, including the potential impacts of climate change and potential contribution to Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*: to provide explicit consideration of the policies and obligations of the State relating to climate change when decisions are made about the use and development of land.

In response to a community campaign in 2019 and an associated Notice of Motion, work on the latest Climate Response Plan began in 2020. A 10 year plan (Climate Response Plan 2021-2031) was subsequently adopted by Council on 27 September 2021. The Plan supports Council's effective planning, management and implementation of climate response actions over the 10 year period.

This report responds to a prior Council resolution to provide an Annual Report on Council's progress in implementing the Climate Response Plan 2021 – 2031 (CRP) actions. This report provides the fourth Annual Report.

Key updates from progress in implementing the CRP actions include:

- steady progress has been made in implementing the CRP actions, with 43 of the 55 actions completed or underway;
- progress is being made in Council meeting its emissions mitigation and net zero by 2030 target;
- based on the latest available data for the Knox community (2022/23) it shows a 12.6% reduction in community emissions since 2018/19; and
- there have been improvements in Council's adaptive capacity, with identified strengths in climate adaptation knowledge, governance, and decision making, as well as strategic response and organisational culture.

It should be noted that the mid-term Review of the Climate Response Plan is currently underway, and the outcome of the review will be presented to Council for consideration in early 2026 prior to the commencement of related community and stakeholder consultation.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council receive and note the Knox Climate Response Plan (CRP) 2021-31 Annual Report (Attachment 1) which provides an update on the implementation of CRP actions during the 2024/2025 financial year.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Williams**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Atwell**

**That Council receive and note the Knox Climate Response Plan (CRP) 2021-31 Annual Report (Attachment 1) which provides an update on the implementation of CRP actions during the 2024/2025 financial year.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.14 School Focused Youth Service Advocacy

SUMMARY
On Friday, 5 September 2025, Council received notification from the Department of Education (DE), notifying Council that the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) contract would not be renewed at the conclusion of the current contract period (31 January 2026). DE has provided the SFYS grant program for more than 25 years. Officers are seeking Council support to draft a letter to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll, seeking an immediate review and reversal of this decision. The SFYS funding provides essential support and targeted interventions to young people in Grades 5 to Year 12 who are at risk of disengaging from education. These vulnerable young people often fall through the gaps of other service provisions, with the SFYS program providing a unique opportunity to support schools to target and provide services to this cohort.

RECOMMENDATION
That Council resolve to authorise officers to draft a letter to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll, of behalf of Council, requesting a review and reversal of the decision by the State Government to cease funding the School Focused Youth Service program.

*Councillor Lockwood left the meeting at 9:56pm before the vote on item 8.14*

*Councilor Lockwood returned to the meeting at 9:5pm before the vote on item 8.14*

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Baker**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Duncan**

**That Council resolve to authorise officers to draft a letter to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll, of behalf of Council, requesting a review and reversal of the decision by the State Government to cease funding the School Focused Youth Service program.**

**CARRIED**

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Cooper**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Williams**

**That Council adjourn the Meeting for 10 Minutes.**

**CARRIED**

**The Meeting was adjourned at 10:05pm and resumed at 10:16pm with all Councillors present.**

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Duncan**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Williams**

**That Council resolve to extend the Council Meeting to 11pm.**

**CARRIED**

# 9 Supplementary Items

Nil.

# 10 Notices Of Motion

## 10.1 Notice of Motion No. 187 - Domestic Animal Management Plan

The following notice of motion was lodged by Councillor Lockwood in accordance with Council's Governance Rules:

I hereby give notice that it is my intention to move the following motion at the Council Meeting on 29 September

That Council resolve:

A) To note that Council resolved to endorse the Draft Knox Domestic Animal Management Plan (the draft DAMP) for phase 2 of community engagement at the Council meeting on 8 September 2025 and that phase 2 commenced on 15 September 2025; and

1. Note that verbatim community feedback from phase 1 of community engagement (conducted February to April 2025) was not included in the report to Council considered on 8 September 2025.
2. To increase transparency, and subject to the removal of personal information to protect privacy, to request that copies of verbatim community feedback from phase 1 of community engagement be made available to the community as part of phase 2 of community engagement.
3. Request officers extend phase 2 of community engagement by at least two weeks, recognising the delay in releasing verbatim community feedback from phase 1.

B) In relation to the draft DAMP:

1. To note that the draft DAMP includes "Programs to address over-population rates and any high euthanasia rates" and "Dog attacks" as two of the nine areas of focus.
2. To amend the draft DAMP to include an action to investigate how a community cat program or cat desexing program could be implemented at Knox:
    a. Using evidence provided by the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation and other available peer reviewed evidence relating to cat containment and the welfare of cats;
    b. Including proactive, microtargeted desexing initiatives as demonstrated in the City of Banyule;
    c. Considering any animal management cost savings generated by such a program; and
    d. With a target completion date of December 2026.
3. To amend the draft DAMP to include an action to investigate pro-active dog programs:
    a. As described in the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation's phase 1 submission, which would require an increase in community education and engagement;

   b. Considering any animal management cost savings generated by such a program; and
   c. With a target completion date of December 2027.
4. To note that the objectives of the programs detailed in Resolutions B(2) and B(3) above are to:
   a. Reduce attacks on local wildlife;
   b. Increase compliance with registration and responsible pet ownership; and
   c. Increase compliance relating to dogs
5. To note that the extension of phase 2 of community engagement will also allow community engagement on the proposed amendments to the DAMP in Resolutions B(2) and B(3) above; and to request officers to contact all existing phase 2 submitters to advise them of the amendments once released and invite further comment.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Lockwood**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Pearce**

**That Council resolve:**

**A) To note that Council resolved to endorse the Draft Knox Domestic Animal Management Plan (the draft DAMP) for phase 2 of community engagement at the Council meeting on 8 September 2025 and that phase 2 commenced on 15 September 2025; and**

1. **Note that verbatim community feedback from phase 1 of community engagement (conducted February to April 2025) was not included in the report to Council considered on 8 September 2025.**
2. **To increase transparency, and subject to the removal of personal information to protect privacy, to request that copies of verbatim community feedback from phase 1 of community engagement be made available to the community as part of phase 2 of community engagement.**
3. **Request officers extend phase 2 of community engagement by at least two weeks, recognising the delay in releasing verbatim community feedback from phase 1.**

**B) In relation to the draft DAMP:**

1. **To note that the draft DAMP includes "Programs to address over-population rates and any high euthanasia rates" and "Dog attacks" as two of the nine areas of focus.**
2. **To amend the draft DAMP to include an action to investigate how a community cat program or cat desexing program could be implemented at Knox:**
   a. **Using evidence provided by the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation and other available peer reviewed evidence relating to cat containment and the welfare of cats;**
   b. **Including proactive, microtargeted desexing initiatives as demonstrated in the City of Banyule;**
   c. **Considering any animal management cost savings generated by such a program; and**
   d. **With a target completion date of December 2026.**
3. **To amend the draft DAMP to include an action to investigate pro-active dog programs:**

   a. **As described in the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation's phase 1 submission, which would require an increase in community education and engagement;**
   b. **Considering any animal management cost savings generated by such a program; and**
   c. **With a target completion date of December 2027.**
4. **To note that the objectives of the programs detailed in Resolutions B(2) and B(3) above are to:**
   a. **Reduce attacks on local wildlife;**
   b. **Increase compliance with registration and responsible pet ownership; and**
   c. **Increase compliance relating to dogs**
5. **To note that the extension of phase 2 of community engagement will also allow community engagement on the proposed amendments to the DAMP in Resolutions B(2) and B(3) above; and to request officers to contact all existing phase 2 submitters to advise them of the amendments once released and invite further comment.**

**CARRIED**

A Division was called by Councillor Atwell

| | |
|---|---|
| For the motion: | Councillor Lockwood, Councillor Pearce, Councillor Williams, Councillor Duncan and Councillor Kennett. |
| Against the motion: | Councillor Baker, Councillor Atwell, Councillor Considine and Councillor Cooper. |
| Abstention: | Nil. |

CARRIED 5:4

## 10.2 Notice of Motion No. 188 - Knox News

The following notice of motion was lodged by Councillor Lockwood in accordance with Council's Governance Rules:

I hereby give notice that it is my intention to move the following motion at the Council Meeting on 29 September 2025 :

That Council resolve:

1. That a report be provided to the Council meeting on 24 November 2025 (unless deferred to a later meeting in consultation with the Mayor) that explores cessation of the publication Knox News, including:
    a. Detail of the funds that would be saved; and
    b. How some of those funds saved could be redirected to utilising the four local community newspapers for Council and councillor information
2. To refer the content of this report to a subsequent budget discussion.

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED: Councillor Lockwood**
**SECONDED: Councillor Williams**

**That Council resolve:**

1. **That a report be provided to the Council meeting on 24 November 2025 (unless deferred to a later meeting in consultation with the Mayor) that explores cessation of the publication Knox News, including:**
    a. **Detail of the funds that would be saved; and**
    b. **How some of those funds saved could be redirected to utilising the four local community newspapers for Council and councillor information**
2. **To refer the content of this report to a subsequent budget discussion.**

**CARRIED**

## 10.3 Notice of Motion No. 189 - Keeping Knox Safer Forum

The following notice of motion was lodged by Councillor Lockwood in accordance with Council's Governance Rules:

I hereby give notice that it is my intention to move the following motion at the Council Meeting on 29 September 2025

That Council resolve:

1. To note Victoria Police's Eastern Region Division 2 is establishing a new Local Safety Committee and Council's support for this Committee.
2. To note the Policy Brief included as Appendix 1 to this motion.
3. To note that safety issues are occurring nationally and are not restricted to Victoria and require local solutions and actions.
4. To note that young people are featuring strongly in crime reports,
5. In support of this new Local Safety Committee, to receive a report to the Council meeting on the 15 December 2025 with a proposal that Knox City Council hold a Keeping Knox Safer Round Table to properly understand the safety issues being experienced by the Knox community, residents and businesses alike:
    i. Led by an independent facilitator.
    ii. The independent facilitator will produce a report of the proceedings and recommendations flowing therefrom,
    iii. That this forum consists of Council, Victoria Police (including Knox, Boronia, Rowville and Transit Police) emergency relief organisations, relevant Council departments (Community Laws, Youth Services Team, Schools, Community Strengthening) the State Government (especially the Department of Fairness Families and Housing), any local support agency with an interest and representatives from the community.
6. That this Forum focus on identifying issues and exploring possible solutions relating to youth counselling, family violence, substance abuse, the provision of rough sleeping, safe spaces, safe showers and safe food. It should also consider the experiences of affected individuals as well as the concerns raised by individuals and local traders who have made many complaints.
7. That the structure of this event should be decided with consultation that includes councillors informally.
8. To note that the information gathered and reported to Council will also be provided to all participants.

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Cooper**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Williams**

**That Council resolve to extend the Council Meeting until 11:30pm.**

**CARRIED**

**RESOLUTION**

**MOVED:** **Councillor Lockwood**
**SECONDED:** **Councillor Williams**

**That Council resolve:**

1. **To note Victoria Police's Eastern Region Division 2 is establishing a new Local Safety Committee and Council's support for this Committee.**
2. **To note the Policy Brief included as Appendix 1 to this motion.**
3. **To note that safety issues are occurring nationally and are not restricted to Victoria and require local solutions and actions.**
4. **To note that young people are featuring strongly in crime reports,**
5. **In support of this new Local Safety Committee, to receive a report to the Council meeting on the 15 December 2025 with a proposal that Knox City Council hold a Keeping Knox Safer Round Table to properly understand the safety issues being experienced by the Knox community, residents and businesses alike:**
    i. **Led by an independent facilitator.**
    ii. **The independent facilitator will produce a report of the proceedings and recommendations flowing therefrom,**
    iii. **That this forum consists of Council, Victoria Police (including Knox, Boronia, Rowville and Transit Police) emergency relief organisations, relevant Council departments (Community Laws, Youth Services Team, Community Strengthening), Schools, the State Government (especially the Department of Fairness Families and Housing), any local support agency with an interest and representatives from the community.**
6. **That this Forum focus on identifying issues and exploring possible solutions relating to youth counselling, family violence, substance abuse, the provision of rough sleeping, safe spaces, safe showers and safe food. It should also consider the experiences of affected individuals as well as the concerns raised by individuals and local traders who have made many complaints.**
7. **That the structure of this event should be decided with consultation that includes councillors informally.**
8. **To note that the information gathered and reported to Council will also be provided to all participants.**

**CARRIED**

A Division was called by Councillor Cooper.

| | |
|---|---|
| For the motion: | Councillor Baker, Councillor Atwell, Councillor Kennett, Councillor Cooper, Councillor Considine, Councillor Duncan, Councillor Lockwood, Councillor Williams and Councillor Pearce |
| Against the motion: | Nil |
| Abstention: | Nil |

CARRIED 9:0

## 11 Urgent Business

Nil.

*Councillor Considine retired from the meeting at 11.02 pm at the commencement of Item 12. Questions Through the Chair.*

## 12 Questions Through the Chair

Councillor Atwell asked the following questions:

**Have we received questions or concerns from families in the community about the kindergarten registration process, particularly regarding how places are allocated?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

We receive questions frequently each year regarding our allocation and registration process, particularly for families participating for the first time and do not understand the process. We work through these individually and respond as we get them.

**How do we ensure that children currently attending a kindergarten, or with siblings already enrolled, are not disadvantaged in the allocation process?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

Our current process meets the State Government Kindergarten Funding Guidelines.
However, we are already reviewing this process as the kindergarten service delivery is changing as we move through the State Government reforms.

Per the State Government guidelines, kindergarten places must first be allocated to children who meet the Priority 1 Criteria which is set by the State Government.

Children who meet this priority must be offered a place at their first preference kindergarten regardless of where they live or where they may have previously attended.

Priority 2 criteria, which is set locally includes children who:

- Live within the local community area of the kindergarten
- Had an elder sibling who attended the 1st preference service within the last 5 years
- Child attended a 3 Year Old program at a service in Knox
- Child is currently utilising Council LDC on the same site as kindergarten preference (eg. The Hubs)

However should a kindergarten and particular group receive a high number of Priority 1 registrations, these children are offered a place first, including those children who are requiring an additional year of kindergarten before going to school which is approved by the Department. This reduces the number of places available to the children who have attended the 3 year old program and 4 Year Old program. New families moving into the area would also fall into Priority 2.

It can be difficult because the number of Priority 1 allocated, there are less Priority places that fall under Level 2.

**Could Council explore alternative models that reduce reliance on a randomised ballot where multiple criteria are met?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

Because of the way we look at the priority, we sometimes need randomised ballots because we have a low number of places available. We exited kindergarten services and we have established a collaborative working network inclusive of all our kindergarten providers across the municipality and work through needed changes to Council's Kindergarten Policy and Procedures, inclusive of our Central Registration process. We are looking at improvement opportunities over time.

**When can Council expect an update or recommendations on potential refinements to the policy?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

We will be bringing the Funded Kindergarten Policy to Councillors to discuss later this year and after refinement, the Policy will then be presented to Council for a decision.

Councillor Kennett asked the following questions:

**Kindergarten Capacity - Based on the feedback from families received by councillors to date, and assuming there could be more, I wonder about the Knox sessional kindergarten capacity. Are there geographic disparities in capacity across Knox (The Basin, Rowville and Knoxfield), and how does council plan to manage these I.e working with providers to offer additional sessions, adjusting the local criteria for priority of access to smooth out demand?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

As outlined in the recent review of Knox City Council's Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan that was presented to Council on 8 September 2025, Council supports access to kindergarten places across local community areas which reflect local patterns of service use.
Demand for kindergarten places in smaller geographical areas changes over time with the changing demographics of the community, local community areas that span suburb boundaries balances families ability to access local services whilst also supporting the viability of services in nearby areas. In practice, many families in Knox access kindergarten outside their immediate suburb, reflecting established patterns of cross-suburb enrolment and mobility.

**Future demand - Given the capacity issues being currently experienced at a number of centres, has the Council completed future demand analysis considering the State Government two year kindergarten reforms, and what does that show? And how will council ensure sufficient places in kindergartens for all eligible children by 2028?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

The Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan will establish where the needs are across the community. Some groups experience a high number of registrations, however this does not necessarily mean that the kindergarten is over-subscribed, it may just be that group.

As of today there are currently 85 more kindergarten places available across the municipality than those registered. There also remains some further capacity in group sizes at some kindergartens that could be enacted should the demand for those places present.

Based on current participation rates, population projections and existing service availability, kindergarten provision is expected to meet projected demand up to 2029 when taking into account kindergarten availability across local community areas.

**Review of local criteria (not State based criteria) - Will the review of local criteria for the priority of access by council, consider weighting of local criteria, specifically children already enrolled in 3 Year Old Kinder that wish to continue kindergarten at the same facility?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

As previously mentioned, a review of the Funded Kindergarten Policy and Kindergarten Registration Procedure is currently underway.

The review of the registration and allocation process is focused on ensuring Priority 2 criteria and accumulation of meeting multiple criteria, whilst also balancing the need to ensure families moving into Knox or those who choose not to attend 3 year old kindergarten are not unduly penalised. We will be looking at all areas and we will bring that back to Council.

**Review of the enrolment process - What feedback and information is being considered through the review that Council are completing on the kindergarten process?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

All feedback received from community members this year and in previous years is being considered as a part of the review process. As part of the review we have also undertaken benchmarking with

other Councils who have a central registration systems, reviewed the timing of our registration process with input from both our Early Years Advisory Committee and the kindergarten providers and reviewed our local Priority of Access criteria as well.

**Multi-age kindergarten groups - Noting feedback received from one family and questions relating to composite classes. The Victorian State Government "Your Guide to Multi-age groups document' states that intentional planning, differentiation and staffing must be in place to manage composite kindergarten cohorts to ensure all children thrive. Noting that current research suggests success of composite classes depends heavily on the quality of the program delivered, and the skill and resources of educators, how does Knox council currently manage and supervise this, and has this been considered for future years, particularly with the State reforms coming on board? And what is the view of the kindergarten service providers on composite kindergarten classes?**

The Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley responded:

As you have indicated the State Government is the funding body for kindergartens. They manage the licencing requirements of these services and specifies the maximum number of children who are able to attend a service at any one time.

The Kindergarten Providers determine what groups they will be offering at their services, whether they be single or multi-age and it is their responsibility to provide a high quality kindergarten program as per State Government requirements.

We make available population data in relation to the overall numbers of children in community areas when they are setting their proposed groups for the year. It is up to the service providers to manage whether they will have composite groups or straight groups which is discussed with State Government. Council does not set this. We can look at it for our two sessional kindergartens we run but cannot be done for the providers. We can provide them with the population data information and what it can look like and they can then plan going forward.

*Councillor Pearce left the meeting at 11:04 pm during item 12*

*Councillor Pearce returned to the meeting at 11:09 pm during item 12*

## 13 Confidential Items

Nil.

**MEETING CLOSED AT 11:18pm**

Minutes of Meeting confirmed at the
Meeting of Council
held on Monday, 27 October 2025

……
Chairperson

The Agenda for this meeting is attached in full at the end of the Minutes

# AGENDA

Meeting of Council

To be held at the

Civic Centre

511 Burwood Highway

Wantirna South

On

Monday 29 September 2025 at 7:00 PM

This meeting will be conducted as a hybrid meeting

**Order of Business**

1 Apologies And Requests For Leaves Of Absence ....4

2 Declarations Of Conflict Of Interest ....4

3 Confirmation Of Minutes ....4

4 Presentations, Petitions And Memorials ....4

5 Reports By Councillors ....4

6 Planning Matters ....5

6.1 Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 ....5

7 Public Question Time ....10

8 Officer Reports ....11

8.1 Community Engagement Feedback for the Annual Budget 2026-2027 ....11

8.2 Knox Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 Review and Development of Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028 ....47

8.3 Waste Services Community Engagement Plan ....151

8.4 2026 Council Meeting Schedule ....166

8.5 Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025 - Final Report ....170

8.6 Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 Review .....225

8.7 Knox Disability Advisory Committee Membership Recruitment and Annual Report .....320

8.8 Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy.....332

8.9 2025-26 Amended Budget.....363

8.10 Infrastructure Capital Works Program Annual Report 2024-25.....377

8.11 Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy Review.....415

8.12 Biannual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee.....514

8.13 Climate Response Plan Annual Report 2024/2025 .....525

8.14 School Focused Youth Service Advocacy .....557

9 Supplementary Items.....560

10 Notices Of Motion .....560

11 Urgent Business .....560

12 Questions Through The Chair .....560

13 Confidential Items.....560

Bruce Dobson

Chief Executive Officer

# 1 Apologies And Requests For Leaves Of Absence

# 2 Declarations Of Conflict Of Interest

# 3 Confirmation Of Minutes

Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting of Council held on Monday 25 August 2025.

# 4 Presentations, Petitions And Memorials

# 5 Reports By Councillors

# 6 Planning Matters

## 6.1 Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Noting
**Author:** Acting Manager City Planning & Building, Katherine Walker
**Manager:** Acting Manager City Planning & Building, Katherine Walker
**Executive:** Director, City Liveability, Matt Kelleher

**SUMMARY**
Details of planning applications considered under delegation are referred for information. It is recommended that the items be noted.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council note the planning applications decided under 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 as set out in the officer report.

**1. REPORT**
Details of planning applications decided under delegation from 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 are attached. The applications are summarised as follows:

| **Application Type** | | **No.** |
|---|---|---|
| Building & Works: | Residential | 3 |
| | Other | 4 |
| Subdivision | | 13 |
| Units | | 6 |
| Tree Removal / Pruning | | 7 |
| Small Second Dwelling | | 2 |
| Single Dwelling | | 1 |
| Change of Use | | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | | **37** |

**2. CONFIDENTIALITY**
There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the *Local Government Act* 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**
Nil

# Knox City Council

## Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation

1 August 2025 and 31 August 2025

| Ward | No/ Type | Address | Description | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baird | 2025/9081 | 17 Narcissus Avenue BORONIA VIC 3155 | 2 Lot Subdivision - NDIS development. | 4/08/2025 Approved |
| Baird | 2025/9082 | 19 Narcissus Avenue BORONIA VIC 3155 | 2 Lot Subdivision - NDIS development. | 5/08/2025 Approved |
| Baird | 2025/6117 | 55 Helen Road FERNTREE GULLY VIC 3156 | Construction of 2 double storey and 1 single storey residential dwellings on behalf of Homes Victoria pursuant to Clause 53.20 of the planning scheme | 15/08/2025 Approved |
| Baird | 2025/6247 | 7 Catesby Court BORONIA VIC 3155 | Removal of two (2) Acacia dealbata (Silver Wattle) | 19/08/2025 Approved |
| Baird | 2025/9091 | 89 Burke Road FERNTREE GULLY VIC 3156 | Two lot subdivision (Approved unit development) | 27/08/2025 Approved |
| Baird | 2025/9093 | 84 Helen Road FERNTREE GULLY VIC 3156 | Two lot Subdivision (Approved unit development) | 28/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6241 | 6 Gravenstein Crescent THE BASIN VIC 3154 | Removal of one (1) Eucalyptus nicholii (Narrow leaved Black Peppermint) | 1/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2024/6355 | 41 Stuart Street THE BASIN VIC 3154 | Development of a double storey dwelling to the rear of the existing dwelling, removal of vegetation, and the subdivision of the land into two (2) lots | 1/08/2025 Notice of Decision |
| Chandler | 2025/6287 | 11A Marland Road BORONIA VIC 3155 | Construction of a single dwelling and removal of one tree | 6/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6315 | 20 Robertson Crescent BORONIA VIC 3155 | Buildings and works to construct a Small Second Dwelling | 6/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6249 | 8 Cedar Crescent BORONIA VIC 3155 | Buildings and Works (Additions and Alterations to the existing dwelling) | 8/08/2025 Approved |

| Ward | No/ Type | Address | Description | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chandler | 2025/6349 | 13A Boronia Road BORONIA VIC 3155 | Target Pruning and Lopping of T4 Quercus canariensis (Algerian Oak) and T5 Corymbia citriodora (Lemon Scented Gum Hybrid) | 14/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6260 | 24 Olive Grove BORONIA VIC 3155 | The removal of three (3) Eucalyptus obliqua (Messmate) and one (1) Pittosporum eugenioides 'Variegatum' (Variegated Pittosporum) | 20/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6155 | 201 Ferndale Road SASSAFRAS VIC 3787 | Buildings and works for a shed | 22/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6266 | 18 Mercia Avenue THE BASIN VIC 3154 | Removal of one (1) Eucalyptus goniocalyx (Long Leaved Box) | 27/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6270 | 10 Currawa Drive BORONIA VIC 3155 | Removal of one (1) Eucalyptus melliodora (Yellow Box) | 28/08/2025 Approved |
| Chandler | 2025/6276 | 166 Albert Avenue BORONIA VIC 3155 | Removal of one (1) Hesperocyparis lusitanica (Mexican Cypress) | 29/08/2025 Approved |
| Collier | 2025/6067 | 517 Boronia Road WANTIRNA VIC 3152 | Development of the land for four (4) triple storey dwellings and two (2) double storey dwellings (total of (6) dwellings) and alteration of access to a road in a Transport 2 Zone | 8/08/2025 Notice of Decision |
| Collier | 2025/6115 | 679 Boronia Road WANTIRNA VIC 3152 | Use of the land for the purpose of a Restricted Recreation Facility (Gymnasium), buildings and works, and internally illuminated business identification signage | 14/08/2025 Approved |
| Dinsdale | 2024/6498 | 1 Oakfield Court BAYSWATER VIC 3153 | The development of the land for three (3) double storey dwellings and variation of the restrictive covenant D077531 Volume 8633 Folio 918 to allow three dwellings on the lot and no restrictions on the construction materials used | 5/08/2025 Refused |
| Dinsdale | 2025/9088 | 13A & 13B Billara Close WANTIRNA SOUTH VIC 3152 | Two lot subdivision (approved unit development) | 18/08/2025 Approved |

| Ward | No/ Type | Address | Description | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinsdale | 2025/6254 | Knox City SC (MASTER)<br>425 Burwood Highway<br>WANTIRNA SOUTH<br>VIC 3152 | Buildings and works for the creation of an open plaza, including the construction and display of electronic signage | 22/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Dinsdale | 2025/6295 | 10 Katandra Court<br>BAYSWATER VIC 3153 | Two Lot Subdivision (Approved Unit Development) | 26/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Dinsdale | 2024/6591 | 575 Burwood Highway & 86 Parkhurst Drive<br>KNOXFIELD VIC 3180 | Buildings and works for a self-storage facility on the site, display of business identification, internally illuminated and pole signage, a reduction in the car parking requirements | 29/08/2025<br>Notice of Decision |
| Dobson | 2025/6252 | 14/19 Cornhill Street<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | Buildings and works (extension to floor area) | 5/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Dobson | 2025/9066 | 16 Parkview Drive<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | Small Second Dwelling | 6/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Dobson | 2025/6350 | 91 Hancock Drive<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | 2 Lot Subdivision (Approved Unit Development) | 13/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Dobson | 2025/9084 | 93 Forest Road<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | 2 lot subdivision (approved unit development) | 14/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Dobson | 2025/6366 | 73 Grange Drive<br>LYSTERFIELD VIC 3156 | Buildings and Works comprising an extension to an existing shed | 29/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Friberg | 2024/6230 | 7 David Street<br>KNOXFIELD VIC 3180 | Construction of two (2) double storey dwellings, one (1) single storey dwelling and removal of existing vegetation | 1/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Friberg | 2025/6263 | 13 Mountain Gate Drive<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | Three lot subdivision (Approved Unit Development) | 19/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Friberg | 2025/6137 | 27 Christie Street<br>KNOXFIELD VIC 3180 | Construction of one (1) double storey dwelling and one (1) single storey dwelling on the lot | 20/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Friberg | 2025/9092 | 1 - 2/48 Kingston Street<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | Two Lot Subdivision (Approved Unit Development) | 28/08/2025<br>Approved |
| Friberg | 2025/6302 | 9 Lydford Road<br>FERNTREE GULLY<br>VIC 3156 | Four Lot Subdivision (Approved Unit Development) | 29/08/2025<br>Approved |

| Ward | No/ Type | Address | Description | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scott | 2025/6334 | 49 Lloyd Street North KNOXFIELD VIC 3180 | 2 Lot Subdivision (approved unit development) | 4/08/2025 Approved |
| Scott | 2025/9089 | 11 Foster Crescent KNOXFIELD VIC 3180 | 2 Lot Subdivision (Approved Unit Development) | 27/08/2025 Approved |
| Tirhatuan | 2025/9090 | 800 Wellington Road ROWVILLE VIC 3178 | Buildings and works for a retaining wall | 20/08/2025 Approved |

# 7 Public Question Time

# 8 Officer Reports

## 8.1 Community Engagement Feedback for the Annual Budget 2026-2027

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Noting
**Author:** Head of Strategy and Business Intelligence, Jen Reid
**Manager:** Acting Manager Strategy and Transformation, Gail Power
**Executive:** Acting Director Customer and Performance, Scott Coleman

**SUMMARY**
The Annual Planning Cycle for 2026-27 is currently underway. In August 2025, a Community Engagement Program was undertaken to offer insights into the services most valued by the community and actions required to better align with community needs and desires.

Engagement activities included an online survey, pop-ups at locations across the municipality and targeted activities including engagement at our Childhood and Family Centres and representation from all nine Advisory Committees through a Multi-Advisory Committee Workshop.

The engagement process resulted in 594 responses from the community, with eight members of the community seeking to make formal submissions to councillors.

The Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) and formal submissions (Attachment 2) will provide input into the next annual planning cycle, including the Annual Budget 2026-27, the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan Year Two Actions and Performance Measure targets and annual organisation service planning.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council resolve to:
1. Receive and note the Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1).
2. Receive and note the eight formal submissions received (Attachment 2).

**1. DISCUSSION**
In line with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, the new Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, Annual Budget 2025-2026, Rating and Revenue Plan 2025-2029 and Financial Plan 2025-2035 were endorsed by Council in June 2025. The Asset Plan 2025-2035 is being finalised and will be considered by Council in October 2025.

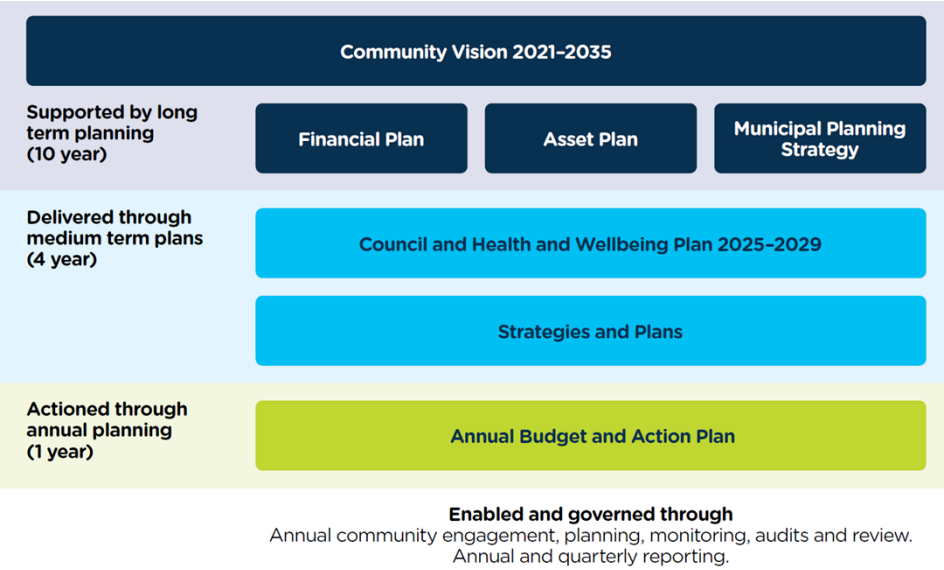



**Figure 1 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework**

The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 is the roadmap for how we are working towards achieving the Community Vision. It sets our strategic directions for the next four years, guiding where we put our focus and effort. The priorities for supporting, protecting and improving the health and wellbeing of our community are at the forefront of everything we do and are integrated across all Council services and initiatives.

Council has 34 Service Plans to guide the organisation to deliver efficient, fit-for-purpose, value-for-money services to meet our customers' needs. The Service Plans will be delivered over the 2025-2029 period and respond to the priorities outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. The Service Plans include key information on community value, service goals, service delivery model, legislative requirements, service financials, service levels, annual actions and performance measures.

The Annual Budget 2026-27 details the mechanism for how we will deliver and fund our community priorities. To ensure Council remains responsive to the community's evolving needs and priorities, each financial year, the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 annual actions and performance measure targets will be published in the Budget.

The Annual Planning Cycle for 2026-27 is currently underway. To inform the development of the Annual Budget and Action Plan for 2026-27, Council has undertaken community engagement. This engagement ran from 28 July to 24 August 2025, which is earlier than previous years to allow the community's views on Council's priorities to better inform the annual planning and budgeting work. The community engagement sought to understand:

- How we can best meet community needs under each theme of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.
- Community ideas for actions or projects in a specific location in Knox.
- The services our community think deliver most value to the community.
- If there are any other things our community would like considered for the 2026-27 planning and budget process or future years.
- If community members would like to present their feedback to Councillors at a public submissions meeting.

A total of 594 members of our community provided feedback through a variety of activities including an online survey, pop-ups at locations across the municipality and targeted activities including engagement at our childhood and family centres and representation from all nine Advisory Committees through a Multi Advisory Committee Workshop. The Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report has been included in Attachment 1 for noting.

In addition to the community engagement results, there are several other inputs that will inform the 2026-27 Annual Budget and Action Plan including:

- Community engagement results from the development of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.
- Changes to the external environment including reforms, cost of living changes, population trends.
- Risk assessments, legislative requirements, service planning and reviews, community satisfaction data, voice of customer data, service performance trends, complaints, and changes in service volumes.

**Formal Submissions**
As part of the Annual Budget and Action Plan community engagement, the community were invited to make a formal submission and speak to councillors on their submission. Eight formal submissions were received. The submissions have been included in Attachment 2 for noting. For those respondents who have nominated this option, the formal submissions will be heard at a meeting with councillors scheduled for Wednesday, 1 October 2025.

**Next Steps**
- Formal submissions will be heard by councillors at a meeting scheduled Wednesday, 1 October 2025.
- Have Your Say will be updated to include the Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report. (Attachment 1). Any member of the community who has subscribed to this engagement will be notified of the availability of this Report.
- This community feedback will be an input into the Annual Planning Cycle and be considered in the development of the Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27.
- In April 2026, release the draft Budget 2026-27 including the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 year two actions and performance measure targets for community questions. The Budget 2026-27 will be presented to Council for consideration of adoption in June 2026.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**
The community were engaged at the level of ‘consult’, in line with Council’s Community Engagement Policy, providing Council the opportunity to consider the community’s feedback in the 2026-27 Annual Budget and Action plan process.

The Annual Plan and Budget community engagement process ran from 28 July to 24 August 2025. Five-hundred and ninety-four (594) community members participated in the engagement. This community engagement opportunity was promoted extensively across various communication channels including Council’s website, roadside banners, Knox News articles and social media.

Residents and ratepayers received links to the online survey and activities through a range of channels:

- Knox News with a link to the QR code;
- On hold message during the engagement period;
- Social media posts;
- Email to all Have Your Say subscribers;
- Web news articles.

The online survey also detailed the days and times of the pop-up activities.

The table below provides details of the participants and responses received for various engagement activities.

| ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES | TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS | PARTICIPANTS |
|---|---|---|
| **Online Survey**<br>The survey was available to all community members as an accessible platform for engaging via the Knox Have Your Say page. Hard copies of the survey were available on request.<br><br>The survey had four elements as detailed below:<br>• Budget allocation / Voting to understand service priorities<br>• Nominating projects on a map<br>• Survey to propose actions for the Annual Budget 2026-27<br>• Formal written submissions.<br><br>The survey asked respondents to identify how we could best meet their needs under each theme of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan and identify the services that deliver the most value to the community.<br><br>The questions asked in the survey formed the foundation of questions asked across the various activities to ensure consistent data capture.<br><br>The survey was open from 28 July to 24 August 2025. | Community members<br>Community groups | 139 contributors across the various surveys |
| **Pop-Ups**<br>The Pop-Ups aimed to raise awareness within the community about the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan, provide councillors the opportunity to engage directly with their constituents and encourage people to have their say and get involved in engagement activities.<br><br>• Knox Leisureworks Pop-Up: Saturday, 2 August 2025, 9:00-11:00am<br>• Council Health and Wellbeing Plan launch event: Monday, 4 August 2025, 4:30-5:30pm<br>• Youth Summit: Thursday, 14 August 2025, 11:30am- | Community members | 328 participants |

| ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES | TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS | PARTICIPANTS |
|---|---|---|
| 1:00pm.<br>• Knox Library Pop-Up: Saturday, 16 August 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm<br>• Rowville Community Centre Pop-Up: Saturday, 23 August 2025, 11:00am-1:00pm.<br><br>To ensure the activities were accessible and easy to complete in a pop-up location format, the activities were structured slightly differently to the online survey. | | |
| **Targeted Activities**<br>The following activities were also delivered during the engagement period:<br>**Workshops**<br>• Multi-Advisory Committee Focus Group: Thursday, 5 June 2025, 6:30-9:00pm (27 Advisory Committee members).<br>**Family Centre ("Hubs") Drawing Activities**<br>• Drawing activities at Knox Children and Family Centres in Wantirna South and Bayswater (100 participants). | Advisory Committee members, children | 127 participants across the activities |

## 3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2026-27 Annual Budget will contain Council and Health and Wellbeing Year 2 actions as well as financial resourcing for a wide range of programs that deliver important community services to the Knox community.

## 4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

The annual planning and budget process will support Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation. Further, the annual budget will positively impact on Council's Net zero 2030 target by funding activities identified in the Climate Response Plan.

## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Theme 3 of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan is Caring for and enhancing our environment: Our environment is greener, healthier and sustainable through Council's environmental protection and enhancement, working in collaboration with our community. The community feedback collected as a part of the Annual Budget and Action Plan community engagement will drive the identification of annual actions that will contribute to the achievement of this strategic objective and its measures of performance.

## 6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Community Engagement Program and required resources for delivery are funded within existing operational budgets.

The Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) outcomes will be considered as part of the development of the Annual Budget 2026-27.

**7. RISKS**

The development of the Annual Budget and Action Plan community engagement has prioritised the assessment of risk throughout the process.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.2 - Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-2027 community engagement report [**8.1.1** - 9 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - Formal submissions [**8.1.2** - 21 pages]

# Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-2027 community engagement report

In August 2025, we conducted a survey to help us better understand what services the community value most and the actions we can deliver to best meet the needs of our community.

Our 2026-2027 Annual Plan and Budget engagement had three distinct purposes:

- To inform our 2026-2027 Budget and future budgets
- To inform the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan year two actions and performance measure targets
- To inform our annual service planning program for 2026-2027

This work will also be informed by:

- Engagement results from the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029
- Changes to the external environment including reforms, cost of living changes, population trends
- Legislative requirements, service planning and reviews and community data.

**Engagement approach**

The engagement was designed to capture people who were motivated to participate through Council's online engagement page and to capture wider viewpoints through four pop up activities at locations across the municipality. Targeted activities including engagement at our childhood and family centres and representation from nine Advisory Committees through a Multi Advisory Committee workshop captured the perspectives of key audiences.

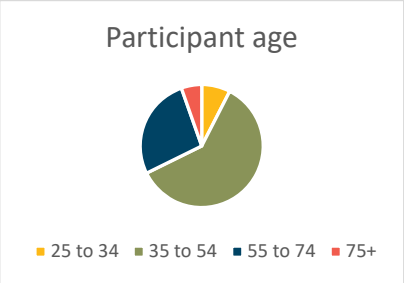
The engagement captured feedback through the following activities:

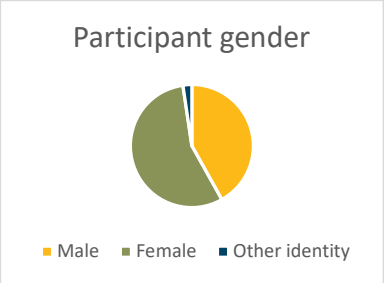
- Budget allocation / voting to understand service priorities
- Nominating projects on a map
- Survey to propose actions for the Annual Budget 2026-27
- Formal written submissions.

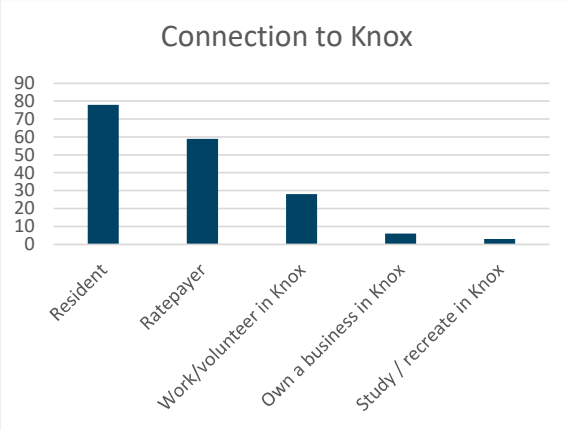
**Who completed the activities?**

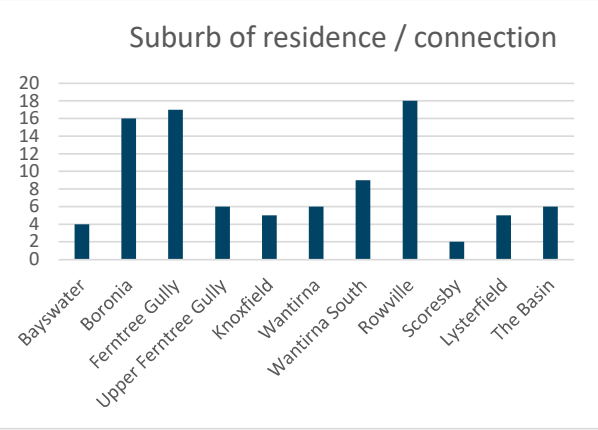
- 594 total responses from the Knox community
- 8 members of the community submitted a public submission
- 100 children from our family centre hubs submitted a drawing.

The demographic profile of the respondents to the online survey were as follows:



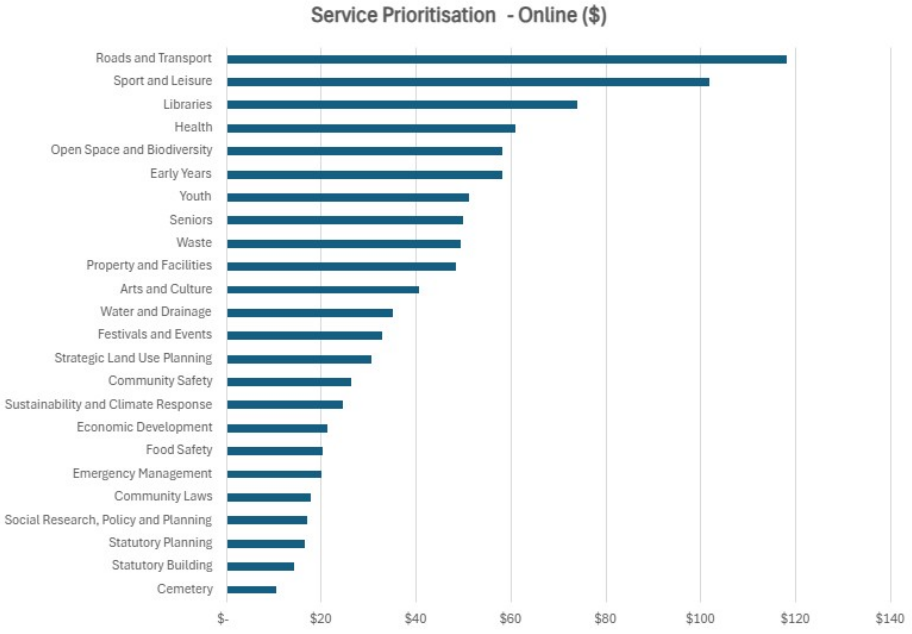



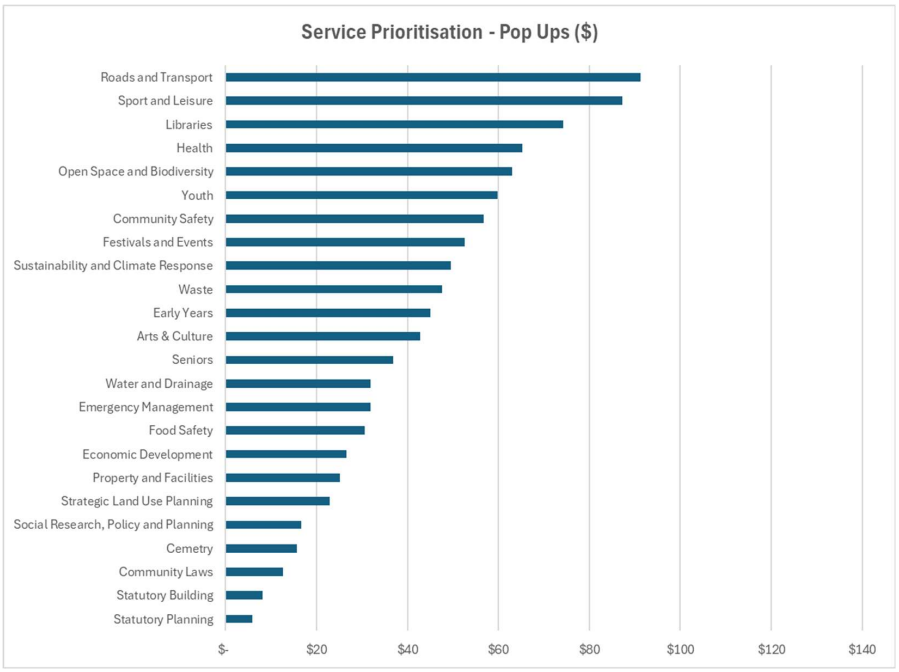




**Which services do you think deliver the most value to the community?**

Respondents were asked to help us understand which services they believe deliver most value to the community by allocating points to the service area. Two similar activities were run online and in person. In the online survey, respondents had a total of 1,000 dollars to allocate across all 24 external facing services according to their priority. The average dollar allocation per service is as follows:



At pop-up events, respondents were provided with 10 dots each representing $100. Respondents were asked to allocate across the 24 external facing services according to their priority. The average dollar allocation per service is as follows:




Roads and Transport, Sports and Leisure, Libraries, Health and Open Space and Biodiversity were consistently rated, in that order, as the top five valued services across both the online and pop-up engagement activities. Youth and Waste were also consistently rated in the top ten valued services across the activities however the other services in the top ten varied. In the online activity, Early Years, Seniors, and Property and Facilities made up the remaining top ten valued services. In the pop-up activity, Community Safety, Festivals and Events, Sustainability and Climate Response made up the remaining top ten valued services.



**What are your priorities for our Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan year two actions**

Respondents were asked to identify their ideas and priorities for the 2026-2027 Annual Plan and Budget to deliver on our Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (CHWP) themes. Responses have been categorised, noting there was generally only one or two comments relating to each topic. The topics are listed under each CHWP Theme below:

Theme 1: Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

- Support for local business
- Improved and accessible footpaths and bike paths
- Advocacy for improved public transport, including the trackless tram
- Clear, localised pathways to support our vulnerable community
- Increased library hours on Saturday and Sunday mornings
- Provide ongoing funding to Knox Infolink which provides community-led programs that reflect deep local knowledge, trusted relationships, and proven effectiveness.
- Clean pathways and roads.

Theme 2: Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

- Services and infrastructure that promote safety and social connection, build trust and support vulnerable community members
- Social events to mark various community cultural and religious events
- Workshops and education on mental health, gambling, drug and alcohol issues in the community
- Reduced 'red tape' was received in relation to the Risky Play program
- Prioritise ongoing investment in established programs recognising that health and wellbeing outcomes require long-term commitment and stable resourcing as opposed to grant funding
- Additional sporting facilities and support for sporting clubs.

Theme 3: Caring for and enhancing our environment

- Update sites of biological significance with an emphasis on tree planting, revegetation and wildlife corridors
- Respond to a rise in illegal dumping of waste, animal waste and litter in parks, reserves and council land
- Improve waste and recycling services, find a solution for soft plastics, polystyrene and foams, increase frequency of waste collection and provide larger bins
- More canopy trees on Council and private land and better protection for our wildlife, vegetation and trees
- Ensure there is above ground water for wildlife via protection of creeks and ponds and the removal of algae and debris from ponds
- Maintenance of playgrounds
- Plant fruit trees for people to eat from.

Theme 4: Leading, Listening and governing responsibly

- Reduce spending on non-essential programs, promotions, and projects outside Council's core responsibilities, and concentrate on doing the basics well
- Advocate for the removal of Land Tax.

Theme 5: Being a strong voice for safety

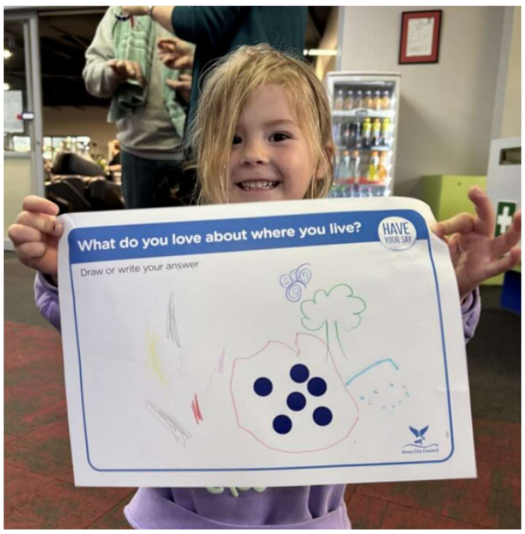
- Provide safe and accessible areas
- Improve wheelchair access, bike racks and pedestrian zones
- Setup neighbourhood watch schemes, partner with Police, add surveillance cameras and increase street lighting.

Theme 6: Planning our future City

- Stop property developers buying land and reduce ‘massive builds’
- Approved designs are in nature colours rather than reds and neons
- Landscaping and native vegetation requirements stronger across all build types
- Enforcement of building and landscaping requirements needs to be better resourced and supported
- Increase facilities and services that enable community to gather and connect at no cost
- Increase housing of different types, densities and variety
- Upkeep of Scout Halls and Toy Libraries
- Prioritise graffiti removal.





**Multi advisory committee workshop outcomes**

In addition to the engagement activities, representatives from Knox's nine advisory committees were asked to suggest ideas for the CHWP year two actions. Ideas under each CHWP theme are summarised below:

Theme 1: Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

- Better communication around capital development i.e. footpaths, alternate routes, accessibility considerations (wheelchairs).
- Provide digital health assessments for community, with support around technology.
- Review and enhance actions around Strategy 1.5, by evaluating efforts, identifying gaps and what is working well.
- Provide community education on using substances, including for families supporting individuals.
- Address access to basic needs, including housing, food and community connection.
- Provide space for people to connect without being moved on.
- Provide education and programs focused on health and nutrition – partnership approach with experts and relevant settings.
- Provide electric bike hire stations, especially in areas where there is limited public transport.

Theme 2: Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

- Increase awareness on First Nations culture, data, and accessibility. Including place naming, and provenance.
- Plan and establish another Men's Shed in central Knox.
- Develop a centralised platform to promote committees, groups (including internet groups), and opportunities for connection around Knox.
- Provide a free English language program for new arrivals who cannot learn English for free.
- Increase positive coping mechanisms in young people.
- Provide interactive online maps for locating accessible, pram friendly sites and facilities in Knox.
- Continue the 'Keeping it real' program and broaden for men and women. Including advertising more widely, in order to reach more people in the community.
- Support for people with dementia.
- Provide multicultural resources in language, including welcome packs in language for new residents.
- Provide ongoing social connection opportunities that allow for intergenerational & multi-generational connection. Make informal, but ongoing.
- Increase and further support employment and volunteering opportunities, especially amount Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and youth.
- Establish a walking club at Scoresby Tennis Club, in partnership with the club and using club facilities.

Theme 3: Caring for and enhancing our environment

- Work in partnership with key community groups (sporting clubs, scouts etc) to improve the environment (tree planting, education etc).
- Sporting clubs to be provided with dedicated food waste bin, alongside general waste and recycling.
- Expand sites of biodiversity and bio-sensitive urban design, including continuing to expand utilising innovative ideas e.g. planter boxes on hard serves with vegetation that encourages biodiversity and floating wetlands.

- Work with private property shopping precincts industrial precincts to utilize biodiversity boxes, planter boxes on hard surfaces.

Theme 4: Leading, listening and governing responsibly

- Council to go to schools and get ideas and feedback from students. Council could look at doing this with workplaces too.
- Create process and services that are aligned and connected, in order to create a consistent and shared source of information and visibility.

Theme 5: Being a strong voice for safety

- Establish a gambling harm committee and implementation plan. Including partnerships with community education programs such as EACH Gamblers Help Program, and community lived experience.
- Support 'The Forge', a young men's program (14-17 years) supporting healthy masculinity, healthy and positive peer relationships.

Theme 6: Planning our future City

- Increased housing for older people that live alone.
- Improve footpath accessibility for wheelchairs across Knox. Work to replace footpaths and ensure private property and business access is achievable.
- Improve planning and development of use of old and new infrastructure. Consider impacts on parking, safety, traffic, and accessing open space.
- Create more free and safe facilities for young people to socialise, study or chill (similar to Youth Hive at Knox Library).
- Support people over 50 to own a house and live safely in their community.
- Install more changing places accessible bathrooms in Knox public places and facilities.

**Understand community ideas for actions or projects in a specific location in Knox**

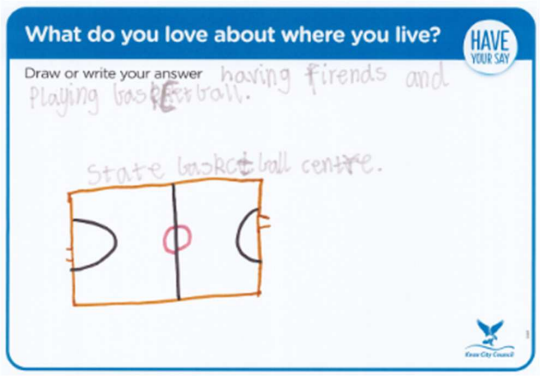
Throughout the engagement, the community were invited to provide ideas for actions or projects in specific locations within Knox. These ideas were placed by respondents on a map of Knox to signify the specific location. Ideas have been categorised as follows:

- Cycling safety and investment in bike infrastructure was discussed with dedicated bike lanes requested on Mountain Highway, The Basin; new bike paths along Armstrong Road and Pine Road, Bayswater, better connections for the Ringwood–Belgrave rail trail, cycling links between Lakeview Drive and Stamford Park Rowville, better links for cycling and walking paths in Ferntree Gully, a new path between Coleman Road and Boronia Road, Wantirna and a dedicated bike path along Stud Road in Rowville as the current path is not fit for purpose.
- Pedestrian safety was raised as a concern at the Bayswater shopping precinct on Mountain Highway, accessing Knox Basketball Stadium and Knox Regional Football Centre and on Claremont Avenue, Boronia. Other suggestions included an accessible path connecting Bayswater station and the Scout Hall, a footpath connecting Liverpool Road and the retarding Basin and improved public lighting in Upwey.
- Investment in infrastructure including maintenance and upgrades of Knox Leisureworks, Wally Tew Scout Hall, Mountain High Shopping Centre, Boronia Library, a new arts and entertainment facility in Wantirna and upgrades to Boronia station and bus terminal including well-lit commuter spaces, multi-level car parking and adding a mural.
- More and improved green space, parks and playgrounds in Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Rowville, Upwey as well as more active living and sporting opportunities, including sporting ground upgrades in Lysterfield Rowville and Upwey.
- Public toilets in the parks in Lysterfield, Rowville and Guy Turner Reserve, Bayswater.
- Outdoor sporting infrastructure such as basketball courts in Rowville, Ferntree Gully and Boronia, upgraded skate parks and BMX tracks at Rowville and Lewis Road Skate Park, a new water park in Rowville, and Mountain Bike facilities in Ferntree Gully.
- Removal of mature trees was a concern and enhancing tree related approval processes.
- Investment and maintenance of the footpath and road infrastructure in Upwey, Rowville, Wantirna South and Lakewood Reserve and a new footbridge connecting Bayswater and Heathmont.
- Parking and traffic concerns were raised, including having no standing signs on overdeveloped streets in Boronia and Ferntree Gully and the Knox Regional Netball Centre parking, Angliss Hospital and Talaskia Reserve needing more available parking.
- Open access to the Knox Westfield swimming pool during school holidays and summer.
- Extended library hours and collections.
- Advocacy for improved public transport including the trackless tram in Rowville and bus access in Bayswater.
- General maintenance such as more frequent street sweeping, cleaning the creek in Ferntree Gully, removing commercial bins from streetscapes and removal of older unsafe buildings and playgrounds.
- Long term planning of waste, waste collection frequency and introducing more plastics collections and more bins on bike paths
- Opportunities for social and neighbourly connections including programs and support for seniors and active ageing.
- Christmas decorations and celebrations.

**Children's Drawings and Statements**

Children were asked to draw and write what they love about Knox. These drawings and statements were analysed and grouped together by theme. The key themes identified included:

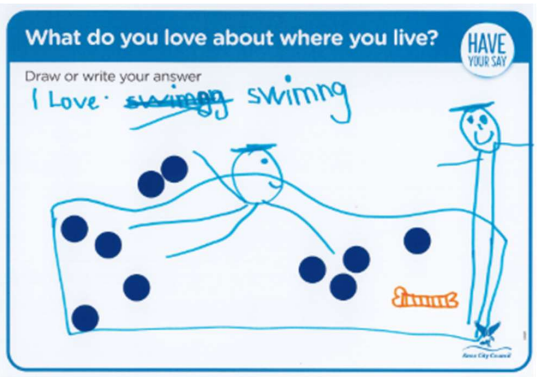
- Family and pets
- Socialising
- Childcare and school
- Sport
- Cultural links
- Home, garden and bedroom
- Use of park, footy ground and playground facilities for socialising, play and walking
- Close proximity of services
- Bike riding and swimming
- Shopping and toys
- Closeness to the mountains, forest, the river, birds, flowers, open spaces, rainbows and the sun
- Transport, e.g. riding in the car.









**Andrew Teh**
President, Waverley City Soccer Club
waverleycitysc@gmail.com

9 June 2025

**Bruce Dobson**
Chief Executive Officer
511 Burwood Highway,
Wantirna South VIC 3152

Dear Mr Dobson

I am writing to you as the President of the Waverley City Soccer Club, the winter tenant at Milpera Reserve, to advocate for urgent upgrades and redevelopment of the Milpera Reserve pavilion in line with the *Knox Pavilion Strategy* (**Strategy**).

**Milpera Reserve Pavilion: A Critical Community Asset Needing Renewal**

The pavilion at Milpera Reserve is a vital hub for our club and the broader Knox community. However, as highlighted in the Strategy, many pavilions across Knox, including Milpera Reserve, were constructed decades ago and now fall well short of meeting the needs of modern sport, community expectations, and current building standards. The Strategy's assessment specifically identifies Milpera Reserve Pavilion as requiring a "*Close the Gap*" investment scenario, meaning it is unfit for purpose and needs substantial improvement to meet current demand and service levels.

**Our Club's Growing Needs**

Waverley City Soccer Club currently fields 4 senior men's teams, 1 senior women's team, 3 junior boys teams (under 11s, 12s, and 13s), and 1 junior girls team (under 14s) in various divisions within the Victorian Churches Football Association. In total, we have approximately 80 senior men, 20 senior women, 46 junior boys, and 17 junior girls registered.

This diverse and growing membership underscores the urgent need for facilities that are inclusive, accessible, and fit for purpose.

**The Challenges Faced by Women and Girls at Our Club**

Women and girls at our club face significant barriers due to the inadequacy of the shared pavilion facilities at Milpera Reserve:

- Lack of Female-Friendly Spaces and Privacy: The current pavilion was not designed for the needs of female players. There are no dedicated female-friendly change rooms or amenities, meaning women and girls are

frequently forced to share limited spaces with male teams or resort to changing in cars or public toilets for privacy and comfort. This lack of appropriate facilities is a well-documented barrier to female participation and retention in sport.

- Scheduling Conflicts and Unequal Access: With four senior men's teams, one senior women's team, three junior boys' teams, and one junior girls' team all sharing the same space, female teams often wait for male teams to vacate the change rooms. This not only causes logistical delays but also reinforces a sense of inequity, as women and girls are left feeling like an afterthought within their own club.
- Inadequate Amenities and Safety Concerns: Shared, outdated facilities often lack basic features such as private showers, sanitary bins, and secure, clean toilets-essentials for female comfort and dignity. The absence of these amenities can make participation stressful and discouraging, especially for girls navigating adolescence. Safety is also a concern, with inadequate lighting and access contributing to discomfort, particularly after evening training sessions.
- Impact on Participation, Retention, and Club Culture: The lack of appropriate infrastructure sends a strong message about who is valued and welcome in community sport. When women and girls are forced to make do with substandard facilities, it undermines efforts to grow female participation and can lead to higher dropout rates, especially among teenage girls.

Addressing these issues through targeted upgrades is critical for ensuring equal access, boosting participation, and building a truly inclusive club and community.

**A Video Message from a Womens Player**

Chelsea Vrakatselis, a Committee Member and womens team player has created the below video:



**Council Funding and Progress to Date**

On 28 June 2021, Councillors passed the 2021-2022 budget which allocated $20,000 for design work on the Milpera Reserve pavilion refurbishment:

### 4.5.2 Current Budget

| Capital Works Area | Project Cost $'000 | Asset Expenditure Types: New $'000 | Renewal $'000 | Upgrade $'000 | Expans'n $'000 | Summary of Funding Sources: Grants $'000 | Contrib. $'000 | Council Cash* $'000 | Borrow-ings $'000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Property Buildings** | **15,428** | **185** | **5,532** | **4,092** | **5,619** | **3,000** | **160** | **8,084** | **4,184** |
| Knox Athletics Track - New Shade Structure | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Schultz Reserve - New Shade Structure | 50 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 |
| Modular Building Program (Modern Construction System) (Scoping Only) | 35 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 0 |
| Replacements of components for all Council owned buildings based on Building Asset Management Systems | 5,532 | 0 | 5,532 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,532 | 0 |
| Stamford Park Development | 1,230 | 0 | 0 | 1,230 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,230 | 0 |
| Facility Upgrades as per Buildings Asset Management Plan | 500 | 0 | 0 | 500 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 500 |
| Boronia Precinct Planning (Design Only) | 361 | 0 | 0 | 361 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 361 | 0 |
| Community Toilet Replacement Program | 309 | 0 | 0 | 309 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 309 |
| Family & Children Buildings and Facilities Upgrades | 278 | 0 | 0 | 278 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 88 | 190 |
| Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Facility Management (Scoping Only) | 250 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 |
| Upgrades to Early Years Facilities | 200 | 0 | 0 | 200 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 200 |
| Knox Leisureworks - Major Redevelopment (Scoping Only) | 155 | 0 | 0 | 155 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 155 |
| Millers Homestead Upgrade | 150 | 0 | 0 | 150 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 150 |
| Early Years Facility Emergency Warning System | 100 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Solar panels in Community Facilities | 100 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Energy Retrofits in Community Buildings | 80 | 0 | 0 | 80 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 80 |
| Schultz Reserve - Pavilion Refurbishment | 75 | 0 | 0 | 75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75 |
| Installation of Electronic Entry System | 60 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 60 |
| Updates all Kindergarten Signage | 60 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 60 |
| Council Kindergartens Lockers Installation | 50 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
| Boronia Progress Hall Upgrade | 40 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 |
| Kitchen Retrofitting Program at sports pavilions | 25 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Milpera Reserve - Pavilion Refurbishment (Design Only) | 20 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 |

Between 25 October 2021 to 11 July 2022, Council regularly reported at Strategic Planning Committee meetings that the refurbishment works would "*align with the new modular project*":

**Knox City Council Project Status Report** 27-Apr-2022

| Project Number | Project Name | Total Adjusted Budget |
|---|---|---|
| **1469** | **Milpera Reserve, Wantirna - Existing Pavilion Refurbishment** | **$20,000** |
| Collier | Works will align with the new modular project. | |

On 26 June 2023, Councillors passed the 2023-2024 budget which allocated $110,000 for pavilion refurbishment work:

### 4.5.2 2023-24 Capital Budget

| Capital Works Area | Project Cost $'000 | Asset Expenditure Types: New $'000 | Renewal $'000 | Upgrade $'000 | Expans'n $'000 | Summary of Funding Sources: Grants $'000 | Contrib. $'000 | Council Cash* $'000 | Borrow-ings $'000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Property** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Buildings** | **10,503** | **2,050** | **4,732** | **2,321** | **1,400** | **0** | **0** | **6,033** | **4,470** |
| Park Ridge Reserve Pavilion | 2,000 | 2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Gilmour Park - Shade Shelter | 50 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Replacements of components for all Council owned buildings based on Building Asset Management Systems | 4,732 | 0 | 4,732 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Carrington Park - Squash Facility | 623 | 0 | 0 | 623 | 0 | | | | |
| Community Toilet Replacement Program | 250 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 0 | | | | |
| Rowville Recreation Reserve - DDA and Baby Change Facilities Upgrade (Design) | 200 | 0 | 0 | 200 | 0 | | | | |
| Solar panels in Community Facilities | 195 | 0 | 0 | 195 | 0 | | | | |
| Tormore Reserve - Facility Redevelopment (this will only be funded if State/Federal funding is confirmed) | 160 | 0 | 0 | 160 | 0 | | | | |
| Energy Retrofits in Community Buildings | 150 | 0 | 0 | 150 | 0 | | | | |
| Milpera Reserve - Pavilion Refurbishment | 110 | 0 | 0 | 110 | 0 | | | | |

Between 11 September 2023 to 12 February 2024, Council regularly reported at Strategic Planning Committee meetings and Council meetings that the "*scope and design has not commenced*":

**Knox City Council Project Status Report** 29-Jan-2024

| Project Number | Project Name | Total Adjusted Budget |
|---|---|---|
| **1588** | **Milpera Reserve Pavilion - Design** | **$110,000** |
| Collier | Scope and design has not commenced. | |

Despite these allocations, our club has not yet seen any tangible progress or action towards refurbishment or redevelopment.

We seek clarification on how these funds have been utilised and urge Council to move forward with delivering the comprehensive upgrades that Milpera Reserve urgently requires.

**Comparison with Other Pavilions**

Milpera Reserve is one of 13 pavilions assessed as needing a "*Close the Gap*" investment scenario. Several pavilions assessed as "*Close the Gap*" and "*Radical Transformation*" have already received significant funding for renewal or redevelopment, including Tormore Reserve Pavilion ($5.5 million), Fairpark Reserve Pavilion ($4.4 million) and Park Ridge Reserve Pavilion ($3.6 million).

Not to mention, some pavilions assessed as "*Business as Usual*" have already received significant funding for renewal or redevelopment, including Carrington Park Pavilion ($3.5 million) and Wally Tew Reserve Pavilion ($182,004).

These projects are progressing towards modern, compliant facilities, while Milpera Reserve continues to operate with outdated infrastructure. This disparity highlights the need for equitable investment in our pavilion.

**Our Request**

Council's draft budget for 2025-2026 seeks to provide $630,000 for design work associated with pavilion upgrades:

**4.5.2 2025-26 Capital Budget**

| Capital Works Area | Project Cost $'000 | Asset Expenditure Types: New $'000 | Renewal $'000 | Upgrade $'000 | Expans'n $'000 | Summary of Funding Sources: Grants $'000 | Contrib. $'000 | Council Cash* $'000 | Borrow-ings $'000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Property Buildings** | **6,524** | **0** | **4,709** | **1,785** | **30** | **0** | **0** | **4,739** | **1,785** |
| Replacements of components for all Council owned buildings based on Building Asset Management Systems | 4,709 | 0 | 4,709 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Pavilion Upgrade (Design) | 630 | 0 | 0 | 630 | 0 | | | | |

We respectfully request that a portion of this allocation be utilised in the next financial year on the designing upgrades for the Milpera Reserve pavilion specifically, like was allocated in previous budgets (see above).

We are eager to work in partnership with Council to deliver a facility that meets the needs of our rapidly growing club and the wider community.

**Invitation to Visit**

To provide you with a first-hand understanding of the pavilion's current condition and its limitations, we warmly invite you and your officers to attend one of our Thursday night training sessions at Milpera Reserve. This will be an excellent opportunity to see the pavilion in use and discuss how upgrades will benefit the club and community.

Please let us know a convenient Thursday evening for you, and we will ensure a club representative is available to meet and show you around.

Thank you for your ongoing support of grassroots sport and community infrastructure. We look forward to securing the future of Milpera Reserve pavilion.

Sincerely

**Andrew Teh**

President, Waverley City Soccer Club

waverleycitysc@gmail.com

CC: Director Infrastructure – Grant Thorne

Director Connected Communities – Judy Chalkley

| Contribution ID | Date Submitted | Full name | I would like to present my feedback or have someone speak on my behalf at the public submission meeting |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17558 | Aug 03, 2025, 10:49 AM | Mrs REEMA SARWAL | Yes |

**When thinking about these themes, what actions would you like to see represented in our Annual Budget 2026-27?**

To enhance community connection, I would like to see the Ferntree Gully library open for longer on Saturdays and in the mornings on Sundays. This would allow parents who work full-time to enjoy a Saturday afternoon with their children reading at the library. It would also allow for a space for adult groups to meet for a book chat or conversation club on Saturdays. This is important because the current morning hours do not work for kids who go for morning sports sessions and adults who need to first attend to weekend chores before stepping out of the house on Saturdays. It would be an added bonus if the library can also open for some time on Sundays.

**Is there anything else you would like to be considered as part of the Annual budget 2026-2027 or future years, or do you have any further comments about your responses to the survey questions?**

I would like to see the council paying more attention to the upkeep of Scouts Halls and promoting and increasing the number of Toy Libraries in Knox. The toy libraries should also include some games for children in the 6-12 age group instead of being limited to the under 6s. This is especially vital because of the growing amount of screen time among young children. Primary-aged children are not getting enough opportunities for practicing social skills. This adversely affects teenage behaviors too. Knox council could be the pioneer in innovating towards providing new opportunities for children and their parents to socialize and connect instead of spending more and more time alone on the Internet. Otherwise we are at risk of a loneliness epidemic that could increase apathy, mental health issues and even instances of suicide.

# Knox Council Budget 2026-2027

Knox Infolink is pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the consultation process for the 2026/27 Knox Council budget.

Knox Infolink provides some of the most vulnerable members of the Knox community with access to emergency relief, social connection, and information and referral pathways to additional supports.

Due to the often complex and highly stressful circumstance that our clients experience, they are a cohort who are unlikely to participate in engagement processes such as this one. We are proud to represent their voices and advocate to all three tiers of government for the investment in the essential services that they need.

**Our key asks are:**

1. The Community Partnership Fund review considers an increase to the base rate of funding available under the welfare and emergency relief stream ($180,000 in year one).

2. That the Community Partnership Fund review further considers an annual increase that is either:
    - in line with the rate cap for the financial year, or
    - at a fixed rate of 3% or greater.

3. Council makes a further commitment to make available the Emergency Relief Fund in future years, at a minimum of $100,000.

**Context:**

In the past two years, we have seen a **33% increase in demand** for services, with core funding remaining relatively stagnant over this period. Our peers who participate in the Knox Emergency Relief Network all report similar increases in demand over this period.

In 2023-24, **50% of people accessing Infolink were new to the service** and **21% were experiencing homelessness**. During this time we have seen a surge in the number of working poor accessing our service (increased by 58%) as well as those with no income (increased by 77%).

There can be no doubt that the dual cost-of-living and the housing crisis's are impacting on people living here in Knox. Recent interest rate cuts are promising, but are likely to have little impact for private renters who make up 39% of our visits.

In 2023-24, our emergency relief program:

- Distributed **7124 food and meat parcels** (equivalent to 53,199 meals)
- Distributed **4830 pieces of material aid**

Whilst meeting the immediate vital needs of community members is important, it does not look to long-term change and solutions. In 2023-24, our specially trained volunteer interviewers conducted **1580 interview conversation** to identify and address broader structural issues impacting individuals and households.

These conversations resulted in **over 1700 referrals** to external supports for concerns including mental and physical health, financial counselling, family violence, housing, legal and disability services.

Our other programs supporting vulnerable Knox residents also had significant impact and demand:

- The Breakfast Program delivered **10,134 meals** to Knox community members. Across the year, **1118 guests accepted referrals** for extra support.
- Connecting Kids supported **31 children and young people** to access recreational and sporting activities in the Knox area, where they otherwise would have faced financial barriers to joining in local activities.
- The Knox Community Christmas Support Program, 'Share The Joy' provided support for **over 1090 people with 337 food hampers and 1,250 gifts** making Christmas a brighter day for Knox families in need.
- Our **Energy Assistance Program supported over 150 households** to reduce their energy bills and/or access utility relief grants to maintain access to essential services.
- An Out of Hours Pantry was installed in June 2025 to support the **increasing numbers of working poor and people experiencing homelessness** seeking assistance.

Our 2024-25 Annual Report is currently being prepared ahead of our Annual General Meeting in October. It is anticipated that these figures will have continued to increase in the last financial year.

**Resourcing of Knox Infolink**

Funding from Knox City Council is of exceptional significance to our service. We currently have only two sources of multi-year funding which provide for the ongoing and core operation of Knox Infolink. The first is Knox Community Partnership Fund (CPF) which constitutes 26% of our budget, with a CISVIC (DSS) grant representing 14%.

Multi-year funding is rare across all three levels of government, but is crucially important as it provides the foundations for ongoing certainty of service delivery. The need for welfare and emergency relief services are the result of long-term, systemic issues created by multiple economic and social forces. In short – there likely will always be demand for the work we do.

With the remaining 60% of our budget consisting of annual grant programs, donations and sponsorships, our team is working harder than ever to diversify and increase funding sources whilst also trying to keep up with community needs.

In recent years we have been forced to make difficult decisions, including closing the emergency relief office one day per week and reducing staffing to our programs. Our volunteers contribute more than 9000 hours per annum, and we have initiated a student placement program to support the assessment and referral work (in lieu of a paid case manager) that is so crucial for the people accessing our services.

**Community Partnership Fund review**

We understand that Council intends to undertake a review of the four-year CPF funding program prior to the conclusion of the current cycle in June 2026.

As part of this review and the current budget deliberations, we ask that:

1. The Community Partnership Fund review considers an increase to the base rate of funding available under the welfare and emergency relief stream ($180,000 in year one).
2. That the Community Partnership Fund review further considers an annual increase that is either:
    - in line with the rate cap for the financial year, or
    - at a fixed rate of 3% or greater.

Over the past 8 years, CPF funding has increased at a fixed rate of 1% per annum. A slightly higher increase was granted in 2022-23 and 2023-24, as a result of significant advocacy efforts. The table below highlights that this increase has not kept pace with either the CPI rate or the rate cap which determines Council's own budget increase from rates.

| Time period | CPI rate (Source: ABS) | Rate Cap | Increase to CPF funding |
|---|---|---|---|
| Year to 30 June 2026 | - | 3.0% | 1.0% |
| Year to 30 June 2025 | 2.1% | 2.75% | 1.0% |
| Year to 30 June 2024 | 3.8% | 3.5% | 2.25% |
| Year to 30 June 2023 | 6.0% | 1.75% | 1.75% |
| Year to 30 June 2022 | 6.1% | 1.5% | 1.0% |

Had our funding followed either of the proposed models in this submission, it would have resulted in the following during the current CPF cycle:

| | Actuals | Scenario (A) | Scenario (B) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time period | CPF funding received | Increase in line with rate cap | Increases at a fixed 3% p.a. |
| Year to 30 June 2026 | $169,624 | $178,130 | $179,885 |
| Year to 30 June 2025 | $167,944 | $172,942 | $174,645 |
| Year to 30 June 2024 | $166,281 | $168,314 | $169,558 |
| Year to 30 June 2023 | $162,622 | $162,622 | $164,619 |

In the context of Council's budget of more than $120million per annum, we suggest that this represents a modest increase which would deliver enormous benefit to a service such as Knox Infolink which operated on a total budget of $786,000 in 2023-2024.

**Knox Emergency Relief Fund**

The introduction of the Knox Emergency Relief Fund in the current financial year has been a welcome additional funding source. We have made an application to the fund and hope to soon be advised of a successful outcome. We understand from the grant guidelines that the continuation of this fund in future years.

As such, our final ask is that:

3. Council makes a further commitment to make available the Emergency Relief Fund in future years, with a minimal funding pool of $150,000.

This commitment would represent an ongoing recognition of the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our community. It provides essential relief to those in need and meets the vital human needs for food and sanitation. The need for immediate emergency relief items is what brings people through our doors, forging the basis for connection and further access to supports.

We suggest given that the demand for emergency relief is so high across Knox, that the fund be increased to $150,000. Furthermore, rather than providing this as a monthly grant we suggest having a fixed application period so that all like-minded proposals can be considered at the same time. This ensures that the funding will go to where it is most needed and has the most impact.

**Conclusion**

Our proposals align strongly to the key themes of the new Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan, including:

- **Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**: Our community can access important local services and resources through Council's delivery, advocacy, and partnerships.
- **Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**: Our diverse and connected community is strengthened by creating opportunities to actively participate, connect and learn.

**For further information please contact:**
Penny Robinson, Centre Manager - 9761 1325 or pennyr@knoxinfolink.org.au
Denise Budge, Board President – deniseb@knoxinfolink.org.au

Thank you again for this opportunity.

August 20th, 2025

Bruce Dobson
Chief Executive Officer
Knox City Council
Bruce.dobson@knox.vic.gov.au

**SUBMISSION TO ANNUAL BUDGET 2026**
**FERNTREE GULLY VILLAGE SHOPPING PRECINCT**

On behalf of the Ferntree Gully Village, we wish to highlight issues affecting the prosperity and ambience of the Village and request Councils consideration for funding a business case to address these issues and work in partnership with the Township group and local community.

The Ferntree Gully Village is experiencing a high level of vacancy, lack of care and investment, and some anti-social behaviours including physical assault of traders, one of whom was recently hospitalised.

Whilst anti-social behaviours are the remit of the Victorian Police and we are currently in contact with the Knox Community Policing Team, Council also has a role in ensuring and/or advocating that appropriate support services are in place. To this end we are disappointed to have recently learned that a request for advocacy to the State for ongoing funding for support workers by Foothills Community Care was rejected by Council.

The lack of investment over many years by Council and land owners has resulted in a centre that is tired and under pressure as more businesses close.

Some of the ideas may include but are not limited to:

- A revisit of the 2014 Ferntree Gully Structure Plan and its objectives – none of which have been implemented. It is evident that the current Plan has not resulted in repurposing or investment in existing properties and new builds.
- A review of council owned assets such as land in Station Street to determine its long-term objective and contribution to the Village.
- Investigation and Implementation of appropriate planning controls to stem the saturation of boarding houses in a confined area and the resultant issues arising from intimidation and inappropriate behaviours such as urinating and defecating in the streets
- The introduction of a Special Rate Scheme to support initiatives

We wish to be heard at the Budget submissions on September 29th.

Yours sincerely,

**SEAMUS SMITH**
**PRESIDENT**

Rotary Club of Boronia

UNITE FOR GOOD

**Knox City Council Budget 2026-2027**
**Submission by: Rotary Club of Boronia**

The Rotary Club of Boronia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 2026/27 Knox Council budget consultation process.

We commend the Knox Council Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 and its six themes towards the Council 10-year Community Vision. In particular, we wish to highlight the relevance of the following two themes to our submission:

- Theme 1 – Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources.
- Theme 2 - Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity.

The Rotary Club of Boronia is a long-standing community partner of Knox Infolink, we are proud to support their essential work through volunteer hours, fundraising, and advocacy. Our members have a unique vantage point—actively contributing to and witnessing the critical role Knox Infolink plays in supporting vulnerable residents through emergency relief, social connection, and referral pathways to broader services.

We continually recognise community needs at many levels and have recently commenced work on a Men's Hub / Snack and Chat facility using the local Boronia Scouts Hall and very qualified local professionals along with members of our own club. Boronia Rotary has submitted a funding/grant proposal to Council seeking to assist with this vital project.

We also recognise that many of the individuals and families who rely on Knox Infolink are unlikely to participate in formal consultation processes due to the complexity of their circumstances. As a community organisation committed to service above self, Boronia Rotary Club is proud to amplify their voices and advocate for the resources they need.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Towards Theme 1 – Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources.

  We advocate that **the 2026-2027 Council Plan and Budget prioritise stable, long-term funding for experienced organisations like Knox Infolink**, which are already embedded in the community and delivering essential services.

  The importance of drop in, accessible, localised support hubs like Knox Infolink and Men's Hub which offer face-to-face conversations, tailored referrals, and compassionate timely assistance cannot be overstated. These services are far more effective than centralised hotlines or digital platforms, in building trust and meeting individual needs.

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Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/rotaryboronia
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/rotary-club-of-boronia-ba0831268/
Chartered 25th April 1968
ABN: 48 952 056 345
Reg. Assn#18626A
President: Bernadette Vanderwolde
Secretary: Peter Dalwood
Mail: PO Box 145 Boronia 3155
Rotary International District 9815

- Towards Theme 2 – Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity.

  **We encourage Knox Council to secure ongoing funding for existing inclusive programs**, such as the Knox Infolink Community Breakfast Program, which demonstrably foster connection, inclusion and diversity. These initiatives not only meet immediate needs but also strengthen community cohesion and wellbeing.

  The Rotary Club of Boronia is a big supporter of this program with some 10 members supplying their volunteer labour each week.

**Why This Matters**

As active community partners of Knox Infolink, Rotary Club of Boronia members regularly volunteer across its support programs and have directly witnessed the sharp rise in demand for services. In the past year alone, 50% of clients were first-time users, reflecting the deepening impact of the cost-of-living and housing crises on our local community.

This increase in demand has coincided with stagnant—and more recently, declining—funding levels. Despite operating with minimal resources, Knox Infolink continues to deliver high-impact services. However, recent funding constraints have forced the organisation to reduce operating hours and staffing, directly affecting service delivery to those most in need.

From an economic standpoint, investing in Knox Infolink is a strategic and cost-effective decision. Underfunding this vital service diverts limited staff time away from core support work and into fundraising efforts—an inefficient use of resources that undermines long-term sustainability.

**The 2026-2027 Council Plan and Budget should prioritise strategic investment in organisations like Knox Infolink,** enabling them to focus on what they do best: providing timely, place-based support that prevents crisis escalation and connects residents to broader systems of care.

The Rotary Club of Boronia urges Knox City Council to recognise the value of this service and ensure it is adequately resourced to meet the growing needs of our community.

**Conclusion:**

The Rotary Club of Boronia strongly supports Knox Infolink's work and urges Knox City Council to invest in the long-term sustainability of this vital service. With increased and secure funding, Knox Infolink can continue to meet growing community needs and help build a more resilient, connected Knox.

**Submitted on behalf of the Board of the**
**Rotary Club of Boronia as agreed at their**
**Board Meeting Tuesday 19th August 2025.**

| Contribution ID | Date Submitted | Full name | I would like to present my feedback or have someone speak on my behalf at the public submission meeting |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17825 | Aug 20, 2025, 08:24 AM | Richard Jago President Rowville Football Club | Yes |



**When thinking about these themes, what actions would you like to see represented in our Annual Budget 2026-27?**

Redevelopment of Seebeck Oval main Pavillion
the main Pavillion at Seebeck oval has become so dilapidated and an eye sore it is beyond constant temporary repair.
Roof lining collapsing, cardboard used as temporary repair (by council facilities team), dry rot in the walls, floor covering tattered, rotted and unhygienic, electrical components exposed to outside weather conditions, excessive heating bills due to weathered door fittings.
redevelopment of Seebeck oval should be a priority

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22nd August 2025

**Knox City Council Budget 2026-2027**
**Submission by: Saint Paul's Anglican Church Boronia**

Saint Paul's Anglican Church Boronia thanks Knox Council for the opportunity to contribute to the 2026-27 budget consultation process.

The Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 is very good and its alignment with the 10-year Community Vision is an excellent way to plan ahead. There are two themes that resonate with us and would like to emphasise the relevance of the following in submission:

**Theme 1** – Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources.

**Theme 2** – Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity.

**Key Recommendations:**

**Towards Theme 1 – Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources.**
We urge that the 2026–2027 Council Plan and Budget guarantee stable, long-term funding for established organisations like Knox Infolink, which are well known, used and respected in the community and already delivering essential services.
The value of accessible, local support as provided by Knox Infolink cannot be overstated. By providing face-to-face conversations, tailored referrals, and compassionate, timely assistance, they build trust, relationships and respond effectively to individual needs—far more so than hotlines or digital platforms.

**Towards Theme 2 – Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity.**
Knox Council is also in the perfect position to secure ongoing funding for existing inclusive programs, such as the Knox Infolink Community Breakfast Program. Like Saint Paul's Community Meal, this also fosters connection, inclusion and diversity. These types of initiatives meet immediate needs and also strengthen community cohesion and wellbeing, for both the deliverer (volunteers) and the receivers.

Infolink is also a great place for local people to volunteer. The volunteers are well trained and supervised and have a great sense of giving back to those in need in their community. A good number of church members of Saint Paul's have and still do volunteer at Knox Infolink, thus further strengthening our connection.

**Why This Matters**
Members of Saint Paul's regularly volunteer with Infolink and have seen first-hand the rise in demand for support. Saint Paul's understands this year 50% of clients were first-time users. This only highlighting the growing impact of the cost-of-living and housing crises on our community.

*Celebrating Jesus and Building Community*

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At the same time, funding has stalled—even declined—forcing Knox Infolink to reduce hours and staffing, directly affecting service delivery to those most in need. Despite these pressures, the organisation continues to provide high-impact, place-based support with minimal resources. Their clients come first.

Investing in Knox Infolink is both strategic and cost-effective. Adequate, secure funding will allow staff to focus on delivering essential services rather than diverting limited capacity into fundraising. This is the best way to ensure long-term sustainability and prevent crises from escalating.

We strongly request Knox City Council to prioritise investment in Knox Infolink through the 2026–2027 Council Plan and Budget, so it can continue connecting residents to the care and support our community deserves.

Saint Paul's Anglican Church Boronia has been a long-standing community partner of Knox Infolink and we are proud to support its vital work through provision of food for emergency relief and advocacy. Over the years the perspective of the parishioners of Saint Paul's is both contributing to and witnessing first-hand the essential role Knox Infolink plays in assisting through emergency relief, social connection, and referral pathways to wider services.

Many people who use Knox Infolink may be unable to engage in other processes due to the challenges they face. Saint Paul's Anglican Church Boronia sees many of these at our Community Meal and Christmas lunch and therefore are happy to support Knox Infolink who can help with the resources they need.

**Conclusion:**
Saint Paul's Anglican Church Boronia encourages Knox City Council to invest in the long-term sustainability and invaluable work of Knox Infolink. It is not a luxury item but an essential service. As Knox Council would understand, stable and increased funding means Knox Infolink will help provide a resilient, connected and strong community by supporting the growing number of people in need and helping them become more self-sufficient.

Yours Sincerely,

**Rev. James Connor**
On behalf of
Saint Paul's Anglican Church Boronia

***Celebrating Jesus and Building Community***







# PERMANENT DISC GOLF COURSE AT **LLEWELLYN PARK**

**THIS IS A PUBLIC SUBMISSION TO KNOX CITY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN and BUDGET**

**August 2025**

**By Club President, Michael Van Der Linden**

**On behalf of Melbourne Disc Golf Inc. (MDGC)**

**Phone:** **0498 002 376**

**Email:** **Melbourne Disc Golf Club Inc.**

## WHAT IS DISC GOLF?

Disc golf is one of the fastest growing recreational activities and allows anyone to participate in their own way.



Disc golf is played much like traditional golf. Instead of a ball and clubs, however, players use a flying disc, or Frisbee®

https://www.australiandiscgolf.com/what-is-disc-golf/

## DISC GOLF BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY

- Accessible, family friendly recreational activity.
- Low impact so can be played by all ages.
- Low cost for both participants and councils.
- Courses are usually in public parks or green spaces unsuitable for many other sports..
- Provides passive security in public parks.
- Brings people / economic activity to the area.







## WHY LLEWELLYN PARK & KNOX CITY COUNCIL

Llewellyn Park is a suitable large green space that has many areas that are perfect for disc golf.

- A temporary disc golf course has been operating successfully in the park since 2023.
- The area has become a well used shared space with the local drone club, dog walkers, cricket clubs and family users which has been easily accommodated with all users. The areas of Llewellyn Park allow park users to co-exist in the same way as Melbourne's other disc golf courses.
- The Park has existing toilet/water facilities that encourage female participation (unlike some other courses).
- A permanent disc golf course aligns with Council's Health & Well-being plan 2025 - 2029 by promoting active lifestyles, enhancing green spaces, and supporting community engagement initiatives for all ages.
- Llewellyn Park has the potential to host major tournaments that will bring people and economic activity to the Knox City Council area in the future.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- From MDGC's experience in working with multiple other councils we know that:
- Community engagement & participation is essential for long term success.
- Whilst a temporary course provides short term flexible benefits for both residents and councils, the move to a permanent course maximises these benefits and improves the safety and amenity of the area.

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR

- MDGC has been working successfully with Tom Scanlon (Coordinator Sport & Leisure) and his team since 2023, when MDGC supported the required move from Lewis Park Disc Golf course.
- MDGC have provided equipment needs at no cost to Council.
- MDGC has also worked cooperatively with other teams within Council, including Community Strengthening (Move Your Way initiative) and volunteers have provided support to Council departments with "working bees" to improve the amenity of the park, through weed mitigation, mulching and blackberry removal.
- MDGC has received approval to trial appropriate tee pads which will provide improved safety for all players in all weather.
- Temporary course has provided passive security in light of pavilion vandalism.

# LLEWELLYN PARK DISC GOLF COURSE

Proposal to install a permanent 18 - hole disc golf course.

- MDCG has experience in disc golf layout and planning:
  - Safety of other park users and players is our number 1 priority;
  - Ensure visibility of other park users;
  - Baskets are setback from roads and paths;
  - Holes do not cross and are well spaced;
  - Layout will appeal to both new and experienced players;
  - Avoid heavy scrub areas to minimise risks.

- MDGC will provide further support for an 18-hole course:
  - Engage community through Come and Try community events;
  - Scheduled club social days and approved competition days;
  - Joint social media advertising to build awareness.

- Approximate costs

1) 14 Tee-pads: $20k for all weather concrete.

2) 5 baskets ($3500) and 12 bases ($1800)
4 baskets to replace MDGC baskets and 1 basket for a practice basket.
MDGC will build bases and install at no cost.

3) Signage: 1 or 2 signs at entry points ($400) and 18 tee pad signs $1000).
MDGC will install at no cost.



# MELBOURNE DISC GOLF CLUB INC.

**www.melbournediscgolf.com**

Club President, Mike Van Der Linden **Ph: 0498 002 376**

**Email:** Melbourne Disc Golf Club Inc.

# 8.2 Knox Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 Review and Development of Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Decision
**Author:** First Nations Lead, Adrian Greenwood
**Manager:** Manager Community Strengthening, Kerryn Jansons
**Executive:** Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley

**SUMMARY**
Knox has the second largest First Nations population in Melbourne's east and is home to places of historical significance to the Kulin Nation, which is a nation of Aboriginal Tribes with territory extending across Victoria and beyond. For thousands of years, the creeks, hills and plains now known as the City of Knox have been cared for by the Traditional Custodians. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the Traditional Knowledge of the First Peoples and the traumatic stories of colonisation. Cultural sites in Knox include campsites, stone tools, scar trees, travelling routes, and song lines that would have been a place of meeting between the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people before settlement.

In 2020, Council consulted with members of the local First Nations communities as part of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Needs Analysis. A key recommendation was to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are developed and monitored within a framework supplied by Reconciliation Australia, the lead body for reconciliation nationally.

Based around the core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities, RAPs provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations, increasing economic equity and supporting First Nations self-determination.[1]

The Knox City Council, "Innovate" Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023-2025 (refer to Attachment 1) was endorsed by Council in June 2023 to strengthen relationships between First Nations and the wider community through meaningful steps to advance reconciliation. The RAP was developed with the local First Nations community and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Elders.

This report provides a review of the Knox RAP 2023–2025 achievements and provides recommendations for developing the next iteration of Knox's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2026–2028 as indicated in the current RAP Action 20, "Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP". This is again reflected in our current Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan under Theme 2, "Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity" as a 2025-2026 action, "Review the RAP 2023-2025 and develop the next iteration of the Plan."

[1] Reconciliation Australia

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council resolve to:
1. Receive and note the review of the Reconciliation Action Plan 2023–2025.
2. Approve the recommendations for developing the Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–2028 as set out in the officers reports.

## 1. DISCUSSION

### 1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Plan

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are developed and monitored within a framework supplied by Reconciliation Australia, the lead body for reconciliation nationally. A RAP is a commitment to taking meaningful, accountable actions to advance reconciliation. Over 2,000 organisations and businesses across Australia have a RAP, including 52 Councils. The four RAP types are:

- Reflect (getting started);
- Innovate (developing and strengthening relationships);
- Stretch (embedding reconciliation); and
- Elevate (leadership to advance reconciliation).

Each type sets out the minimum elements required to build strong relationships, respect and opportunities within the organisation and communities. Knox City Council's RAP is at an "Innovate" level and identifies six focus areas:

- Health and Wellbeing;
- Recognition and Respect;
- Employment and Economic Development;
- Civic Participation;
- Cultural Heritage; and
- Voice and Governance.

These focus areas were drawn from the Knox First Nations Needs Analysis Summary Report 2020 and take into account the broader policy framework in Victoria and nationally for First Nations plans/frameworks.

The RAP contains 23 Actions with 73 Deliverables of which:

- 13 Actions and 48 Deliverables are set by Reconciliation Australia as mandatory actions to be included and endorsed as an "Innovate" RAP; and
- The remaining 10 Actions and 25 Deliverables were identified through consultation with Traditional Owners, local First Nations community, Knox staff, and alignment with other Knox plans and statutory requirements. These additional Actions and deliverables were endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

### 1.2 Progress Summary

Overall, the RAP 2023–2025 actions are on track with 96% of actions either "Completed", or "On schedule". This progress has fostered the desired work environment for teams to develop the confidence to program First Nations projects and goals in their work plans.

Three actions are "Behind schedule", due to either resourcing, capacity or political complexities. A number of these actions and deliverables have been flagged to continue in the next iteration of the RAP. A full progress update is provided as Attachment 2 to this report:

| Status | Symbol | No. of Actions | Definition |
|---|---|---|---|
| Completed | ✓ | 19 | Progress against this action item has been completed. |
| On schedule | ● | 51 | Progress against this action has met Council's commitment. |
| Behind schedule | ● | 3 | Progress against this action item has partially met Council's commitment. |
| Deferred | ● | 0 | This action item has not been started within the identified time due to reasons described in the progress comments. |
| **TOTAL ACTIONS** | | **73** | |

### 1.3 Snapshot of Key Achievements

A review of the RAP 2023-2025 was undertaken, with an update being provided on each Action (see Attachment 2). Below is a snapshot of key achievements across the six key focus areas, over the two years of the Plan:

#### 1.3.1 Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect

Respect and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures increases everyone's awareness and appreciation of cultures and civilisation enriching our histories for at least 65,000 years:

- Supported Indigenous rounds across various sporting codes across Knox.
- Special sports events were held, including the Indigenous Basketball All Star event against New Zealand at the State Basketball Center.
- Formalised the use of the Kulin Seasons Calendar in agreement with Traditional Owners for public education and land management planning, including fire calendars for traditional burns.
- Increased First Nations information and Acknowledgement of Country signage, including right of use for First Nations artwork.
- A First Nations Arts Trail was established to highlight First Nations art and storytelling in Knox.

#### 1.3.2 Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage

Access to land and protection of cultural heritage. Country plays a significant role in Aboriginal cultures, there are many places that tell stories of events and practices within the landscape:

- Conducted cultural education training for Council staff in both face-to-face and online settings. This included:
  - Inclusion of mandatory online Cultural education training for all staff as part of onboarding; and
  - Over fifteen face-to-face sessions were held for staff including cultural walks, yarning circles, team education and reconciliation NAIDOC week sessions.

- Conducted 17 cultural sessions and online cultural education training for the wider community.
- Care of Country to include First Nations approaches and networks to connect with Indigenous knowledge and practices, for example utilising cool burns and weed control on sensitive sites.
- Protection of Heritage Sites and management of culturally sensitive areas in planning stage.

### 1.3.3 Focus Area 3: Health and Wellbeing

For the health and wellbeing of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to flourish initiatives must include a holistic, whole of life cycle view of health that includes physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, economic (including housing) and mental health and wellbeing:

- Worked with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) to increase their presence in Knox to deliver programs and services.
- Strengthened programs provided to the community by Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place at the HV Jones Council facility.
- Aboriginal Housing now has 22 residences located in Knox. This is the first time Knox has had any Aboriginal Housing located in Knox.
- Four Koorie Academy Basketball and Cultural Clinics plus three major Indigenous basketball events/tournaments have been held.

### 1.3.4 Focus Area 4: Civic Participation

Effective civic participation can be achieved when all members of the communities feel valued, safe and recognised:

- Increased overall attendance and profile of Sorry Day event, noting the high proportion of First Nations and Stolen Generations families.
- Increased First Nations content in Citizenship ceremonies through Welcome to Country, visuals and optional Cultural education sessions.
- Strengthened positive and collaborative relationship with Traditional Owners leading to a more responsive relationship in consultations, increased communication in relation to Welcome to Counties and a willingness to advise on projects.

### 1.3.5 Focus Area 5: Employment and Economic Development

Employment and economic development is essential to start bridging the gap of inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Adequate employment is a key to health and wellbeing in any community:

- Undertook the Lowitija Institute Individual Cultural Safety Audit for individuals in the RAP Working Group to increase the group's understanding of cultural safety.
- Lead and participated in inter-Council forums focusing on cultural safety and Aboriginal employment, procurement and economic development.
- Increased First Nations procurement and program delivery across events, arts and community portfolios.

### 1.3.6 Focus Area 6: Voice and Governance

A successful RAP listens to the First Nations communities and ensures the actions are delivered:

- Knox Council won the Victorian Magollee Reconciliation Award in 2023 for outstanding contribution to the reconciliation movement with the construction and use of the Yarning Circle at the Knox Civic Centre.
- Strengthened First Nations Policy, including development and implementation of the Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians Policy, Procurement Policy, and Flying and Display of Flags Policy.
- Established the RAP Working Group and First Nations Leadership Group to progress the actions across all business.

## 1.4 Opportunities and Considerations for the RAP 2026–2028

Over the last five years, Knox Council has made considerable steps to improve inclusion, cultural safety, internal employment practices, development of a procurement policy and support for First Nations People and Care of Country.

The RAP has provided the framework to assist Knox Council staff to progress goals related to First Nations people and Care of Country. The increase in projects and relationships built across the organisation with Traditional Owners and First Nations Community is significant and this will continue to be built on in the next iteration of the RAP.

A number of Eastern local Councils are committed to the continued utilisation of the RAP framework and thus adopting the mandatory actions for First Nations work. The continuity of Knox also committing to the RAP framework allows further inter-Council forums that focus on common RAP Actions. Over the past two years, Knox has led inter-Council forums, attended by representatives from relevant departments from Manningham, Maroondah, Yarra Ranges, Boroondara, Whitehorse and Monash Councils. The Eastern Region Group forums focused on cultural safety and Aboriginal employment and procurement and economic development. There is interest and planning underway to continue inter-Council forums that progress First Nations work with surrounding Councils.

When developing the RAP 2026–2028, it is important to recognise that the trust and energy of First Nations leadership, Elders and community member to attend Local Government forums and consultation is extremely low due to the failed Australian Indigenous Voice referendum. Recently there have been incidents in Eastern Councils that have driven division between First Nations and the mainstream community, and this impacts trust and consultation pathways.

It is anticipated that the RAP consultation process will need to take a more place-based approach to be meaningful and effective.

The current Plan is based on the Knox First Nations Needs Analysis Summary Report 2020, which considered the broader state and National policy context. The Summary Report was based on many State and National policies that are still active and reflect the current context. Our intention is to build on the learnings from the RAP and enhance actions to align with emerging State and National policy frameworks.

Having already gone through the process of endorsement by Reconciliation Australia on Knox specific actions for the RAP 2023–2025, it is anticipated that this will assist with the next RAP's passage to endorsement.

The broader State and National policy landscape to consider includes:

- Yoorook Truth Telling Commission recommendations;
- Treaty Victoria progress and shape;
- Close the Gap priorities;
- Victoria Aboriginal Affairs Framework and related education, housing, health, wellbeing, plans;
- Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy;
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act;
- Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions; and
- Various Knox Council Plans.

### 1.5 Recommendations for Development of the RAP 2026–2028

Development of the next iteration of Knox's RAP 2026–2028 is an action in the current RAP, "Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP". This is again reflected in our current Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan under Theme 2, "Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity" as a 2025-2026 action, "Review the RAP 2023-2025 and develop the next iteration of the Plan".

#### 1.5.1 Maintain "Innovate" RAP Level

It is recommended that Council remains at the "Innovate" RAP level as this maintains our current status and alignment with other Councils. It also allows our actions to be strengthened based on our current plans and should create a smoother progression through Reconciliation Australia for endorsement. The next level of a RAP is "stretch", which contains internal focused targets that are restrictive and don't allow for Council Departments to set and pace their work.

#### 1.5.2 Continue Strengthening Existing Actions

Building on the strength of current RAP, past consultation and progress on all actions, it is recommended that the next iteration of the RAP continues to strengthen existing actions. The actions should align to current strategic directions and build on the aspirations of the First Nations community and the achievements of Knox Council.

It is recommended that the RAP 2026–2028 includes Reconciliation Australia's mandatory "Innovate" actions as well as an update to existing Knox Actions to reflect current context and related policies and plans.

#### 1.5.3 Engage Key Stakeholders in RAP Development

The following key stakeholders have been identified for the development of the RAP 2026–2028 along with the core approach that will be utilised:

**Traditional Owners - Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong:**

- Cultural Consultation on actions that relate to Country; and
- Invitation to participate in First Nations Community conversations.

**Local First Nations Community:**
- First Nations Community conversations; and
- Pop up consultation in Local Aboriginal Network events.

**Knox Council Staff and Leadership:**
- Staff conversations;
- Leadership Conversations; and
- Service Plan alignment conversations.

Consultation, review and draft of the new RAP will be completed in 2025, leading to an "Innovate" RAP 2026–2028 to be endorsed by Council and Reconciliation Australia.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**
The RAP 2023–2025 was developed in conversation with:

- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Elders;
- A steering group of First Nations Leadership group consisting of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations leadership, local Elders and leaders;
- Forums and conversations with local First Nations community members;
- Knox Staff conversations to ensure First Nations actions aligned with existing Council Plans; and
- A RAP Working Group representing thirteen teams across Knox to champion, report and connect the related actions to their departments.

The RAP responds to First Nations community consultations, that identified that a successful RAP should:

- Increase cultural safety and pride;
- Care for Country;
- Listen to the voice of the First Nations communities; and
- Deliver on the actions contained in the RAP.

Progress of the RAP 2023-2025 actions has been collected through discussions with relevant Council Teams and Departments.

An engagement consultation with 40 First Nations participants in August 2024 focusing on the RAP actions priorities, affirmed the breadth of actions included in the RAP as important.

Following this report being endorsed by Council, we will spend six months consulting and drafting the new RAP. The RAP will then be presented to Council for approval to be sent to Reconciliation Australia for endorsement. Following Reconciliation Australia's endorsement, the final RAP will be presented to Council.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
There has been an increase in people identifying through Census data as First Nations in Knox. There has also been an increased demand for cultural education opportunities from First Nations community as well as the wider community.

After the Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum, the First Nations community has seen an increase in discrimination, this creates a risk for engagement and inclusion in Knox. These experiences have been voiced at regional meetings and yarning circles. Recently there have been incidents in the Eastern Councils that have driven division between First Nations and the mainstream community, and this impacts trust and consultation pathways.

Knox First Nations residents are providing information to the Yoorrook Commission about their experience of trauma. This increases the awareness and need for truth-telling about what has happened in Knox, particularly focused on the Stolen Generation and native Police Force – police paddocks.

The First People's Assembly of Victoria (Treaty) is being progressed in Victoria, which means that First Nations people in Knox are negotiating who represents them. The Yoorrook Recommendations and Treaty process include new decision-making bodies and funding of services across Victoria for First Nations people. This will have implications about how Councils relate to Traditional Owners and what services are provided locally.

The continuation of the RAP is an important step in cultural safety, inclusion and respect for First Nations Knox Council staff, community, leaders and the broader allies in Knox and Knox Council staff.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental or amenity considerations associated with this report.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Registration of the new RAP was included in the 2024–2025 financial year budget at a cost of $1,650, including GST. Development and implementation of the RAP 2026–2028 will be achieved through existing budgets.

**7. RISKS**

Racism and in particular institutional racism are harmful to health and contribute to inequities globally. Due to the outcome of the Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum there is increased risk of decreased participation and relationships with First Nations community and Local Government. By implementing actions identified in the RAP it enables Council to take meaningful action to advance and champion reconciliation and truth-telling in Knox.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**

Strategy 1.3 - Local businesses and our economy are strong and resilient and there are increased employment opportunities through development, attracting investment, embracing technology and innovation, and advocacy.

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**
Strategy 2.1 - Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.
Strategy 2.2 - Cultural diversity is celebrated through assisting, participating in, facilitating and delivering accessible programs, initiatives and events in partnership with our community, community groups and service providers.
Strategy 2.3 - Our community is supported to thrive during all stages of life through the promotion and provision of services, advocacy and partnerships with local service providers.
Strategy 2.4 - There are opportunities for social connection and active living through planning, provision of facilities, program delivery and support for local groups.

**Caring for and enhancing our environment**
Strategy 3.2 - Green spaces and waterways are protected, enhanced and enjoyed through planning, promotion and maintenance of our built and natural environment.

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**
Strategy 4.4 - The changing needs of our community are met through informed policy and strategy that maximises value, collaboration and partnerships with other councils and local organisations.

**Being a strong voice for safety**
Strategy 5.4 - People feel safe in their homes and in the community through the development of partnerships, planning and promotion of programs, services and education that focus on connection, safety and respect.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
The Officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**
There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**
There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**
1. Attachment 1 - Knox Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 - 2025-09-08 [**8.2.1** - 68 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - CM - Knox Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 Achievements - 2025-09-29 [**8.2.2** - 27 pages]

Attachment 1

# Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2023 – June 2025

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE



**Yana djerring ba ngarrnga djerring**

Walking together and listening together

knox

Knox City Council

# Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Knox City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land in Knox. The Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities come from a variety of different Nations within Australia including the Torres Strait, the Traditional Custodians and Stolen Generation. As such, we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's histories.

Located at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, Knox has many places of historic significance to the Kulin Nation. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the traditional knowledge of the First Nations peoples and the traumatic stories of colonisation.

The journey ahead for Knox involves the land, the Traditional Custodians, the local First Nations communities, the wider community and the Council itself. Walking together and listening together to create a culturally safe and culturally rich community for all.

In 2021, Knox City Council announced an intention to promote a "whole of business" mindset, moving forward in its acknowledgement and respect of First Nations peoples, ensuring cross functional collaboration as opportunities present themselves.

(Knox Council Plan 2021–2025)



# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| A message from the Mayor & CEO | 5 |
| A message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia | 6 |
| Language and Terminology for Knox consultation | 8 |
| Our vision for reconciliation and truth telling | 10 |
| What is a Reconciliation Action Plan and why do we need one? | 11 |
| First Nations are an important part of Knox's past, present and future | 12 |
| Our RAP journey | 14 |
| RAP Framework | 18 |
| RAP Focus Areas | 19 |
| Strategic Alignment | 20 |
| How will we know we are on track? | 21 |
| Actions | 22 |
| Relationships / Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect | 23 |
| Respect / Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage | 31 |
| Respect / Focus Area 3: Health and Wellbeing | 39 |
| Respect / Focus Area 4: Civic Participation | 43 |
| Opportunities / Focus Area 5: Employment and Economic Development | 49 |
| Governance / Focus Area 6: Voice and Governance | 55 |
| Broader Policy Context | 62 |
| Appendix 1: Understanding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and Caring for Country Fact Sheet | 64 |
| Appendix 2: References | 66 |


**Child Safe Commitment Statement:**
Knox City Council has zero tolerance for child abuse and all forms of harm to children.
All children and young people who access our services, programs, events and facilities have the right to feel safe and be safe. This includes spaces owned or managed by Council. We take the wellbeing and safety of children and young people in our care seriously. We maintain a child safe organisation by embedding the protection of children into everyday thinking and practice.
All Knox City Council employees, contractors and volunteers are responsible for ensuring children and young people are valued, heard and protected from abuse.



# A message from the Mayor & CEO

From the heart of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong land, we are proud to present Knox City Council's Reconciliation Action Plan.

In doing so, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas which forms a crucial part of our collective histories and future. Connection to Country is essential to First Peoples cultures, health and wellbeing and provides an opportunity to acknowledge and share cultural knowledge with the wider communities.

This represents Council's first Reconciliation Action Plan, enabling us to take meaningful action to advance and champion reconciliation and truth-telling in Knox.

It is important to recognise that there cannot be reconciliation without truth-telling. Acknowledging our histories and approaching it with openness and honesty is the only way to create a more positive future together.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan contains specific, actionable directions to embed the principles of reconciliation in everything we do. It will provide tangible and substantive benefits for our First Nations communities.

To do this, the Plan identifies five key areas to focus future efforts and collaboration:

- Health and wellbeing;
- Recognition and respect;
- Employment and economic development;
- Civic participation; and
- Cultural heritage.

The Reconciliation Action Plan was developed in conversation with a working group of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Elders and our local First Nations communities. We thank them for their invaluable contribution and support.

The First Nations peoples living in Knox come from a variety of different Nations within Australia. Their collective stories, histories and experiences enrich our community and deserve celebration and respect.

In the spirit of empathy, respect and openness to shared experiences we are pleased to present this Reconciliation Action Plan.



**Cr Marcia Timmers-Leitch**
Mayor



**Bruce Dobson**
CEO

# A message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends Knox City Council on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Knox City Council to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, Knox City Council will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Knox City Council is part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Knox City Council's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Knox City Council on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.



**Karen Mundine**
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE


7

# Language and Terminology for Knox consultation

**Traditional Owner:** are the traditional people and nation of a given area. Today, Traditional Owners are descendants of the original inhabitants and have continuing spiritual, cultural, emotional, cultural protocols and physical connection with the land where their ancestors lived. Ownership noting a sense of being owned by Country and referring to, and care of, Country.

**Traditional Custodian:** is similar to Traditional Owner placing emphasis on the continual connection and care of country.

An Aboriginal person who is a member of a local descendants group having certain right and responsibilities in relation to a piece of land, area or sea.

**First Nations:** is a preferred term at Knox and at various government levels when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a group. It is a shorter phrase that maintains a sense of sovereignty.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:** is a term that keeps cultural identity while grouping First Nations. Abbreviations such as 'ATSI' in place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is offensive and should not be used.

**Aboriginal:** is the best accepted term we have at present in Victoria to refer to a group of Aboriginal people from many tribes and Nations. It is worth noting though that while this is an English word that is also used to describe many Aboriginal peoples around the world, Aboriginal people here have asserted a strong sense of ownership over the word and many use it to describe themselves and each other. Its use is also strongly associated with the Aboriginal flag as a unifying symbol of solidarity, protest and strength.

**Torres Strait Islander:** is a widely accepted term used to describe people from the Torres Strait Islands in northern Queensland, who now live in many parts of Australia.

**Kulin Nation:** is a Nation of Aboriginal clan with a territory extending across Victoria, Eastern South Australia and Far Western New South Wales. In Victoria it includes the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, Bunurong (Boonwurrung speaking), Taungurung, Wadawurrung (sometimes Wathawurrung) and Dja Wurrung people.

**Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung:** are the Traditional Owners of the Central-Eastern Kulin Nation. The Majority of Knox is on their traditional lands.

**Bunurong:** are the Traditional Owners of the South-Eastern Kulin Nation. The Southern sections of Knox is on their traditional lands.

**Welcome to Country:** is delivered as a speech by Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their Country.

**Acknowledgement of Country:** is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country.

**Truth telling:** offers an important opportunity for the telling of the truth of Australian histories to achieve justice and healing. It can be a tool for all Australians to recognise, understand and accept the wrongs of the past and the impact of these wrongs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

**Yoo-rrook Justice Commission:** is a formal truth telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Nations in Victoria.

**Country:** is a term used by First Nations to refer to land, waters and skies to which they are connected through ancestral ties and family origins. Country is a proper noun which is why it is capitalised, Aboriginal people refer to Country the same way we would to a person. For example: Country is sick, Country needs time to heal. Country is alive. Country is timeless and Country is us.

**First Peoples Assembly of Victoria:** is an independent and democratically elected body to represent Traditional Owners of Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria, on the pathway to Treaty with the Victorian Government.

**First Peoples - State Relations:** is a Department of Premier and Cabinet responsible for cultural rights, Treaty and Truth, self- determination, heritage and an extensive program of priority work for First Peoples.

## Acknowledgments

**Acknowledgement of Artists**
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung / Yorta-Yorta artist Simone Thomson and Bunurong artist Adam Magennis have designed digital works on the themes of “Country, Culture, Connection” to celebrate and acknowledge Wurundjeri and Bunurong Country and Culture.

**Simone Thomson**



**Adam Magennis**



**Acknowledgement of Voice**
Knox City Council would like to acknowledge the time and wisdom given by people involved in creating this Reconciliation Action Plan, including:

**Knox City Council Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group**
Thank you for your leadership in guiding and creating this RAP -

- Uncle David Farrall (Local Elder);
- Karen Milward (Local leader);
- Andrew Peters (Local leader);
- Elke Smirl (Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place);
- Jida McCartney (Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service); and
- Les Chessells (Local Leader).

**Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Elders**
Thank you for your willingness to have conversations about what is important from a Traditional Owner point of view, ensuring that issues that relate to Country are in conversation with those that speak for Country.

**The Local First Nations Communities**
Thank you for your participation in conversations, your guidance and ideas ensuring this RAP has a strong voice from communities has been critical.

**Knox City Council staff, Leadership and Councilors**
Thank you for your willingness to be led by First Nations communities in the journey of reconciliation and truth telling. Increasing the trust and understanding of Council is crucial to the goal of increasing cultural safety and pride for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Knox and in Caring for Country.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in various conversations, forums and meetings to align area work plans with the opportunities to partner with First Nations communities.

**Photography**
Photos supplied by Knox City Council.

# Our vision for reconciliation and truth telling

**Our vision for reconciliation involves the land, the Traditional Custodians, the local First Peoples communities, and the wider community. Walking together and listening together to create a culturally safe and culturally rich community for all.**

Reconciliation and truth telling are inseparable when healing and relationships are the goal. Deep listening to the stories of the Dreaming, Cultures, histories and the impact of colonisation on First Peoples and Country is the first step in understanding, respect, relationships and healing.

It is an ongoing journey that aims to bring together and strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations and the wider community. It is about helping everyone understand our shared histories and how the past affects the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations today.

Reconciliation is about respecting and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations heritages and people and aims to achieve equality in life expectancy, education, employment and other areas of disadvantage.

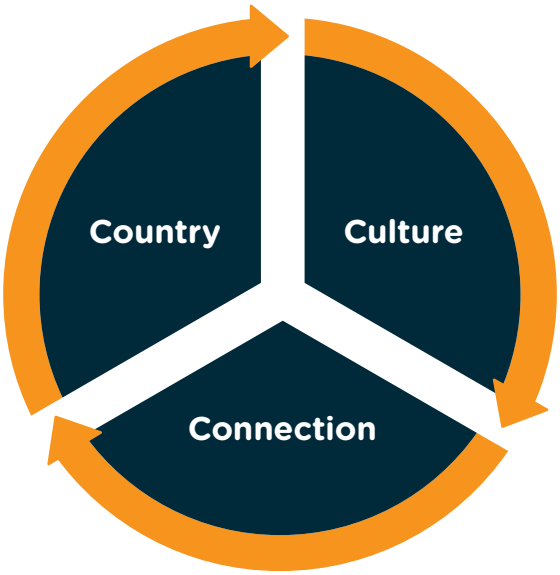
We support reconciliation and truth telling wherever possible in practical and symbolic ways to show respect and value cultures. We do this through:

## Country, Culture, Connection

**Country:** respecting and protecting the land, the stories, the heritage, the native species, traditional land practices, and healing Country.

**Culture:** listening and walking together to understand cultural recognition, education, safety, continuing practices, the arts, bush knowledge, stories, truth telling and healing

**Connection:** to Country, to Traditional Custodians, to First Nations People, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations specific services, to each other. Progressing reconciliation, truth telling and healing.



# What is a Reconciliation Action Plan and why do we need one?

In 2020, Council consulted with members of the local First Nations communities as part of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Needs Analysis. A key recommendation was to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan.

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are developed and monitored within a framework supplied by Reconciliation Australia, the lead body for reconciliation nationally.

"Based around the core pillars of **relationships, respect** and **opportunities**, RAPs provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations, increasing economic equity and supporting First Nations self-determination."
*Reconciliation Australia*

A RAP is a commitment to taking meaningful, accountable action to advance reconciliation. Over 2000 organisations and businesses across Australia have a RAP, including 52 councils.

As the level of government closest to communities, councils are well-placed to lead and influence positive changes to strengthen relationships that will benefit everyone. This includes the local and regional communities.

It is also important to acknowledge that non-Aboriginal staff have a real opportunity to reflect on their understanding of and attitudes towards First Nations peoples by actively supporting this work. Relationships built through this process can become one of the most enduring outcomes of the RAP and enable actions and commitments to be effectively implemented to empower First Nations peoples.

For the First Nations communities it is central that Council understand and acknowledge the opportunities, strengths, needs, barriers and challenges and commit to moving forward and walking together.

## Our Business

The City of Knox is located approximately 25 kilometres south-east of the Melbourne CBD and is home to an estimated 160,000 residents and 58,965 households, with an average of 27% of people born overseas with English as a second language. Council employs over 1,000 staff with one customer service centre and staff located at numerous Council-owned and operated facilities throughout the City of Knox.

Currently, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed at Knox is four officers.

The City of Knox includes the suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Knoxfield, Lysterfield, Rowville, Scoresby, The Basin, Wantirna and Wantirna South.

# First Nations are an important part of Knox's past, present and future

Knox City Council is home to places of historical significance to the Kulin Nation, which is a nation of Aboriginal Tribes with territory extending across Victoria and beyond. For thousands of years the creeks, hills and plains now known as the City of Knox have been cared for by the Traditional Custodians.

Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the Traditional Knowledge of the First Peoples and the traumatic stories of colonisation. Cultural sites in Knox include campsites, stone tools, scar trees, travelling routes, and song lines that would have been a place of meeting between the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people before settlement.

Within the City of Knox are three historic Aboriginal places, two of which are campsites in the general area of the registered historic Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung campsites, and the other a travelling route:

- Corhanworrabul No.1 Camp;
- The Basin Camps; and
- Ferntree Gully to Monbulk Travelling Route.

Monbulk, which lies outside of Knox, was a ceremonial place and neutral ground for Wunrundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people. The travelling route located within Knox, may have also linked the Dandenong Police Paddocks, through Lysterfield and Churchill National Park, and the Native Police Headquarters in Narre Warren.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the City of Knox today come from a variety of different Nations within Australia, including our Traditional Custodians and Stolen Generation.

Within Australia, First Nations share the commonality of health and wellbeing inequalities, despite being culturally and geographically diverse. Federal, State and Local governments recognise that there are long-lasting, far reaching and intergenerational consequences of colonisation and dispossession. The establishment of laws, policies, systems and structures explicitly excluded Aboriginal peoples, resulting in and entrenching systemic and structural racism.

Despite the past and present impacts of historical decisions, Aboriginal peoples, families and communities remain strong and resilient. The practices of the oldest living cultures and the contributions of Aboriginal peoples, local Elders and communities of Victoria continue to enrich Australian society.



# First Nations Knox – 2021 Census

## Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People in Knox

**38% INCREASE IN POPULATION** 2016-2021

Knox has the 2nd largest First Nations population in the East of Melbourne.

**1022** FIRST NATIONS RESIDENTS
**0.6% OF KNOX**
50% MALE
50% FEMALE

**YOUNG ADULTS ACCOUNT FOR**
**23.1%**
OF FIRST NATIONS KNOX

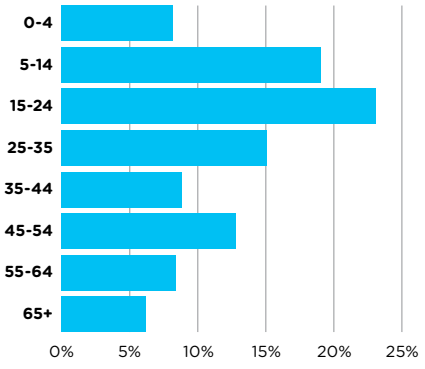
## Comparisons to Consider

| FIRST NATIONS KNOX | | NON INDIGENOUS KNOX | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Median Age | **25** | Median Age | **40** |
| One Parent Family | **32.1%** | One Parent Family | **14.6%** |
| Renting | **49.6%** | Renting | **21.3%** |
| Left School before Yr11 | **39%** | Left School before Yr11 | **22.5%** |

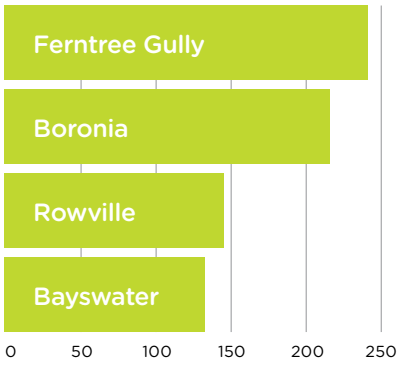
**Knox First Nations residents compared to First Nations Victorian overall have**

- Higher Secondary, Vocational Education and University attendance.
- More Young Adults 23.1% vs 18.2%
- Lower divorce and separation but higher widowed population.

### Age Groups




### Top Suburbs




Source: Census 2021, Australian Bureau Statistics

13

# Our RAP Journey

## Snapshot of Knox's key achievements leading up the RAP

**1997**

Council becomes a member of the Inter-Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee.

**2003**

Community members establish the Towards Reconciliation At Knox Group.

**2004**

Council adopts the Acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians Policy. Acknowledgement of Country included on our gateway signage and documents.

**2005**

First annual Sorry Day ceremony.

**2007**

Council commences flying the Aboriginal flag at the Knox Civic Centre permanently, and the Torres Strait Islander flag on Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

**2008 to 2023**

Knox City Council implements and continues with the following activities:

- Permanently flying Aboriginal Flag at Civic Centre and the Torres Strait Islander flag on Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.
- Acknowledgment of Country plaques installed at key Council facilities.
- Holding annual Sorry Day ceremonies, Reconciliation and NAIDOC week events.
- Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians included at Council meetings, in Council documents and reports, Welcome to Country included at functions and events.

**2018**

Aboriginal Heritage Scoping Study complete.

**2020**

Council employs First Nations Lead Officer.

Council presents Community Cultural Education sessions.

**2021**

Council adopts the 2020 -Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Needs Analysis report and Action Plan.

Council formally announces an intention to promote a “whole of business” mindset, moving forward in its acknowledgement and respect of First Nations.

Acknowledgement of Country included on Council email signatures.

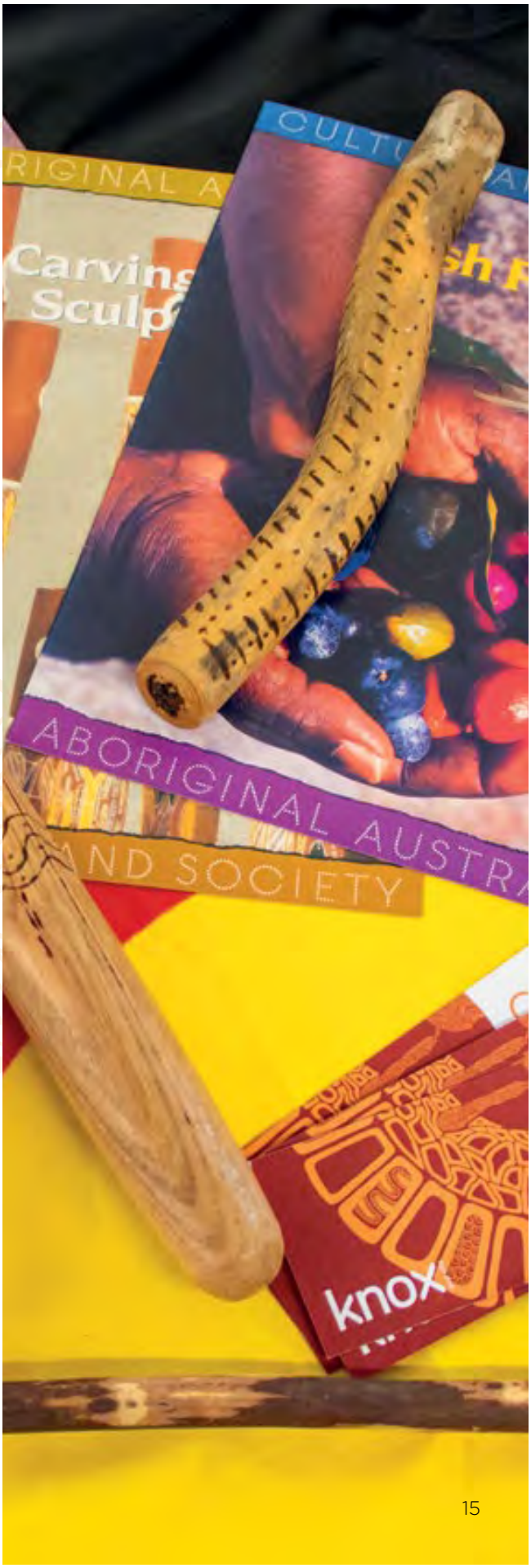
The Council and Community plans (2021–2025) include a strategy to “Honour and integrate First Peoples cultures into actions and environments.

**2022**

First Nations E-Newsletter commences for community.

Yarning Circle space established at the Civic Centre.

Council commences permanently flying the Torres Strait Islander flag at the Civic Centre.



## RAP Working Group

In early 2022, Council convened a RAP Working Group that included Elders, local Aboriginal Leaders, Traditional Owners and representatives from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

The members of this Group generously gave their time and expertise to guide the development of the RAP and advise on the preferred process for First Nations communities conversations with Council staff and the wider communities.

The Group also held discussions on important local considerations related to Country, cultures and governance. This was to ensure the RAP acknowledged both Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Bunurong Traditional Owners and included actions that supported a pathway to enable them to speak for Country.

Ongoing, the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group will include key Council officers and a representative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Knox.

Membership includes:

- First Nations Lead, Knox City Council
- Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Knox City Council
- Coordinator Biodiversity, Knox City Council
- Coordinator Arts and Cultural Services, Knox City Council
- Coordinator Strategic Planning, Knox City Council
- People and Culture Lead, Knox City Council
- Manager Family and Children's Services, Knox City Council
- Andrew Peters, local Aboriginal Leader

The RAP Champion is the Director Connected Communities, Knox City Council.



## Community Conversations

In October 2022, members from the First Nations communities gathered at the Knox Civic Centre to discuss what was important to include in the RAP to progress reconciliation and truth telling in Knox. Twenty-six local people attended with family connections to Yarra Tribe, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, Bunurong, Marra mob, Peeraper, Palawa, Gamilaraay, Yorta, Worimi, Bardi, Ngarrindjeri, and Kaurna/ Narrunga mobs.

Conversations centered on the mandatory RAP actions and highlighted emerging issues that were important to communities. The First Nations communities were clear about what a successful RAP should deliver, including:

- An increase in cultural safety and pride;
- Care for Country;
- Listening to the voice of the First Nations communities; and
- Accountability and tangible progress.

## Council Staff Forum

In November 2022, 45 Council staff attended a forum to hear what the First Nations said in the community conversations, discuss and contribute to shaping the RAP actions, and reflect on how a RAP could enhance their work and relationship with the First Nations communities.

## Executive and Councillors Discussion

In February 2023, Council's Executive Management Team and Councillors met to consider how to best champion and enable implementation of key priorities.

Our conversations captured the voices of many to inform the actions in this RAP. The next steps require collaboration, partnerships and respect between First Nations communities, Council and the wider community to deliver this work.

# RAP Framework

The development of an Innovate RAP is an important step in Council's reconciliation journey and builds on the work already achieved through the 2020 Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Needs Analysis and Action Plan. The implementation of this work focused on our commitment to progress reconciliation and Truth Telling. The Innovate RAP enables us to continue to build on and strengthen this groundwork before progressing to the next RAP level.

Reconciliation Australia provides a framework for organisations to develop a structured approach to work towards reconciliation. The four RAP types are:

- Reflect (getting started);
- Innovate (developing and strengthening relationships);
- Stretch (embedding reconciliation); and
- Elevate (leadership to advance reconciliation).

Each type sets out the minimum elements required to build strong relationships, respect and opportunities within the organisation and community.

## Council's first RAP is aiming for the Innovate RAP.

An Innovate RAP runs for two years, and focuses on:

- Developing and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- Engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation activities and projects; and
- Developing and piloting innovative strategies to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

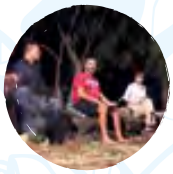
The RAP also includes mandatory Reconciliation Australia actions developed in line with a national vision for reconciliation. The mandatory actions will also ensure we are meeting the standards for accreditation to deliver tangible outcomes for local First Nations.

# RAP Focus Areas

The RAP has six Focus Areas, which were developed in the lead-up conversations and research in 2021.

The Focus Areas guided the structure of our conversations with communities and staff in 2022 and underpin the way we will work to achieve the goals.

The Focus Areas are:



## 1. Recognition and Respect

Respect and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures increases everyone's awareness and appreciation of cultures and civilisation enriching our histories for at least 65,000 years.



## 2. Cultural Heritage

Access to land and protection of cultural heritage. Country plays a significant role in Aboriginal cultures, there are many places that tell stories of events and practices within the landscape.



## 3. Health and Wellbeing

For the health and wellbeing of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to flourish initiatives must include a holistic, whole of life cycle view of health that includes physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, economic (including housing) and mental health and wellbeing.



## 4. Civic Participation

Effective civic participation can be achieved when all members of the communities feel valued, safe and recognised.



## 5. Employment and Economic Development

Employment and economic development is essential to start bridging the gap of inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Adequate employment is a key to health and wellbeing in any community.



## 6. Voice and Governance

A successful RAP listens to the First Nations communities and ensures the actions are delivered.

# Strategic Alignment

The RAP aligns with the Knox Community Plan (2021–2031) and Council Plan (2021–2025), which includes a commitment to progress positive outcomes for the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Plan includes Key Directions for "Connection, resilience and wellbeing" to "Honour and integrate First Peoples Cultures into actions and environments." by "working in partnership with local First Nations, relevant services and key networks to progress Reconciliation." In committing to a partnership approach Council aims to "Work with First Nations organisations to ensure positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Kulin Country and the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community."

The RAP also aligns with the Knox Connection, Access, Respect, Equality and Safety Strategy 2022–2027, which focuses directly on supporting and working alongside the First Nations communities and based on the principles of access, equity, rights and participation.

## Council's Role in delivering this Plan:

**We will Partner:** with First Nations Leaders, local communities, businesses and Traditional Owners to develop trusted relationships to seek positive and lasting health and wellbeing outcomes.

**We will Advocate:** to raise awareness of local First Nations issues and needs and to support activities that promote safer and inclusive communities.

**We will Plan:** to ensure that we can deliver on actions that are important to the First Nations communities related to Country, Culture and Connection.

**We will Educate:** the wider communities and ourselves to increase understanding, respect and relationships with First Nation peoples and Country.

**We will Research:** to ensure that we deliver sustainable and supported evidence based projects and decision making.

**We will Provide:** opportunities and activities that support the aspirations and goals of First Nations.

# How will we know we are on track?

The RAP is a two-year plan and it is important that Council demonstrates progress and accountability to the communities.

Councils Community Wellbeing Department will have leadership and oversight for implementation and reporting on the RAP. We will develop an evaluation framework to monitor the impact of our work and to track progress.

A RAP Working Group that includes related Council Staff and First Nations Leaders will guide and monitor the delivery of this work.

## Monitoring progress and change

Council will:

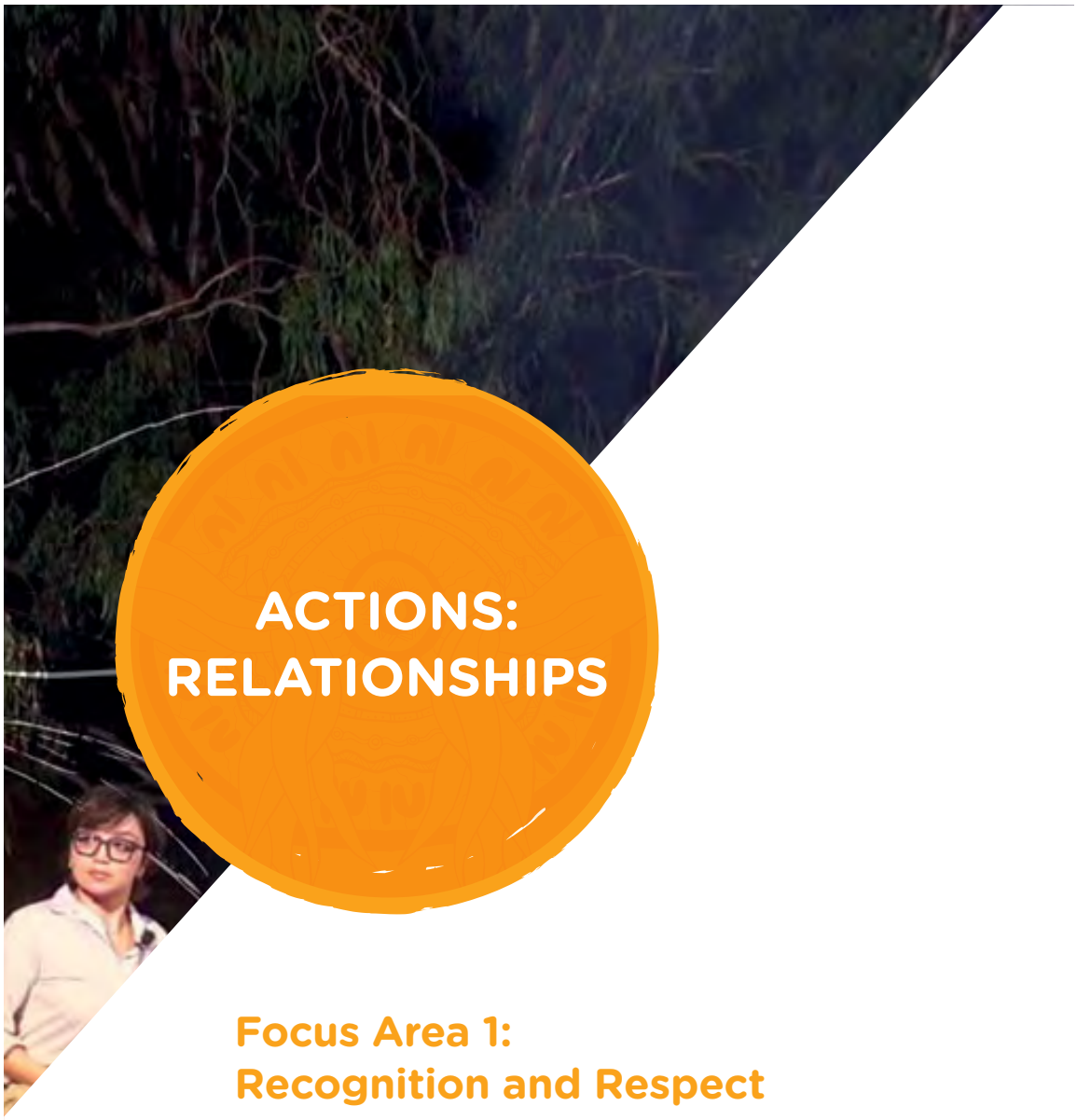
- Nominate a senior staff representative as the RAP Champion;
- Host two First Nations community forums a year to report our progress and to hear current topics of interest to the community; and
- Meet with the Reconciliation Working Group four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.

## Achieving Targets

Council will:

- Report back to Reconciliation Australia annually via the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire;
- Report RAP progress to staff, senior leaders and Council, annually;
- Share our RAP progress with communities, annually;
- Prepare a final evaluation report for Council and Reconciliation Australia at the end of this Plan; and
- Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.





# ACTIONS: RELATIONSHIPS

## Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect

Respect and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures increases everyone's awareness and appreciation of cultures and civilisation enriching our histories for at least 65,000 years.

***'It is important that our families feel safe to identify and publicly see Aboriginal Culture celebrated'***

First Nations Community Conversations 6 Oct 2022

# Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **1** Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.* | **1.1** Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to develop guiding principles for engagement.* |
| | **1.2** Include these principles in Council's revised Community Engagement Policy.* |
| **2** Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).* | **2.1** Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. * |
| | **2.2** Provide opportunities for the RAP Working Group to attend and participate in NRW events. |
| | **2.3** Promote and encourage staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.* |
| | **2.4** Organise at least one Council NRW event each year.* |
| | **2.5** Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – August, 2023 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – August, 2023 |
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** Manager, Customer & Communications | No impact – 27 May - 3 June, 2023, annually |
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – 27 May - 3 June, 2023, annually |
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – 27 May - 3 June, 2023, annually |
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget - 27 May - 3 June, 2023, annually |
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact - May, annually |

*Table continued on following page*

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

# Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **3** Promote reconciliation to the wider communities, businesses and Council staff to increase cultural awareness and build respect.* | **3.1** Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.* |
| | **3.2** Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly. |
| | **3.3** Explore opportunities to positively influence external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.* |
| | **3.4** Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Advocate** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, Customer and Communications<br>Manager, People Culture and Development | Existing operational budget – December, 2024 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing<br>**Partner** Civic engagement and Integrity | **Lead:** Manager, Customer and Communications<br>**Supported by:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact - ongoing, commenced June, 2023 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing<br>**Partner** Civic engagement and Integrity | **Lead:** Manager, Customer and Communications<br>**Supported by:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact - ongoing, commenced June, 2023 |
| **Partner** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – June, 2024 |

*Table continued on following page*

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

# Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **4** Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies including 'Racism Stops with Me' campaign and Welcoming Cities.* | **4.1** Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti- discrimination provisions and future need.* |
| | **4.2** Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/ or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on developing an anti-discrimination policy.* |
| | **4.3** Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.* |
| | **4.4** Educate senior leaders within Council on the effects of racism through Truth Telling, training and discussion with First Nations Lead.* |
| **5** Participate in the Local Aboriginal Network (LAN) and the Outer Eastern Metropolitan Governance Committee (OEMGC). | **5.1** Continue to participate as an active member of the Outer East LAN and Governance Committee to increase opportunities for First Nations programs and services to locate in Knox. |
| | **5.2** Collaborate on regional initiatives being undertaken as appropriate including the EMR Regional Inclusive Employment Program. |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Research** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, People, Culture & Development<br>**Supported by:** First Nations Project Officer, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – January, 2024 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Officer, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, People, Culture & Development | Existing operational budget – January, 2024 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Officer, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, Customer & Communications | Existing operational budget – June, 2024 |
| **Educate** Opportunity and innovation | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact –ongoing, commenced June, 2023 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – ongoing, commenced June, 2023 |
| **Partner** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** Manager, People Culture & Development | No impact – ongoing, commenced June 2023 |

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained





# ACTIONS: RESPECT

## Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage

Access to Land and Protection of Cultural Heritage. Country plays a significant role in Aboriginal cultures, there are many places that tell stories of events and practices within the landscape.

***'Caring for Country, access to Country, learning from Country and Cultural understanding of history and Culture'***

First Nations Community Conversations 6 Oct 2022

# Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **6** Honour and integrate First Peoples Cultures into actions and environments | **6.1** Work in partnership with First Nations organisations to promote positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Kulin country within Knox and the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. |
| | **6.2** Investigate physical ways to Acknowledge Country, with consideration for interpretive signage, design/art elements, murals, Yarning circles, language and Cultural Gardens in our parks, open space and reserves. |
| | **6.3** Explore opportunities to develop First Nations naming protocols for appropriate Council parks, open space, new roads and buildings, in consultation with Traditional Owners. |
| **7** Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.* | **7.1** Continue to provide a mix of face to face and online cultural education and cultural safety training in all areas of our business including Councilors and leadership (4 sessions per year). |
| | **7.2** Consult Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform the development of a cultural learning and safety programs for staff.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Partner** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, Community Infrastructure<br>Manager, City Futures | Existing operational budget – June, 2024 |
| **Plan** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, Active and Creative Communities<br>Manager, Community Infrastructure | Future Council budget initiative- December, 2024 |
| **Plan** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, Community Infrastructure<br>Manager, Operations<br>Manager, Active & Creative Communities | Existing operational budget June, 2025 |
| **Provide** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** Manager, People Culture & Development | Existing operational budget – June, 2024 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – ongoing, commenced June 2023 |

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**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

# Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **7** Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.* | **7.3** Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning and safety strategy within the Knox City Council Learning Plan.* |
| | **7.4** Deliver cultural safety training for RAP Working Group staff and leadership team.* |
| | **7.5** Continue to provide cultural education opportunities for the wider community. (2 sessions per year). |
| | **7.6** Promote and increase cultural understanding and histories for the wider community through Council communications channels. |
| | **7.7** Continue to build understanding of First Nations services and histories in our Early Years Centers and youth programs, to build culturally safe and inclusive settings for families and children. |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Educate** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** Manager, People Culture & Development | Existing operational resources – December, 2024 |
| **Provide** Opportunity and innovation | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – December 2023 |
| **Provide** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – ongoing, November 2023, April 2024, November 2024 and April 2025. |
| **Partner** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** Manager, Customer & Communications | No impact – ongoing, commenced June 2023 |
| **Provide** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, Family and Children Services<br>Manager, Community Access and Support<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational resources – ongoing, June 2025 |

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**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

# Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **8** Increase capacity for protection and awareness of culturally significant sites and assets. | **8.1** In consultation with Traditional Owners (Registered Aboriginal Parties) and First Peoples State Relations, explore opportunities to resource an Aboriginal Heritage/ Values study to inform management and planning.<br><br>See Appendix 1 - Aboriginal Culture Heritage Act for further information about caring for Country. |
| | **8.2** Identify cultural heritage sites and assets within the Knox City Council to ensure appropriate management, protection and access. |
| **9** Include First Nations community in emergency management planning. | **9.1** Council staff will work to partner with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. |
| | **9.2** Partner with key First Nations stakeholders in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

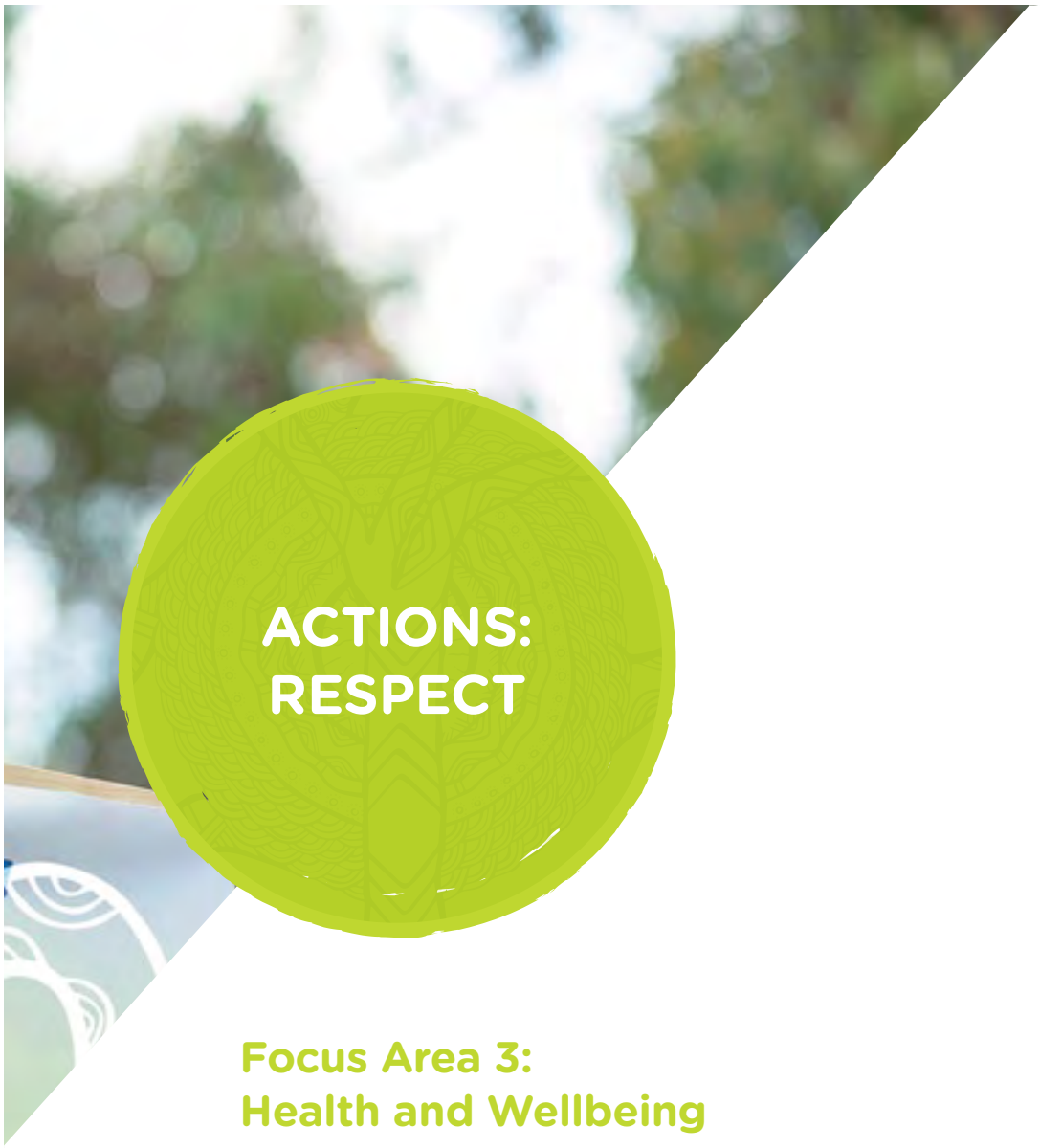
**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Research**<br>Natural Environment and sustainability | **Lead:** Coordinator, Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported by:** Manager, City Futures<br>Manager, Community Infrastructure | External funding to be sought in March 2024 |
| **Research**<br>Natural Environment and sustainability | **Lead:** Manager, City Futures<br>**Supported by:** Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing | External funding to be sought in June 2024 |
| **Partner**<br>Civic engagement and Integrity | **Lead:** Manager, Emergency Management<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No Impact – ongoing, June 2025 |
| **Partner**<br>Civic engagement and integrity | **Lead:** Manager, Emergency Management<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No Impact – ongoing, June 2025 |

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained





# ACTIONS: RESPECT

## Focus Area 3: Health and Wellbeing

*'For the health and wellbeing of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to flourish it must include a holistic, whole of life cycle view of health that includes physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, economic and mental health and wellbeing.*

*A living Cultural services hub that is meets the needs of community delivered by Aboriginal organisations'*

First Nations Community Conversations 6 Oct 2022

# Focus Area 3: Health and Wellbeing

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **10** Actively support and recognise the importance of Truth Telling and Treaty as a means of healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. | **10.1** Include opportunities for Council staff to learn about Truth Telling and Treaty as part of the learning strategy outlined in Action 7.3. |
| | **10.2** Explore opportunities to resource an audit of significant sites, named places and markers related to First Nations histories and colonisation in Knox, to inform the Truth Telling process. |
| **11** Explore the establishment of a First Nations Hub and Cultural Centre. | **11.1** Investigate appropriate sites and source funding opportunities in consultation with the RAP Working Group to establish a First Nations Hub and Cultural Centre. |
| | **11.2** Partner with First Nations community to consider First Nations specific services, opportunities for cultural education and local employment. |
| **12** Advocate for increased local services and supports to be offered in Knox City Council to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident needs. | **12.1** With respect for self-determination, Council will work with regional Aboriginal Community Controlled services and the Outer East Melbourne Area Aboriginal Governance Committee to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and supports to be located in Knox. |
| | **12.2** Investigate opportunities to host and promote specific services for the First Nations community in Knox. |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No Impact – December 2024 |
| **Research** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing | External funding to be sought in Nov 2024 |
| **Plan** Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure | Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing | External funding to be sought in March 2024 |
| **Plan** Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure | Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing | External funding to be sought in February 2024 |
| **Partner** Opportunity and innovation | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – June 2025 |
| **Partner** Opportunity and innovation | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – June 2025 |

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained





# ACTIONS: RESPECT

## Focus Area 4: Civic Participation

Effective civic participation can be achieved when all members of the community feel valued, safe and recognised.

***'Following Cultural protocols, celebrating Elders, Aboriginal leadership and Aboriginal survival'***

First Nations Community Conversations 6 Oct 2022

# Focus Area 4: Civic Participation

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **13** Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.* | **13.1** Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of important meetings, Council documents and email signatures.* |
| | **13.2** Invite local Traditional Owners to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocols at significant events each year.* |
| | **13.3** Continue to build knowledge and respect in relation to the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols for staff, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.* |
| | **13.4** Continue to permanently display the Aboriginal flag and Torres Strait Islander Flags at the Civic Centre. |
| | **13.5** Incorporate elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories into Council's Citizenship Ceremonies. This could include static displays, recorded performances, anthem with Didgeridoo and cultural walks. |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Educate**<br>Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – December, 2023 |
| **Partner**<br>Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>Whole of Council | Existing operational budget – June, 2025 |
| **Provide**<br>Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>Whole of Council | No impact, ongoing, June 2025 |
| **Educate**<br>Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>Governance | No Impact – ongoing, June, 2025 |
| **Educate**<br>Civic engagement and Integrity | **Lead:** Manager, Active and Creative Communities<br>**Supported By:** Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing | Future budget initiatives – June, 2024 |

*Table continued on following page*

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

# Focus Area 4: Civic Participation

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **14** Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.* | **14.1** Provide opportunities for the RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.* |
| | **14.2** Review staff policies and procedures to remove barriers for staff to participate in NAIDOC Week events.* |
| | **14.3** Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact - First week in July, annually |
| **Partner** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** People Culture & Development | No impact - ongoing, June 2025 |
| **Educate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** Manager, Customer & Communications<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact- ongoing, first week in June, annually |

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained





# ACTIONS: OPPORTUNITIES

## Focus Area 5: Employment and Economic Development

Employment and Economic Development is essential to start bridging the gap of inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Adequate employment is a key to health and wellbeing in any community.

***'Pathways of employment, procurement and opportunities for mob.'***

First Nations Community Conversations 6 Oct 2022

# Focus Area 5: Employment and Economic Development

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **15** Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recruitment, retention, and professional development.* | **15.1** Continue to collect data and build understanding of current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.* |
| | **15.2** Engage with First Nations staff to consult on the development of a recruitment, retention and professional development strategy to be incorporated in a revised Knox City Council Workforce Plan.* |
| | **15.3** Develop and implement a First Nations recruitment, retention and professional development strategy incorporated in Knox City Council Workforce Plans.* |
| | **15.4** Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach First Nations community in Knox.* |
| | **15.5** Review Council recruitment procedures and policies to identify areas that will increase support and attraction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Research** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, People Culture & Development<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No Impact – June, 2025 |
| **Partner** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, People Culture & Development<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operation budget – December, 2023 |
| **Plan** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, People Culture & Development<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational Budget – December, 2024 |
| **Provide** Opportunity and innovation | Manager, People Culture & Development | No impact – ongoing, June, 2025 |
| **Research** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, People Culture and Development<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – December, 2023 |

*Table continued on following page*

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

# Focus Area 5: Employment and Economic Development

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **16** Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.* | **16.1** Incorporate First Nations procurement of goods and services as an option aligned with our Procurement Policy.* |
| | **16.2** Investigate membership of Supply Nation and Kinaway to encourage procurement through First Nations businesses locally and more broadly.*<br><br>Note: Supply Nation-Victorian Aboriginal Business Directory is a database of verified Indigenous businesses. Kinaway (Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce) - provide a directory of First Nations businesses including advice and support to strengthen Indigenous business opportunities. |
| | **16.3** Increase the representation of artworks in the Knox Civic Art Collection by Victorian based First Nations artists, with preference for Wurundjeri and Bunurong artworks. |
| | **16.4** Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from First Nations businesses to staff.* |
| | **16.5** Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.* |
| | **16.6** Investigate and advocate opportunities to develop commercial relationships with First Nations businesses.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

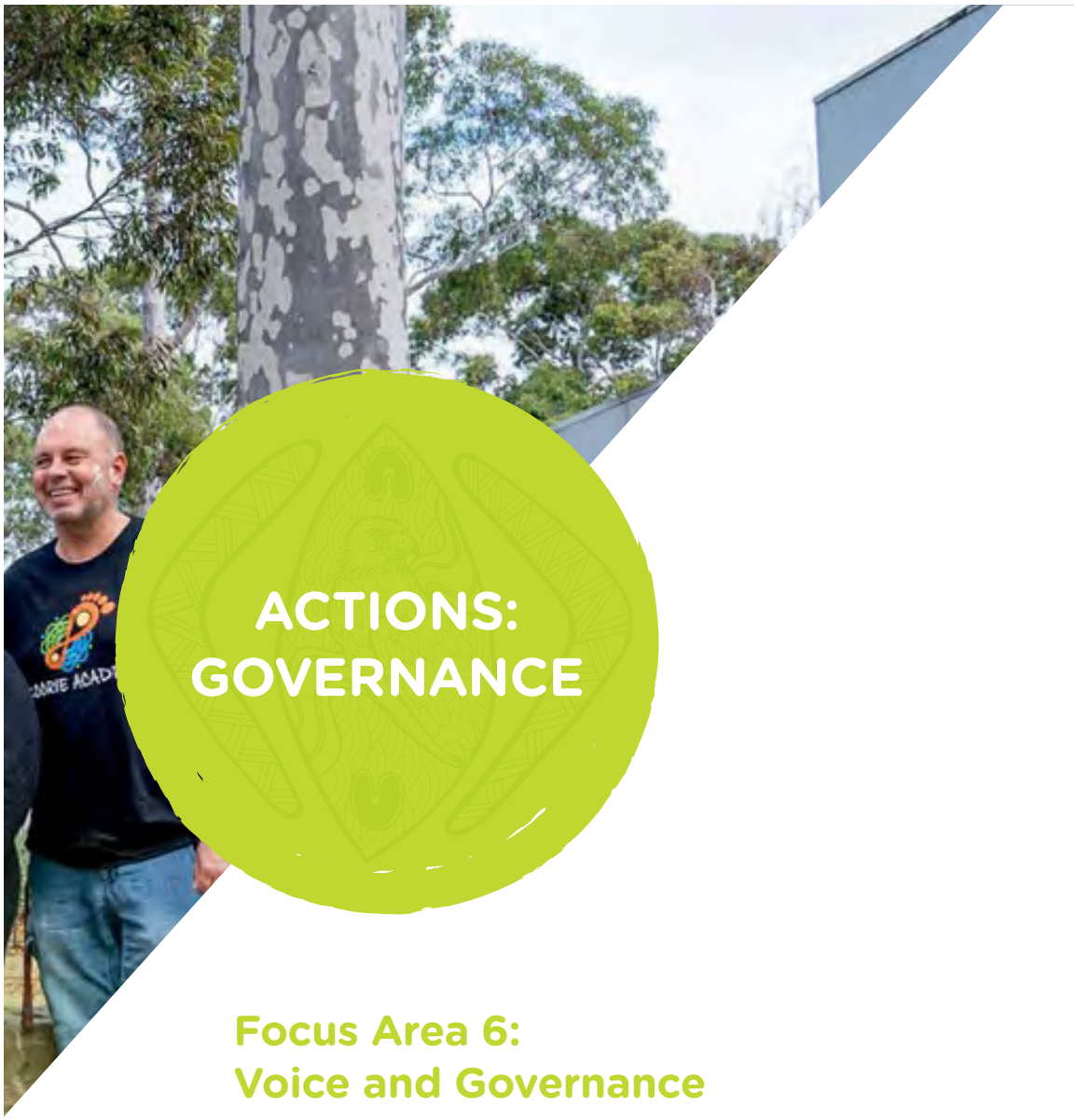
**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Research** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** Manager, Strategic Procurement and Property<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – ongoing, June 2025 |
| **Research** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, Strategic Procurement and Property<br>**Supported By:** Coordinator Healthy and Safe Communities, Community Wellbeing | Future Council budget initiative – July 2024 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | Manager, Active and Creative Communities | Future budget initiative – July 2024 |
| **Educate** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, Strategic Procurement and Property<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – December, 2023 |
| **Research** Opportunity and innovation | **Lead:** Manager, Strategic Procurement and Property<br>**Supported By:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact- August, 2023 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – June, 2025 |

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained





# ACTIONS: GOVERNANCE

## Focus Area 6: Voice and Governance

A successful RAP listens to the First Nations community and ensures the actions are delivered.

***'A strong Aboriginal voice in community and council'***

First Nations Community Conversations 6 Oct 2022

## Focus Area 6: Voice and Governance

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **17** Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.* | **17.1** Establish and coordinate a RAP Working Group (RWG) to monitor and guide the implementation of the RAP. The Group will include relevant Council Staff and member of leadership group.* |
| | **17.2** Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP working group. |
| | **17.3** Establish a Terms of Reference for the RWG to provide advice and guidance and ensure key actions are appropriately resourced.* |
| | **17.4** Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.* |
| **18** Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.* | **18.1** Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.* |
| | **18.2** Include RAP actions on Council Corporate Reporting system (Pulse) to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.* |
| | **18.3** Nominate and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.* |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – December, 2023 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – December, 2023 |
| **Regulate** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – December, 2023 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact - August 2023 then quarterly until June 2025 |
| **Advocate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – August, 2023 |
| **Regulate** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – December, 2023 |
| **Advocate** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – August, 2023 |

*Table continued on following page*

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained

## Focus Area 6: Voice and Governance

| What we will do (Action) | How we will do it (Deliverable) |
|---|---|
| **19** Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.* | **19.1** Maintain current contact details with Reconciliation Australia to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.* |
| | **19.2** Register with Reconciliation Australia to complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.* |
| | **19.3** Annually report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders.* |
| | **19.4** Annually report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to communities, including ongoing feedback.* |
| | **19.5** Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.* |
| | **19.6** Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.* |
| **20** Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.* | **20.1** Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.* |
| **21** Create a First Nations 'consultative group' to guide the broader work of Council. | **21.1** Explore membership and the creation of a First Nations 'consultative group' or advisory committee to include nominated Councillors. |
| **22** Host First Nations Voice Forums to facilitate deep listening by Councilors and leadership. | **22.1** Host two public First Nations forums a year to enable Councillors and leadership to hear current topics of interest from the community. |
| **23** Investigate embedding First Nations commitments beyond the RAP. | **23.1** Work with community to develop statements that outline Council's role in challenging racism and promoting inclusion that support, empower and protect First Nations and Country in Knox. |

'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory actions

**RESOURCES:**

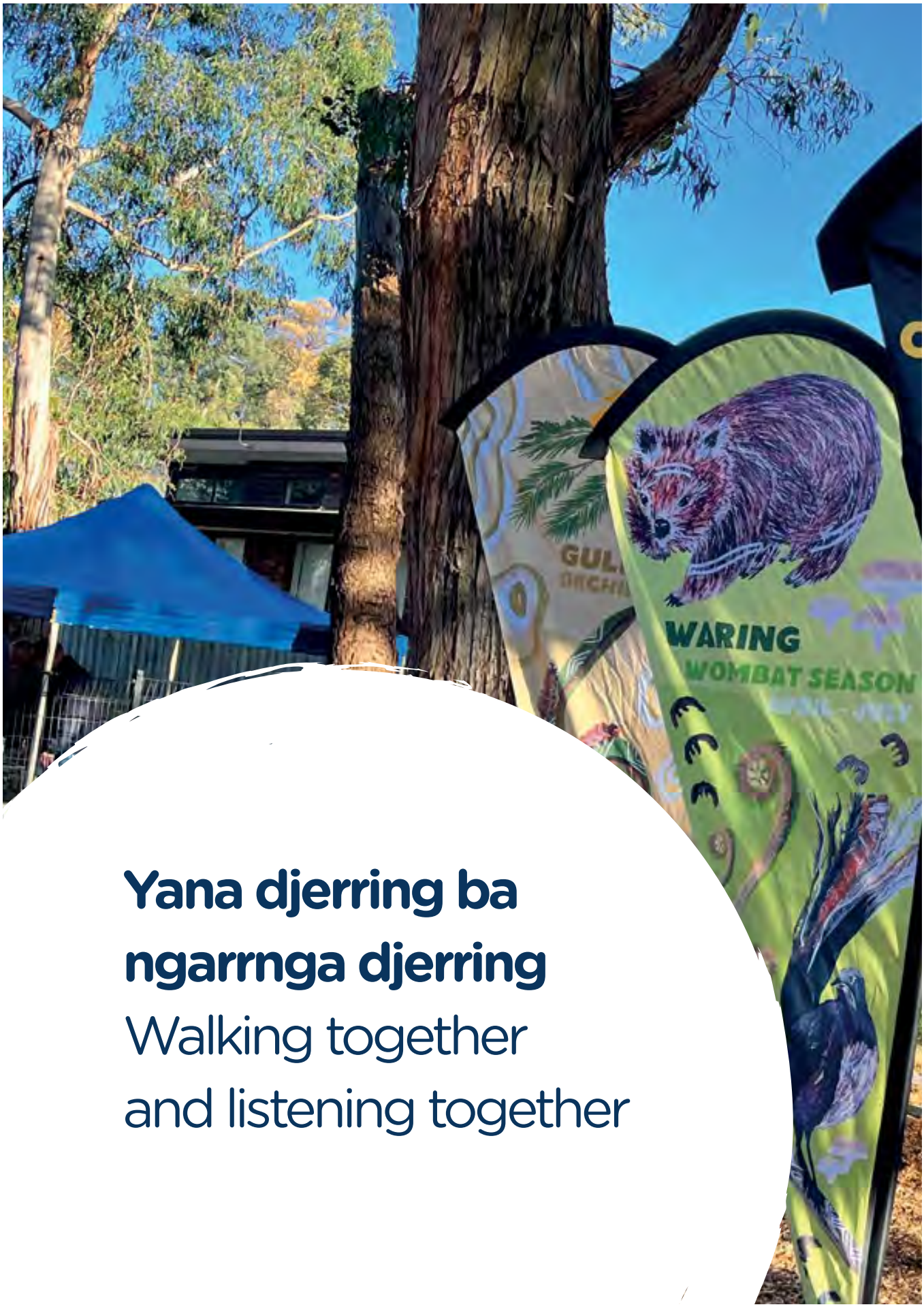
**No impact –** this action can be integrated to existing business plan activities and doesn't require separate resources

**Existing operational budget –** this action will require funding or staff time, but it is already accounted for in the relevant department's budget

| Council Plan Role and Theme | Responsibility | Resources / Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – June 2023, annually |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – 30 September, 2023, annually |
| **Regulate** Civic engagement and integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – June, 2025 |
| **Regulate** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | **Lead:** First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing<br>**Supported By:** Manager, Customer & Communications | No impact – June, 2025 |
| **Research** Connection, resilience and wellbeing | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – May, 2024 |
| **Regulate** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – June, 2025 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | No impact – June, 2025 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Future Council budget initiative – July 2024 |
| **Partner** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – June, 2024 |
| **Advocate** Civic engagement and Integrity | First Nations Lead, Community Wellbeing | Existing operational budget – December, 2023 |

**Future Council budget initiative –** this action will be subject to future Council budget processes; external funding is unlikely

**External funding to be sought –** this action will not proceed unless external funding is gained




# Yana djerring ba ngarrnga djerring

## Walking together and listening together


We are
proudly helping
care for Country
across the
Kulin Nation

# Broader Policy Context

## The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategic Framework 2021–2026

"The Strategy doesn't replace Council plans or RAPs. Instead, the Strategy is a reference document, helping councils crosscheck, progress, and evolve existing plans and RAPs. It will also help councils identify additional actions to help meet their commitments and progress towards self-determination."

| Seven Strategic Pillars | Outcomes | To Succeed, We must: |
|---|---|---|
| **Culture, respect and trust** | Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government that celebrate, understand, and embed Aboriginal cultural heritages and foster trust and respect. | Create and maintain broad awareness, understanding, and embedding of Aboriginal cultures fostering continual refection. |
| | | Celebrate and embed Aboriginal cultures, languages, and customs in local businesses. |
| | | Empower Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to tackle discrimination and racism together through shared understanding, truth, respect, and care. |
| **Awareness and engagement** | Open, proactive, and ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils that is understanding, purposeful, meaningful, thoughtful, and mutually beneficial. | Ensure all parties working together know how to best apply the Strategy. |
| | | Share information and best practice efforts for all parties' easy access. |
| | | Identify and enact regular communication and engagement opportunities between all parties. |
| **Accountability and direction** | Clarity and genuine ownership and accountability that recognises the critical role Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government each play in progressing self-determination. | Recognise Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government's roles in progressing self-determination. |
| | | Enshrine shared purpose and ownership between all parties, clearly defining roles and responsibilities. Embed Aboriginal perspectives and participation in local council processes. |
| | | Develop a locally based, mutually agreed approach to shared reporting and accountability. |

| Seven Strategic Pillars | Outcomes | To Succeed, We must: |
|---|---|---|
| **Governance and participation** | Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into the work local councils perform in creating vibrant local communities. | Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into local councils' work. |
| | | Embed Aboriginal perspectives, goals and aspirations in local council processes. |
| | | Use self-determination principles to establish shared decision-making processes |
| **Economic participation** | Aboriginal peoples are actively participating in the state economy through employment and business ventures. | Procure the services of local Aboriginal businesses. |
| | | Increase the number of Aboriginal employees through career pathways that are diverse and inclusive, and that lead into senior positions with pay parity. |
| | | Remunerate Aboriginal Victorians for their expertise when engaging and partnering. |
| **Health and Wellbeing** | Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians including the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, local councils, regional self-determining structures including Dhelk Dja and the Victorian Government that improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal Victorians. | Design local Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and services in partnership with Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, and Aboriginal communities. |
| | | Prioritise self-determined solutions that promote cultures, connection, and community strengthening. |
| | | Ensure the preservation of Aboriginal cultures by supporting Aboriginal Elders, and empowering the next generation of proud, strong, and thriving Aboriginal peoples to continue their cultures. |
| **Resourcing and Funding** | Effective and sustainable funding models that support Aboriginal Victorians and local councils and enable the Strategy. | Establish sustainable resourcing and funding models that encourage locally led collaboration, prioritisation, and resource sharing. |

# Appendix 1: Understanding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and Caring for Country Fact Sheet

Understanding the Aboriginal Cultural heritage, histories and stories associated with Knox City Council gives an informed evidence base for future planning, protection and management of Country. The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) actions related to cultural heritages and values assessments are required to be in-step with State legislation.

**More information can be found at: www.firstNationsrelations.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-culture-and-heritage**

### The Aboriginal Heritage Act and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations

The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 provide for the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritages in Victoria.

### What are Aboriginal Historical Places?

Aboriginal people have lived in southern Australia, including what is now Victoria, for many thousands of years. During that time, they left physical evidence of their activities which now survive as cultural heritage sites or places. Examples include shell middens, scatters of stone artefacts, oven mounds, stone quarries, rock art sites, fish traps, scarred trees, stone arrangements and places of burial.

An Aboriginal historical place is a location that is important because of its associations with, and cultural significance to, Aboriginal people. Such places may or may not contain archaeological remains. For example, a historical place could include the foundations of a mission building, or a massacre site at which no physical remains survive.

Aboriginal Historical Places are identified through a range of sources including oral histories provided by Aboriginal peoples, references in historical records and information arising from archaeological investigations.

### Where do Aboriginal Historical Places occur?

There are Aboriginal Historical Places all over Victoria. They are most common near rivers, lakes, swamps and the coast. There may be places on your property.

### Are Aboriginal Historical Places protected?

All Aboriginal Historical Places and cultural places in Victoria are protected by law (the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006). Aboriginal artefacts are also protected. It is against the law to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal place. Artefacts should not be removed from site.

### Why protect Aboriginal Historical Places?

Aboriginal Historical Places are a precious part of the heritage of the whole community. They are of immense cultural, scientific, educational and historic interest. Aboriginal heritage places provide Aboriginal people today with an important link to their cultures and their past.

Aboriginal places are also fragile. When they are destroyed or damaged, information about past cultural and environmental changes may be lost forever. In many cases, information about the past occupation of Australia can only be obtained through the archaeological investigation of these places.

### If there is an Aboriginal Historical Place on my land, can it be subject to a Native Title Claim?

Generally, no. Only vacant Crown land may be subject to a Native Title Claim. Freehold land, which is almost all private property, is not subject to native title claims even if Aboriginal Historical Places are present. In general, having Aboriginal cultural places on your land will not affect ownership, or stop existing land use from continuing.

### What are threats to Aboriginal Historical Places?

Erosion and other natural processes threaten some Aboriginal Historical Places. Human activities may also be a threat, particularly major changes to the way land is used, such as development.

### Who is Responsible for Aboriginal Historical Places?

First Peoples State Relations (formally Aboriginal Victoria) is the State Government agency which is responsible for Aboriginal places. First Peoples State Relations has a register of Aboriginal places, and records and protects places.

### Planning and development of land

The endurance of Aboriginal societies across Australia is of global significance and the cultural heritage places and objects associated with Aboriginal societies are a significant part of the heritage of all Australians. More importantly, they are a fundamental part of Aboriginal communities' life and cultural identities. The legislation provides protection for all Aboriginal places and objects regardless of their inclusion on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register or whether they are located on public or private land.

Large developments and other high impact activities in culturally sensitive landscapes can cause significant harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage. In these situations, the Act may require the preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan or the planner or developer may need to get a cultural heritage permit.

The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 includes a range of enforcement provisions to provide better protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. These provide appropriate penalties and clear powers for Authorised Officers (AOs) and Aboriginal Heritage Officers (AHOs).

### What is a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP)?

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is a written report prepared by a Heritage Advisor. It includes results of an assessment of the potential impact of a proposed activity on Aboriginal cultural heritages. It outlines measures to be taken before, during and after an activity in order to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritages in the activity area.

### When is a CHMP required?

A CHMP is required when a 'high impact activity' is planned in an area of 'cultural heritage sensitivity'. These terms are defined in the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018.

In these circumstances, planning permits, licences and work authorities can't be issued unless a CHMP has been approved for the activity. Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity include registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places, as well as landforms and land categories that are generally regarded as more likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritages: https://www.firstNationsrelations.vic.gov.au/cultural-heritage-sensitivity.

# Appendix 2: References

**Related Policy Framework:**
**International**

- UN Declaration of Human Rights
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Nations

**Australian Government**

- Australia's Human Rights Framework
- Closing the Gap Strategy 2008

**Victorian Government**

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill
- Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023
- Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017–2027
- Aboriginal Family Violence 10-Year Plan 2016-2026
- Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement and Strategic Action Plan
- Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026
- Balit Murrup: Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Framework
- Aboriginal Justice Agreement
- Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) 2018–2023
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and 2016 amendment

**Local Government**

- The Victorian Local Government Act 2020
- The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategic Framework 2021–2026
- Strategic Priorities of the Early Years Compact
- The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan 2017

**Knox City Council strategic plans**

- Community Plan 2021–2031 and Council Plan 2021-2025
- Knox Connection, Access Respect Equality and Safety Strategy 2022–2027
- Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021–2025
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2022-2025

**Knox City Council policies and procedures**

- Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Policy 2018-2021
- Plaque Inscription Policy 2003-2006
- Flying and Displaying of Flags Policy 2022-2025

**Knox City Council contact**
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Knox City Council

**Attachment 1**

# Knox Reconciliation Action Plan

# 2023-2025

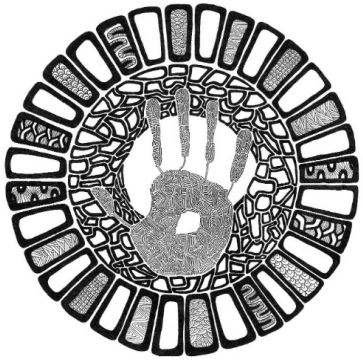
# Achievements

## Focus Area 1: Recognition and Respect

Respect and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures increases everyone's awareness and appreciation of a culture and civilisation enriching our history for at least 65,000 years.

*'It is important that our families feel safe to identify and publicly see Aboriginal Culture celebrated'*

First Nations Community Conversations, 6 Oct 2022



'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory action and are flagged to be continued in the RAP 2026–-2028.

| Action | Deliverable | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.* | 1.1 Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and organisations to develop guiding principles for engagement.* | Actively participated in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) meetings, Eastern Region Group, education roundtable, ACCHOs Event attendance, consultations with Wurundjeri and Bunurong and First Nations State and Local Government Network. |  |
| | 1.2 Include these principles in Council's revised Community Engagement Policy.* | The Community Engagement Policy has 'Inclusive' as a Principle of Engagement. Guidance is provided to staff undertaking consultation by the First Nations Lead to ensure engagement with First Nations and Traditional Owners is in line with the Cultural Heritage Act. |  |
| 2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).* | 2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. * | Reconciliation Week (May) and NAIDOC Week (July) events promoted to staff annually. |  |
| | 2.2 Provide opportunities for the RAP Working Group, staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.* | Reconciliation Week (May) and NAIDOC Week (July) events promoted to staff annually. |  |
| | 2.3 Promote and encourage staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.* | Reconciliation Week (May) and NAIDOC Week (July) events promoted to staff annually. |  |
| | 2.4 Organise at least one Council NRW event each year.* | Annual Knox Sorry Day event held on 26 May at the Civic Centre. |  |

✓ = Completed  = On schedule  = Behind schedule

| Action | Deliverable | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2.5 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.* | All events registered. | ✓ |
| 3. Promote reconciliation to the wider community, businesses and Council staff to increase cultural awareness and build respect. * | 3.1 Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.* | Staff attendance (approx. 100 staff) at each annual Sorry Day event held on 26 May, also attended by Elders and Stolen Generation families.<br>Promoted National Reconciliation Week events to staff, for example lunchtime documentary screening. | ● |
| | 3.2 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly and explore opportunities to positively influence external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.* | Fifteen Culture Walks were held.<br>First Nations presence at Cultural Diversity Week event held at The Basin. First Nations space at the annual KnoxFest event.<br>Cultural Conversations session with Councilors. | ● |
| | 3.3 Explore opportunities to positively influence external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.* | Provided support and partnership opportunities to organisations to encourage them to hold First Nations events in Knox. This includes providing support and attending local club Indigenous Round events, the Indigenous Allstars matches against Hawaii and New Zealand, First Nations sports clinics, holiday programs and Yarning Circles. | ● |
| | 3.4 Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.* | Attended annual Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events locally. | ● |



✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| Action | Deliverable | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies including 'Racism Stops with Me' campaign and Welcoming cities.* | 4.1 Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future need.* | Human Rights Commission and Police met with Multicultural leaders in 2024 to discuss racism in Knox.<br>Hosted staff capacity building workshop about the Victorian Human Rights Commission Reporting Tool in May 2025.<br>Attended Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations annual roundtable on racism in the Eastern suburbs, this session was also attended by Treaty. |  |
| | 4.2 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on developing an anti-discrimination policy.* | Resources have been developed in consultation with First Nations community and multicultural community to increase cultural safety and understanding in Knox.<br>Currently exploring a project to run a strength based Anti-Racism campaign. This project will be guided by Welcoming Cities and 'Say No to Racism' commitment/resources along with benchmarking, this will be done in partnership with the Knox Multicultural Partnership Officer. |  |
| | 4.3 Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.* | Knox is a signatory of 'Racism It Stops With Me' campaign and Welcoming Refugee Cities.<br>Provided input on inclusion in Councils Organisation Strategy. |  |
| | 4.4 Educate senior leaders within Council on the effects of racism through truth telling, training and discussion with First Nations Lead.* | Four bystander training sessions held for staff.<br>A Cultural Safety Maturity Assessment for the organisation is currently being developed. |  |

✓ = Completed  = On schedule  = Behind schedule

| Action | Deliverable | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Participate in Local Aboriginal Network (LAN) and the Outer Eastern Metropolitan Governance Committee (OEMGC). | 5.1 Continue to participate as an active member of the Outer East LAN and Governance Committee to increase opportunities for First Nations programs and services to locate in Knox. | The Local Aboriginal Network (LAN) has been defunded.<br>The Outer Eastern Metropolitan Governance Committee (OEMGC) has not been meeting regularly.<br>However, First Nations Lead has Quarterly meetings with the Outer East DFFH Senior Aboriginal Advisor and bi-monthly conversations with Aboriginal CEOs of ACCHOs. |  |
| | 5.2 Collaborate on regional initiatives being undertaken as appropriate including the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Inclusive Employment Program. | Participated in various annual events, for example health, education and jobs expo in the East for First Nations community. |  |

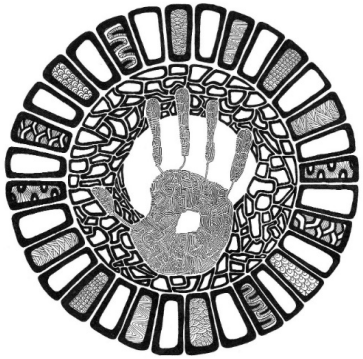
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## Focus Area 2: Cultural Heritage

Access to Land and Protection of Cultural Heritage. Country plays a significant role in Aboriginal culture, there are many places that tell stories of events and practices within the landscape.

*'Caring for Country, access to Country, learning from Country and Cultural understanding of history and Culture'*

First Nations Community Conversations, 6 Oct 2022



'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory action and are flagged to be continued in the RAP 2026–2028.

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Honour and integrate First Nations Culture into actions and environments. | 6.1 Work in partnership with First Nations organisations to promote positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Kulin country within Knox and the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. | Wellbeing projects were delivered including Culture Walks, multiple Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and Cultural education at open space openings and events. Partnered with Nature Stewards and locals to deliver cultural education sessions.<br>Partnered with First Nations educators and knowledge keepers to deliver land management and cultural education on Kulin Country. | ● |
| | 6.2 Investigate physical ways to Acknowledge Country, with consideration for interpretive signage, design/art elements, murals, Yarning circles, language and Cultural Gardens in our parks, open space and reserves. | Integrated Acknowledgment of Country, Wurundjeri and Bunurong art works into Councils wayfinding and interpretive signage across Knox<br>Cultural native planting is now considered and prioritised at significant sites.<br>Council's Arts team is progressing with the Peters Family and Oonah to create a public art piece honoring Aunty Dot Peters. | ● |
| | 6.3 Explore opportunities to develop First Nations naming protocols for appropriate Council parks, open space, new roads and buildings, in consultation with Traditional Owners. | Increased Woi-wurrung language use and naming of places such as new wetlands, facilities and the 'Ngarrgoo' library.<br>Consultations held with City Futures, Biodiversity and Major Projects around naming, land management and Indigenous knowledge concerning climate change. | ● |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.* | 7.1 Continue to provide a mix of face-to-face and online Cultural education and cultural safety training in all areas of our business including Councilors and leadership (4 sessions per year). | Cultural education sessions have been delivered face-to-face and online, presented at staff induction and orientation sessions, mandatory onboarding has been introduced, online education available for staff, held external Cultural education sessions and walks. Cultural consultations to project and staff provided by First Nations Lead. Including Community Development Fund Panels, heritage, policy and land management meetings. | ● |
| | 7.2 Consult Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform the development of a cultural learning and safety programs for staff.* | Lowitja Cultural safety maturity tools for individual has been undertaken and currently identifying ways of incorporating this for the organisation. | ● |
| | 7.3 Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning and safety strategy within the Knox City Council Learning Plan.* | Cultural safety is now included in Council staff onboarding, training and inductions. | ✓ |
| | 7.4 Deliver cultural safety training for RAP Working Group staff and leadership team.* | Three focused Cultural education sessions were provided to RAP Working Groups and various leadership teams. RAP Working Group also attended the Cultural education sessions held for all staff. | ✓ |
| | 7.5 Continue to provide Cultural education opportunities for the wider community. (2 sessions per year). | Held Cultural education at the Cultural Diversity Week event, First Nations presence at KnoxFest, Cultural Walks, Citizenship ceremonies, and a Building Aboriginal Cultural Competency session held through Council's Community Training program. | ● |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 7.6 Promote and increase Cultural understanding and history for the wider community through Council communications channels. | Held annual Sorry Day event at the Civic Centre.<br>Across Knox: First Nations performance at Council events, Acknowledgment of Country, Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremonies, First Nations involvement at Citizenship ceremonies, signage, communication of significant days; First Nations E-newsletter (five times a year). |  |
| | 7.7 Continue to build understanding of First Nations services and histories in our Early Years Centers and youth programs, to build culturally safe and inclusive settings for families and children. | Early Years Cultural education and site development of hubs has been incorporated as part of their core business.<br>Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Association First Nations play group operating in Knox, Youth projects partnering with First Nations school team. |  |
| 8 Increase capacity for protection and awareness of culturally significant sites and assets. | 8.1 In consultation with Traditional Owners (Registered Aboriginal Parties) and First Peoples State Relations, explore opportunities to resource an Aboriginal Heritage/Values study to inform management and planning. | Ongoing meetings concerning the Cultural Values Study (CVS), planning, access and protection of site and site management with Wurundjeri and Bunurong. Traditional Owners discussing best process with external consultant for CVS. CVS of Police Paddock underway with Parks Victoria and Knox's Biodiversity team. |  |
| | 8.2 Identify cultural heritage sites and assets within the Knox City Council to ensure appropriate management, protection and access. | Ongoing relationship with Elders and Traditional Owners to Care for Country. City Futures is increasing access and training to support heritage compliance. Biodiversity is working with Traditional Owners and Firesticks (cool burns) to build opportunities and practice of Aboriginal land management. |  |

✓ = Completed  = On schedule  = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 Include First Nations community in emergency management planning. | 9.1 Council staff will work to partner with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. | Cultural Safety and Inclusion of First Nation is a Pillar in the State Emergency Policy and Procedures. |  |
| | 9.2 Partner with key First Nations stakeholders in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. | Cultural Safety and Inclusion of First Nation is a Pillar in the State Emergency Policy and Procedures. |  |

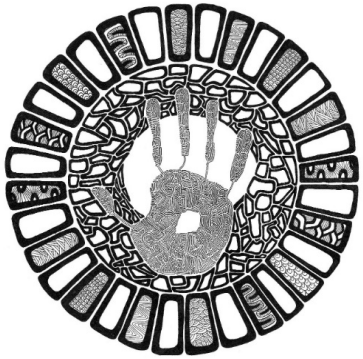
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## Focus Area 3: Health and Wellbeing

For the health and wellbeing of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to flourish it must include a holistic, whole of life cycle view of health that includes physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, economic and mental health and wellbeing.

*'A living Cultural services hub that is meets the needs of community delivered by Aboriginal organisations'*

First Nations Community Conversations, 6 Oct 2022



'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory action and are flagged to be continued in the RAP 2026–-2028.

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 Actively support and recognise the importance of Truth Telling and Treaty as a means of healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. | 10.1 Include opportunities for Council staff to learn about Truth Telling and Treaty as part of the learning strategy outlined in Action 6.3. | A Sorry Day event has been delivered annually at the Civic Centre.<br>Annual attendance includes up to 150 local Stolen Generation families and Koorie students. Sorry Day speakers in the ceremony have included leadership from Yoorook Commission (Truth Telling Royal Commission), and First People Assembly (Treaty) and the First Treaty Commissioner for Victoria.<br>An annual speech from the Mayor, that has included an apology, has been warmly received.<br>An information table provided resources and was supported at the Sory Day event by Treaty.<br>Online units about referendum and treaty have been delivered through PCD.<br>Staff orientation and online resources now include a section on Treaty and Truth Telling. |  |
| | 10.2 Explore opportunities to resource an audit of significant sites, named places and markers related to First Nations history and colonisation in Knox, to inform the Truth Telling process. | An Audit of a significant site is being considered within the Cultural Values Study by City Futures. |  |
| 11 Explore the establishment of a First Nations Hub and Cultural Centre. | 11.1 Investigate appropriate sites and source funding opportunities in consultation with the RAP Working Group to establish a First Nations Hub and Cultural Centre. | Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service (BWAHS) and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP) have established spaces in Knox. VAACA and Ngwala Willumbong have partnered with these two Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations (ACCHO's) to deliver pop-up services in their facilities. |  |

✓ = Completed  = On schedule  = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP) currently hold the lease arrangement with Knox Council for HV Jones facilities and (BWAHS) have facilities in Bayswater.<br>Currently exploring options for surplus facilities and room use for Oonah and Koorie Basketball Academy. | |
| | 11.2 Partner with First Nations community to consider First Nations specific services, opportunities for cultural education and local employment. | Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service (BWAHS) and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP) have established spaces in Knox.<br>VAACA and Ngwala Willumbong have partnered with these two Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations (ACCHO's) to deliver pop-up services in their facilities.<br>Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP) currently hold the lease arrangement with Knox Council for HV Jones facilities and (BWAHS) have facilities in Bayswater.<br>Currently exploring options for surplus facilities and room use for Oonah and Koorie Basketball Academy. |  |

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| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 Advocate for increased local services and supports to be offered in Knox City Council to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resident needs. | 12.1 With respect for self-determination, Council will work with regional Aboriginal Community Controlled services and the Outer East Melbourne Area Aboriginal Governance Committee to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and supports to be located in Knox. | Internal advocacy for surplus facilities options and projects based in Knox continues. There is an increased activation of HV Jones site by Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and other ACCHOs.<br>Aboriginal Housing now has 22 residences located in Knox. This is the first time Knox has had any Aboriginal Housing located in Knox.<br>Four Koorie Basketball clinics and various yarning circles have been delivered in Knox, including four Yarning Circle session with Uncle Kutcha pre and post the referendum funded by Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place.<br>Conversations have begun regarding inter-Council collaboration with ACCHO's. |  |
| | 12.2 Investigate opportunities to host and promote specific services for the First Nations community in Knox. | Internal advocacy for surplus facilities options and projects based in Knox continues. There is an increased activation of HV Jones site by Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and other ACCHOs.<br>Aboriginal Housing now has 22 residences located in Knox. This is the first time Knox has had any Aboriginal Housing located in Knox.<br>Four Koorie Basketball clinics and various yarning circles have been delivered in Knox including four Yarning Circle session with Uncle Kutcha pre and post the referendum funded by Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place. |  |

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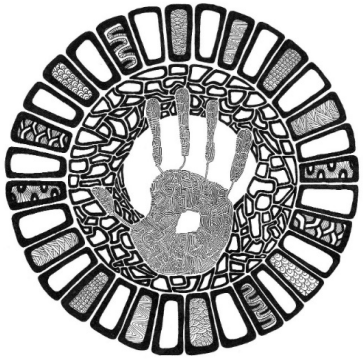
| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Conversations have begun regarding inter-Council collaboration with ACCHO's. | |

## Focus Area 4: Civic Participation

Effective civic participation can be achieved when all members of the community feel valued, safe and recognised.

*'Following Cultural protocols, celebrating Elders, Aboriginal leadership and Aboriginal survival'*

First Nations Community Conversations, 6 Oct 2022



'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory action and are flagged to be continued in the RAP 2026–2028.

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.* | 13.1 Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of important meetings, Council documents and email signatures.* | Guidelines for First Nations ceremony and protocol has been developed and made available on the Knox Intranet.<br>A draft Inclusive Language Guide is under development and includes a First Nations section. | ● |
| | 13.2 Invite local Traditional Owners to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocols at significant events each year.* | Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies are delivered by Traditional Owners at Council run events and festivals as appropriate. | ● |
| | 13.3 Continue to build knowledge and respect in relation to the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols for staff, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.* | The Acknowledging Traditional Custodians Policy including guidelines to support engagement with First Nations community provided on the intranet and includes smoking ceremonies, Welcomes and other protocols. | ● |
| | 13.4 Continue to permanently display the Aboriginal flag and Torres Strait Islander Flags at the Civic Centre. | The Knox Flying and Display of Flags Policy includes the permanent flying of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at the Civic Centre. | ✓ |
| | 13.5 Incorporate elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories into Council's Citizenship Ceremonies. This could include static displays, recorded performances, anthem with Didgeridoo and cultural walks. | First Nations content for Citizenship Ceremonies has been developed in consultation with Traditional Owners.<br>Increased First Nations content in Citizenship ceremonies through Welcome to Country, visuals and optional Cultural education sessions. | ● |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.* | 14.1 Provide opportunities for the RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.* | Annual NAIDOC Week events (National/State calendar and Knox events) promoted to the RAP Working Group and wider community through email and First Nations E-newsletter. | ✓ |
| | 14.2 Review staff policies and procedures to remove barriers for staff to participate in NAIDOC Week events.* | Cultural Leave included in Council's Enterprise agreement. | ● |
| | 14.3 Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.* | Annual NAIDOC Week events (National/State calendar and Knox events) promoted to staff via The Buzz, intranet and internal comms. | ✓ |

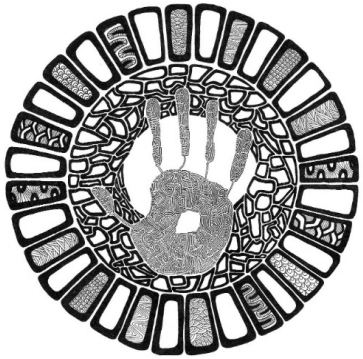
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## Focus Area 5: Employment and Economic Development

Employment and Economic Development is essential to start bridging the gap of inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Adequate employment is a key to health and wellbeing in any community.

*'Pathways of employment, procurement and opportunities for mob'*

First Nations Community Conversations, 6 Oct 2022



'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory action and are flagged to be continued in the RAP 2026–2028.

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.* | 15.1 Continue to collect data and build understanding of current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.* | Staff data processes now include ability for staff identification as First Nations. |  |
| | 15.2 Engage with First Nations staff to consult on the development of a recruitment, retention and professional development strategy to be incorporated in a revised Knox City Council Workforce Plan.* | Cultural safety organisational and individual maturity assessment tool being planned for Knox Council.<br>Informal consultation meetings with First Nations staff have begun.<br>Cultural Leave now included in Council's Enterprise Agreement. |  |
| | 15.3 Develop and implement a First Nations recruitment, retention and professional development strategy incorporated in Knox City Council Workforce Plans.* | The internal processes for advertising, recruitment, retention and professional development of Knox has been reviewed and updated. |  |
| | 15.4 Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach First Nations community in Knox.* | The internal processes for advertising, recruitment, retention and professional development of Knox has been reviewed and updated. |  |
| | 15.5 Review Council recruitment procedures and policies to identify areas that will increase support and attraction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.* | The internal processes for advertising, recruitment, retention and professional development of Knox has been reviewed and updated. |  |

✓ = Completed  = On schedule  = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.* | 16.1 Incorporate First Nations procurement of goods and services as an option aligned with our Procurement Policy.* | Council's Procurement Policy now has First Nations inclusion and weighting. | ✓ |
| | 16.2 Investigate membership of Supply Nation and Kinaway to encourage procurement through First Nations businesses locally and more broadly.*<br><br>Note:<br>Supply Nation-Victorian Aboriginal Business Directory is a database of verified Indigenous businesses.<br>Kinaway (Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce) - provide a directory of First Nations businesses including advice and support to strengthen Indigenous business opportunities. | First Nations businesses being utilised more by Council's Events, Arts and Community Strengthening Teams.<br>Investigation on how to identify First Nations businesses within Council's procurement system is underway.<br>Membership conversation progressing with Kinaway. | ● |
| | 16. 3 Increase the representation of artworks in the Knox Civic Art Collection by Victorian based First Nations artists, with preference for Wurundjeri and Bunurong artworks. | First Nations Arts trail is now live for Knox.<br>Digital artworks by Simone Thomson (Wurundjeri) and Adam Magennis (Bunurong) of the theme County, Culture and Connection has been purchased to enhance recognition of Country and increase Cultural safety in various forms such as signage.<br>Council was successful in receiving a State Government grant to create a First Nations Public Art piece honoring Aunty Dot Peters. | ● |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 16.4 Develop communication opportunities for procurement of goods and services from First Nations businesses to staff.* | Council's Procurement Policy now has First Nations inclusion and weighting. | ● |
| | 16.5 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.* | Council's Procurement Policy now has First Nations inclusion and weighting. | ● |
| | 16.6 Investigate and advocate opportunities to develop commercial relationships with First Nations businesses.* | First Nations businesses being utilised more by Council's Events, Arts and Community Strengthening Teams.<br>Investigation on how to identify First Nations businesses within Council's procurement system is underway.<br>Membership conversation progressing with Kinaway. | ● |

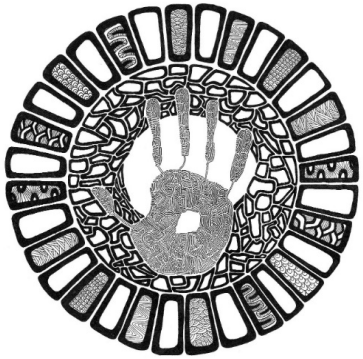
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## Focus Area 6: Voice and Governance

A successful RAP listens to the First Nations community and ensures the actions are delivered.

*'A strong Aboriginal voice in community and council'*

First Nations Community Conversations, 6 Oct 2022



'*' denotes Reconciliation Australia mandatory action and are flagged to be continued in the RAP 2026–2028.

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.* | 17.1 Establish and coordinate a RAP Working Group (RWG) to monitor and guide the implementation of the RAP. The Group will include relevant Council Staff and member of leadership group.* | Internal RAP Working Group established. Cultural Training with Wurundjeri undertaken. | ✓ |
| | 17.2 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP working group. | RAP working group is convened by First Nations Lead. | ✓ |
| | 17.3 Establish a Terms of Reference for the RWG to provide advice and guidance and ensure key actions are appropriately resourced.* | Terms of reference have been established. | ✓ |
| | 17.4 Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.* | Group meets at least four times a year to progress the delivery of RAP actions. | ✓ |
| 18. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.* | 18.1 Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.* | 1xEFT - First Nation Lead supports all work related to delivery of RAP actions. Resourcing for RAP action delivery is developed in negotiation with various department and team for projects, grants and actions. | ● |
| | 18.2 Include RAP actions on Council Corporate Reporting system (Pulse) to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.* | All RAP actions are included in Council's corporate reporting system. | ✓ |
| | 18.3 Nominate and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.* | Council's Director Connected Communities has been the appointed RAP Champion. | ✓ |
| 19. Build accountability and transparency through reporting | 19.1 Maintain current contact details with Reconciliation Australia to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.* | Reporting to Reconciliation Australia undertaken. | ✓ |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.* | 19.2 Register with Reconciliation Australia to complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.* | Registration and completion of annual questionnaire completed. | ✓ |
| | 19.3 Annually report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders.* | RAP Actions are included in Council's corporate reporting tool, Pulse. | ✓ |
| | 19.4 Annually report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to the community.* | Updates on RAP progression is included in Council's First Nation E-Newsletter. RAP update is included in council annual report. | ● |
| | 19.5 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.* | Annual RAP reporting to Reconciliation is included in biennial Workplace RAP Barometer. | ✓ |
| | 19.6 Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.* | Completed traffic light reporting. | ✓ |
| 20. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.* | 20.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.* | Registration completed with Reconciliation Australia to develop the RAP 2026 - 2028. Planning for review of RAP 2023 – 2025 has been completed. | ✓ |
| 21. Create a First Nations 'consultative group' to guide the broader work of Council. | 21.1 Explore membership and the creation of a First Nations 'consultative group' or advisory committee to include nominated Councillors. | A First Nations Leadership group has been formed. Group has met quarterly over the life of the RAP. | ● |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

| What we will do | How we will do it | Progress on Actions 2023-2025 | Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22. Host First Nations Voice Forums to facilitate deep listening by Councilors and leadership. | 22.1 Host two public First Nations forums a year to enable Councillors and leadership to hear current topics of interest from the community. | In 2024 forums were unable to be delivered due to the impact of the referendum on First Nation community and timing of local government council elections.<br>The Forum scheduled for April 2025 was postponed and will be turned into a smaller Yarning Circle conversations.<br>Planning is underway for the best way to hear from the First Nations community.<br>Regular conversations occur with Elders and ACCO's and relevant groups to ensure current topics of interest are raised with Council. |  |
| 23. Investigate embedding First Nations commitments beyond the RAP. | 23.1 Work with community to develop statements that outline Council's role in challenging racism and promoting inclusion that support, empower and protect First Nations people and Country in Knox. | Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians policy reviewed and updated to incorporate a set of guidelines.<br>Procurement Policy includes First Nations inclusion and weighting.<br>Council's Flag Policy updated to include permanent flying of both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags. |  |

✓ = Completed ● = On schedule ● = Behind schedule

# 8.3 Waste Services Community Engagement Plan

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Decision
**Author:** Manager Green Spaces and Environment, Andrew Dodd
**Manager:** Manager Green Spaces & Environment, Andrew Dodd
**Executive:** Director, Infrastructure, Grant Thorne

**SUMMARY**
At the Council meeting held on 26 May 2025, Council resolved to request officers prepare a proposal for a community-wide engagement process relating to waste services. This report presents an approach to this engagement process for Council endorsement including:

- Survey scope.
- Supporting information within the survey.
- Survey questions.
- Delivery methodology.
- Timeframes for communicating, conducting and completion the survey.

A further report will be presented at a Council meeting in early 2026 detailing the results of this engagement process.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council resolve to:

1. Endorse the community engagement process for the Waste Services Survey, including:
    a. The proposed scope and methodology
    b. The supporting information within the survey
    c. The timeline as outlined in section 1.2.
2. Approve the survey questions detailed in Attachment 1.
3. Note that the engagement results will be presented to Council in early 2026.

**1. DISCUSSION**
This report, seeks to finalise the engagement process on Waste Services, as resolved by Council on 26 May 2025.

The proposed community survey (Attachment 1) is designed to provide reliable, objective data at a municipal level, reflecting that waste services are delivered across the whole municipality.

The report covers:

- The proposed survey questions and supporting information.
- The methodology for delivering the survey and engagement process.
- The timeframes for conducting the survey.
- The timeframes for reporting results back to Council.

### 1.1. Background

As a result of an Officer report presented to Council at the Council meeting held 26 May 2025 – Waste and Recycling Kerbside Reform Update, Council resolved to;

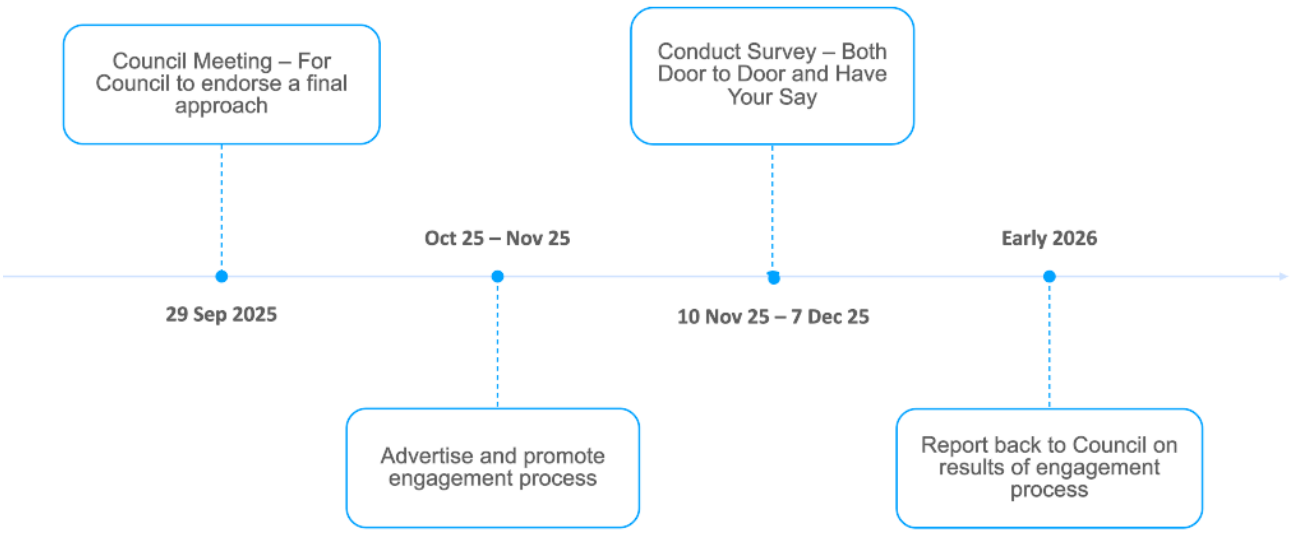
1. *Note the updated progress on the Kerbside Reform project including positive environmental and fiscal outcomes for the community driven by significantly increased diversion of waste from landfill.*
2. *Note the updated information provided detailing the implications of a potential change from fortnightly to weekly rubbish collection, including anticipated impact on diversion rates, cost and timing.*
3. *Request officers prepare a proposal for a community-wide engagement process to:*
   a. *Seek community sentiment and feedback on our current waste collection services.*
   b. *Test community appetite for a weekly rubbish collection service; and*
   c. *Present information regarding the environmental and financial implications associated with each option.*
4. *Requests the proposed methodology, including design, communication, timing and cost of any survey be discussed with Councillors prior to the proposal being referred to Council for consideration no later than September 2025 (unless deferred to a later date in consultation with the Mayor); and*
5. *Subject to Council's determination in relation to Resolution 4 above, that Council receives a report outlining the results of community engagement for consideration prior to any decision being made on whether to change the existing kerbside rubbish collection frequency.*

To assist in the design and implementation of this process, Metropolis Research has been engaged through a competitive Request for Quotation (RFQ) process.

### 1.2. Timeline

The timeline represented in Figure 1 highlights the milestone dates to undertake this engagement process. More detail can be found in Section 2 – Engagement.

**Figure 1 – Proposed Timeline**




NOTE: Timeframes may vary depending on final adopted survey methodology

A survey will be conducted and reported to Council in early 2026. Should Council decide to change the collection frequency to weekly following receipt of the survey results, the previously communicated implementation date of July 2026 would not be achievable. The likely timing for implementing a weekly rubbish collection service would instead be early to mid 2027.

**1.3. Survey Services Scope**

Being the Council resolution calls for this process to be conducted on Councils current waste collection services, the services listed below have been included in the process to engage community satisfaction.

- Kerbside rubbish collection
- Kerbside recycling collection
- Kerbside FOGO collection
- Hard waste collection
- Bundled green waste collection
- Kerbside Glass Only Service (future service)

Questions within the survey relating to each service are based around levels of satisfaction for each, issues (if any) respondents are currently facing, utilisation of services, knowledge of service delivery and current options to increase capacity and general information on how households are currently managing waste.

There are also direct questions relating to changing the current garbage collection service to weekly. These focus on the importance of convenience over cost and testing community appetite on keeping the current frequency or changing to the alternate, highlighting cost and environmental impacts for each.

**1.4. Supporting Information**

Consolidated information has been provided within the survey to support the line of questioning in various sections including;

- Messaging to explain why the survey is being conducted (considering returning back to weekly rubbish collection). This has been provided in the statement “Knox City Council regularly reviews its services to ensure they align with the needs of the community. Council is seeking feedback from the community to help inform any future decisions”.
- Costs associated with moving to weekly rubbish collection. This includes overall costs and impacts on the waste charge per property.
- Results of the implementation of FOGO on increased diversion rates and being one of the state leaders in this space.
- Special consideration requests currently available to assist households still challenged by the current waste services provided.

**1.5. Delivery Options**

Delivery options that were considered during the design of the draft survey are listed in Table 1, with information on what has been included and excluded.

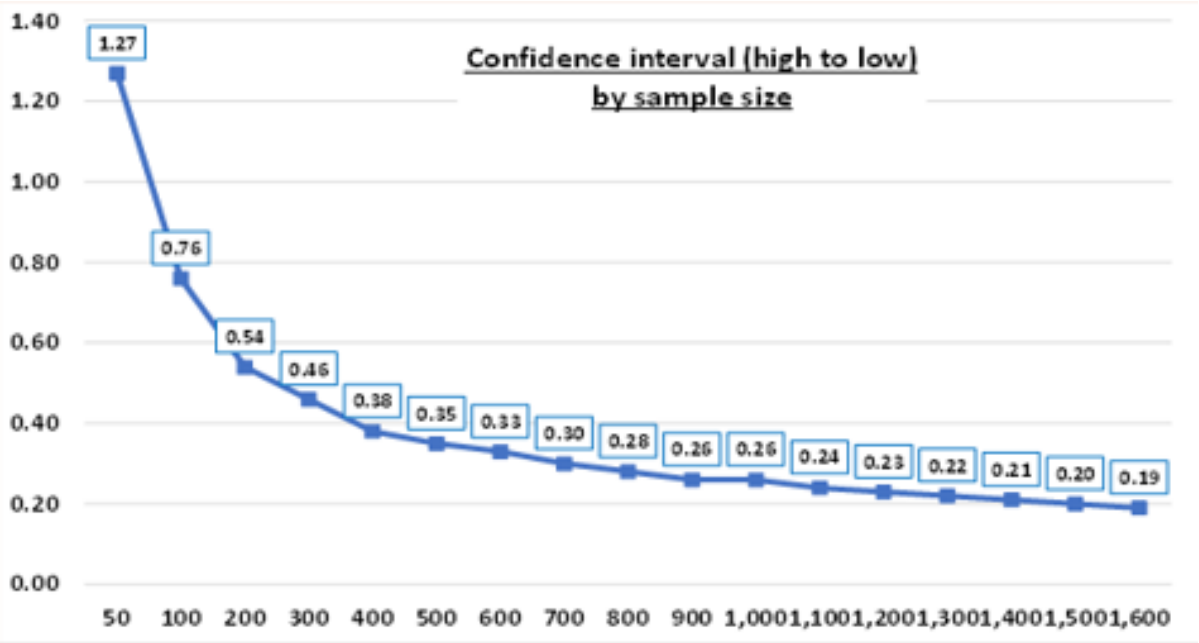
**Table 1 – Delivery Options Considered**

| Engagement Options | Description | Included/ Excluded | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| Door to Door | Door knock properties depending on demographic required similar to the Community Satisfaction Survey process, providing definite parameters regarding response numbers and an even demographic/ward spread. | Included | Seen as the best delivery method to gain broader information and data relating to waste services. |
| Have your say | Provide an option for the community to engage in an online survey via Council's 'Have Your Say' page. | Included | Seen as a practical support mechanism to the door-to-door process. Would replicate the door-to-door survey and would need to be limited to one response per household to gain accurate information. Results of online surveys are likely to differ from those of a door-to-door nature. |
| Focus Groups | Have a Focus group meet to gain feedback relating to the survey. | Excluded | Consultant opinion is that running such a process would not provide more reliable data, nor increase the validity of the engagement process more broadly. |
| Drop in Sessions | To utilise any event such as markets/festivals to engage with the community on a face-to-face level to gain wider feedback. | Excluded | This type of engagement is normally utilised for major plan and strategy development. |
| Phone Survey | Include an additional phone survey to reach a wider audience. | Excluded | These types of surveys generally have a lower response rate. |

### 1.6. Number of Respondents

The proposed survey recommends 500 responses, which is in line with the annual Community Satisfaction Survey. This is due to statistical validity relating to confidence intervals, not improving significantly once 500 respondents are reached. A confidence interval indicates how close a survey result is likely to be to the true community view. For example, if a satisfaction score was achieved of 7.8 from 500 survey responses, at a confidence interval of 0.35, the actual community satisfaction level could be between 7.45 and 8.15. Figure 2 highlights the confidence intervals in relation to response rates.

**Figure 2 – Confidence Intervals vs Response Rates**




The survey is conducted using a stratified sampling methodology based on population of suburbs. This gives statistically viable data from a municipal perspective being Councils Waste Services are provided at a municipal level, with a balance of responses obtained from equal numbers of surveys across suburbs based on population of each.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

The draft survey is estimated to take respondents 5-10 minutes to complete. It is estimated that the proposed 500 surveys would be completed within a three to four week period. The online "Have Your Say" survey is proposed to be open for four weeks and run concurrently with the door-to-door survey from 10 November 2025 to 7 December 2025.

Promotion of the engagement process will be achieved through a campaign running from early November to early December. The proposed approach to this campaign will be to explain to the community that no change or decision is being considered immediately. The purpose of the engagement is to understand their current satisfaction with the household waste service and to understand their sentiment towards change if Council were to consider this in the future. Key messaging would include;

- We want to understand how satisfied you are with our household waste services.
- Interviewers will be visiting some homes across Knox to ask questions and get a representative view.
- Don't want to miss the opportunity to share your feedback? Jump online today.
- Your feedback will be considered by Council to help guide any future decisions about waste services.

The consultation period has been selected to best align with key communication channels, in particular delivery deadlines to reach every household. Consideration has been given to Melbourne Cup week and the process being completed prior to the busy Christmas period.

Promotional material will be presented through various channels including;

- Have Your Say website project page.
- Email notification to Have Your Say subscribers (1800 subscribers).
- Web News story.
- Update on waste web pages to direct to Have Your Say.
- Knox eNews article 12 November and 24 November (9900 subscribers).
- Knox News magazine, back page feature, delivery from 17 November (every household in Knox).
- Community papers – two editions are available in November: Boronia and The Basin, Rowville Lysterfield. Delivery will be in early November, a holding page with the option to subscribe to be notified when the engagement opens will be available (approximately 25,000 homes and businesses).
- Social media paid campaign.
- Mayoral Radio segment 1st Tuesday of the Month can be referenced in November and December.
- Posters in community facilities.
- On hold messages.
- Digital screens at Early Years Hubs, Leisure Works, Libraries.
- Prepared FAQs and key messages for use by staff, Councillors when responding to customer enquiries for consistency in messaging.
- Hard copy survey available on request only.

This engagement process will be in addition to significant engagement campaigns already carried out over the past three years relating to Waste Services including;

- Engagement with the community on waste services and its recently adopted strategy over the last 3 years. This has included dedicated community consultation campaigns, and significant stakeholder engagement including Councillors, contractors, and internal departments.
- Recent targeted proactive engagement with properties identified as having overfull or contaminated bins, and through the Bin Inspection Program.
- Interaction with the community and traders on a daily basis regarding all aspects of waste management services.
- Conducting regular waste education events and workshops with community groups and schools and the general public.
- The recent Community Satisfaction Survey included data on satisfaction with different elements of Waste Services. These results formed part of the Kerbside Reform Update Report presented to Council at the May Council meeting.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Any increase in residential waste charges resulting from new services, coupled with current increased cost of living will financially impact residents. Council is cognisant that some community members have additional needs and will continue to provide options to alleviate the financial burden where possible. At present, Special Consideration Requests allow eligible families an additional rubbish bin free of charge. A small number of additional bins are also offered free on compassionate grounds.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

The collection frequency of kerbside rubbish has a direct correlation with environmental outcomes related to waste management including;

- Positively impact on Council's Net Zero 2030 target and the Community Net Zero 2040 target by ensuring all waste streams are effectively and efficiently collected to allow resource recovery and diversion of waste to landfill (resulting in reduced methane creation and lower greenhouse gas emissions).
- Create opportunities for Council or the community to adapt to climate change through continuous improvement of processes and positive behaviour change associated with waste reduction and resource value. As education and awareness increases in this space, Victoria will shift from a linear waste model to a circular, climate-resilient economy.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Increasing the diversion of resources from landfill and thereby reducing the waste required to be managed into the future not only aligns with Federal and State policy settings, but also with the Knox Climate Response Plan, which identifies organic waste as a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions.

Efficient, well planned, and universally available services with strong education programs also improve service utilisation and can improve local amenity through reduction in dumped rubbish and litter generation.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

As previously reported, returning to a weekly rubbish collection frequency will have a cost implication of between $2,950,000 - $3,410,877 equating to a direct impact to the household waste charge of approximately $57 per household.

The cost to deliver the proposed survey is approximately $35,000 including survey design deliver and reporting as well as an implementation of a communication campaign led by Council. If the decision is made to expand respondents past the recommended 500, costs will increase depending on the number of additional responses.

The cost of this engagement process has been captured within the Waste Education Budget, which is funded through the waste charge.

**7. RISKS**

As an essential service strongly linked to maintaining local amenity and improving broader environmental outcomes, Council's waste services contain considerable environmental and amenity risks. The current service aims to minimise and mitigate these risks by reducing waste to landfill (reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and utilising safe and efficient collection methods.

Any potential changes to Waste Services due to this survey carry significant financial cost for the community as highlighted in Section 6 – Financial and Resource Implications. This is due to the direct correlation of increasing waste that goes to landfill, has on the cost per property relating to the standard waste charge. It is considered that the current waste service methodology provided by Council provides the best value for money and achieves the best environmental outcomes whilst meeting state legislative requirements and targets.

It is possible that undertaking this survey may raise community expectations that Council is considering changes to waste services. Seeking community feedback on rubbish collection frequency options may be perceived that Council will implement an alternate service model with majority rating. If Council does not implement change in line with community feedback there is a strong likelihood of community dissatisfaction, media interest and reputational damage. This could also impact community trust in future engagement processes.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**

Strategy 2.1 - Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.

**Caring for and enhancing our environment**

Strategy 3.1 - Our environment is healthy and sustainable by considering environmental factors when planning for and making decisions.
Strategy 3.3 - Minimise waste to landfill through access to a suite of waste services and education.

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.2 - Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.
Strategy 4.3 - Council services are efficient and optimised through ongoing improvement, and focused investment in innovation, technology and capability.

**Being a strong voice for safety**

Strategy 5.1 - Our community feels safer in public spaces and facilities through planning, maintenance, education, design and proactive program delivery for Council owned and managed spaces and via advocacy for others.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Knox City Council - Proposed Waste Services Engagement Survey [**8.3.1** - 7 pages]

# Knox City Council - 2025 Waste Services Survey

Hello, my name is ____ from Metropolis Research and I am here on behalf of Knox City Council to conduct a short survey about the kerbside waste collection services provided by Council.

The survey takes approximately five minutes to complete, is voluntary, and completely Confidential and anonymous.

## FORTNIGHTLY rubbish (red lid) collection

**1** **On a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high), how satisfied are you with the regular garbage collection?**

| | *Low* | | | | | *Neutral* | | | | | *High* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Regular garbage collection | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |
| **If rated less than 6, why do you say that?** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**2** **What size bin does your household currently have?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 80L | **1** | 240L | **3** |
| 120L | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**3** **Typically, how full is the bin each time you put it out?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full | **1** | Up to 1/4 full | **4** |
| Up to 3/4 full | **2** | Can't say | **9** |
| Up to 1/2 full | **3** | | |

**4** **Do you have any issues with the regular garbage collection?**

*(please select as many as appropriate)*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Smell | **1** | Broken bin or bin lid | **4** |
| Overflowing / overfull bins | **2** | Missing bin | **5** |
| Can't dispose of certain waste *(specify):* _____ _____ | **3** | Other *(specify)* _____ _____ | **6** |

## FORTNIGHTLY recycling (blue lid) collection

**5** **On a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high), how satisfied are you with the recycling collection?**

| | *Low* | | | | | *Neutral* | | | | | *High* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Recycling collection | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |
| **If rated less than 6, why do you say that?** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**6** **Typically, how full is the recycling bin each time you put it out?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full | **1** | Up to 1/4 full | **4** |
| Up to 3/4 full | **2** | Can't say | **9** |
| Up to 1/2 full | **3** | | |

**7** **Do you have any issues with the recycling collection?**

*(please select as many as appropriate)*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overflowing / overfull bins | **1** | Missing bin | **4** |
| Broken bin or bin lid | **2** | | |
| Can't dispose of certain waste *(specify):* _____ _____ | **3** | Other *(specify)* _____ _____ | **5** |

## WEEKLY food and garden waste (lime green lid) collection

**8** **On a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high), how satisfied are you with the food and garden waste collection?**

| | *Low* | | | | | *Neutral* | | | | | *High* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Food and garden waste collection | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |
| If rated less than 6, why do you say that? | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**9** **Typically, how full is the food and garden waste bin each time you put it out?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full | **1** | Up to 1/4 full | **4** |
| Up to 3/4 full | **2** | Can't say | **9** |
| Up to 1/2 full | **3** | | |

**10** **Would you like an option for a smaller, 80L FOGO bin?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | **1** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |
| No | **2** | | |

**11** **Do you have any issues with the food and garden waste collection?**

*(please select as many as appropriate)*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Smell | **1** | Broken bin or bin lid | **4** |
| Overflowing / overfull bins | **2** | Missing bin | **5** |
| Can't dispose of certain waste *(specify):* _____ _____ | **3** | Other *(specify)* _____ _____ | **6** |

## Hard waste collection

**12** **Council offers kerbside hard waste collection via two booked services per year. Before today, were you aware of this service, and if so, have you used this service in the last 12 months?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aware of and have used the service | **1** | Aware of but have not used | **2** |
| **If YES, how many times?** | | Not aware of the service | **3** |

**13** **How likely are you to use the hard waste collection service in the next 12 months?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Will definitely use the service | **1** | Unlikely to use the service | **3** |
| May use the service | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**14** **On a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high), how satisfied are you with the hard rubbish collection?**

| | *Low* | | | | | *Neutral* | | | | | *High* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Hard rubbish collection | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |

**If rated less than 6, why do you say that?**

**15** **If used, how much do you typically put out?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than one cubic metre (*a standard bookcase*) | **1** | Three cubic metres or more | **3** |
| One to less than three cubic metres | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**16** **Would a cap of three cubic metres impact on your use of the service?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes - definitely | **1** | No | **3** |
| Yes - possibly | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**If YES, why do you say that?**

## Bundled green waste collection

**17** **Council offers a fortnightly service where green waste (e.g. branches) are picked up providing they are neatly bundled with twine. Before today, were you aware of this service, and if so, have you used this service in the last 12 months?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aware of and have used the service | **1** | Aware of but have not used | **2** |
| **If YES, how many times?** | | Not aware of the service | **3** |

**18** **How likely are you to use the bundled green waste collection service in the next 12 months?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Will definitely use the service | **1** | Unlikely to use the service | **3** |
| May use the service | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**19** **On a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high), how satisfied are you with the bundled green waste collection?**

| | *Low* | | | | | *Neutral* | | | | | *High* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Bundled green waste collection | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |

**If rated less than 6, why do you say that?**

**20** **If used, how much do you typically put out?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than one cubic metre | **1** | Three cubic metres or more | **3** |
| One to less than three cubic metres | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**21** **Has your use of this service declined since the introduction of the food and garden waste service?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes - significantly | **1** | No | **3** |
| Yes - somewhat | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**22** **Would a reduction in the frequency of collection impact your use of the service?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes - definitely | **1** | No | **3** |
| Yes - possibly | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**If YES, why do you say that?**

## Glass only collection service

**23** **Before today, were you aware that the State Government requires Council to implement a glass only collection service by 2027, at a direct cost to residents?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes - I was aware of this | **1** | No - I was unaware of this | **2** |

**24** **Do you support this State Government initiative?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes - definitely | **1** | No | **3** |
| Yes - possibly | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**25** **Approximately how many glass containers does your household typically generate per week?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than five | **1** | 10 or more | **3** |
| Five to less than 10 | **2** | Don't know / can't say | **9** |

**26** **Before today, were you aware of the Container Deposit Scheme (10c rebate on return)?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes - aware of and have used the scheme | **1** | No - not aware of the scheme | **3** |
| Yes - aware of, but have not used the scheme | **2** | | |

## Current options to increase bin capacity

**27** **In the past 12 months, which, if any of the following has your household done to manage your rubbish bin capacity?**

*(please select as many as appropriate)*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reduce waste (e.g. food, green, general) | **1** | Upgraded bin size | **4** |
| Composted at home | **2** | Taken waste to a transfer station | **5** |
| Used Council's food and garden bin for all food scraps | **3** | Other *(specify)* _____ _____ | **6** |

**28** **Before today, were you aware that you can upgrade from an 80L rubbish bin to a 120L rubbish bin for an annual additional cost of $48.50?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aware of and have upgraded | **1** | Not aware of this service | **3** |
| Aware of but have not upgraded | **2** | | |

**29** **Before today, were you aware that you can order an additional 120L bin (or upgrade from a 120L to 240L rubbish bin for an annual additional cost of $107.29?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aware of and have upgraded | **1** | Not aware of this service | **3** |
| Aware of but have not upgraded | **2** | | |

## Special consideration programs

**30** **Before today, were you aware of the special consideration program to provide a free additional bin for households with excessive waste due to medical needs?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aware of and have accessed this service | **1** | Not aware of this service | **3** |
| Aware of but have not accessed the service | **2** | | |

**31** **Before today, were you aware of the special consideration program to provide a free additional bin for households with two or more children in disposable nappies (up to six years of age)?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aware of and have accessed this service | **1** | Not aware of this service | **3** |
| Aware of but have not accessed the service | **2** | | |

## Council's waste management and diversion progress

**The universal food and garden service, along with the change in collection frequency, was successfully implemented in Knox in 2023.**

**32** **Before today, were you aware that these changes to the system have led to the following financial and environmental benefits to the Knox community?**

| | *Aware* | *Unaware* |
|---|---|---|
| Knox has become one of Victoria's leading councils for diverting waste away from landfill (for recycling, composting, etc). The government set a target of 72% of waste to be diverted from landfill by 2025, and Knox achieved 71% in 2024/25. | **1** | **2** |
| The introduction of the food and garden bin has led to the diversion of approximately 32,000 tonnes of organic material annually, saving ratepayers approximately $1.2 million per year (*which are passed on to the community reducing the waste charge*). | **1** | **2** |
| This had led to a reduction of approximately 23,600 tonnes of landfill-based greenhouse gas emissions per year | **1** | **2** |

## Alternative waste collection options

**33** **On a scale of 0 (very unimportant) to 10 (very important), how important do you believe the following should be when designing the kerbside collection services?**

| | *Very Unimportant* | | | | | *Neutral* | | | | | *Very Important* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The cost to individual ratepayers | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |
| 2. The convenience to householders | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |
| 3. The environmental impacts of waste going to landfill | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Can't say* |

**34** **Taking everything into account, which of the following options do you prefer for the kerbside collections?**

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Option One*** (the current system) - a fortnightly garbage collection, a fortnightly recycling collection, and a weekly food and garden waste collection. No change to the current cost to ratepayers and the environmental impacts. | **1** |
| ***Option Two*** (alternative) - a weekly garbage collection, a fortnightly recycling collection, and a weekly food and garden waste collection. Additional cost to all ratepayers of approximately $57 per household per year, and likely to increase waste going to landfill and increase in greenhouse gas emissions (due to lower diversion rates). | **2** |

## Respondent profile

**35** **Please indicate which of the following age groups best describes you?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 - 19 Years | **1** | 46 - 60 Years | **4** |
| 20 - 35 Years | **2** | 61 - 75 Years | **5** |
| 36 - 45 Years | **3** | 76 Years or Over | **6** |

**36** **With which gender to you identify?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Man / Male | **1** | Prefer to self identify: | **4** |
| Women / female | **2** | _____ | |
| Non-binary | **3** | Prefer not to say | **9** |

**37** **Do any members of the household speak a language other than English at home?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| English only | **1** | Other : _____ | **2** |

**38** **Do any members of the household identify with a permanent or long-term disability?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | **1** | No | **2** |

**39** **How many adults and children typically reside in this dwelling?**

Number of adults ☐ Number of children ☐

**40** **In what type of dwelling do you live?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Separate detached home | **1** | Low rise flat, unit or apartment *(2 to 4 storeys)* | **4** |
| Semi-detached, row, or terrace house | **2** | High rise flat, unit, or apartment *(5 or more storeys)* | **5** |
| Single storey flat or unit | **3** | Prefer not to say | **9** |

**41** **In which suburb do you live?**

Suburb:

**42** **Do you have any other general comments you would like to make regarding kerbside collection services in the City of Knox?**

## THANK YOU FOR TIME AND FEEDBACK

# 8.4 2026 Council Meeting Schedule

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Decision
**Author:** Acting Manager Governance and Risk, Saskia Weerheim
**Executive:** Acting Director Customer and Performance, Scott Coleman

**SUMMARY**
The current arrangements for meetings are set out in Council's Meeting Structures and Cycles Policy. This report outlines the proposed meeting schedule for the 2026 calendar year, in alignment with this Policy.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
That Council resolve to adopt the proposed 2026 Council Meeting Schedule set out in Attachment 1.

## 1. DISCUSSION

The schedule for meetings in 2026 has been prepared based on the traditional cycle as set out in Council's Meeting Structures and Cycles Policy (see table below), with some variations as outlined further in this report.

| | |
|---|---|
| **First Monday of the Month** | **Issues Briefing** |
| **Second Monday of the Month** | **Mid-Month Council Meeting (7 pm start)**<br>**Issues Briefing** |
| **Third Monday of the Month** | **Issues Briefing** |
| **Fourth Monday of the Month** | **Council Meeting (7 pm start)** |

Additional meetings may also be scheduled throughout the year as and when required, and dates may be amended in accordance with Chapter 2, Part C of Council's Governance Rules.

### 1.1 Proposed Meeting Schedule 2026

The proposed schedule for 2026 is included in Attachment 1. The schedule flags school holidays, public holidays impacting Council meeting and the Mayoral Election.

Only Council Meeting dates need to be set by Council resolution. The schedule for Issues Briefing Meetings is separately agreed in consultation with councillors.

### 1.2 Council Meetings

Following is a discussion of departures from the usual cycle for Council Meetings impacting the 2026 schedule:

- In January, it is customary to commence the year with a Council Meeting, and in 2026, the Meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, 27 January 2026 – noting that Monday 26 January 2026 is the Australia Day public holiday.
- In March, the Mid-Month Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 10 March 2026 to accommodate the Labour Day public holiday on Monday, 9 March 2026.

- In June, the King's Birthday public holiday is on Monday, 8 June 2026. The Mid-Month Council Meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, 9 June 2026 to accommodate this public holiday.
- In November, the Annual Meeting to elect the Mayor has been scheduled for Thursday 19 November 2026, which aligns as closely as practicable to the one-year anniversary of the 2025 Mayoral Election Meeting (held on Thursday, 20 November 2025).
- In December, the last Council Meeting for the year is proposed for Monday 14 December 2026.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**
Councillors and Council's Executive Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of the 2026 Meeting Schedule.

Once adopted by the Council, the Schedule of Council Meetings will be communicated to the community via Council's website.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
Nil.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**
Nil.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**
Nil.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
Nil.

**7. RISKS**
Setting the 2026 Council Meeting Schedule in advance mitigates risk and promotes good governance and effective decision-making. With agreed timelines in place, Council, councillors and officers can plan efficiently, ensure transparency, and avoid delays that may otherwise affect the timely delivery of commitments.

A clear and predictable schedule also mitigates risks to councillor wellbeing and sustainable workload management. By locking in meeting times, councillors can better plan and manage their responsibilities and commitments in the interests of a healthy work-life balance.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**
**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**
Strategy 4.1 - Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Proposed 2026 Council Meeting Schedule [**8.4.1** - 1 page]

## Draft 2026 Council Meeting Schedule

| Day | Date | Time | Meeting |
|---|---|---|---|
| **JANUARY** | | | |
| Monday, 26 January 2026: Australia Day Public Holiday | | | |
| Tuesday | 27 January 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **FEBRUARY** | | | |
| Monday | 9 February 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 23 February 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **MARCH** | | | |
| Monday, 9 March 2026: Labour Day Public Holiday | | | |
| Tuesday | 10 March 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 23 March 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **APRIL** | | | |
| Monday, 6 April 2026: Easter Monday Public Holiday | | | |
| School Holidays: 6 April 2026 - 17 April 2026 | | | |
| Monday | 13 April 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 27 April 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **MAY** | | | |
| Monday | 11 May 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 25 May 2026 | 7.00pm | Council |
| **JUNE** | | | |
| Monday, 8 June 2026: King's Birthday Public Holiday | | | |
| Tuesday | 9 June 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 22 June 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| School Holidays: 29 June 2026 – 10 July 2026 | | | |
| **JULY** | | | |
| Monday | 13 July 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 27 July 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **AUGUST** | | | |
| Monday | 10 August 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 24 August 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **SEPTEMBER** | | | |
| Monday | 14 September 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| School Holidays: 21 September 2026 - 2 October 2026 | | | |
| Monday | 28 September 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **OCTOBER** | | | |
| Monday | 12 October 2026 | 7.00pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Monday | 26 October 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **NOVEMBER** | | | |
| Tuesday 3 November 2026: Melbourne Cup Day Public Holiday | | | |
| Monday | 9 November 2026 | 6.30pm | Mid-Month Council Meeting |
| Thursday | 19 November 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting (for the Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor) |
| Monday | 23 November 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| **DECEMBER** | | | |
| Monday | 14 December 2026 | 7.00pm | Council Meeting |
| School Holidays commence on Monday 21 December 2026 | | | |

## 8.5 Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025 - Final Report

| | |
|---|---|
| **Final Report Destination:** | Council Meeting |
| **Paper Type:** | For Decision |
| **Author:** | Social and Inclusive Communities Lead, Lana Harris |
| **Manager:** | Acting Manager Community Access and Support, Lana Harris |
| **Executive:** | Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley |

**SUMMARY**
The Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025 (Knox CYS Plan) was approved by Council in February 2022. The Plan responded to the five key directions outlined in the Knox Council Plan 2021-2025, applying a life course lens to identify the differing interests, needs and priorities of children, young people and seniors. The Plan reached the end of its life cycle in June 2025.

The report provides details of all actions and key achievements from July 2021 to June 2025 with the plan now at conclusion (refer Attachment 1). All actions within the Knox CYS Plan have been completed, successfully delivering important outcomes for each of the targeted life stage cohorts.

The final Knox CYS Plan report provides an overview of how outcomes aligned with community needs have been delivered, showcasing the breadth of work undertaken across the 4-year term.

The Knox Child Youth and Seniors Plan was our commitment to an integrated and intergenerational approach to services. The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, which has been shaped by our community and reflects the vision, values and aspirations of the people of Knox, has been developed with the awareness of the importance of the key life stages of the community. The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 will guide where we focus our services and support the Knox community, with the life stages of children, youth and seniors represented in this Plan.

While the formal lifespan of the Child Youth and Seniors Plan concluded in June 2025, Council remains committed to ongoing actions that address issues impacting the community across all life stages – children, young people, and seniors. However, with these life stage cohorts embedded in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 as well as Service Plans for Early Years, Youth and Seniors, a new standalone plan is not required. These Service Plans will be an integral part of guiding the way in which we continue to deliver programs and services that meet the needs of Knox residents, demonstrating our shared commitment to long term outcomes for children, young people and seniors.

To ensure accountability in achieving the goals outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 and associated service plans, a biennial report aligning with the financial year will be completed and presented to Council. The report will provide transparency and demonstrate progress across each cohort, reinforcing our commitment to delivering measurable outcomes for children, young people and seniors.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Note the final report of the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-2025, provided as Attachment 1.
2. Endorse that Officers provide to Council a report every two years to demonstrate the ongoing impact of our services and share insights into effective service delivery, regarding Child, Youth and Seniors.

## 1. DISCUSSION

### 1.1 Background

The Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-25 supported the delivery of the Knox Community Plan 2021-31 and Knox Council Plan 2021-25. The Plan responded to the five key directions outlined in the Knox Council Plan 2021-2025, applying a life course lens to identify the differing interests, needs and priorities of children, young people and seniors. It built on our commitment to an integrated and intergenerational planning process first established in the previous Knox Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021.

The objectives of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-25 were as follows:

- To value the unique perspectives, experiences, abilities and contributions of residents across the life course, from the youngest to the oldest residents in Knox;
- To promote greater understanding of the changing priorities, needs and challenges facing children, young people and seniors in Knox; and
- To identify opportunities for intergenerational activities that build understanding and strengthen community connectedness across the life course.

The Plan was developed through consultation and engagement with the Knox community, including the three priority population groups of children (early years), young people and seniors. Community input and feedback from the engagement activities undertaken during the development of the Knox Community and Council Plans influenced the Plan's direction and actions.

Previously, in accordance with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, there was a legislative requirement to maintain a standalone Early Years plan. However, this is no longer a requirement.

### 1.2 Overview of Report

The final report (refer to Attachment 1 Final Report Knox CYS Plan 2021-2025) includes:

- Key achievements of the Plan;
- Case studies highlighting significant projects delivered across each of the three age cohorts, as well as intergenerational activities; and
- Reflections that explore the challenges, opportunities, and priorities that inform future planning for these cohorts.

#### 1.2.1 Key Achievements

Over the past four years, the Knox CYS Plan has delivered a range of positive outcomes. All 33 actions outlined within the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan have been successfully completed.

Below are key achievements and highlights, with the comprehensive list of all achievements across the past four years documented in the final report, Attachment 1 - Final Report Knox CYS Plan 2021-2025.

**Children (0-6 Years)**

- Secured a lease with Interchange Outer East to deliver allied health services in Early Years Hubs.
- Established a First Nations Playgroup with VACCA and committed to embedding Indigenous perspectives in Early Years services.
- Established the Kindergarten Provider Network to strengthen collaboration and promote access to kindergarten for all eligible Knox children.

**Young People (10-25 Years)**

- Provided skill development workshops focusing on skill-based activities including first aid skills, reaching over 400 young people.
- Facilitated parent webinars, reaching over 1,300 parents and carers.
- Hosted the inaugural 2021 Youth Summit online, with 49 students from six schools, and for the 2023 Youth Summit hosted an in-person event with 44 students from ten schools.

**Seniors (Over-55 Years)**

- Supported digital literacy through training sessions and scam prevention programs, including a pilot program in partnership with the Department of Government Services. The session attracted 45 participants, who were provided with practical strategies to safeguard their personal information.
- Assisted over 3,300 Knox seniors as a Commonwealth Home Support Programme provider for Meals on Wheels, Home Maintenance, Home Modifications and Occupational Therapy, and delivered an average of 2,600 meals a month.
- Over two years, delivered over 20 dementia awareness sessions across the broader community. Audiences included the Bright Ideas Network, Life Activities Club Ferntree Gully, Wantirna South Probus, Knoxfield Ladies Probus, Your Library staff, and Knox City Council staff.

**Intergenerational**

- Delivered successful intergenerational programs across playgroups, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, retirement villages and aged care facilities growing to 21 programs and 486 participants in 2024-25, many of which are now embedded in the respective organisation’s regular planning.
- The fishing program for vulnerable men, Keeping It Reel, received an Outstanding Commendation at the 2025 LGPro Positive Ageing and Wellbeing Awards for the Outstanding Program/Project (grant based) category.

### 1.2.2 Case Studies

This report presents case studies that highlight significant projects related to actions within the Knox CYS Plan:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Early Years Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Systems Project**<br>Action 5.4: Undertake business system improvements to remain sustainable and enhance the experience of community members accessing Children's Services. | The "Enrol Now" software was implemented to centralise Kindergarten and Long Day Care registrations, enrolments, allocations, attendance, communication and reporting into one system for families and staff. This has improved customer experience, replacing three previous software platforms. |
| **Allied Health Service in Early Years Hub**<br>4.11: Establish allied health services within the Wantirna South and Bayswater Early Years Hubs to provide an integrated service delivery model. | Council entered into a Lease Agreement at our Children and Family Centres at Bayswater and Wantirna South with Interchange Outer East who will provide allied health services for our families with young children in Knox, providing co-locality of services to increase participation and support for vulnerable families in the Knox community. |
| **Young Parents Program**<br>Action 4.7: Deliver individual and group-based wellbeing programs, services and supports to young people and their families. | Facilitated by Youth Services in partnership with Children's Services, this Program offers a structured format to support young parents to strengthen the bond with their child and connect with other young parents. It provides critical information to support the development of babies, as well as social connection and wrap-around support to address the unique challenges faced by young parents. |
| **Youth Hive**<br>Action 2.3: Manage and support the relocation of the Knox Youth Information Centre to a new site (co-located with the Knox Library, inside Westfield Knox) to support the health and wellbeing of young people and their families. | The Youth Hive opened in March 2024 and is a dedicated space within the new Knox Library, offering comprehensive programming designed to build practical skills and foster personal development for young people of Knox. It provides young people with exposure to emerging technologies through artificial intelligence programming and real-world skill building applicable to future employment opportunities. |
| **Dementia Friendly Action Plan**<br>Action 4.12: Support the development of new dementia support pathways, build workforce capacities and apply dementia friendly principles to the design of new facilities. | A comprehensive engagement process supported the development of the first Knox Dementia Friendly Action Plan. The Knox Dementia Alliance has been formed, consisting of industry volunteers, carers and people living with dementia. Knox staff provided the Become a Dementia Friend |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Awareness Program to cover 20 separate Knox audiences, including Council staff, community clubs, seniors' networks and local libraries. |
| **Keeping It Reel Program**<br>Action 4.1: Review, deliver and support programs and initiatives that address social isolation loneliness for seniors across the municipality. | Knox City Council introduced an inaugural "Keeping It Reel" men's fishing program during the 2024 Seniors' Festival, supported by a State Government Grant. This program was designed to engage men over-55 who had limited or no social connections, lived alone and had existing barriers that impact on participation in other social programs. Of the 20 participants, 70% attended all session, with several ongoing friendships formed as a result. |
| **Intergenerational Forum**<br>Action 4.15: Design and deliver a range of intergenerational activities, events and programs across the Knox municipality. | The "Building Connections Between Generations Forum" was held in March 2023 with over 80 people attending in-person and online. The event showcased successful local intergenerational programs, strengthened Council's relationship with local services and brokered new connections between community organisations wanting to become involved in intergenerational activity. |
| **The InterGen Project – Intergenerational Community Resource Toolkit**<br>Action 4.15: Design and deliver a range of intergenerational activities, events and programs across the Knox municipality. | Knox City Council took part in The InterGen Project – a collaboration with Swinburne University and RMIT which led to the creation of a Community Toolkit to support community when developing and maintaining a sustainable intergenerational program. The Project was shortlisted as a finalist in the Outstanding Intergenerational Innovation and Contribution Award 2025 category by the Australian Institute of Practice. |

### 1.2.3 Reflections

**Successes**

**Community Voice and Engagement**

- Successfully supported all age cohorts to ensure their voices guided planning and delivery of CYS Plan action items and Council services, including the "Voice of the Child" initiative, Youth Summits, Youth Advisory Committee, and various Seniors Advisory and Steering Committees.
- Enhanced community engagement by tailoring consultation strategies to different groups - using digital platforms for younger people while maintaining face-to-face meetings for older residents.

- Inclusion of all life stages voices in the development of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

**Service Delivery Innovation**

- Demonstrated the effectiveness of adopting a life stages approach to service delivery and community planning, which transformed how we understand and respond to our community's diverse needs.
- Enabled design of services that specifically address the distinct needs of different demographic groups, from early childhood and families to youth, and seniors, resulting in enhanced community participation through tailored programming rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Operational Improvements**

- Improved coordination between departments, with housing, transport, recreation, youth, and social connections working together around life stages needs, creating more integrated support for residents.
- Established the Pulse reporting system (since 2022) to improve tracking of implementation of the Plan actions.
- Delivered many standout outcomes for community, such as those highlighted in the Case Studies.

**Challenges and Trends**

**External Factors**

- The COVID-19 Pandemic significantly impacted participation in volunteering and community connection activities in the first two years, particularly for seniors, though participation progressively increased over the second two years through targeted programming.
- Heightened cost of living pressures continues to place high demand on support services, such as Council's Housing Support Program for seniors.
- Significant State Government reform to early childhood services impacted Council's direction regarding kindergarten services delivery.

**Service Delivery Adjustments**

- Council transitioned to remaining a service provider only in the two Early Years Hubs from 1 January 2025, ceasing provision of remaining sessional kindergarten services at the conclusion of 2024.
- Council expanded its Early Years Municipal Planning role, including advocacy to State Government on quality and accessible early years programs.

**Opportunities**

- Collaboration across the Connected Communities Directorate and other departments created opportunities for internal and external partnerships, including:
  - Access to diverse perspectives and relevant expertise to address complex issues.
  - Greater funding opportunities and resources.
  - Enhanced benchmarking and data collection capabilities.
  - Improved promotion of events and community awareness-raising.

- Victorian Government's revised Child Safe Standards (July 2022) provides enhanced guidance for integrating children and young people's voices in service planning and delivery.
- Opportunity to leverage lessons learned about strategic flexibility to develop more adaptive planning frameworks.
- Alignment with the new Council Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 to enable more responsive annual service planning.

**1.3 Next Steps**

The Knox Child Youth and Seniors Plan was our commitment to an integrated and intergenerational approach to services. The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, which has been shaped by our community and reflects the vision, values and aspirations of the people of Knox, has been developed with the awareness of the importance of the key life stages of the community. The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 will guide where we focus our services and support the Knox community, with the life stages of children, youth and seniors represented in this Plan.

While the formal lifespan of the Child Youth and Seniors Plan concluded in June 2025, Council remains committed to ongoing actions that address issues impacting the community across all life stages – children, young people, and seniors. However, with these life stage cohorts embedded in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029; as well as Service Plans for Early Years, Youth and Seniors; a new standalone plan is not required. These Service Plans will be an integral part of guiding the way in which we continue to deliver programs and services that meet the needs of Knox residents.

By integrating both the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 and the Service Plans, we are well positioned to embed the learnings of the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan into our work, ensuring they become part of our everyday practice and they provide the agility to be responsive to community needs.

It is proposed to provide Council with an update every two years to demonstrate the ongoing impact of our services and share insights about effective service delivery. Regular reporting would keep Council well-informed about how our programs are meeting community needs and best practice, whilst providing structured opportunities to reflect on outcomes and adapt to changing community circumstances. This approach would enable the departments to remain responsive to evolving community requirements rather than adhering rigidly to plans that may no longer align with current needs.

These biennial updates would strengthen connection to Council by showcasing the real outcomes of our community work and provide current information about service effectiveness and community impact. The two-year reporting cycle represents an appropriate balance - frequent enough to share meaningful progress and allow for timely service improvements, whilst avoiding unnecessary administrative burden. This commitment reflects a focus on continuous improvement in delivering valuable community outcomes and adapting to emerging needs. It ensures Council is informed of progress and impact in providing positive outcomes for the community.

The attached final report outlines the service goals across each life stage and illustrates how these objectives align with the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

The Knox CYS Plan was developed through consultation and engagement with the Knox community, including the three priority population groups of children (early years), young people and seniors. Community input and feedback from the engagement activities undertaken during the development of the Knox Community and Council Plans also influenced the CYS Plan's direction and actions.

There is ongoing engagement occurring to guide the development of annual actions supporting the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 and Service Plans. Examples include the "Voice of the Child" initiative, Early Years Advisory Committee, Youth Summits, Knox Youth Advisory Committee, Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee, Knox Dementia Advisory Group and the Knox Dementia Alliance. In addition, staff embed feedback opportunities in the delivery of events, activities and initiatives to guide future program delivery and strategic planning.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report has highlighted a range of positive social impacts for the Knox community. The three priority population groups targeted in the Knox CYS Plan 2021-2025 have been supported to enhance their health and wellbeing, and there have been increased opportunities for community participation, skill development and social inclusion.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

Specific actions were included in the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-25 that relate to climate change education and awareness raising. Implementation of these actions and embedding sustainable practice into Council's service delivery will positively impact opportunities for the community to adapt to climate change.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications as result of this report. The Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan implementation is funded within the existing Connected Communities operational budgets and staff resources.

**7. RISKS**

Risks associated with the delivery of actions included in the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan were considered by the responsible Department(s) as part of the project management process when being implemented. The future delivery of programs and services will be guided by an awareness of potential risks, which will be proactively addressed through the planning process.

## 8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029

**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**

Strategy 1.2 - Our community can access diverse training and life-long learning opportunities through delivery, promotion and partnerships with relevant organisations.

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**

Strategy 2.2 - Cultural diversity is celebrated through assisting, participating in, facilitating and delivering accessible programs, initiatives and events in partnership with our community, community groups and service providers.
Strategy 2.3 - Our community is supported to thrive during all stages of life through the promotion and provision of services, advocacy and partnerships with local service providers.

**Caring for and enhancing our environment**

Strategy 3.2 - Green spaces and waterways are protected, enhanced and enjoyed through planning, promotion and maintenance of our built and natural environment.
Strategy 3.3 - Minimise waste to landfill through access to a suite of waste services and education.

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.1 - Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.
Strategy 4.2 - Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.
Strategy 4.3 - Council services are efficient and optimised through ongoing improvement, and focused investment in innovation, technology and capability.
Strategy 4.4 - The changing needs of our community are met through informed policy and strategy that maximises value, collaboration and partnerships with other councils and local organisations.

**Being a strong voice for safety**

Strategy 5.1 - Our community feels safer in public spaces and facilities through planning, maintenance, education, design and proactive program delivery for Council owned and managed spaces and via advocacy for others.
Strategy 5.2 - Safety and liveability are prioritised through the planning, delivery and enforcement of local laws and regulatory services.
Strategy 5.3 - Our community is more secure, connected and feel less isolated through planning, partnerships, advocacy and targeted support for our most vulnerable.

## 9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

## 10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

## 11. CONFIDENTIALITY

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Final Report Knox CYS Plan 2021 2025 (1) [**8.5.1** - 45 pages]

# Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021 – 2025 Final Report

September 2025

# Contents

**Contents** ..... **2**

**Background** ..... **3**

Scope of Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-25 ..... 4

**Overview of progress** ..... **5**

**Key achievements** ..... **6**

Children (0-6 years) ..... 6

Young people (10-25 years) ..... 6

Seniors (over 55 years) ..... 7

Intergenerational ..... 8

**Case studies** ..... **9**

Early Years Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Systems Project ..... 9

Allied Health Service in Early Years Hub ..... 10

Young Parents Program ..... 11

Youth Hive ..... 12

Dementia Friendly Action Plan ..... 13

Keeping it Reel Program ..... 15

Intergenerational Forum - Building Connections between Generations ..... 16

The InterGen Project - Intergenerational Community Resource Toolkit ..... 17

**Reflections** ..... **18**

Successes ..... 18

Challenges and Trends ..... 18

**Continuity of Programming** ..... **20**

**Summary** ..... **21**

**Next steps** ..... **22**

**Appendix 1: Action Acquittal – Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan Implementation** ..... **23**

**Key** ..... 23

Key Direction 1: Opportunity and Innovation ..... 24

Key Direction 2: Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure ..... 27

Key Direction 3: Natural environment and sustainability ..... 30

Key Direction 4: Connection, resilience and wellbeing ..... 31

Key Direction 5: Civic engagement and integrity ..... 42

# Background

The *Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-25* supported the delivery of the Knox Community Plan 2021-31 and Knox Council Plan 2021-25. The Plan responded to the five key directions outlined in the Knox Council Plan 2021-25, applying a life course lens to identify the differing interests, needs and priorities of children, young people and seniors. It built on our commitment to an integrated and intergenerational planning process first established in the previous Knox Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021.

The objectives of the Child, Youth and Seniors (CY&S) Plan 2021-25 were as follows:

- To value the unique perspectives, experiences, abilities and contributions of residents across the life course, from the youngest to the oldest residents in Knox
- To promote greater understanding of the changing priorities, needs and challenges facing children, young people and seniors in Knox
- To identify opportunities for intergenerational activities that build understanding and strengthen community connectedness across the life course.

The CY&S Plan was developed through consultation and engagement with the Knox community, including the three priority population groups of children (early years), young people and seniors. Community input and feedback from the engagement activities undertaken during the development of the Knox Community and Council Plans influenced the Plan's direction and actions.

The Community Strengthening department had overseen the creation of the CY&S Plan and mid term report to Council, with input from relevant stakeholder departments. Lead responsibility for this plan has now rightly shifted to Community Access and Support department with input from the Early Years department who are the other stakeholder for the child life stage.

The purpose of this report is to provide a status of all actions and key achievements from July 2021 to June 2025 with the Plan now at conclusion of its timelines. Identification of opportunities, challenges, and ongoing priorities that can inform future strategic and service planning for these cohorts has also been considered. The report provides an overview of how the Plan delivered outcomes aligned with community needs, showcasing the breadth of work undertaken throughout its duration. The report also highlights actions that have become embedded as standard practice, as well as those now incorporated into the endorsed Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. Service Plans for Early Years, Youth and Seniors also reflect the ongoing needs for these life stage cohorts.

## Scope of Child, Youth and Seniors Plan 2021-25

Actions within the CY&S Plan 2021-25 corresponded with the five key directions of the Council Plan 2021-25:

| Key Direction | Successful implementation of the CY&S Plan |
|---|---|
| **Key Direction 1: Opportunity and Innovation**<br>Encourage and supports skills development and lifelong learning for all people in Knox | • Increased community engagement in learning across the life course<br>• Support residents to develop skills and knowledge that increase capacity to live independent and healthy lives<br>• Compliance with all current and emerging legislative and regulatory requirements in the provision of early years services |
| **Key Direction 2: Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure**<br>Plan for and support diverse housing to meet changing community needs<br>Create, enhance and maintain places and spaces for people to live, work, play and connect<br>Provide, maintain and advocate for accessible for sustainable ways for moving around Knox | • Planning and delivery of infrastructure to meet the needs of children, young people and seniors<br>• Improved access to transportation including public transport and car parking, to meet needs across the life course<br>• Increased awareness of housing support services |
| **Key Direction 3: Natural environment and sustainability**<br>Prepare for, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change | • Children, young people and seniors are more strongly connected to the natural environment in their local neighbourhood<br>• Increased knowledge of sustainability, climate change and environmental challenges, including how to take positive action |
| **Key Direction 4: Connection Resilience and Wellbeing**<br>Respond to emerging social and health issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic<br>Support our community to improve their physical, mental and social health and wellbeing<br>Foster inclusivity, equality, belonging and safety within the community<br>Honour and integrate First Nations Culture into actions and environments | • Enhanced social connections for children, young people and seniors to address the impacts of social isolation and loneliness<br>• Responding to the health and wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for children, young people and seniors<br>• Increased community participation and connection across cultural groups and generations |
| **Key Direction 5: Civic Engagement & Integrity**<br>Provide opportunities for all people in Knox to have their say<br>Manage our resources effectively to ensure financial sustainability and improved customer experience | • Recognition of Knox as an Age Friendly and Child Friendly City<br>• Capture the voices of children, young people and seniors in community engagement and consultation processes<br>• Improved customer service for residents accessing early years' services |

# Overview of progress

The below table summarises the progress against the CY&S Plan action items following the full four years of implementation. All actions within the CY&S Plan 2021-2025 have been completed.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Completed | 33 | Progress against this action item has been completed.<br>Reporting against this action item will not be required for future reporting periods. |
| **TOTAL** | **33** | |

A full acquittal of each action within the Plan is included as Appendix A. Key achievements are summarised in the section below.

# Key achievements

The information below provides a summary of key achievements between July 2021 and June 2025 from the Knox Child, Youth and Senior's Plan 2021-2025, grouped by life stage.

### Children (0-6 years)

- Developed an internal confidential data management process across Early Years teams to assist in the initial identification and tracking of priority cohort children.
- Secured Council's endorsement of the provision of two years of kindergarten, adding 15 hours for 3-year-old children to our existing 15 hours for 4-year-old children, which commenced in Council-run services since 2022.
- Established the Kindergarten Provider Network to strengthen collaboration and promote access to kindergarten for all eligible Knox children.
- Completed the Early Years Infrastructure Project in 2021, and further assessment of infrastructure as part of the Community and Social Infrastructure Modelling (CASIMO) database project in 2023.
- Created a welcome mural at the Wantirna South Families and Children's Hub, by a local Indigenous artist and in local language.
- Enhanced the bush tucker gardens at the Wantirna South and Bayswater Hubs with additional indigenous plants and training for kitchen staff to build the 'paddock to plate' approach.
- Incorporated the local Woiwurrung language in program delivery and foyer displays at Hubs.
- Completed initial planning, benchmarking and process mapping to enable successful implementation of the 'Voice of the Child' opportunities across Council.
- Implemented a new software system to streamline online registration, enrolments and attendance processes for families, which replaces three separate systems and digitises children's enrolment and attendance records.
- Completed a Kindergarten Service Review and successfully transitioned sessional kindergarten provision to five not-for-profit kindergarten providers across 18 early years facilities.
- Implemented the Child Sharing Scheme to improve child safety and wellbeing.
- Secured a lease with Interchange Outer East to deliver allied health services in Early Years Hubs.
- Established a First Nations playgroup with VACCA and committed to embedding Indigenous perspectives in early years services.
- Became a signatory to the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities.

### Young people (10-25 years)

- Facilitated parent webinars, reaching over 1300 parents and carers.
- Delivered young sporting leaders programs, reaching over 30 young female sporting leaders
- Provided skill development workshops focusing on skill-based activities including first aid skills, reaching over 400 young people.
- Supported First Nations skill development programs for over 30 First Nations young people, offered in partnership with the EACH Ngarrang Gulinj al Boordup Team.
- Delivered LGBTIQ+ programs to 225 young people and facilitated young parents' programs reaching 46 young parents.

- Delivered targeted interventions across schools in Knox through our School Focused Youth Service program, reaching 800+ students, 84 school staff and 99 families and carers.
- Delivered the FReeZA program across Knox between August 2022 and December 2024, through a committee of 13-15 young people, enabling young people to perform and engage with Council festivals and events.
- Hosted the inaugural 2021 Youth Summit online, with 49 students from six schools, and for the 2023 Youth Summit hosted an in-person event with 44 students from 10 schools.
- Facilitated the Knox Primary Wellbeing Network and the Knox Secondary Wellbeing Network to provide an opportunity for wellbeing staff to connect, collaborate and develop professionally
- Established the Engage! Youth Crew to co-design youth events.
- Delivered Dungeon and Dragons leadership program in 2024 for 3 young people who support the delivery of a weekly program to 10-12 young people.

### Seniors (over 55 years)

- Expanded volunteering opportunities for seniors within Council through Meals on Wheels, Senior Exercise Park Champions, steering committees and dementia advisory and alliance working groups.
- Demand for housing support and advice from people aged over 55 who are living or have close ties to Knox has continued to increase year on year supporting 93 clients in 2021-22, to 205 clients by 2024-25. In addition, a total of 144 seniors were assisted to find long-term affordable accommodation.
- The Community Transport Program grew over the four years, from participation rates during COVID in 2021-22 of 2,212 trips to 9,640 trips made in 2024-25, which included 160 outings.
- The Knox Seniors Festival, held in October each year, continued to grow in participation rates, with the 2024 Seniors Festival reaching an all-time high of more 2,000 participants attending events across Council-led, and Council funded seniors club and organisations programs.
- Provided ‘Come and Try’ programming at the Seniors Exercise Park at Carrington Park since the park officially opened in April 2022, throughout school terms excluding winter. As part of a study conducted by National Ageing Research Institute (NARI), in its first year, the park was attended independently by at least 627 people, and weekly attendance rates range from 7-14 people.
- Supported the Knox Digital Connection Stakeholder Group, which identified advocacy is required for resourcing technology programs aimed at improving digital literacy and access for Knox seniors.
- Supported digital literacy through training sessions and scam prevention programs, including a pilot program in partnership with the Department of Government Services. The session attracted 45 participants, who were provided with practical strategies to safeguard their personal information.
- Facilitated social connection programs focused on Knox’s over 55s public housing estates, including excursions that were attended by over 190 residents.
- Assisted over 3,300 Knox seniors as a Commonwealth Home Support Programme provider for Meals on Wheels, Home Maintenance, Home Modifications and Occupational Therapy, and delivered an average of 2,600 meals a month.
- Recognised by the World Health Organization as an Age-Friendly City.
- Developed and implemented the first Knox Dementia Friendly Action Plan and established the Knox Dementia Alliance.
- Over 2 years, delivered over 20 dementia awareness sessions across the broader community. Audiences included the Bright Ideas Network, Life Activities Club Ferntree Gully, Wantirna South

Probus, Knoxfield Ladies Probus, Your Library staff, and Knox City Council staff.

- Establishment of a dementia friendly sensory garden within the Knox Community Gardens and support for a dementia inclusive choir at the Haven Day Centre.
- Showcased the Voices of Over 55s Photography Exhibition and participated in national ageism workshops.
- The fishing program for vulnerable men, Keeping it Reel, received an Outstanding Commendation at the 2025 LGPro Positive Ageing and Wellbeing Awards for the Outstanding Program/Project (grant based) category.

**Intergenerational**

- Launched a series of short videos to showcase intergenerational relationships within Knox in 2022. There have been over 1400+ views of these short videos which have been shared both internally and externally with various stakeholders within the Knox municipality and beyond, showcasing ageless friendships.
- Hosted a hybrid Intergenerational Forum: 'Building Connections Between Generations' with over 80 attendees in March 2023.
- Established a partnership with Swinburne University to deliver the Intergenerational Social Connection and Wellbeing Program, connecting 13 secondary school students from Boronia K12 College with 8 vulnerable seniors from the community, over a 12-week period.
- Launched Knox's Ageism Awareness program in October 2022 at Boronia Bowls Club.
- Since the launch event, conducted 27 Ageism Awareness presentations reaching 845 people.
- Delivered successful intergenerational programs across playgroups, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, retirement villages and aged care facilities growing to 21 programs and 486 participants in 2024-25, many of which are now embedded in the respective organisation's regular planning.
- Supported the launch of the Intergenerational Toolkit in July 2024.
- Recognised nationally with a finalist nomination in the Outstanding Intergenerational Innovation & Contribution Award.

# Case studies

The following case studies are illustrative of the significant positive impact of key initiatives delivered under the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan from July 2021 to June 2025.

### Early Years Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Systems Project

**Action 5.4: Undertake business system improvements to remain sustainable and enhance the experience of community members accessing Children's Services**

Council's Kindergarten Services previously managed three separate systems for enrolment, registration and attendance. Families and staff identified the need to streamline these processes to improve the experience of families and provide a more efficient system for staff to manage.

The Early Years Department undertook the Early Years Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Project together with Council's Information Technology and Transformation Teams during 2021. Before the end of the existing software contract at December 2022 (for the 'KEYS' system), this project aimed to implement an integrated system to support our Kindergarten and Long Day Care services to:

- Improve our families' experience of accessing Kindergarten services
- Avoid duplication of data and effort
- Ensure consistent data between our services.

The Project mapped the existing processes for Kindergarten and Long Day Care and the customer experience. The following recommendations were made:

- Issue an Expression of Interest request to the software market, with compliance requirements and implementation timeframes
- Seek to integrate a solution for Kindergarten and Long Day Care

A new software license for enrolments was rolled out by Council's Early Years Department in November 2022. This system, 'Enrol Now', replaces three separate systems:

- KEYS – for kindergarten registrations, allocations and offers
- KN Enrol – for kindergarten enrolments
- QK – for childcare registrations and enrolments.

The key improvements brought to Council's services through the Enrol Now system are:

- Enabling registrations, allocations, offers, enrolments, communication and reporting for both kindergarten and long day care.
- Providing one child record across both services
- Allowing families to digitally sign in and out their children from services
- Providing educators with access to their group lists, removing the need for hard copy spreadsheets.
- Enabling live data analysis and easier generation of reports for staff.

The system processes between 1,600 to 1,700 registrations per year. This platform is now providing Knox families with seamless online access to systems for registration, enrolments and attendance.

## Allied Health Service in Early Years Hub

**4.11 Establish allied health services within the Wantirna South and Bayswater Early Years Hubs to provide an integrated service delivery model**



In May 2025, Council entered into a lease agreement at our Children and Family Centres at Bayswater and Wantirna South with **Interchange Outer East.** Interchange Outer East will provide allied health services for our families with young children in Knox.

Council's Children and Family Centres at Bayswater and Wantirna South are well placed to provide a range of allied health and education services to meet the needs of families in the early year's community. Having co-locality of services such as Maternal Child Health, Kindergarten, Childcare and allied health services can increase participation and support for vulnerable families in the Knox community. This approach integrates education, care, wellbeing, and preventive measures to ensure children live grow and learn.

Council's centres already deliver early years services to the local community, including childcare, kindergarten, maternal and child health and supported and community playgroups.

Council officers undertook a procurement process to secure a suitable allied health professional organisation to operate therapy allied health disciplines from the vacant consulting rooms located in both Early Years Hubs. The focus of the procurement process was to secure a socially minded organisation with multi-disciplinary services to support the health and wellbeing of children and their families.

The new lease will expand the services to include occupational therapy, physiotherapy and counselling, and will be provide as a free or low cost family support services for the community.

This milestone for Council fulfils the vision to be flexible and provide holistic support to families and children at our two early years centres.



Interchange Outer East brings 30 years of experience and is an NDIS provider already supporting families in the Knox community and this will allow them to support more families through a range of programs at our centres.

Benefits of this arrangement:

- Interchange Outer East are a not-for-profit organisation and are committed to providing low or no cost services through the NDIS and Medicare
- The inclusion of allied health services for children means the community can access even more specialist support for children and families in one location.
- Convenience for local families
- easy referral pathways
- opportunity for Council staff at the centres to build relationships with other onsite professionals to support the best outcomes for children and their families

Establishing allied health programs within our centres reflects Council's priority to support children to have the best possible start to life.

## Young Parents Program

**Action 4.7: Deliver individual and group based wellbeing programs, services and supports to young people and their families**

The Young Parents Program is facilitated by Youth Services, and in partnership with Early Years, operates as a Small Talk supported playgroup. This integrated approach to service delivery ensures that participants benefit from both expertise on both child development, as well as the support of youth workers.

The program operates twice a year, with a typical program running over 16 weeks and involving around 8 young people. Most participants are referred by Council's Maternal and Child Health Team and have a child under one year-old. The program offers a structured format to support the parents in connecting with one another and strengthening the bond with their child. Guest speakers address a range of topics including first aid, feeding, introducing solids and maternal health.

Due to the high level of vulnerability experienced by the program participants, a key focus is on building their confidence to access mainstream services. Staff make referrals to other agencies who can support the needs of participating families; these may include food relief, Centrelink, family violence or mental health services.

The program first began over 20 years ago, initially as a Young Mum's Group before evolving to a young parents group. However, the program changed significantly in late 2019 when the partnership between youth and children's services was developed. Since returning to face-to-face programming in 2022, post-COVID restrictions, the program has been well attended and delivered invaluable positive benefits for both young parents and their children.

*"When I started group I didn't have a lot of support, friends or a safe place to come and share all the things that come with being a new mum. I was anxious to begin with but after one session I found it was such a welcoming, loving environment. I have learned lots of ways to interact with my baby, made lots of new friendships and found a new confidence."*

*"Now I have the confidence to socialize and leave the house with my baby."*

*"I felt very nervous because I struggle with social situations but I felt very welcomed and comfortable from the first day. Having the facilitator there for supported conversations really helped ease my anxiety."*

## Youth Hive

**Action 2.3 Manage and support the relocation of the Knox Youth Information Centre to a new site (co-located with the Knox Library, inside Westfield Knox) to support the health and wellbeing of young people and their families**

The Youth Hive opened in March 2024 and is a dedicated space within the new Knox library, offering comprehensive programming designed to build practical skills and foster personal development for young people of Knox.

The Youth Hive operates during library hours with dedicated Council youth worker support from 2pm-5pm, Monday through Friday during school terms and extends its programming during school holidays, ensuring consistent access to services year-round. This supports young people's schedules, particularly accommodating those who utilise public transportation immediately after school hours.
Support programs focusing on building social connection are well attended, while activities such as board games, craft-making sessions, and Dungeons & Dragons facilitate supportive peer connection in relaxed environments. The dedicated quiet study sessions are popular, particularly on Wednesdays from 2pm-4pm when local schools finish early.

**Student Benefits and Outcomes**
The Youth Hive delivers tangible benefits to young people:




- Access to quiet study environments with minimal distractions
- Personalised resume review and support
- Career exploration workshops
- Real-world skill building applicable to future employment opportunities
- Writing workshops and Art groups fostering creative expression
- Safe, inclusive environment where young people can connect with peers
- Structured social activities including board games and craft activities
- Friendship building opportunities in a supervised, supportive setting
- Community belonging for young people from diverse backgrounds
- Strategic location accessible via public transport
- Operating hours that accommodate school schedules and after-school needs
- No-cost programming removing financial barriers to participation.

The Youth Hive successfully addresses multiple youth development needs simultaneously - social connection, skill building, academic support, and safe space provision - within a single, accessible location.

## Dementia Friendly Action Plan

**Action 4.12: Support the development of new dementia support pathways, build workforce capacities, and apply dementia friendly principles to the design of new facilities**

The Knox Dementia Friendly Action Plan 2023-2025 (the Action Plan) was developed in partnership with key community stakeholders and was endorsed by Council in July 2023. The Action Plan guided Council to becoming a Dementia Friendly organisation and supported Knox to work towards becoming a dementia friendly community.

Over 2021 to 2023, the development of the Action Plan involved:

- The formation of the Knox Dementia Friendly Advisory Group – comprised of people living with dementia, carers, community members, community groups and organisations, and industry representatives.
- Consultation through the Knox Dementia Friendly Community Survey and focus groups
    - Surveys and information were available online and in hard copy, distributed to community houses, libraries, residents, retirement villages, senior's social clubs and dementia support services across Knox
    - Collection of 370 surveys, including 25 responses from people living with dementia
    - Feedback from the Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee and the Knox Age Friendly Futures Steering Committee

The consultation identified key areas of importance to Knox's community, including raising awareness of dementia and improving carer support. This is represented in the following quotes:

> *'Information about the disease is needed. Our doctor gave my husband the seven standard questions and said he did not have dementia. I knew he did and it was hard to find out where to get tested more thoroughly and then I had to find out how to get support.'*
> *'You are a carer 24/7 and cannot leave the person for any reason and cannot always take them with you. Everything revolves around the needs of them. When they pass away, it leaves a huge gap.'*

The input from the community consultation guided the Knox Dementia Advisory Group in developing the Action Plan, with a strong focus on the following strategic priority outcome areas: (1) Inclusivity and Equality, (2) Belonging, and (3) Safety.

The Action Plan was underpinned by key design principles developed by Dementia Australia, who partnered with Council to build awareness, understanding and acceptance of dementia, so that people living with dementia can participate and remain active in the community.



*Knox Dementia Friendly Advisory Committee Member, Barb Reid (pictured right), was later featured in Knox News September-October 2023 edition.*

**Become a Dementia Friend Program – Raising awareness**

The Become a Dementia Friend program by Dementia Australia served as an accessible entry point for people wanting to understand and support those living with dementia in their communities. A Dementia Friend is defined as someone who wants to gain a better understanding of dementia so they can better support people living with dementia, and the program emphasises that this support can range from simple acts like "offering patience in a conversation or challenging stigma" to larger commitments like

setting up community action groups. Knox staff registered as Dementia Friend hosts and provided the Become a Dementia Friend awareness program to over 20 separate Knox audiences. This included Council staff, community clubs, seniors networks and local libraries.

What makes this program particularly accessible is its straightforward, video-based learning approach that requires no prior expertise or extensive time commitment, yet has a meaningful, educational impact.

The educational component consists of watching short video stories that cover fundamental topics:

- understanding what dementia is
- hearing directly from people living with dementia about their experiences, and
- envisioning what truly dementia-friendly communities look like.
- The program then followed with a Q&A session with a guest speaker with lived experience, which included carers and members of our community living with dementia.

Feedback from these awareness sessions was excellent especially due to the guest speaker.

This program will continue to be delivered to the community to raise awareness and will be supported by the newly formed Knox Dementia Alliance. Council officers remain committed to providing ongoing assistance to the Knox Dementia Alliance as it grows and advocates for a more dementia-friendly Knox from a grassroots level.



*Ken and Kiti House (pictured above) both joined the Knox Dementia Alliance to help raise greater awareness of dementia in the Knox community. Their story was featured in Knox News July-August 2025 edition.*

## Keeping it Reel Program

**4.1 Review, deliver and support programs and initiatives that address social isolation and loneliness for seniors across the municipality**

The Knox City Council's 2024 Seniors festival introduced an inaugural men's fishing program, "Keeping it Reel" with the support of a grant from the State Government. This program was specifically designed to engage men over 55 who had limited or no social connections, lived alone, and had existing barriers that impact on participation in other social programs.



A word-of-mouth strategy using trusted community connectors built participant confidence to join, while comprehensive equipment provision and covered licensing costs ensured maximum participation.

**Program Objectives**

- Enhance social participation among older men in Knox
- Create meaningful connection opportunities for socially isolated men
- Eliminate common participation barriers (transport, cost, equipment, apprehension)
- Support positive physical and mental health outcomes
- Engage older men who historically show lower participation in traditional social programs

**Key Problems Addressed**

The program tackled critical issues facing older men:

- Social isolation as a significant demographic concern
- Multiple participation barriers (transport, cost, equipment)
- Limited engagement with traditional social programs
- Life transitions (retirement, bereavement, relocation) exacerbating isolation
- Living arrangements creating perceived barriers



**Community Connector Feedback**

"The fishing outings have been the highlight of the week for many that have attended, and it has put smiles and laughter on faces that have not seen or had a good time in a long time. Steve the bus driver has been absolutely fantastic, and I cannot speak highly enough about him and the way that he made everyone feel welcome and equal to one another."

**Program Benefits**

- Improved social connections through shared activities
- Physical health benefits from outdoor engagement
- Mental health support through increased social interaction
- Development of new skills or rekindling of past interests
- Building of social networks and creation of valuable talking points and shared experiences

**Outcomes**

- 24 men initially registered, 20 participants attended more than one session
- 70% attended all four sessions
- 6 participants continue meeting independently after program conclusion and 4 participants exchanged contact details for self-organised outings.

## Intergenerational Forum - Building Connections between Generations

**Action 4.15: Design and deliver a range of intergenerational activities, events and program across the Knox municipality.**

In March 2023, Knox Council held the Building Connections between Generations Forum. As well as being Council's first intergenerational forum, it was also the first hybrid community event. Over 80 people attended to learn about implementing intergenerational programs to improve understanding, friendship, enjoyment, confidence and purpose for participants young and old.

The majority of participants were from Knox, however with the hybrid format, interest was also garnered from other regions, as well as interstate and one attendee from overseas. The panel of speakers shared their experience in delivering: an intergenerational playgroup at Coonara Community House, a digital storytelling project involving secondary students and seniors, and an intergenerational relationships program with an early education centre and a retirement village.

Feedback from participants included:

- *'An outstanding event. I was enthralled from start to finish. I walked away inspired and ready to advocate for intergenerational programs.'*
- *'I was completely inspired by the stories and reflections from the panel as were 2 other staff from KCFC Bayswater. We immediately contacted the Bowls Club next door and look forward to working with Bree to continue this conversation.'*

The forum strengthened Council's community partnerships and encouraged organisations to collaborate in developing intergenerational programs. As a result of the forum:

- Knox Council partnered with Swinburne University over a pilot research project funded by VicHealth, to develop a resource kit for intergenerational and social connections (see next case study).
- A program began with students from Boronia K-12 and a group of older adults at Knox Express Library. The program ran for an hour a week over 12 weeks. Several of Council's Meals on Wheels volunteers were involved in this project.
- The Basin Early Years and Martin Luther Homes Aged Care implemented an activities program together that continues to be part of their regular programming.



## The InterGen Project - Intergenerational Community Resource Toolkit

**Action 4.15: Design and deliver a range of intergenerational activities, events and programs across the Knox municipality.**

Knox City Council together with five councils in the eastern metropolitan region of Victoria took part in The InterGen Project; a collaboration with Swinburne University and RMIT, funded by VicHealth. The project aim was to assess the efficacy of a community-based approach for implementing a sustainable and scalable model for social connection, underpinned by the Healthy Social Connections Framework, with a particular focus on people, places and activities.

The Knox program comprised of 13 secondary school students from Boronia K12 College and 8 older participants from the community, coming together, fostering friendship and connections over games at the Knox Library. This program has continued beyond the research project, with further iterations of this program successfully conducted in 2025.

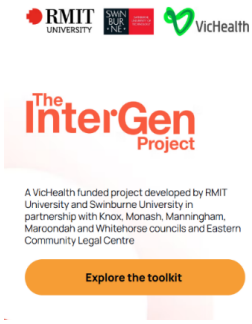
- *"I find it's nice to be able to mix on the same level as the younger generation….You can get encouragement from them because they still have that sparkle of life…a little bit more of their enthusiasm, it's just nice." (Older participant, Knox)*
- *"When they start to appreciate you, and appreciate you being there, it makes you feel like you're important." (Younger participant, Knox)*

A key output from the evaluation of The InterGen Project was a Community Toolkit. The toolkit was launched in late 2024 and consists of information and resources for developing, evaluating and maintaining an intergenerational social connection program, including resource management tools, evaluation tools and survey creation and video testimony creation advice.

Even though the project was aimed at older adults and teenagers aged 13-17 years, the principles outlined in the toolkit can be adapted in providing guidance when developing and maintaining a sustainable intergenerational program.

This toolkit has been widely shared with various primary and secondary schools within the community, along with neighbourhood houses, and local groups and organisations.

A link to the toolkit has also been created and features on our Knox website: Welcome | The Intergen Project






The InterGen Project was shortlisted as finalist in the Outstanding Intergenerational Innovation & Contribution Award 2025 category by the Australian Institute of Practice. This finalist award was presented at the Annual Conference in Sydney in February 2025.

# Reflections

## Successes

**Community Voice and Engagement**

- Successfully supported all age cohorts to ensure their voices guided planning and delivery of CY&S action items and Council services, including the 'Voice of the Child' initiative, Youth Summits, Youth Advisory Committee, and various seniors advisory and steering committees.
- Enhanced community engagement by tailoring consultation strategies to different groups - using digital platforms for younger people while maintaining face-to-face meetings for older residents.
- Inclusion of all life stages voices in the development of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

**Service Delivery Innovation**

- Demonstrated the effectiveness of adopting a life stages approach to service delivery and community planning, which transformed how we understand and respond to our community's diverse needs.
- Enabled design of services that specifically address the distinct needs of different demographic groups, from early childhood and families to youth, and seniors, resulting in enhanced community participation through tailored programming rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Operational Improvements**

- Improved coordination between departments, with housing, transport, recreation, youth, and social connections working together around life stages needs, creating more integrated support for residents.
- Established the Pulse reporting system (since 2022) to improve tracking of implementation of the Plan actions.
- Delivered many standout outcomes for community, such as those highlighted in the Case Studies.

## Challenges and Trends

**External Factors**

- COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted participation in volunteering and community connection activities in the first two years, particularly for seniors, though participation progressively increased over the second two years through targeted programming.
- Heightened cost of living pressures continues to place high demand on support services, such as Council's Housing Support Program for seniors.
- Significant State Government reform to early childhood services impacted Council's direction regarding kindergarten services delivery.

**Service Delivery Adjustments**

- Council transitioned to remaining a service provider only in the two Early Years Hubs from 1 January 2025, ceasing provision of remaining sessional kindergarten services at the conclusion of 2024.
- Council expanded its Early Years Municipal Planning role, including advocacy to State Government on quality and accessible early years programs.

## Opportunities

- Collaboration across the Connected Communities Directorate and other departments created opportunities for internal and external partnerships, including:
    - Access to diverse perspectives and relevant expertise to address complex issues
    - Greater funding opportunities and resources
    - Enhanced benchmarking and data collection capabilities
    - Improved promotion of events and community awareness-raising.
- Victorian Government's revised Child Safe Standards (July 2022) provides enhanced guidance for integrating children and young people's voices in service planning and delivery.
- Opportunity to leverage lessons learned about strategic flexibility to develop more adaptive planning frameworks.
- Potential to expand successful life stages methodology to other areas of Council service delivery.
- Enhanced capacity for navigating uncertainty and supporting flexible, responsive services based on four years of implementation experience.
- Alignment with the new Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 to enable more responsive annual service planning.

# Continuity of Programming

Beyond the Plan, service planning for these cohorts continues and aligns with theme 2 of the new Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029: Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity.

The service goals for each of the life stages are listed below.

**Early Years**
The Early Years services are designed to support children's development and family needs, including Maternal Child Health (MCH), Early Childhood Education and Care, playgroups, and inclusion support services.
Service Goals:

- To enable our community to connect with the services and supports they need.
- To deliver excellence in Early Years Services.
- To lead and empower the organisation to support the principles of the Child Friendly Cities Charter.

**Youth**
The Youth service seeks to support physical, social and mental wellbeing of young people through programs and advocacy. It includes but is not limited to providing individual and group support programs, school focused youth care, and family support.

Service Goals:

- To support young people and their families to improve their physical, mental and social health and wellbeing through capacity building and upskilling.
- To broaden the reach of the Youth Services team across the municipality by networking and collaborating with local youth service providers.
- To foster inclusivity, equality, belonging and safety for young people and their families through the delivery of programs, policies, frameworks and statutory requirements.
- Increasing the voice of young people by delivering advocacy programs on a wide range of issues.

**Seniors**
The Seniors service provides a range of services and programs to assist residents aged 65 years and over to live independently and safely in their own homes by the provision of food services, occupational therapy, home modifications and maintenance, and housing support. The service also supports seniors' clubs, social connections, active ageing programs including intergenerational programs, support for carers and people with a disability, community transport, short term support, and planning for an ageing community.

Service Goals:

- The community has easy access to services through improved technology, communication, service efficiency and accessible and inclusive service information.
- To increase social connections for seniors, people with disabilities and their carers through the delivery of programs and services.
- To create an accessible, diverse, healthy and connected community, through the delivery of education, programs, and advocacy**.**
- To have a safe and independent community by promoting safe practices, education and referring to support services.
- To maintain financial sustainability through exploration of new avenues, advocacy, collaboration with community stakeholders.

# Summary

The Plan responded to the five key directions outlined in the Knox Council Plan 2021-2025, applying a life course lens to identify the differing interests, needs and priorities of children, young people and seniors. The Plan reached the end of its life cycle in June 2025.

This report presents key findings from the report of the Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan, focusing on outcomes and learnings from the four-year plan (2021 -2025). The Plan's implementation has been successful in delivering important outcomes for each of the key cohorts with 100 per cent of action items completed.

The report also documents the value of bringing a life stages approach and intergenerational lens to issues impacting the Knox community, as well as the Plan's focus on supporting all age cohorts to have a voice to guide planning and delivery.

The Plan has provided a strong foundation for teams to continue delivering programming that supports the various cohorts. The structured approach and clear priorities have enabled initiatives to evolve and adapt, with many becoming embedded into business-as-usual practices. This continuity has ensured the work remains responsive to community needs, while also fostering collaboration across teams and reinforcing a shared commitment to long-term outcomes. As a result, the momentum generated through the Plan sustains and strengthens program delivery beyond its initial timeframe.

# Next steps

The Plan builds on our commitment to an integrated and intergenerational planning process, and a Statement of Commitment will be developed to reflect this in our service planning.

The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 - 2029, which has been shaped by our community and reflects the vision, values and aspirations of the people of Knox, has been developed with the awareness of the importance of the key life stages of the community. This Plan will guide where we put our focus and effort into delivering and improving services that support and are important to the Knox community.

While the formal lifespan of the Plan concluded in June 2025, Council remains committed to ongoing actions that addresses issues impacting the community across all life stages - including children, young people, and seniors. This commitment is upheld through the developed Service Plans for Early Year, Youth Services and Seniors; with the annual review cycle of service plans, to ensure continued responsiveness to emerging issues and sustained community engagement. Service Plans will be an integral part of guiding the way in which we continue to deliver programs and services that meet the needs of Knox residents.

By integrating both the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 and the Service Plans, we are well positioned to embed the learnings of the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan into our work, ensuring they become part of our everyday practice, and they provide the agility to be responsive to community needs.

It is proposed to provide Council with an update every two years to demonstrate the ongoing impact of our services and share insights about effective service delivery. Regular reporting would keep Council well-informed about how our programs are meeting community needs and best practice, whilst providing structured opportunities to reflect on outcomes and adapt to changing community circumstances. This approach would enable the departments to remain responsive to evolving community requirements rather than adhering rigidly to plans that may no longer align with current needs.

These biennial updates would strengthen connection to Council by showcasing the real outcomes of our community work and provide current information about service effectiveness and community impact. The two-year reporting cycle represents an appropriate balance - frequent enough to share meaningful progress and allow for timely service improvements, whilst avoiding unnecessary administrative burden. This commitment reflects a focus on continuous improvement in delivering valuable community outcomes and adapting to emerging needs. It ensures Council is informed of progress and impact in providing positive outcomes for the community.

# Appendix 1: Action Acquittal – Knox Child, Youth and Seniors Plan Implementation

**Key**

| Symbol | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Completed | Progress against this action item has been completed.<br>Reporting against this action item will not be required for future reporting periods. |

## Key Direction 1: Opportunity and Innovation

Knox strives to be a city of opportunity, embracing innovation and change, and providing local learning and employment opportunities for all. It's a place where people and business can thrive.

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 Support the expansion of education, training and volunteering opportunities for seniors across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Volunteering opportunities for seniors have expanded within Council. Meals on Wheels volunteers have increased from 42 in 2021 to 81 in 2023, of which 70% are aged over 55 years.<br><br>Six Senior Exercise Park Champions were recruited in 2022. Twenty-five volunteers have been involved in ageing-related advisory groups, such as the Age Friendly Futures Steering Committee, Knox Dementia Friendly Advisory Group and Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee.<br><br>Council staff attended the Volunteer for Knox Expo in May 2023 to boost awareness of these opportunities. Council also regularly promotes volunteering through the Knox Bright Ideas Newsletter. For National Volunteer Week in 2022 and 2023, the May editions featured a variety of local volunteering roles. The Newsletter also featured key education opportunities throughout 2021-23, including promotion of seniors clubs and workshops such as 'Online Safety: Recognising Scams', 'Showcase of Living Options', 'Financial Fitness' and 'Safer Driver' training.<br><br>Recruitment recommendations for the Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee were endorsed by Council in January 2025. The new volunteers have since completed an induction and education program. A further recruitment for community and industry members for Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee has been completed in June, with recommendations to be taken for Council consideration in the first quarter of 2025-26.<br><br>Volunteering opportunities remained consistent since 2024, with low attrition rates.<br><br>Quarterly meetings have been introduced for the Food Service (Meals on Wheels) volunteers since 2024, which have been welcomed.<br><br>A training program was held for the Food Services (Meals and Wheels) volunteers in February 2025, with good attendance and participation. |
| 1.2 Deliver programs focused on increasing knowledge and skills of young people and their families | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | In the first two years of the Plan's implementation, Council has delivered a wide range of programs focused on increasing knowledge and skills of young people and their families, including:<br><br>Supporting 24 parent webinars - reaching over 750 parents and carers<br><br>Supporting the delivery of 3 young sporting leaders programs, reaching over 30 young female sporting leaders |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | Running 15 skill development workshops for young people focusing on craft based activities, tie-dye workshops and first aid skills. Reaching over 150 young people.<br><br>Supporting First Nations skill development programs, in partnership with EACH Ngarrang Gulinj al Boordup Team including Yarning Circles, Aboriginal Songwriting program, Deadly Mirring Photography program and Traditional Aboriginal Games Train-the-trainer program. Over 30 First Nations young people were involved in these programs.<br><br>During second two years of the Plan's implementation, Council continued to deliver a wide range of programs focused on increasing knowledge and skills of young people and their families, including:<br><br>Supporting 13 parent webinars - reaching over 850 parents and carers<br><br>Supporting the delivery of 1 young sporting leaders programs, reaching 16 young female sporting leaders<br><br>Running over 34 skill development workshops for young people focusing on skill-based activities, Dungeon and Dragons master training, resume and job skills sessions and first aid skills, reaching over 440 young people.<br><br>Supporting First Nations skill development programs, in partnership with EACH Ngarrang Gulinj al Boordup Team including Yarning Circles, Deadly Tucker and a song writing program. Over 30 First Nations young people were involved in these programs.<br><br>With the opening of the Youth Hive in March 2024, School Holiday programs have been offered to young people commencing in Autumn 2024 and have included activities for skill development each time. |
| 1.3 Prioritise the needs of vulnerable children and implement integrated service strategies that provide full access to services and supports for families and community members, to support all children | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | During 2021, an internal confidential data management process was developed with Maternal Child Health, Kindergarten and Long Day Care staff to assist in the initial identification and tracking of eligible priority cohort children through Council's Knox Explorer system.<br><br>Quarterly meetings with key MCH and Kindergarten/Long Day Care staff occur to support identified priority cohort children to successfully transition to school. Council continued to consolidate the transition to school process with our Early Years Services throughout 2022-2023. The Maternal Child Health team conducted internal education and training of nurses in partnership with the Department of Education. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| in Knox to successfully transition to school | | | | |
| 1.4 Advocate for the provision of targeted resources to ensure that all children in Knox have the opportunity to participate in two years of funded kindergarten | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council endorsed the provision of two years of kindergarten, commencing in Council-run services from 2022. This included an initial 5 hours of provision for 3-year-olds alongside 15 hours for 4-year-olds. During this period, the Kindergarten Provider Network was established, with invitations extended to existing and new Knox kindergarten providers. Council is committed to strengthening collaboration through this Network to promote access to kindergarten for all eligible children. In 2024, both 3 and 4 year-old children will access 15 hours of kindergarten in Council run services.<br><br>Council implemented 15 hours of 3-year-olds to match our 4-year-old provision. Establishment of the Kindergarten Provider Network Bulletin and ongoing activities has ensured our collaboration and advocacy with other providers of kindergarten in ensuring access to kindergarten for all eligible children in Knox.<br><br>Council undertook an extensive Kindergarten Review in 2023, resolving to cease being an Early Years Manager and an approved provider of sessional kindergarten (outside its two Hubs) by December 2024. Council further resolved in its capacity as an infrastructure owner to work with the Department of Education to make available its existing stand-along kindergarten facilities to alternate not-for-profit providers to enable the ongoing provision of stand-alone sessional kindergarten to the Knox community.<br><br>A procurement (tender) process was undertaken successfully awarding the contract to 5 different not-for-profit kindergarten providers to maintain the provision of kindergarten across 18 early years kindergarten facilities. Council in its municipal planning role continue to offer the Kindergarten Central Registration System to all families across Knox to participate in 2 years of kindergarten. |

## Key Direction 2: Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure

Building on what's great about our city, Knox's housing and infrastructure will meet the changing needs of our community.

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 2.1 Provide housing information, resources and support to seniors across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | The Housing Support Officer has continued to provide housing information, resources and support to seniors across the municipality. Requests for assistance increased by 11% from 2021-22 to 2022-23.<br><br>During this period, the Housing Support Officer processed a total of 93 clients, across areas such as general housing enquiries, support/advice and advocacy, and assistance to complete Office of Housing transfer applications. In addition, the Housing Support Program housed a total of 41 seniors in long term affordable accommodation.<br><br>The wait list process was refined to accept only medium to high categories. People who were seeking assistance categorised as lower priority were supported with referrals to relevant early intervention and relief agencies within Knox.<br><br>Between 2023-24 and 2024-25 more data was captured to identify trends. During this period, the Housing Support Officer processed 263 general housing enquiries and 340 clients. Waitlists reduced from 73 to 61 people on the Knox over 55 housing waitlist, and 103 clients were housed both within Knox City nominated over-55 public housing estates and external public and social housing vacancies. Many of these housing outcomes were due to networking with Social Housing providers (Community Housing Limited CHL and National Affordable Housing Victoria NAHV) to secure long term social housing for Knox City Council residents.<br><br>The Housing Transition Tool Kit was completed and presented at the Knox Seniors Find Your Joy event in May 2024. This resource can be found on the Knox City Council website. |
| 2.2 Plan for future municipal early years infrastructure needs to provide access to funded kindergarten for 3 and 4-year-old children in Knox, in line with Council's decision on kindergarten expansion | Family and Children's Services (now Early Years) | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Early Years undertook an Infrastructure Project in 2021 to inform Council's decision-making regarding Council-owned kindergarten buildings. In collaboration with the Major Initiatives Unit, a report was tabled to Council in November 2021 noting the significant contribution and support that Council provides the kindergartens as an Early Years Manager and service provider.<br>Council has an ongoing planning role for early years infrastructure. In 2022, Council's early years infrastructure was assessed as part of the Community and Social Infrastructure Modelling database project. Early Years continues to review infrastructure in line with the Victorian Government Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan and recent kindergarten reforms. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 2.3 Manage and support the relocation of the Knox Youth Information Centre to a new site (co-located with the Knox Library, inside Westfield Knox) to support the health and wellbeing of young people and their families | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2023 | Completed | Council committed to developing a new shop front service to support the health and wellbeing of young people and their families. This service, the Youth Hive, to be co-located with the new Knox Library, inside Westfield Knox. Whilst there were building delays early on in the reporting period, the new Youth Hive, located within the new Knox Library at Westfield Knox, was opened in March 2024. Youth Services delivered a highly successful range of activities during the April 2024 school holidays, the first school holiday program delivered. Eleven engaging activities were delivered, engaging with over 180 young people. Youth Services and Your Library are continuing to build on this partnership to support the health and wellbeing of young people and their families.<br><br>Youth Services continue to build on school holiday and weekday programs that are seeing increasing use of the Youth Hive. |
| 2.4 Support the research for additional accessible parking spaces and innovative seating at parks and reserves, shopping centres and train stations | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2023 | Completed | Research was conducted following the Age Friendly Survey 2020 findings as part of the Age Friendly Cities Project to narrow down key priorities for enhancing accessible parking. Gaps were identified around key shopping centres and train stations. In addition, the Knox Disability Advisory Committee provided advice to internal teams on accessible park benches in May 2023. Advocacy and research information was shared with relevant stakeholders and departments. The second Age-Friendly Survey was conducted and feedback was shared with relevant departments.<br><br>Working with Sustainable Transport team members, sites were identified for additional accessible parking spaces and benches to be explored. The Transport team also have an extensive list of proposed bench seating locations which aligned with the feedback from seniors who completed the survey. This has been taken into consideration when prioritising the installation of additional benches across Knox. |
| 2.5 Support the improvement of pedestrian access for seniors in high traffic areas such as parks and reserves, residential aged care facilities, retirement villages, and, shopping centres and strips | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Further analysis of the Age Friendly Survey 2020 findings and Council's Principal Pedestrian Network Plan and Footpath and Shared Path Plan identified key problematic areas in Boronia, Ferntree Gully and Rowville. Advocacy and research information was shared with relevant stakeholders and departments.<br>During 2025, Seniors were engaged to consult on the new Knox Mobility and Access Plan to ensure a seniors' perspective was considered. Seniors were invited to participate in sessions at various locations for the Transport team to evaluate how it was being used and seek their feedback on its functionality, including identifying any challenges, which was used to inform the strategy for the Knox Mobility and Access Plan. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 2.6 Deliver the Community Transport and Outings program and On Demand Bus service across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Utilisation of Council's Community Transport Program increased dramatically from 2,212 total passengers in 2021-22 to 5,535 total passengers in 2022-23. This includes general outings, shopping trips, public housing estate outings, senior citizens clubs, and the community bus hire.<br><br>Participation rates increased as COVID restrictions lifted, enabling greater capacity and flexibility, and destination and activity options. The On Demand trial has been completed and will not be continued as participation rates were too low.<br><br>Utilisation continued to grow, delivering 9,640 trips, and supporting 3,776 registered Community Transport clients by 2024-25. In addition, 1,691 other passengers were transported through various programs and events, including members of the public, club members, staff, students, and others who aren't registered clients but accessed transport through outings or hire services.<br><br>Our fleet completed 160 outings, covering social outings, club and community group transport, Council events such as Immerse, Knox and Radiant Festivals, staff tours, Intergenerational programs, and shopping buses. With reduced demand for an On Demand Bus service post-COVID, another local provider now meets that need. Our focus remains on providing safe, reliable transport for eligible residents and delivering programs that help people stay connected and engaged. |
| 2.7 Support young people and seniors to contribute to Council Plan advocacy to improve public transport across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2023 | Completed | Council supported seniors by providing training around road safety and raising awareness for use of public transport. The Knox Age Friendly Futures Steering Committee (AFFSC) advocated on behalf of seniors for flexibility to book with the public bus system without needing a mobile app. The AFFSC has also advocated for bicycle racks to be installed as required with the Seniors Exercise Parks to encourage bicycle transport.<br><br>Feedback received from the Knox Age Friendly Survey 2023 highlighted the need for improved transport infrastructure that benefits seniors, for example needing access to parking spaces close to stations or a 'park and ride' option as well as advocating for better public transport coverage in areas like Rowville and the challenges in connecting Wantirna to Bayswater without a direct bus route. Advocacy for our Young people and seniors, with State Government to forward better public transport in Knox is an ongoing agenda.<br><br>Young people and seniors, on Councils Youth and Active Aging Advisory Committees gave feedback into the new Knox Cycling Action Plan, part of this feedback centred around that the existing public transport network is insufficient to meet their needs and to seek out alternative transport options.<br><br>Young people, and seniors, were also involved in extensive consultation to contribute to the development of the ***Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29***, which includes the strategic objective 'our community can access important local services and resources through Council's delivery, |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | advocacy, and partnerships'. Strategy 1.1 is particularly relevant to the area of public transport 'a variety of transport options is available through the effective planning, advocacy and management of efficient, active, sustainable and accessible transport modes, particularly in growth locations.' |

## Key Direction 3: Natural environment and sustainability

Knox's natural environment is protected and enhanced to ensure sustainability for future generations

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 3.1 Raise awareness of climate change by providing information, and supporting children, families, young people and seniors to help reduce their environmental footprint and impact of climate stressors | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council raised awareness of climate change with families and children accessing Maternal Child Health by providing information on reusable nappies and staff training through 'The Nappy Project'.<br><br>Heat health and other parent information is provided electronically with QR codes inserted into the client's child health record (green book) during home visits.<br><br>Sustainability is embedded across the Children's Hubs and kindergarten services, with education about biodiversity, promoting exploration of and care for local parks and nature reserves, and encouraging recycling and re-purposing through education programs. The services were collection points for families wishing to recycle materials such as bread tags, batteries and milk bottle lids. Many kinder services collaborated with Knox Environment Society to source appropriate indigenous plants and manage weeds in outdoor play spaces. Other climate and sustainability initiatives in place included rainwater tanks, compost piles, worm farms and clothes and food swaps. Together, these initiatives increased children's knowledge of sustainability practices and supported them to take greater ownership of protecting the natural environment.<br><br>Youth Services provided skill development workshops supporting young people to reduce, reuse and recycle - with a particular focus on reusing clothing to create tote bags. Youth Services utilises social media channels to support Council's broader education for the Knox community on climate change. Youth Services worked with Mountain District Community College through the School Focused Youth Service program to develop and implement a program called "Sustainable Futures Experience." The program had a joint focus on sustainable practice and local business partnerships, with the aim of developing sustainable career options for the students.<br><br>Council has supported seniors through publication of articles in the Knox Bright Ideas newsletters, as per action CRP 1.7 in Council's Climate Response Plan. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | Heat health information has been provided annually to all Council aged care clients and resources distributed at the Knox Seniors Festivals each October. |

### Key Direction 4: Connection, resilience and wellbeing

Knox is a place to call home. Our community is strong, healthy and we support and respect each other.

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 4.1 Review, deliver and support programs and initiatives that address social isolation and loneliness for seniors across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Social connection for seniors continued to be supported through a range of programs and services including Knox's Over 55s Zest 4 Life Program, Community Transport Outings, Knox Seniors Festival, support for senior citizens clubs, over 55s public housing estate projects and funding support for social connection activities through the Community Development Fund and Minor Grants programs.<br><br>During 2022, a review was conducted of social prescribing models across Knox, the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) and beyond, which identified the existing Living Our Best Life as an effective program operated through the community house networks within the EMR. Council regularly supports this program through mentor and mentee referrals, as well as through promotion of their Talking Café events and other social activities. Council also collaborated with Swinburne University on the Intergenerational Social Connection and Wellbeing Program aimed at connecting vulnerable seniors with students.<br><br>The Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee workplan for 2024 and 2025 has focused on addressing social isolation and loneliness, which helped shape all planning of social connection activities to find ways to be more available and accessible to those who are lonely and socially isolated in our senior community. Examples include the return of the Zest4Life bus tours, a line dancing event for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (where someone can attend solo and not feel on their own); carers walks program expanded to be more available for those who are isolated caring for someone; music therapy sessions for those living with dementia and the Find Your Joy expo held in May 2024 at Fairpark Reserve.<br><br>Social participation opportunities were created for those living with dementia and their carer by partnering with The Haven Day Centre to start Knox's first dementia-inclusive choir. The talking cafes, Living our Best Life (LOBL) program has been expanding and supports those socially isolated and continues to grow. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | There was a continued focus on event and program planning for single participant attendance. During Seniors Festival, events such as line dancing, the mystery bus trips, the Navy Big Band attracted almost 50% single-ticket bookings. Feedback surveys from the Seniors Festival held during October 2024 indicated that more than 45% had not attended Seniors Festival before, reflecting the expanded communications channel usage resulting in new attendees.<br><br>Additionally, a fishing program was established especially for vulnerable men in the Knox community using grant funding provided by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). This program was specifically designed to engage men over 55 who have limited or no social connections, live alone, and have existing barriers that impact on participation in other social programs. With the knowledge men often build relationships through shared activities like sports or shared projects, trusted community connectors referred participants to the program. The program delivered multiple benefits to participants.<br><br>Social connections improved through shared activities, while outdoor engagement provided physical health benefits. Mental health was supported through increased social interaction, and participants either developed new skills or rekindled past interests. The success of these programs has informed future events and program planning. |
| 4.2 Support the review and modification of existing exercise reserves and outdoor gyms, and design and implement new seniors exercise parks, to improve physical activity by seniors across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | After successful implementation of the initial dedicated Senior Exercise Park within Knox, a project review was completed in November 2022. This report identified the success of the Senior Exercise Park at Carrington Park Knoxfield, reviewed sites across other councils in Victoria to compare and consider, created criteria for optimal new site locations and made recommendations for installation of a further two sites.<br><br>Programming continued at Carrington Seniors Exercise Park with Come and Try sessions. The five volunteer senior champions provided support to their peers during the scheduled come and try sessions, supported by Council officers. There were three terms of Come and try sessions each year (not including winter) welcoming over 250 people attending each year. The benefit of physical exercise was promoted in this activity through distribution channels such as the Bright Ideas Newsletter, Zest 4 Life brochure and the Move Your Way program that was led by Community Strengthening.<br><br>The installation of two additional seniors exercise parks began in June 2025 at the Marie Wallace Park, Bayswater, and the Wally Tew Reserve in Ferntree Gully and official opening of these parks will occur in 2025-26. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 4.3 Facilitate the delivery of in-home mobility and out-of-home exercise, recreation and leisure activities, events and programs for seniors and vulnerable persons | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Allied health professionals who are primarily responsible for delivering Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) occupational therapy services via the My Aged Care Referrals provided in-home assessments to referred residents providing recommendations on equipment for safety.<br><br>Each year the Allied Health team have met service delivery and reporting requirements, with the team delivering in home visits to Knox seniors to support safe mobility and independent movement at home.<br><br>In-home, group or outdoor mobility resources were sourced and promoted to Knox seniors through Allied Health team members' in-home work.<br><br>Council promoted out-of-home exercise and activity with 'Come and Try' sessions at the Seniors Exercise Park and created recreation and leisure opportunities for seniors and vulnerable persons resulting in positive engagement. These included Senior Exercise Park sessions with targeted outreach to housing estate residents, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day events featuring line dancing and movie screenings, a fishing program specifically developed for vulnerable men, and a Dementia-inclusive choir. These initiatives demonstrate how recreational programming can create meaningful participation opportunities that help vulnerable populations remain active and connected to their community. |
| 4.4 Advocate for improved access to, and increase the reach of technology programs, services and supports for seniors across the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | The Knox Digital Connection Stakeholder Group was established following a desktop review in 2022, and the group convened in October 2022. It identified advocacy is required for resourcing of technology programs aimed at improving digital literacy and access for Knox seniors. In addition to Council, the Stakeholder Group included Bridges, EACH, Services Australia, Swinburne University, Your Library, Knox U3A, and various community centres and neighbourhood houses within Knox attended stakeholder meetings. Research was conducted to identify the types of programs required.<br><br>As a result of this stakeholder group, there has been increased focus and program delivery of digital literacy. Providers developed the following programs in support of digital literacy for seniors: U3A Knox - 2 x iPad training sessions (delivered by volunteers within the U3A Knox membership); a 3D printer (Cricut Maker 3) was purchased as an innovative addition to the U3A Knox craft classes; Community Learning Centre (CLC) Rowville engaged Bendigo Bank to run a scam-prevention session; CLC Rowville also ran a series of monthly Tech Talks; Bridges Connecting Communities partnered with the National Anti-Scam Centre (NASC) to host a Scam Prevention session for two of the Waterford retirement village locations in Knox, plus facilitated a community-wide session on Friday 19 April 2024. Your Library purchased Big Purple Phone handsets for seniors to explore and decide if this option is right for them. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | Your Library maintained its delivery of technical support sessions, providing personalised assistance to those in need.<br><br>Council's Social and Inclusive Communities team offered onsite support at one of the Knox housing estates, helping residents address technology-related challenges with their personal devices. A pilot program in partnership with the Department of Government Services was held on 14 May 2025, focusing on online safety for seniors, with particular emphasis on scam prevention. The session attracted 45 participants, who were provided with practical strategies to safeguard their personal information, providing a satisfaction rating of 4.53 stars (out of 5).<br><br>Planning is also underway to launch an intergenerational digital literacy program, to connect older community members with younger generations to foster mutual learning and support, scheduled to commence later in 2025.<br><br>The Stakeholder Group indicated they no longer needed to meet, and formal meetings concluded in May 2024. However, the stakeholder members continue to share program ideas and initiatives as a collective, and cross-promote their program offerings; all of which is now embedded in annual programming to support the senior community. |
| 4.5 Support residents in older persons public housing estates to build their individual and collective capacities to participate in their communities | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2023 | Completed | The Community Connections Project progressed well in the five public housing estates for seniors.<br><br>Key achievements included: the six-week digital literacy program, attended by 30 residents; the ongoing gardening group at three estates, involving Mountain District Learning Centre (MDLC) and Orana Community House, funded through VicHealth; a Wednesday gathering at the Terama estate, supported by MDLC and Your Library; a series of information sessions facilitated with Victoria Police for culturally and linguistically diverse residents on emergency preparedness; and, English classes for tenants offered in partnership with Rowville Learning Centre. In addition, social connection excursions were attended by 190 residents. Particular highlights were the Christmas Lights expeditions. Through these activities, 19 ongoing friendships have evolved and are still going strong.<br><br>Officers, in conjunction with Your Library, have supported 30 residents living in older person's public housing to increase their understanding and capacity to use digital literacy, with a focus on basic communication skills - text messages, using social media, using emails and access to local services and supports.<br><br>Officers, in conjunction with Mountain District Learning Centre, have worked with 20 residents living in one older person's public housing estate to grow fresh food on site and have increased their |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | nutrition and health via supported cooking program. This program has also worked to address issues around food security via an onsite "community pantry" and continues today.<br><br>Six residents living in older person's public housing have been empowered to participate in community engagement events focusing on preventing homelessness in older women and preventing elder abuse.<br><br>Eight residents from non-English speaking background were supported to increase their knowledge of and capacity on accessing emergency services, with a concentrated focus on calling Victoria Police when there is threat to their safety.<br><br>Through this Community Connections Project, there are now embedded connection across all of the five housing estates where programs have resulted with improved connection and support offered to residents, enhanced communications and working relationship with DFFH (who are the property owner of the five housing estates) and increased willingness for residents to participate in community life. |
| 4.6 Deliver selected Commonwealth Home Support Programme services and supports to seniors and vulnerable persons within the municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2022 | Completed | Services were delivered to eligible clients across food services, allied health, occupational therapy, home maintenance, home modifications, and up until June 2024, aged care assessments. Some key achievements include assisting over 3,300 seniors per year with services and providing an average of 2,600 delivered meals each month.<br><br>All obligations under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme funding agreements have been met by Knox City Council annually. |
| 4.7 Deliver individual and group based wellbeing programs, services and supports to young people and their families to support | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council has delivered a wide range of individual and group based wellbeing programs to young people across the municipality. Between July 2021 to June 2023, Council delivered counselling support sessions directly to individual young people and group sessions.<br><br>Across the whole reporting period the following programs were delivered to support young people and their families:<br><br>7 Young parents programs supporting 68 young parents, and their child/ren<br><br>25 LGBTIQ+ groups supporting over 335 young people<br><br>7 one-off wellbeing programs and activities focusing on fostering social connections, which engaged over 200 young people. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | Parent webinars with a focus on wellbeing for young people delivered annually have also been well attended. |
| 4.8 Facilitate the delivery of programs in primary, secondary and alternative education settings to support staff health and wellbeing and student engagement | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council has delivered a substantial body of work across Knox schools through the State Government funded School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) program, as well as broader wellbeing initiatives, with a strong emphasis on supporting students, school staff, and families.<br><br>Across various primary, secondary, and alternative education settings, a total of 51 targeted interventions have been implemented. These programs have directly supported 960 students, offering opportunities for personal growth, emotional wellbeing, cultural connection, and peer engagement. Students participated in a wide range of initiatives such as *The Man Cave* and *Redefining Masculinity* workshops, *PLAY* and *Supportive Friends* peer support programs, *I-CAN Network Mentoring*, and Indigenous student-led projects. These programs were designed to build resilience, promote positive identity development, and foster inclusive school environments.<br><br>In parallel, 150 school staff were engaged in professional development and capacity-building activities. Training sessions such as *Youth Mental Health First Aid*, *Trauma Smart*, *Transforming Attendance*, *Social Stencil*, and *Making Space for Learning* equipped educators with the tools and knowledge to better support students experiencing mental health challenges, trauma, or disengagement. These sessions also helped strengthen whole-school approaches to wellbeing.<br><br>Additionally, 150 families and carers were reached through programs that encouraged collaboration between schools and home environments. Initiatives like *Peaceful Parents*, *Canine Therapy*, and trauma-informed workshops provided families with strategies to support their children's emotional and behavioural development, while also fostering stronger relationships between families and school communities.<br><br>Beyond direct interventions, Council has played a key role in fostering professional networks. The Knox Primary and Secondary Wellbeing Networks, facilitated by the SFYS Coordinator, offer regular opportunities for wellbeing staff to connect, share practice, and access local service information. Each network meets four times annually, creating a consistent platform for collaboration and learning.<br><br>Programs such as *GirlZone* have been tailored to support girls in upper primary school during key transition periods, helping them build confidence and navigate social challenges. Council's partnership with EACH's Ngarrang Gulinj-al Boordup Team has ensured culturally safe and responsive support for First Nations students across multiple schools, reinforcing the importance of identity, belonging, and cultural learning. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | Annually Council has met all requirements and achieved successful interventions for young people through the SFYS program, noting the current funding agreement concludes in December 2025. |
| 4.9 Support young people to facilitate activities and events that increase youth connection and improve wellbeing | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council received Victorian Government funding in early 2022 to deliver the FReeZA program across Knox. This program was delivered as a partnership between Cultural Services and Youth Services. The FReeZA committee was made up of 13 young people aged 15 to 25 years and was established in August 2022 to deliver youth-focused events across the municipality. From July 2021 to December 2024, the FReezA Committee supported a youth music stage at the Knox Festivals and the Stringybark Festivals, and Haunted Theatre 2023, overall supporting over 25 young artists to perform. Knox funding for this State government program concluded in December 2024.<br><br>Council's Youth Services team continues to engage young people at Council festivals and events through the provision of a range of engagement opportunities. The purpose of these engagement activities is to promote Council's services to young people and their families. During 2024 Youth Services engaged with almost 500 young people, and their families, through a range of consultation strategies to help inform how Youth Services will continue to be delivered across the municipality.<br><br>In 2025 Youth Services established the Knox Engage! Youth Crew, supporting up to 10 young people to plan, design and deliver activities and events for young people in Knox. To date this group is planning a range of school holiday activities for the September 2025 school holidays.<br><br>In late 2024 Youth Services provided training for 3 young people to enable the delivery of a Dungeon's and Dragons program. Young people were supported and trained as Dungeon Masters to enable the delivery of a weekly program. This program supports 10-12 young people to build social connections and leadership skills through weekly participation in a supported group, led by young people and supported by Youth Workers.<br><br>Since opening of the Youth Hive in March 2024, weekly programs have been developed offering opportunities for connection in a safe and supportive environment, dedicated to young people. Utilisation of this space has significantly increased since that time, with all programs and activities being well patronised by young people. |
| 4.10 Deliver the agreed annual priorities from the 'Early Years Compact' to promote coordinated and | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Early Years collaborated with the Victorian Government to meet the annual priorities outlined in the 'Early Years Compact'. This Compact is a Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria commitment to work together to improve outcomes for young children and families from 2017 to 2027. The Compact sets out principles and priorities for joint-work. A particular focus for Council is |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| collaborative approaches which improve outcomes for all Knox children in the early years | | | | exploring ways to strengthen access, participation and attendance of vulnerable children in early years services.<br><br>Council engaged with the MAV to advocate on kindergarten reform and other early years matters. There is currently strong participation in the Knox Early Years Advisory Committee that provides input into strategic planning for our ongoing early years' service delivery. |
| 4.11 Establish allied health services within the Wantirna South and Bayswater Early Years Hubs to provide an integrated service delivery model | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council officers undertook a procurement process between October 2024 to February 2025 to secure a suitable allied health professional organisation to operate therapy allied health disciplines from the vacant consulting rooms located at both the Early Years Hubs. The focus of the procurement process was to secure a socially minded organisation that is able to provide multi-disciplinary services to support the health and wellbeing of children and families.<br><br>At a Council meeting on 28 April 2025, Council resolved and accepted the tender submitted by Interchange Outer East for the leasing of consulting room located in the Early Years Hubs, Bayswater and Wantirna South for the next 3 years with an opportunity to extend for a further 2 years. The lease arrangement commenced on 5 May 2025. |
| 4.12 Support the development of new dementia support pathways, build workforce capacities, and apply dementia friendly principles to the design of new facilities | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | The Knox Dementia Friendly Action Plan was successfully developed during 2021-23. The Knox Dementia Friendly Advisory Group was formed, comprised of people living with dementia, carers, community members, organisations and industry representatives. Consultation occurred through the Knox Dementia Friendly Community Survey (with 370 completed) and additional focus groups.<br><br>Feedback was also sought from the Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee and Knox Age Friendly Futures Steering Committee. In February 2023, the Knox Dementia Advisory Group considered the results along with Dementia Australia's requirements and created the draft Knox Dementia Friendly Action Plan. The draft Action Plan identified 15 Actions to be implemented over a two-year period. The Plan was endorsed by Council in July 2023, and the Knox Dementia Friendly Action Plan has driven the development of a range of programs and training for both staff and community to attend and learn<br><br>There was a targeted focus on raising awareness of dementia in the community through media such as the Bright Ideas Newsletters, Knox eNews, Knox News and articles on our website. An Information Pack was developed, compiling a range of online, paper and library resources for people to access and this has been promoted throughout the municipality via our Positive and Healthy Ageing team and to community groups and libraries. Events crafted for people with dementia were held with a focus on |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | dance therapy and music therapy for those living with Dementia plus talks on maintaining healthy brains which attracted collectively over 310 attendees.<br><br>A key component to the dementia-friendly work continuing, involved establishing a Dementia Alliance. A working group, made up of community representatives, service providers and Council staff, 12 people in total, was formed to develop foundational documents, including a Terms of Reference, in preparation for launching the Knox Dementia Alliance. The Alliance was successfully launched on 18 June 2025, at an Afternoon Melodies Event in Bayswater, with 63 community members in attendance. Members from both the working group and the dementia advisory group were invited to join the Core Group, which will guide the Alliance's future direction. The Alliance is now established, with a clear pathway for ongoing development and support.<br><br>Initial collaboration discussions were held with a service provider and a dementia café provider, however a more viable alternative was identified, to incorporate a cafe initiative with the Knox Community Gardens Society, which offer inclusive and sensory features suitable for dementia-friendly initiatives. A project proposal for a sensory garden was developed and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was established outlining the mutual promotion and the creation of two raised sensory garden plots for social participation for people living with dementia. |
| 4.13 Raise awareness and support the research of community attitudes and beliefs towards seniors, and strengthen organisational systems and structures | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Groundwork was undertaken in 2021 by reviewing effective programs and service models nationwide and establishing a collaboration with the Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC). In 2022, staff and volunteers participated in the Every Age Counts Advocates Training and Tips for talking about Age/Ageism webinar. Council partnered with the Boronia Bowls Club to host the Ageism Awareness Day event in October 2022 marking the beginning of the Ageism Awareness campaign. This event was attended by 52 staff and council representatives, and many signing the pledge to end ageism.<br><br>Short videos were developed in late 2022 to showcase our diverse intergenerational relationships within Knox. These videos were designed to improve understanding and increase intergenerational connections and have been viewed over 1,300 times. In May 2023, staff members attended the Framing Age Masterclass Workshops conducted through the Southern Melbourne Elder Abuse Prevention Network. These workshops were designed to gain a deeper insight into the Framing Age Message Guide, helping to create a society that respects, values and celebrates everyone, regardless of age. Members of our Age Friendly Futures team delivered Ageism Awareness presentations in early 2023 to address ageism in our community. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | Our Voices of Over 55s - Photography Exhibition was showcased at Millers Homestead throughout July 2023. This exhibition was very well received by the community and was complimented with Ageism Awareness Presentations throughout the month, hosted by local volunteers who were also featured in the exhibition. Knox City Council partnered with Eastern Community Legal Centre and local government areas in October 2023 to present A Question of Age: In Conversation with Jacinta Parsons. This event was to acknowledge Ageism Awareness Day and was attended by staff and community of the eastern metropolitan region, with the aim to question perceptions of getting older and re-evaluate the meaning of ageing in a society obsessed with youth.<br><br>A face-to-face workshop, What's Age Got To Do With It? facilitated by Joanna Maxwell, Age Research, Project Director from the Australian Human Rights Commission was offered to staff in November 2023. We had 13 staff across the organisation attend this engaging workshop, which discussed assumptions and stereotypes commonly associated with ageing across the lifespan, including ageism. A further four Ageism Awareness Presentations were conducted at various Senior Clubs/Rotary/Lions Clubs over this period with a total of 40 members in attendance.<br><br>From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, a total of eleven Ageism Awareness Presentations were shared with local Probus groups and Clubs to a total of 464 members. The Voices of Over 55s – Photography Exhibition was showcased at The Basin Community House throughout July/August 2024. Selected portraits from this exhibition were also used as centerpieces at our Senior Dance in October 2024 as part of our Seniors Festival event. To acknowledge Ageism Awareness Day 2024, Knox City Council in collaboration with Eastern Community Legal Centre, Maroondah City Council and City of Whitehorse conducted free face-to face community and sector workshops facilitated by Joanna Maxwell, Age Research, Project Director from the Australian Human Rights Commission. These workshops focused on the assumptions and stereotypes that are commonly made about ageing and older adults. Two of these workshops were conducted at the Knox Library with the third conducted at The Realm, Ringwood. A total of 58 attended these workshops, comprising of community members as well as local government officers. In November 2024, The Southern Melbourne Elder Abuse Prevention Network launched A Guide for Addressing Ageism in the Workplace. This guide has been shared within Knox City Council departments, including Biodiversity, Community Strengthening, Communications and People, Culture and Development.<br><br>Building on addressing ageism in the workplace, a strategy is being developed to create an ageism awareness program among Knox businesses collaborating with the Economic Development team, including a planned presentation to Matchworks, an employment agency, scheduled later in 2025. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 4.14 Embed the State Government's Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) to support the safety and wellbeing of children | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Implementation of access to the 'Child Link' program for Early Childhood Educators experienced a delayed roll out due to delays by the Victorian Government. However, training and implementation of the Child Sharing Scheme commenced late 2024. Staff are now trained to share information to promote the wellbeing and safety of children through this program and will improve practice through a continuous improvement process. |
| 4.15 Design and deliver a range of intergenerational activities, events and programs across the Knox municipality | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Knox became a member of the Australian Institute of Intergenerational Practice in 2021, and the Intergenerational Project Officer completed training to support the design and evaluation of best practice intergenerational programs.<br><br>Council hosted its first hybrid Intergenerational Forum, *"Building Connections between Generations,"* in March 2023, attracting over 80 attendees and helping to establish new community partnerships.<br><br>A 12-week Intergenerational Games program was developed in partnership with Swinburne University, Your Library, and a local school, focusing on building social connections. The program was evaluated and informed the creation of a community toolkit.<br><br>In July 2023, Council collaborated with the Early Years Team to develop intergenerational programs between local kindergartens and aged care facilities. These programs successfully fostered relationships between children and older adults. Since this time the intergenerational programs have gone from strength to strength.<br><br>Both Early Years hubs initiated similar programs later in 2023, partnering with aged care and lifestyle villages to deliver regular intergenerational activities. Fortnightly programs between Knox Children and Family Centres and aged care residents continued into 2024, strengthening community bonds across generations.<br><br>A pilot program between a local primary school and a retirement village began in late 2024. Due to its success, additional sessions were held in May 2025, with another scheduled for October 2025.<br><br>Council participated in a pilot project with Playgroup Victoria and The Collie Foundation in February 2024 to develop training and resources for intergenerational playgroups. One of the two pilot sites remains active and sustainable with Council support. The Intergenerational Playgroup at Glengollan Village continues to meet weekly, facilitated by aged care residents and attended by local families, fostering strong intergenerational relationships. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | The Intergenerational Resource Toolkit, developed through the Intergen Project, was launched in July 2024 and is now available via Council's updated *Intergenerational at Knox* webpage.<br><br>The Intergen Project was shortlisted for the 2025 *Outstanding Intergenerational Innovation & Contribution Award* and was recognised at the Australian Institute's annual conference. Attendance at the two-day conference, gaining valuable insights into evaluation, sustainability, and best practice in intergenerational work through shared learning with sector experts.<br><br>Many intergenerational programs continue to be embedded across the municipality and have been set up to be self directed to facilitate ongoing sustainability. |
| 4.16 Deliver community events and activities that cater to a variety of interests and ages | Active and Creative Communities | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council delivers a wide range of large-scale festivals, neighbourhood pop up events, civic events, citizenship ceremonies and leisure activities as an ongoing feature of the Active and Creative Communities business portfolio. Council and community events have seen a considerable increase in patronage post COVID and there is clear support for continued delivery of this service as 'business as usual'. Highlights: sold-out events at the Knox Community Arts Centre and Ferntree Gully Community Arts Centre include the Songs of Eva Cassidy featuring Silvie Paladino (popular with seniors); the Alphabet of Awesome Science, held during school holidays; and the annual Haunted Theatre, which was very popular with young people.<br><br>The Indoor Leisure Team have catered to all age groups by providing various activities and hire groups, such as trampolining, indoor bowls, basketball, netball, tennis, and dancing. For example, the Knox Chinese Elderly Citizens Club utilises the Rowville Community Centre weekly for multiple activities, including table tennis, badminton, tai chi, line dancing, and other activities, which involve hundreds of participants. |
| 4.17 Develop and implement an Indigenous Partnership strategy to build tangible connections with Knox families and children | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Early Years continue to collaborate with First Nations organisations and leaders to develop culturally-safe environments in Maternal Child Health, Kindergartens and Early Years Hubs. Highlights throughout this reporting period include a local Indigenous artist engaged to create a welcome mural in local language at the Wantirna South Hub; a successful grant application to enhance the bush tucker gardens at both Hubs, with kitchen staff trained in the 'paddock' to plate approach; and, with guidance from Council's First Nations Lead, staff incorporated the Woiwurrung language in everyday documentation and greetings at Hubs, and shared Wurundjeri seasons through Woiwurrung language in programs and in entrance foyers.<br><br>Service sites also display First Nations flags and welcome signs in local Indigenous language and offer Indigenous resources, artwork and furnishings. All children's services are embedded with culturally- |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | aware practice in daily routines. Staff consult key Indigenous frameworks to inform programs and practice, and open all classes, meetings and parent groups with an Acknowledgement of Country.<br><br>Established a First Nations playgroup with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). Further work in this space includes how to explore extending Council's Reconciliation Action Plan to embed Indigenous perspectives in Council's early years services in 2025-26. Early Years continue to collaborate with our First Nations agencies and leaders to maintain our culturally safe environments. |

### Key Direction 5: Civic engagement and integrity

Knox Council is a trusted and respected leader in our community, acting appropriately and ensuring all voices are heard.

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| 5.1 Deliver the Age Friendly Knox project to strengthen seniors voice and participation in Council and the community | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Following project planning, the Knox Age Friendly Futures Steering Committee was formed to guide implementation of the Age Friendly Knox Project (Age Friendly Cities). The Steering Committee met on a regular basis and contributed to a range of projects in the Child, Youth and Seniors Plan, including to address ageism, dementia, housing, safety, physical activity/seniors exercise parks, social isolation and loneliness, and digital connection. The Steering Committee also identified and progressed additional actions for improvement within Knox, including relating to bicycle transport, gambling, seating and safety.<br><br>In October 2023, the second survey of the age friendliness of the city was undertaken, which received 627 responses, and the data was analysed and interpreted. Focus group discussions were held on the topics of safety, transport, cost of living and emergency management and preparedness. These group discussions explored the findings, key domains, themes and issues, and identified actions required and next steps and results informed the draft evaluation report. The Draft Evaluation Report was prepared for stakeholder feedback, and included a reflection on the programs and initiatives that have been developed throughout the project on topics of Ageism, Dementia, Housing, Intergenerational, Physical Activity (Seniors Exercise Park), Social Isolation and Loneliness (Social Prescription) and Technology. This report was finalised, and submitted to the World Health Organization in the 2024-25 year, meeting the required timelines.<br><br>An age-friendly focus continues via engagement with seniors across various platforms, such as the Bright Ideas Network meetings and the Knox Active Ageing Advisory Committee to make sure |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| | | | | initiatives are age-friendly and provide opportunities for our seniors to have a voice and participate in the community. |
| 5.2 Develop and implement a framework that guides Youth Services to support the aspirations and needs of young people and strengthens their voice and participation in Council and the community | Community Access and Support | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Council delivered its inaugural Youth Summit, online, in September 2021. Forty-nine students, representing six local secondary schools, attended the program. Young people were supported to provide their ideas and opinions on the topics of mental health and the environment. These ideas guided Youth Services delivery in 2022. This bi-annual event provides an important opportunity for young people to have a voice on issues of importance to them. Council is committed to ensuring young people's voices are heard and incorporated into Council's planning processes.<br><br>September 2023, the second Youth Summit was held in person. In attendance there were 44 students, representing 10 local schools. Young people were supported to provide their ideas and opinions on the topics of mental health, cultural diversity, life skills and the environment which guided Youth Services service delivery in 2024.<br><br>A targetting survey for young people - the Resilience Survey, an annual student wellbeing measure, was considered but deemed financially unviable to implement (with costs of approximately $20,000 for the external survey provider). Insights from the “Resilient Youth State of the Nation Report: The state of wellbeing in Australian students” provides an alternative resource, with general insights impacting young people across Australia for further learning and program development. Information from this survey continues to inform the themes of the Youth Summit and Knox Youth Advisory Committee topics.<br><br>The Knox Youth Advisory Committee continues to inform Council on matters and programs relating to local young people.<br><br>During 2024 Youth Services undertook a comprehensive service review. This process led to the implementation of a framework to guide the work that youth services deliver for the local community. As part of this review, almost 500 young people participated in a range of consultation opportunities to have their say about youth services into the future.<br><br>As a result of the service review, the programming for Youth Services has broadened to provide opportunity for increased participation by young people, and to date, this focused has uplifted the service and increased the number of service users. |
| 5.3 Provide opportunities for the | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Early Years staff consulted with Youth Services, Open Spaces, Health Services, Community Strengthening and the Early Years Advisory Committee. |

| Action | Responsible Department | Year | Status | Key achievements and update July 2021 – June 2025 |
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| voices of children and families to inform decision making, including Council service planning and provision | | | | Initial planning, benchmarking and process mapping was conducted to enable successful implementation of the 'Voice of the Child' opportunities across Council. This includes considering signing up to the Child Friendly Cities Charter. At the meeting of Council 24 June 2024, it was resolved to adopt and become a signatory to the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities. It was noted that Council already undertakes many actions in line with The Charter and formal adoption would publicly recognise this ongoing work. Council officers will continue to further embed the principles of the CFCC, the Charter within Council's existing funding and resourcing. Knox Council is one of 22 other LGA's to be a signatory to the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter. The Charter is a statement of principles that underpin actions that support communities to be child friendly. |
| 5.4 Undertake business system improvements to remain sustainable and enhance the experience of community members accessing Children's Services | Early Years | 2021 - 2025 | Completed | Business system improvements have been finalised through the 'Early Years Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Project'. A new software license for enrolments is now managed by Knox Early Years, which replaces three separate systems. The system processes between 1,600 to 1,700 registrations per year. This platform is now providing Knox families with seamless online access to systems for registration, enrolments and attendance. |

# 8.6 Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 Review

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Noting
**Author:** Health Promotion Officer, Casey Dykes
**Manager:** Manager Community Strengthening, Kerryn Jansons
**Executive:** Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley

**SUMMARY**
The Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 (Action Plan) was developed in response to results from the "Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey" which was conducted in July 2020. The Survey showed that poor mental health and social isolation resulting in feelings of loneliness to be the most pressing issue for the community. The purpose of the Action Plan was to provide a once-off strategic framework to address the then current and emerging mental health needs of the Knox community during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the years immediately following, and to assist in the coordination of interventions moving forward. The Action Plan is, therefore, not ongoing as any incomplete recommendations have been elevated to the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 to ensure a whole-of-Council response.

The Action Plan is comprised of 30 recommendations, sub-categorised into the four key areas of:

- Health Promotion;
- Community Education;
- Sector Coordination and Collaboration; and
- Advocacy.

The sub-categories were identified by partner organisations in Mental Health forums held in December 2020 and February 2021. The aim of the Action Plan was that it would form the basis of strong partnership efforts, collective goals, and actions that would improve the mental health of residents and ensure that poor mental health is prevented at the earliest stage.

This report provides a summary of key achievements of the Action Plan across its lifespan, and an insight into the future direction of work to support mental health and wellbeing in Knox.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council resolve to receive and note the final report for the Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025.

## 1. DISCUSSION

### 1.1 Background

The Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 (refer to Attachment 2) was developed in consultation with partners and peak bodies including Mental Health Victoria, Prevention United, Each, Headspace and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place. The Action Plan was focused on addressing a variety of drivers of poor mental health including social isolation, anxiety, financial vulnerability, racial discrimination, family violence, and alcohol consumption, as well as protective factors which can influence good mental wellbeing, including participation in physical activity, and

being socially connected. It also considered the complex and interrelated nature of mental health, while looking at a range of individual, environmental, personal and social circumstances which collectively influence the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

The 30 recommendations were developed using deliberation and research, expert opinion and best-practice methods to ensure they were all evidence-based and aimed to address a wide variety of areas across the socio-ecological and liveability models.

The Evaluation Report (refer to Attachment 1) highlights Council's key role in advocacy and discusses historical efforts that have been successful in increasing available services within the municipality, while also highlighting the important role prevention plays when seeking to improve mental health outcomes.

**1.2 Introduction**

The Evaluation Report outlines the work that has been undertaken by Council and its partners to promote good mental health for those who live, work and play in Knox. It also discusses the future direction of Council's role in supporting the community's mental health. This includes the work that Council undertakes through its various Departments, as well as the future direction of work to improve the mental health of people more generally.

Overall, most of the recommendations within the Knox Mental Health Action Plan are ongoing as part of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. The table below shows an overview of the status of the 30 recommendations included in the Action Plan, and a full progress update is provided as Attachment 1 to the report:

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| Completed |  | 2 | Progress against this Recommendation has been completed. |
| Ongoing |  | 28 | Action towards this Recommendation is ongoing through the delivery of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. |
| **TOTAL ACTIONS:** | | **30** | |

**1.3 Key Achievements**

There are many achievements of the Knox Mental Health Action Plan which should be celebrated. Grouped by sub-category, examples of some of the key achievements listed in the report include:

**Health Promotion**

- The Move Your Way Program was established in 2022 and has been delivered every year since, to foster social connection and civic engagement through free place based active living opportunities.
- Targeted programs to support priority population groups in Knox to foster social connection including with the Knox Multicultural communities, LGBTQIA+ community and First Nations communities.

**Community Education**

- In June 2025, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training was delivered to Knox volunteers to support their efforts in supporting the Knox community. The training received great

feedback, including that attendees would like it to be run again so more volunteers can access it.
- Supported Women's Health East to deliver a series of mental wellbeing and connection sessions at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo for Chinese migrant women from April to June 2025.

**Sector Coordination and Collaboration**
- The Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee meets quarterly to support the Knox community in protecting and supporting mental health, taking over the consultation and partnership role of the Knox Mental Health Roundtable Group.
- Support for mental health and wellbeing projects through Council's grants streams, as a result of the Grant Framework Policy drawing on the Knox Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029, which includes social connection and mental wellbeing as one of eight health and wellbeing priorities.

**Advocacy**
- Knox Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan June 2023–June 2025 launched which identified a focus on health and wellbeing as one of five key focus areas.
- Council provided a Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria in July 2024 which included information regarding the impacts of food insecurity on mental health, such as feelings of stress, shame and/or embarrassment.

### 1.4 Case Studies

Notable work was undertaken to promote good mental health in Knox by addressing the intersectional factors which can help to increase social connection and therefore act as a protective factor for good mental health. Some examples are noted below:

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| **Knox Empowering Communities** | In 2021, Knox Council received a grant from the Department of Justice and Community Safety to improve community safety by addressing underlying factors such as social cohesion and mental wellbeing.<br><br>A range of community led initiatives were funded and delivered across Knox as part of the Knox Empowering Communities program to improve social connection, community safety, and wellbeing which engaged a total of 4,395 participants. The funded programs included Cultural Safety, the Ferntree Gully Village Markets, Ferntree Gully Community Safety Outreach, Knox Nocturnals Youth Group, the YES Program and Neighbour Day. These programs successfully strengthened social cohesion, improved perceptions of safety, and activated public spaces.<br><br>The Knox Nocturnals Youth Group and YES Program, which were youth focused, fostered resilience, self-expression, and life skills while supporting young people's mental health.<br><br>There was a consistent emphasis across all initiatives to reduce isolation, build supportive networks, and empower individuals and communities, particularly vulnerable and young community members to feel safer, more connected, and more confident every day. |

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| | A standout initiative, as part of the Ferntree Gully Community Safety Outreach initiative was an "R U OK? Day" event which featured a family barbecue and petting zoo, and was delivered in partnership with Ferntree Gully CFA, Rotary Club, and local traders. These projects exemplify how promoting mental health through inclusive, community-driven events can foster respectful relationships and enhance perceptions of safety, highlighting the importance of an intersectional approach and the broader role of Council in supporting wellbeing. |
| **When Life Throws You Curve Balls – Mental Health Summit** | In May 2024, the Community Strengthening Department hosted a Mental Health Summit titled "When Life Throws You Curve Balls", aimed at equipping community leaders with tools to promote mental wellbeing. The event featured expert presentations from Professor Peter Miller on trauma and shame, and Jesuit Social Services on The Man Box study exploring stereotypes of masculinity. A Panel discussion followed with diverse community representatives sharing lived experiences of addiction, mental ill-health, bushfire trauma, and refugee resettlement. Attendees engaged in roundtable discussions, Q&A sessions, and networking over dinner, with support from Council Officers and then Deputy Mayor, Sorina Grasso. A graphic illustrator captured key insights from the evening to share with Advisory Committees and participants, reinforcing the value of storytelling and community connections in mental health promotion. |

### 1.5 Limitations of Delivery

There were some limitations to delivery and reporting that were identified. By recognising these limitations, it allows for continual improvement in the planning and delivery of services and initiatives;

- Commitment to ongoing work by partners due to external factors;
- Funding limitations, particularly in external stakeholders/partners; and
- Evolving drivers of social isolation and loneliness over the life of the Action Plan, particularly those closely relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### 1.6 Future Direction for Mental Health Promotion

Improving social connection and mental wellbeing has been identified as a health and wellbeing priority in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (The Plan). This priority responds to community feedback collected during consultation for The Plan which heard strong calls for prioritisation of social connection and improved mental health in Knox, while considering key population groups. As improving social connection and mental wellbeing has been highlighted as a priority of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, the Mental Health Action Plan will not be renewed.

Council's role in supporting the community's mental health is largely through the promotion of protective factors such as active living, community belonging and connection, providing access to services such as libraries, and prioritising efforts to increase mental wellbeing of the Knox community. The inclusion of mental health and wellbeing in The Plan aligns with the Australian Government's "Vision 2030 for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention", which emphasises the need for and important role of community-based support and collaboration from those with lived experience in service design and delivery, including in prevention. It also aligns with the "Victorian

Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027" which identifies "improving wellbeing", by prioritising good mental health and wellbeing, as one of ten priorities in a long term approach which puts prevention at the forefront of improving the health and wellbeing of Victorians, as well as the Australian Insititute of Health and Welfare's identification of "promotion and prevention" being a key priority for those working to improve mental health.

### 1.7 Next Steps for Knox

Council will continue to support good mental health outcomes for the community, including:

- Delivering on the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 and continuing to embed work to promote protective factors for mental health by all teams across Council, including teams such as Waste, Sport and Leisure, Customer Service and Community Access and Support;
- Continual and enriched evaluation, monitoring and data collection as a priority to identify emerging trends, and to enable thorough evaluation of the work completed by Council; and
- Regular updating of the "Mental Health and Wellbeing" page on the Council website to provide community members with an easily accessible overview of how and where they can access support and services.

## 2. ENGAGEMENT

Consultation occurred with the Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee to capture the important work external stakeholders have undertaken during the life of the Action Plan. Community and partner consultation that occurred in the development of the Knox CARES Strategy in 2021, aligned with the content and recommendations of the Mental Health Action Plan.

Further consultation also occurred across the Departments within Council to capture both completed and ongoing efforts to improve the state of mental health in the Knox community. Additionally, the community engagement undertaken for the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 solidified the future direction of the work by Council in mental health being embedded into "business as usual".

## 3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A range of social impacts for the Knox community are highlighted in the report through actions undertaken in the delivery of it. The recommendations included in the Action Plan have led to increased delivery of initiatives which promote protective factors for good mental health across the community including promoting increased active living, decreased alcohol use and other factors which impact the community's social connection and mental wellbeing, and aim to have positive social implications beyond being exclusive to promoting good mental wellbeing.

## 4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no ongoing financial or other resources required by the Action Plan as it has been embedded into the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. Recommendations included in the report were funded within the existing operational budgets and staff resources, primarily in the Connected Communities Directorate. Some actions within the Strategy were reliant on in-kind support from external partners.

**7. RISKS**

There are no associated risks identified with the end of the Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 as its ongoing work has been incorporated into the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**

Strategy 1.2 - Our community can access diverse training and life-long learning opportunities through delivery, promotion and partnerships with relevant organisations.
Strategy 1.5 - Our community's health and wellbeing is improved through proactive planning, delivery, partnerships and advocacy that enable access to services, education and programs.

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**

Strategy 2.1 - Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.
Strategy 2.2 - Cultural diversity is celebrated through assisting, participating in, facilitating and delivering accessible programs, initiatives and events in partnership with our community, community groups and service providers.
Strategy 2.3 - Our community is supported to thrive during all stages of life through the promotion and provision of services, advocacy and partnerships with local service providers.
Strategy 2.4 - There are opportunities for social connection and active living through planning, provision of facilities, program delivery and support for local groups.

**Caring for and enhancing our environment**

Strategy 3.1 - Our environment is healthy and sustainable by considering environmental factors when planning for and making decisions.
Strategy 3.2 - Green spaces and waterways are protected, enhanced and enjoyed through planning, promotion and maintenance of our built and natural environment.

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.2 - Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.
Strategy 4.3 - Council services are efficient and optimised through ongoing improvement, and focused investment in innovation, technology and capability.
Strategy 4.4 - The changing needs of our community are met through informed policy and strategy that maximises value, collaboration and partnerships with other councils and local organisations.

**Being a strong voice for safety**

Strategy 5.1 - Our community feels safer in public spaces and facilities through planning, maintenance, education, design and proactive program delivery for Council owned and managed spaces and via advocacy for others.

Strategy 5.2 - Safety and liveability are prioritised through the planning, delivery and enforcement of local laws and regulatory services.
Strategy 5.3 - Our community is more secure, connected and feel less isolated through planning, partnerships, advocacy and targeted support for our most vulnerable.
Strategy 5.4 - People feel safe in their homes and in the community through the development of partnerships, planning and promotion of programs, services and education that focus on connection, safety and respect.
Strategy 5.5 - Our community is resilient in the face of emergencies through planning, education, emergency response and support.

**Planning our future city**
Strategy 6.2 - High quality, integrated community services and facilities are available through the planning, design and maintenance of multifunctional places that promote connection and utilisation.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**
There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**
There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**
1. Attachment 1 - Mental Health Action Plan Report FINAL 2025 [**8.6.1** - 40 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 [**8.6.2** - 48 pages]

Attachment 1

# Knox Mental Health Action Plan

# 2021 – 2025

# Evaluation Report

## Table of Contents

Background .....3
Key Achievements .....5
Case Studies .....6
Limitations to Delivery .....11
Future Direction for Mental Health Promotion .....11
Next Steps for Knox .....12
Appendix 1 – Mental Heath Action Plan 2021-2025 Acquittal .....14

## Background

The Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 was developed in response to results from the 'Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey' which was conducted in July 2020 and showed mental health and social isolation resulting in feelings of loneliness to be the most pressing issue for the Knox community. The purpose of the Action Plan was to provide a once-off strategic framework to address the then current and emerging mental health needs of the Knox community during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the years immediately following, and to assist in the coordination of interventions moving forward. This Plan will not be renewed as any on-going recommendations have been elevated to the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 to ensure a whole-of-Council response.

A range of local health services were consulted to explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration throughout the life of the Action Plan. This consultation largely occurred in Mental Health Forums held in December 2020 and February 2021; and included consultation with several peak body agencies and service organisations, including Mental Health Victoria, Prevention United, Each, Headspace and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place.

The Action Plan considered the complex and interrelated nature of mental health, while looking at a range of individual, environmental, personal and social factors which collectively influence the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. While poor mental health has many known drivers, the Action Plan focused on a variety of drivers that were supported by the findings of the 'Knox COVID -19 Household Impact Survey' (Knox City Council, 2020). These areas included social isolation, anxiety, financial vulnerability, racial discrimination, family violence and alcohol consumption.

Advocacy is a key role for Council, especially in mental health service delivery. Knox City Council has a strong history of successful advocacy for improved mental health services. In 2019, Council made a submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, outlining 36 recommendations aimed at strengthening mental health support across the state. This advocacy, which emphasised both service improvement and prevention, should continue to be a key priority for Council.

Key recommendations from the submission included:

- Recognising the interconnectedness of physical, medical, social, and psychological health, and ensuring prevention efforts address the broad range of factors influencing mental wellbeing;
- Increasing funding for neighbourhood houses and community training/education

providers;
- Addressing the harm caused by electronic gaming machines by advocating to reduce Knox's municipal cap to six machines per 1,000 adults; and
- Supporting the development of a Housing First model for people experiencing mental illness, acknowledging housing as a fundamental requirement for effective care.

The full list of recommendations and the accompanying narrative can be accessed here: Knox City Council Submission to the Royal Commission

Another notable example of Knox's successful mental health advocacy is the 2012 petition to the House of Representatives requesting funding for a Headspace Centre, addressing the high incidence of mental illness among young people in the area. This effort led to the opening of Headspace Knox in Westfield Knox in 2013. Continued advocacy, alongside integrating mental health protective initiatives into all health and wellbeing priorities in current and future Council plans, will be essential in advancing mental health outcomes for the Knox community.

The information gathered through consultation, evidence and data during the development of the Action Plan led to 30 recommendations. These recommendations covered a broad scope, addressing a wide range of areas aligned with the socio-ecological and liveability models. Each recommendation was grouped into one of four subcategories:

- Health Promotion;
- Community Education;
- Sector Coordination and Collaboration; and
- Advocacy.

## Introduction

This report outlines the work undertaken by Knox City Council and partners to prevent mental ill-health through increasing protective factors and responding to mental ill-health as it arises. It also explores the future direction of work Council does and could do to support the mental health and wellbeing of the Knox community. This includes the work that Council does in the community through various departments, as well as the future direction of work to improve the mental health of people more generally.

Overall, most of the recommendations within the Knox Mental Health Action Plan are ongoing as part of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. The Table below shows an overview of the status of the 30 recommendations included in the Action Plan, and a full progress update is provided as Appendix 1 to this report:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Completed | * | 2 | Progress against this Recommendation has been completed. |
| Ongoing | ▶ | 28 | Action towards this Recommendation is ongoing through the delivery of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. |
| **TOTAL ACTIONS:** | | **30** | |

## Key Achievements

The information below provides a summary of some key achievements from the Knox Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025, grouped by subcategory. Detailed information regarding all subcategories can be found in Appendix 1.

**Health Promotion**

- The Move Your Way program was established in 2022 and has been delivered every year since to increase social connection, physical activity and civic engagement, through free place based active living opportunities.
- Significant work has been done in Family Violence Prevention in Knox including obtaining grant funding for the 3-year Free From Violence Project Officer, which has supported the delivery of many community webinars and campaigns, as well as ongoing internal workforce development and training.
- Targeted programs to support priority population groups in Knox to foster social connection including with Knox Multicultural communities, LGBTQIA+ community and First Nations communities.
- Knox City Council's Safety and Wellbeing Team deliver annual wellbeing activities to support workforce connection and wellbeing.

**Community Education**

- Mental Health First Aid training delivered to Knox volunteers to support their efforts in supporting the Knox community in June 2025. The training received great feedback, including that attendees would like it to be run again so more volunteers can access it.
- The Community Strengthening Department supported Women's Health East to deliver a six-session series of mental wellbeing and connection sessions at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo for Chinese migrant women from April to June 2025. The partnership created a connection between women of the Chinese community, Women's Health East and Knox Leisureworks to enable the women to access the Knox Leisureworks facility on an

ongoing basis.

**Sector Coordination and Collaboration**

- The Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee meets quarterly to support the Knox community in protecting and supporting mental health and wellbeing, taking over the consultation and partnership role of the Knox Mental Health Roundtable group.
- Continued investment and support for Libraries in Knox, as a place for social connection and service delivery, including relocation and renovation of the Knox Library – Ngarrgoo, located in Westfield Knox, which had on average 1,133 people visit each day from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. The Knox Library - Ngarrgoo also has a focused space for young people to connect and feel safe.
- Support for mental health and wellbeing projects through Council's grants streams, as a result of the grant framework policy drawing on the Knox Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 – 2029, which includes social connection and mental wellbeing as one of eight health and wellbeing priorities.

**Advocacy**

- The Knox Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan June 2023–June 2025 launched which identified a focus on health and wellbeing as one of five key action areas.
- Knox Council provided a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria in July 2024 which included information regarding the impacts of food insecurity on mental health. The Submission noted that many people who access food relief expressed feelings of stress, shame, embarrassment, and concern due to the stigma of not being able to pay for food and/or feed children. This is an example of the way that other social factors can influence people's mental health, and why an intersectional approach should be taken to reduce the impact on the community.

## Case Studies

**Knox Empowering Communities**

Knox City Council received a grant from the Department of Justice and Community Safety in 2021 to address crime and improve community safety by addressing underlying factors that can contribute to perceptions of safety, including social cohesion and mental wellbeing. The Empowering Communities Program, led by the Community Strengthening (then Wellbeing) Department, funded six community led projects to respond to the community's needs. Mental

health was identified in the consultation as being one of five priority areas, which meant that the project had broader social outcomes beyond aiming solely to improve immediate safety concerns, therefore included factors such as social cohesion and fostering of respectful relationships. One of the co-designed initiatives that was implemented through the project was an 'R U OK? Day' event which promoted the importance of mental health in a community event which incorporated a family barbeque and petting zoo. It was delivered in partnership by Ferntree Gully CFA, Ferntree Gully Rotary Club and local traders, and funded by the grant.

Below is a table which shows the six funded initiatives of the Knox Empowering Communities Program, as well as their reach and key outcomes:

| **Funded initiatives** | **Number of participants** | **Key outcomes** |
|---|---|---|
| Cultural Safety<br>- Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP) delivered 'Deadly Youth 3-on-3 Basketball' and 'Sorry Day Yarning Circle' as part of the Cultural Safety project. | 65 | - Improved social connections<br>- Positive promotion of local indigenous culture<br>- Increased connection to community |
| Ferntree Gully Village Markets<br>- The Ferntree Gully Village Market project was an initiative of Coonara Community House that aimed to increase activation in Ferntree Gully Village to improve perceptions of safety. | 1,964 | - Increased social connections<br>- Activation of Ferntree Gully Village |
| Ferntree Gully Community Safety Outreach<br>- The Ferntree Gully Community Safety Outreach project was designed and delivered by Foothills Community Care in Ferntree Gully Village. The project aimed to address community safety issues precipitated by social isolation and disadvantage that had worsened since the pandemic and are often associated with homelessness, rough sleeping and insecure accommodation. | 576 | - Strengthened support for vulnerable residents<br>- Improved perceptions of safety<br>- Increased community connections and belonging<br>- Engagement with local traders |

| Funded initiatives | Number of participants | Key outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Neighbour Day<br>- The Ferntree Gully Neighbour Day project was delivered by the Knox Empowering Communities Action Group with support from Knox City Council's Empowering Communities Project Manager. The project facilitated a series of Neighbour Day gatherings hosted by residents in Ferntree Gully over three weekends in March and April 2024. | 1,440 | - Strong community engagement<br>- Strengthened social connections and reduced isolation<br>- Increased feelings of safety<br>- Increased willingness to help and ask for help<br>- Increased community safety awareness |
| Knox Nocturnals Youth Group<br>- Knox Nocturnals Youth Group is a social inclusion program for young people aged 12 to18 years, with a focus on building connections between young people and their communities and the development of protective factors known to contribute to wellbeing and resilience. | 86 | - Increased positive self-perceptions<br>- Social connections formed<br>- Growth of self-expression and self-discovery<br>- Development of protective life skills, and recognition and avoidance of antisocial behaviour |
| YES Program<br>- The Youth Engagement and Support (YES) Program was an initiative of MDLC designed to assist in addressing social anxieties in young people to help students to remain engaged in education. | 82 | - Reduced anxiety and improved wellbeing<br>- Boosted confidence and social skills<br>- Development of life skills<br>- Observations from parents, teachers and youth workers showed positive outcomes |
| Total: | 4,395 | |

This Program is a great example of how work to promote good mental health can be delivered in various ways and shows why having an intersectional lens and being aware of co-benefits across other priorities of Council is vital in future work. The Program also explored the multiple factors that contribute to good mental health including perception of safety and social cohesion

and evokes further thought into the role of Council in both safety and supporting mental health.

**When Life Throws You Curve Balls – Mental Health Summit May 2024**

The Community Strengthening Department held a 'Mental Health Summit' in May 2024, titled 'When Life Throws You Curve Balls'. It was targeted at community leaders in Knox in efforts to share information about how they could promote good mental health in their community. Guest speakers included Peter Miller, Professor of Violence Prevention and Addiction Studies at Deakin University, who spoke about trauma, shame and invisible barriers, and Jesuit Social Services who spoke about The Man Box which is a groundbreaking study into the attitudes and stereotypes of manhood in Australia. A Panel discussion then followed between community representatives including Bryan who has a lived experience of addiction and mental ill-health, Malcolm, a Black Saturday Bushfire survivor, Mary, a refugee working with young people in Melbourne and Danny, who has lived experience of mental ill-health, and works in the active living and wellbeing space. This allowed attendees an opportunity to ask panel members questions about what they had learnt over their years in supporting the Knox community and how they made it through tough times.

The event was well attended with 59 people present. The Summit provided dinner and a networking opportunity, as well as roundtable discussions, and opportunities to ask guest speakers questions about their presentations. The event was supported by Council Officers as well as then Deputy Mayor, Councillor Sorina Grasso. A graphic illustrator was engaged to creatively capture insights from the night which could be shared with attendees and members of the advisory committees who consulted on the event (see below).


Mental Health Summit 16th May 2024
Part 1
Knox City Council
Wurundjeri Country
Welcome
Cultural Heritage
Surviving
Treating Country like a member of the family
Respect & Purpose
Connection
Learning from eachother about a massive topic
Relying on your input
Mental health is one of our key goals
We're committed
Cr. Marcia Timmers-Leitch
We need to be trauma informed
Prof. Peter Miller Deakin University
Trauma informed approaches
Tell the story once until you're ready to share more
Our systems are set up to force people to re-traumatise
Five principles
Safety
Trust
Choice
Collaboration
Empowerment
Trauma
Prison
The world is not a safe place
Suicide
Self esteem
Drugs
Alcohol
Smoking
Bullying
We are on a different planet when it comes to our discussion these days
We put people in boxes
Genetic triggers
Mental and physical health
By 3, I'm effected adversely and don't even know it!
In utero poisoning
I won't be able to learn
Intergenerational transfer
Corporal punishment
Child beating
Lasting effects
Judged by middle class values
Shame
a treatment barrier
and avoiding it
Our education system is not set up to cope
Sit down and shut up!
Change the language
Adopt a curious position
Violent responses
Fight or flight for
Survival


Mental Health Summit 16th May 2024
Knox City Council
Part 2
Round Table Discussion
Key points
Work places are becoming more trauma informed to support staff
Having a strong lived experience workforce
Community organisation support "uniting"
Welcoming, openness & connection
"support for ages and stages"
Community champions
Community Spirit
"kindness, love"
Go above and beyond!
Check in & engage
"don't become disengaged"
Reach out & address loneliness
"migrants? vulnerable people?"
Inclusivity
Advocate
Culture change starts with you!
Build Relationships
Feeling valued & safe
Give freely
"pay it forward"
Compassion
Connection over compliance
Feeling there is choice
The Man Box
2024 Research
Jesuit Social Services
Why are so many of our participants men?
Less likely to seek help
Challenges at school
Suicide effects men more
Supporting boys and men to live healthy safe lives free from violence
Elise Jesuit Social Services
Bread-winners
Big Boys don't cry
Expected disciplinarians
Tall & strong!
Tough & sporty
Don't step outside the box
Sort your problems out yourself!
When men believe these rules they are more likely to be "violent abusive & harmful
Gamble
Binge drink
Intolerant of diversity
abusive to women
and suffer themselves"
Out-dated ideas of what it means to be a man
Poor mental health
I don't want to feel so much pressure
We need to see diverse masculinity
The workplace has been a great place to start
Addressing values
Share
Challenge
Encourage
Having the conversations about those inner spaces
Working with schools and sporting clubs
Panel Discussion
Danny
Malcom
Mary
Brian
Talking about my life has helped my recovery
"a magnificent adventure"
Group exercise and activities are soooo important!
"to mental health"
Community support is so helpful
Taking care of each other & setting up organisation
Follow your heart
Language can be isolating
We start from the beginning about mental health
Be kind to yourself
"you're ok, as you are"
Connection helps lift us up and triumph
Contact the people who have walked the walk
Throw the manbox away and talk
Community matters
Start off in your own street
Deputy Mayor Cr. Sorina Grasso
We want to create a community that fosters great mental health outcomes
Let's continue creating a culture that fosters wellbeing

## Limitations to Delivery

Limitations in the delivery of any action plan is expected and there are many reasons for this. For the Knox Mental Health Action Plan, limitations were varied as listed here:

- Funding constraints for partner organisations created a barrier to progress. Combined with other delivery challenges, this required careful selection of projects and initiatives to ensure desired outcomes, ultimately resulting in reduced overall output.
- As the Action Plan extended beyond the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, competing priorities for council staff and partner organisations resumed, leading to a reduced focus on mental health response. Mental health initiatives gradually returned to being part of 'business as usual' rather than a dedicated focus.
- The drivers of social isolation and loneliness evolved over the life of the Action Plan. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, lockdowns and restrictions limited social connection. As restrictions eased, more complex factors emerged such as limited community opportunities, transport barriers, and other health and social issues. This shift required Council to adapt its role in supporting protective factors to improve mental health outcomes.

## Future Direction for Mental Health Promotion

Improving social connection and mental wellbeing has been identified as a health and wellbeing priority in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (The Plan). This priority responds to community feedback collected during consultation for The Plan which heard strong calls for prioritisation of social connection and improved mental health in Knox, while considering key population groups.

Efforts to increase mental wellbeing and reduce the impacts of poor mental health outcomes on the Knox community will continue to be prioritised. An important action is working to reduce stigma associated with poor mental health, particularly in men. Poor mental health can affect many areas of life, often leading to withdrawal from daily activities and reduced social connection. Reducing stigma helps promote help-seeking behaviour, which can lessen both the impact and duration of mental ill health for individuals and community. Further promotion of protective factors for mental health which includes active living, social connection and community belonging, should be expanded to support individuals and families to reduce the impact poor mental health has on them and the broader community.

The Australian Governments ‘Vision 2030 for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Australia’ describes a mental health system where people are connected to services in their community,

have a positive experience with said services, are not stigmatised or discriminated against, and are empowered to care for their own wellbeing. The Vision outlines that building capacity in local communities through local mental health services, lived experience insight and community knowledge should be at the centre of identifying what the need is in the community. It also states the importance of being connected to one's community for many reasons, including to improve rapid access to services, and feeling safe and supported in day-to-day life.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identifies 'promotion and prevention' as a key future priority in mental health, and the Victorian Government identified 'improving wellbeing' and prioritising good mental health as one of ten priorities in its efforts to put prevention at the forefront of improving the health and wellbeing of Victorians. This aligns with Council's role, particularly through the Community Strengthening Department and the broader implementation of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029. To maximise impact, it's important that Council teams contribute to mental health outcomes by supporting green spaces, active living, social connection, and access to vital community services such as libraries and neighbourhood houses.

## Next Steps for Knox

Knox City Council will continue to promote mental health and wellbeing as a priority for both the Knox community and workforce, highlighting the importance of intersectionality when planning and delivering programs and services in the municipality. This means that the promotion of protective factors for mental health should be highlighted and prioritised to support the mental wellbeing of people in Knox. The promotion of these protective factors, which align with the health and wellbeing priorities, will occur through Council service delivery, programs and initiatives and partnerships in line with delivering on the health and wellbeing priorities of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

Through delivering on the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, continued and enriched evaluation, monitoring and data collection should be made a priority to ensure that any emerging trends can be addressed as promptly as possible. This also enables us to evaluate the impact that preventative measures have on the community and can be used to inform future work and projects. Evaluating health promotion work can be challenging, as measurable impacts often take years to appear. As such, the absence of immediate changes in Knox's mental health data should not be seen as a lack of progress or value.

Another key action for Council in supporting the mental health of the community is the regular updating of the 'mental health and wellbeing' page on the Council website. This page provides

an easily accessible overview of the mental health and wellbeing services available to the Knox community, divided into priority population groups where possible. This reduces barriers to accessing services, and stigma associated with help seeking by normalising the behaviour and increasing awareness of where to go for support.

As highlighted in the background section of this report, Knox City Council has a track record of successfully advocating for improved mental health services for the community. Continuing to prioritise and promote advocacy efforts is essential, as it plays a critical role in influencing policy, securing funding, and ensuring that the needs of the Knox community are recognised and addressed. Ongoing advocacy for priority populations, like young people, will help influence long-term improvements in mental health outcomes and ensure that local services can be responsive, accessible, and well-resourced.

## Appendix 1 – Mental Health Action Plan 2021-2025 Acquittal

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| **1.** Enhance Liveability factors of all suburbs in Knox City Council (e.g. walkability, housing, food). | ▶ | • Efforts to enhance liveability of all suburbs in Knox occurs each day as business usual across all Council teams. This includes waste management, infrastructure and facilities improvements, and support for food access through relief efforts carried out by organisations within the Knox Emergency Relief Network (KERN) and the Knox Food Relief Taskforce.<br>• The Knox Liveable Streets Plan 2012-2022 has concluded. This Plan was created through research, community and officer consultation and a thorough investigation of the streets of Knox. The Plan recognised and aimed to respond to key challenges in creating liveable streets across Knox. It built on, rather than replaced, other Council plans and strategies. |
| **2.** Address and challenge all forms of discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation in the community (racism, bullying, homophobia, people with mental health issues, people with Alcohol and other | ▶ | • Significant work has been done across Council's workforce to address and challenge all forms of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation. Activities aim to provide an opportunity for people to feel connected to their community and build relationships with those around them. Some key initiatives which have been delivered are:<br>○ The Youth Services team delivered the following programs and events:<br>▪ 'Free 2 Be Me' for 11–14-year-olds, '4Me' for 14–18-year-olds, and 'Emerge' for 18–25-year-olds, each running fortnightly.<br>▪ Engage workshops and programs which are activities that help young people in Knox to develop capacity to participate in civic, |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| drugs (AOD) challenges etc.), including the enhancement of existing programs to include mental health prevention. | | economic and social activities, including but not limited to wellbeing and coping strategies and music and mindfulness.<br>▪ The Youth Hive at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo is a space for young people to belong, connect and support others. There are a range of activities at The Hive including study and games groups.<br>▪ A flag raising is held every May for International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) to reiterate Council's position and support of inclusion.<br>▪ Council representatives march in February each year at the Melbourne Pride March – this is attended by many young people and their families, as well as council staff and Councillors.<br>▪ Knox Youth Services hold a variety of events including a 'Rainbow Euphoria Event' at Knox Community Arts Centre in November 2024, and a webinar with Nevo Zisin – author, poet and LGBTQIA+ advocate in March 2025.<br>○ The Community Strengthening Department delivered the following:<br>▪ IDAHOBIT event at Knox Leisureworks in May 2024 & 2025 to increase visibility and awareness of what IDAHOBIT is for community members.<br>▪ From 2022 to 2025, Council has hosted annual events to celebrate Cultural Diversity Week (March) and Refugee Week (June), celebrating the rich cultural in Knox. These events have fostered community understanding, tackled racism and xenophobia, and |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | addressed social isolation by bringing people together through storytelling, cultural performances/activities, and shared meals.<br>▪ Refugee Week Film Project – Stories of Strength and Belonging: As part of Refugee Week in June 2023, Council delivered a film project that spotlighted the lived experiences of Knox residents from refugee backgrounds. This project captured personal stories of resilience, courage, and the journey of resettlement, highlighting how these individuals have contributed meaningfully to the Knox community. It aimed to build empathy and understanding within the broader community, helping residents gain insight into the challenges and strengths of the refugee experience. It also challenged negative stereotypes and supported the message that people from refugee backgrounds are vital to the social, cultural, and economic life of Knox.<br>▪ 'Racism and Human Rights' Community Education Sessions were delivered in October 2023. Council supported and promoted two public sessions held at the Knox Civic Centre, facilitated by Victoria Police in partnership with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). These sessions educated community members on how to recognise and report incidents of racism and clarified the different pathways for reporting, when to approach police and when to report incidents to VEOHRC. |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| **3.** Undertake an analysis of suburbs reporting higher rates of social isolation during the pandemic lockdowns (through a place-based Liveability Assessment). | * | • Analysis of suburbs reporting social isolation as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic was undertaken. The following percentages represent the proportion of people in each suburb of Knox who found that spending time with family and friends was impacted by the Pandemic. The below results show that social isolation, through reduced time spent with family and friends, was reported as having the highest impact on the residents of the suburbs of Wantirna, The Hills and Bayswater:<br>○ The Knox average was 95%<br>○ Bayswater – 98%<br>○ Boronia – 93%<br>○ Ferntree Gully – 95%<br>○ Rowville – 94%<br>○ Wantirna – 100%<br>○ Wantirna South – 94%<br>○ Knoxfield/Scoresby - 93%<br>○ The Hills (suburbs of Upper Ferntree Gully, The Basin & Lysterfield) - 99% |
| **4.** Improve the state of third places to promote social gathering and cohesion for the strengthening of social capital. | ▶ | • Your Library (previously known as Eastern Regional Libraries) are continuing to deliver a range of library services and community activities from Millers Homestead.<br>• Knox Library – Ngarrgoo, located in Westfield Knox, opened in March 2024 and is receiving significantly increased visitor numbers since the opening. |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | • A relocation of Bayswater Library to a facility that is 50% larger, offering increased amenities including enhanced spaces for the delivery of community programs is due to open in the second half of 2025.<br>• Renovation works to upgrade Ferntree Gully library facilities including repainting and bathroom upgrades were completed in February 2025.<br>• Improvements to Community Strengthening facilities under Council's capital works program were undertaken including; fit for purpose scoping works at HV Jones Community Hall, HV Jones Community Room (both completed in November 2024) and Marie Wallace Community Hall (concept design and scoping completed in May 2025) as well as scoping for installation of an access ramp at Boronia Progress Hall in August. |
| **5.** Focus on Family Violence Prevention as a key driving factor, with specific consideration to trauma and cultural sensitivity. | ▶ | • Family violence prevention has been a key focus for Council over the life of the Action Plan, through work being done in both the Free From Violence Local Government Program (FFVLGP) and business as usual work done to progress gender equality in Knox. Some key achievements from the FFVLGP include:<br>○ **2022**<br>▪ **Recognise, Respond and Refer (3R's) Family Violence Training** (delivered in August) - training designed to increase peoples understanding of family violence and build their knowledge of what to do if someone tells them they are experiencing family violence.<br>○ **2023** |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | ▪ **3Rs Family Violence Training** delivered in October as part of the Community Training Program.<br>▪ **Training for early educators - Family Violence and the Chinese community cultural context – professional development training** for Family and Children Services staff at the Bayswater and Wantirna Hubs, supporting Chinese families and disclosures of family violence. Delivered by the Centre for Holistic Health in September.<br>▪ **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (15 June**) – Community Strengthening supported the Short Term Support team to deliver a 'Making a Splash' event at Knox Leisureworks in June in partnership with Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC), Eastern Health, Elder Rights Australia.<br>▪ **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence** – awareness raising campaign included social media posts and an event with Phil Cleary in November for sporting clubs, community groups and interested residents to hear from Phil, whose 25-year-old sister was murdered by her partner 30 years ago, about the role we can all play in driving positive change within the community.<br>▪ **Knox Dadstuff Workshops** - Two workshops delivered by Relationships Australia Victoria's 'Support for Fathers Program' in partnership with Family and Children Services at Carrington Park Leisure Centre in March. |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | ▪ **Dad's and Father Figures Mental Health workshop** delivered by the Support for Fathers Project on the importance of managing your mental health as a dad and father-figure in August.<br>▪ **Consent, Cyberbullying, Sexting and the law Webinar for Parents** delivered in partnership with Youth Services, Eastern Community Legal Centre, Yarra Ranges and Maroondah Councils in September. The session provided an opportunity to educate parents on new consent laws. The session covered the consequences of acting without consent, how building rejection resilience can help, cyberbullying and sexting, and how to support young people around these topics.<br>○ **2024**<br>▪ **Clubs say NO to family violence** - In-person workshop in May for sporting clubs, to build awareness around family violence and provide bystander action training to create more inclusive cultures within sporting clubs.<br>▪ **Seniors Line Dancing event** – An event to promote connection and healthy ageing in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June.<br>▪ **3Rs of Family Violence Training** - Training for community members in October to help recognise the signs of family violence, respond to disclosures, and refer to specialist services.<br>▪ **16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence** - Start the Conversation – Family Violence Prevention is Everyone's Business |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | Webinar delivered in December in partnership with Monash and Maroondah Councils.<br>○ **2025**<br>▪ **Staff training and engagement** – Active Bystander training delivered to Council staff in May. The training increased participants ability to identify harmful and dominating language, microaggressions, jokes and stereotypes that support different forms of oppression and discrimination, as well as build reflective skills. Also, 3Rs of Family Violence training delivered in June for staff members to help recognise the signs of family violence, respond to disclosures and refer to specialist services.<br>▪ **Are you safe at home? Day webinar: Know your rights – navigating family violence supports** - Webinar delivered in May in partnership with Maroondah and Monash Councils to support victim survivors of family violence to navigate support services, including legal, housing, financial and recovery. The Panel of speakers was made up of from FVREE Free From Violence, Eastern Community Legal Centre and InTouch. Moderated by Jane Gilmore.<br>▪ **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** – movie screening for seniors in Knox in June. The free event aimed to raise awareness about the forms of elder abuse (physical, emotional, financial, neglect, etc.), educate the on the signs and how to respond or seek help, show solidarity with older people and those who advocate for their rights |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | and encourage conversations around safety, respect, and dignity for elders. |
| **6.** Focus on decreasing alcohol consumption and other drug use as a key factor to poor mental health and broader relating issues. | ▶ | • Knox Council endorsed a Statement of Commitment for Reducing Alcohol Harm in September 2024. The key directions in the Statement are:<br>○ Managing alcohol on Council land, at recreation reserves, in sporting and community facilities.<br>○ Promoting a responsible drinking culture within Council and the community.<br>○ Designing public places to be family friendly and manage alcohol consumption in areas where this is a problem.<br>○ Working together with Victoria Police, local community organisations and businesses to develop solutions, share resources and advocate for change in state government policies.<br>○ Strengthening Council assessments of liquor licensing applications which will include assessing the impact of the community.<br>○ Providing education about responsible alcohol consumption, the risks associated with misuse, and information on local support services.<br>○ Taking leadership by prioritising alcohol harm reduction in our health and wellbeing strategies, policies, and programs.<br>○ Researching and monitoring data on alcohol harm to guide Council decisions and development of effective harm reduction programs.<br>• In addition to the Statement of Commitment for Reducing Alcohol Harm, the following work has been done by Council: |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | ○ Convened an internal Harm Prevention Working Group which met quarterly to oversee harm prevention work including the development and implementation of the Statement of Commitment.<br>○ Regular participation in the Action on Alcohol Flagship Group, a stakeholder alliance committed to reducing alcohol-related harm by aligning advocacy and primary prevention projects in the Eastern Metro Region (EMR) and community.<br>○ Council convenes the Knox Liquor Accord bi-annually to bring together Council, Police, the Liquor Control Victoria and local licensed venues to identify local solutions that address local challenges.<br>• Council also supports Knox Infolink to deliver a variety of programs which support community members affected by drug and alcohol harm. This includes a weekday breakfast program which is focused on building relationships of trust and referral pathways to support. Knox Infolink also piloted 'Movement for Mental Health' at the breakfast program which aimed to teach attendees of the breakfast program techniques to help manage mental health concerns. Knox Infolink received a Council Community Development Fund grant to provide access to immediate short term case work for those experiencing crisis, including for addiction. |
| **7.** Promote the Achievement Program to early years settings, schools and workplaces | ▶ | • This work is being led by our community health, health promotion partner, EACH, who support schools and early childhood services to achieve recognition in Health Priority Areas (HPA). There are 99 Achievement Program members in Knox, which is above the Victorian average of 44 (Cancer Council Vic, 2025). More Achievement Program members in Knox |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| within Knox City Council. | | are working on the HPAs than the Victorian average, with 37 in healthy eating and oral health, 20 in smoking, vaping, alcohol and other drugs, 23 in mental health and wellbeing, 28 in physical activity and movement, 38 in sun protection, 2 in sexual health and wellbeing, 26 in safe environments and 1 in climate and health actions. |
| **8.** Focus on specific underutilised health promotion subject areas to support marginalised communities (e.g. LGBTQIA+, multicultural community, First Nations). | ▶ | • Council has supported a range of health promotion projects to support priority population groups. Highlights include:<br>○ Events which recognise IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) were delivered both internally and externally in May in both 2024 and 2025. Events raised awareness about how to be a good ally and support the LGBTQIA+ community in Knox. These events were delivered in partnership with Your Library and Belgravia Leisure and were supported by the Knox LGBTQIA+ working group.<br>○ Author talk with Sam Elkin at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo in May 2024. Sam spoke about his journey from lesbian to transgender lawyer, in the aftermath of the 2017 marriage equality vote, fostering an environment of inclusion and belonging.<br>○ Knox Council also supported Women's Health East to deliver six sessions for Chinese women in Knox from April to June 2025. The sessions were attended by 112 women which focused on mental health, diabetes prevention and self-care. The sessions were delivered in Mandarin and included tips, group discussion, mindfulness activities and light physical activities. Some members of the group now partake in active living at |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | Knox Leisureworks in a weekly exercise group which will be facilitated by a bi-lingual worker from Women's Health East. |
| **9.** Focus on promoting mental health and wellbeing in the Knox City Council workforce. | ▶ | • The Knox Safety and Wellbeing Team have maintained annual wellbeing activities across the years including:<br>○ A calendar of annual wellbeing events which can be found on the Intranet. This includes a '1000 Hearts' club, running club, badminton competition and wellbeing training.<br>○ Wellbeing Week (interchangeable employee led initiatives) to promote social connection at work.<br>○ 'R U Ok? Day' annual 'fun run' held in September to get people active and create an opportunity for social connection and raise awareness in checking in on people.<br>○ Quarterly 'Safety Sizzles' hosted by Council Infrastructure Team at the Operations Centre focusing on wellbeing talks and opportunities for connection.<br>○ Currently in the process of developing a Peer Support Program.<br>○ Health and Safety Month campaign held each year in October. |
| **10.** Promote, support or deliver family and carer support groups in the region. | ▶ | • The Disability Inclusion team have delivered the following initiatives to support carers:<br>○ Borderline Personality Disorder Carers Group including guest speakers on topics such as Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) and emotional regulation, run monthly.<br>○ Partnering on FaPMI (Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness) Family Fun Day, which takes place annually, generally in November, in |

| HEALTH PROMOTION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| | | partnership with a range of Eastern Melbourne organisations including Eastern Health, which rotates location each year.<br>○ Pathways for Carers walks (monthly).<br>○ Carer exercise classes (weekly).<br>○ Mental Health Carer Forum delivered in October 2024<br>○ Eastern (Mental Health) Carers Network.<br>• Each also received a grant from Council to deliver 'CARERS Connection' which is a program which delivers free Tai Chi, yoga and dance classes for unpaid carers in Knox. It aims to give carers the chance to move their body, clear their mind and connect with others who understand the experiences of carers. There is also an opportunity after each class to relax and chat with other carers. All fitness levels and experience are welcome at the sessions. It is running for three terms in 2025 from January to September. |

| COMMUNITY EDUCATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| **11.** Promotion of existing partner programs through council channels to increase awareness to 'hard to reach' groups (e.g. | ▶ | • The Community Strengthening team supported Women's Health East to deliver Mental Health information and connection sessions at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo for Chinese migrant women in Knox from April to June 2025. There were six sessions delivered with an average of 18 people per session. The content was delivered in Chinese by a bi-lingual worker from Women's Health East and focused on topics including mental health, connection, active living, diabetes prevention and self-care. The attendees were highly |

| COMMUNITY EDUCATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| homeless, language other than English). | | engaged, and some have joined an ongoing active living program with Knox Leisureworks, working with key contacts from Women's Health East to ensure that the women are able to access the centre and remove the barrier faced though speaking a language other than English.<br>• As the lead organisation for the Preventing Homeless in Older Women research project, Knox hosted a series of events to raise awareness of the drivers of homelessness for women aged over 55. These events included "Making It Home" (March 2023), hosted by public commentator Jane Caro and including a screening of the documentary "Under Cover". The event featured a panel discussion with the film maker, lead researcher and a women with lived experience of homelessness. Two online webinars were then hosted, the first during Homelessness Week in August 2023 to share the phase one research findings. A second webinar in December 2023 then shared the phase two research findings, which included an in-depth analysis at some of the proposed solutions identified in phase one.<br>• Knox Council staff were involved in the Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter Group working group for Homelessness Week in 2024. The webinar in 2024 focused on responding to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, preventing homelessness among older women research project - phase 2 and affordable, alternative and appropriate housing for people over 55. |
| **12.** Implement parenting and relationship programs to enhance | ▶ | • The Knox Maternal and Child Health Team work to provide support to families and parents, through improving relationships in Knox. This is undertaken in a variety of ways including: |

| COMMUNITY EDUCATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| the quality of relationships – Baby Makes 3 (BM3), Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR). | | ○ Council is reviewing its involvement with the Baby Makes 3 Program, which is an evidence-based health promotion and social change initiative which aims to build understanding, appreciation and mutual respect among first time parents to foster equal and healthy relationships which support collaborative co-parenting of infants and children (Australian Institute of Family Services, 2025).<br>○ Dad's Group delivered in April to May 2025 in partnership with Relationships Australia Victoria across three sessions to support dads in parenting, and by providing them an opportunity to connect with other dad's and share their experiences of parenting.<br>○ Knox's Enhanced Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurses deliver the 'Circle of Security' program which provides parents with education and psychotherapy based on attachment theory (Victoria Government, 2025). This course is first offered to those in the Enhanced MCH program, then in the universal stream if there are spaces available. The Enhanced MCH program provides free extra support to Victorian families with children aimed 0 to 3 years who are experiencing 2+ challenges or factors (such as being under 20 years, family violence and safety, at risk of homelessness or unemployment, etc.), with priority given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and those needing professional interpreter support (Better Health, 2025).<br>• Solihull Approach Groups were previously delivered by the sleep and settling team which teaches parents about attachment and parenting which received great feedback from the community. |

| COMMUNITY EDUCATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| **13.** Implement programs and initiatives to support the first 1000 days of life: Infant, Feeding, Activity and Nutrition Trial (InFANT), BM3 as well as family support and resilience. | ▶ | • The InFANT program, which is a program which is designed to help families with healthy eating, active play and reduced screentime for the start of a baby's life, is delivered by Knox MCH nurses in new parents' groups. It is also incorporated into sleep and settling groups delivered by the MCH team.<br>• Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, extra information sessions were delivered by the MCH team at 6 and 8-month groups which delivered the InFANT program.<br>• New parent groups are offered for first time parents which run for four weeks by MCH nurses which aim to build social connection and increase knowledge in new parents. It includes a session at a Knox Library – Ngarrgoo to increase connection to third places and strengthen connection.<br>• The Knox Young Parents Group offers support, information and activities for parents aged under 25 years with a baby under 12 months. The group meets weekly and is run by the Youth Services Team. |
| **14.** Promote and run mindfulness programs and/or mental health first aid through council for all residents and select cohorts. | ▶ | • A Mental Health First Aid training course was delivered to 13 Knox volunteers in June 2025 to support the work they do in the community. It was delivered in response to increasing need from volunteers to support community members with mental health concerns at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo. A variety of Knox volunteers represented organisations including Feed One Feed All, Living our Best Life and Share Space.<br>• Another initiative included Mental Health Month events at Knox Leisureworks in October 2024 which supported 'Canvas and Cuppa' which used art therapy to support mental health and provide refreshments to encourage social connection. |

| COMMUNITY EDUCATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| **15.** Work with primary, secondary and tertiary education settings, targeting students to build resilience skills to address mental health (e.g. relaxation, mindfulness, psychoeducation, meditation, yoga, wayapa, resilience, coping mechanisms, positive mental health practices, arts), in addition to health promoting behaviours (physical activity, healthy eating, adequate sleep, consumption of alcohol). | ► | • School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) was funded by the Department of Education to the end of 2025 school year to provide funded programs to selected Knox Primary and Secondary Schools. The programs delivered through SFYS support students in years 5-12 who are experiencing mental health challenges, social isolation and those who exhibit poor resilience to remain engaged in education.<br>• The SFYS Coordinator role facilitates the Knox Secondary Wellbeing network for wellbeing staff working in Knox Secondary Schools. This network supports school staff to increase their knowledge of the local services that support young people.<br>• Wellbeing related professional development is offered to Knox Primary School staff working in the school wellbeing space. This includes formal training opportunities and the provision of information through newsletters and email updates. |

| COMMUNITY EDUCATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Key Initiatives** |
| **16.** Promote culturally appropriate mental health awareness and intervention in antenatal and postnatal cohorts. | ► | • All Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurse appointments are done with an interpreter where required. This ensures that mental health support can be provided to those who speak a language other than English.<br>• Chinese and Korean playgroups are held weekly at the Knox Children and Family Centre in Wantirna South to build friendships, play, learn and have fun with parents and carers, and babies, toddlers and preschool students. These groups aim to foster connection and belonging for families in the Knox community to strengthen community connection.<br>• New parents are sent the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale self-report measurement tool which screens for symptoms of emotional distress during pregnancy and the postnatal period. This tool can be accessed in a variety of languages, and if done before appointments with MCH nurses, the results can be used to identify and support women experiencing postnatal depression by referring them to extra support through both general practitioners, hospitals and other health services.<br>• For those who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, extra support is offered through the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA).<br>• There is also scoping underway with Women's Health East to make 'Baby Makes 3' or a similar program available to Chinese speaking families in Knox. |

| SECTOR COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| **17.** Knox Mental Health Round Table – for collective impact partnered approaches to mental health actions. | ► | • The Knox Mental Health Roundtable Group was wound up after its final meeting in May 2024, as a result of mental health and wellbeing being a standing item on the Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee. Members of the round table were invited as guests to the June 2024 Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee, and were recommended to apply to be members. Knox City Council thanked members of the Roundtable for their contributions. |
| **18.** Implement a mental health and wellbeing specific community grants program – to support community organisations lead initiatives. | * | • As a result of the overarching grant framework policy which draws on the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, mental health and wellbeing is included as one of the five key directions (specifically under Connection, Resilience & Wellbeing). Grants to support mental health and wellbeing are specifically encouraged. |
| **19.** Greater use and activation of third places to foster social connection (e.g. running free place-based physical activity programs like Active Maribyrnong). | ► | • Move Your Way has been delivered in February/March in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 to activate Knox Council outdoor spaces, and encourage community members to be active and social with others.<br>○ The Program ran most recently in February 2025 for two weeks. There was over 470 people across the lifespan and from varied cultural backgrounds who attended activities across the program period. Feedback from the participants showed than when rating the Program out of 100 for level of comfort and enjoyment while participating, that it |

| SECTOR COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| | | was rated 89 and 87 respectively. More than half (62%) of participants said they intended to continue with the activities, and 78% said they tried something new.<br>○ Planning is underway for the 2026 edition of the Program which aims to further build on the momentum of the program and aims to enable the Knox community to incorporate active living into their lives in an ongoing manner which will support the mental health of those who live, work and play in the municipality. The Program also plans to include more partnership and collaboration in its next edition by working closely with settings such as Neighbourhood Houses, Libraries, Knox Leisureworks and other recreation and leisure facilities and teams within Knox. |
| **20.** Partner with and utilise existing facilities in Knox to deliver and strengthen current social connection initiatives, including leisure centres, libraires, neighbourhood houses. | ► | • There are ongoing partnerships with Your Library and Neighbourhood Houses to deliver Community Strengthening initiatives including Move Your Way, Cultural Diversity Week, Community Training and community health programs.<br>○ Knox Leisureworks hosts a variety of community connection initiatives each week. This includes a community walking group two mornings per week, also carers coffee and connection groups and a shower program in partnership with Knox Infolink.<br>○ In late 2024 and early 2025, the Knox Council Youth Team developed and planned 'The Forge', a program designed to support young men aged 14-17 to explore healthy masculinity, emotional intelligence and |

| SECTOR COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| | | positive peer relationships. It began fortnightly delivery at Knox Library – Ngarrgoo in June 2025. |
| **21.** Encourage the co-location of services, potentially leveraging existing council facilities. | ▶ | • The Youth Hive opened at Knox Library - Ngarrgoo in March 2024 which is a space for young people who live, work and play in Knox as a place for connection and support. Knox City Council Youth Workers are present 2-5pm weekdays to provide information and support, and activities are run each week for young people to join and enjoy, including table tennis, study zone, game afternoons and special school holiday sessions and activities. This use of a Council facility to foster belonging and social connection is a good example of co-locating services by bringing young people together in a safe and supported environment. |
| **22.** Partner with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to support existing initiatives for the increased health and wellbeing of First Nations people. | ▶ | • The Knox Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023-2025 was developed in conversation with a working group of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Elders and our local First Nations communities. The Plan outlines six key areas to focus future efforts and collaboration over the 2-year period. The key areas are; recognition and respect, cultural heritage, health and wellbeing, civic participation, employment and economic development and voice and governance. The RAP aims to support the mental health of the First Nations community in Knox by fostering a culturally safe and inclusive environment in many ways including strengthening relationships, cultural safety and healing, and increasing cultural awareness.<br>• The RAP has helped progress partnerships with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) and has seen various key initiatives undertaken. |

| SECTOR COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| **23.** Work collaboratively with carers, families and support people to address their needs and connect them to appropriate services. | ► | • The Disability Inclusion Team provide support, information and referral to organisations that can assist community members to access information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).<br>• The Short-Term Support Team connect community members in Knox with the services they need such as mental health support, financial hardship and other challenges.<br>• EACH received funding from Knox City Council to deliver 'CARES Connection' from January to September in 2025 which offers free classes for carers to give them an opportunity to move their body, clear their mind and connect with others who have similar experiences to them. The classes run on Tuesday afternoons at locations across Knox including Knox Library – Ngarrgoo, and Carrington Park Leisure Centre. CARES Connection - Each.<br>• Council puts on a wide variety of webinars each year to support the Knox community to access information. This includes webinars for parents put on by the Youth Services Team on topics including sleep, consent and many more. Other webinars include sessions for carers and people experiencing family violence as mentioned in recommendation 5. |

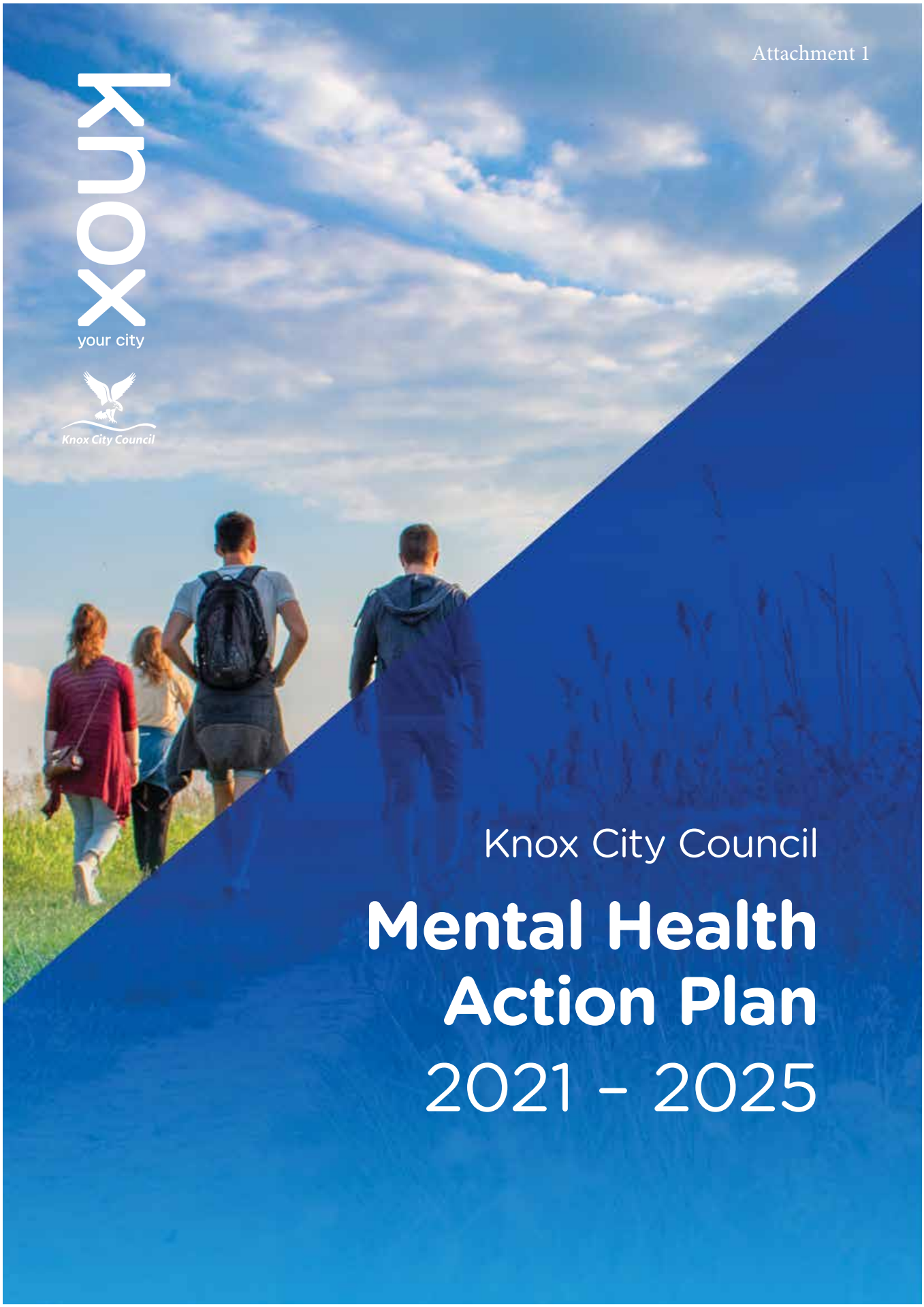
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| **24.** Seek advice and input into initiatives from those with lived experience (e.g. community representation group), including those from vulnerable groups, families, carers and supporters. | ► | • There are nine Advisory Committees which Council seeks advice and input into initiatives from. This included the Knox Mental Health Roundtable which came to an end in mid-2024, due to mental health being a standing agenda item at the Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee which is made up of a variety of professional stakeholders from organisations including Each, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Women's Health East and more, which also meets quarterly.<br>• Consultation is also undertaken with professional and community stakeholders in the development of key Council documents including the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. This includes all Advisory Committee's convened by Knox Council such as the Youth, Multicultural & Active Ageing Advisory Committees. |
| **25.** Promote participation in wellness practices (yoga, meditation, yarning circles, Wayapa etc.) with guidance from specific cultural groups. | ► | • The Indian Senior Citizens Association of Victoria partnered with Knox Council in the 2025 Move Your Way program to deliver Yoga for the Knox community.<br>• The Yarning Circle at Knox Civic Centre was unveiled in marking Sorry Day in May 2022 as a place of truth telling and healing conversations. The Sorry Day ceremonies each year since have been held at the Yarning Circle, offering the First Nation community and allies a place to connect to Country and Culture.<br>• In 2023, Coonara Community House partnered with Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place to create a safe and inclusive place for their local community and to continue efforts of reconciliation. This led to the development of a mural, yarning circle, cultural kitchen, Indigenous gardens |

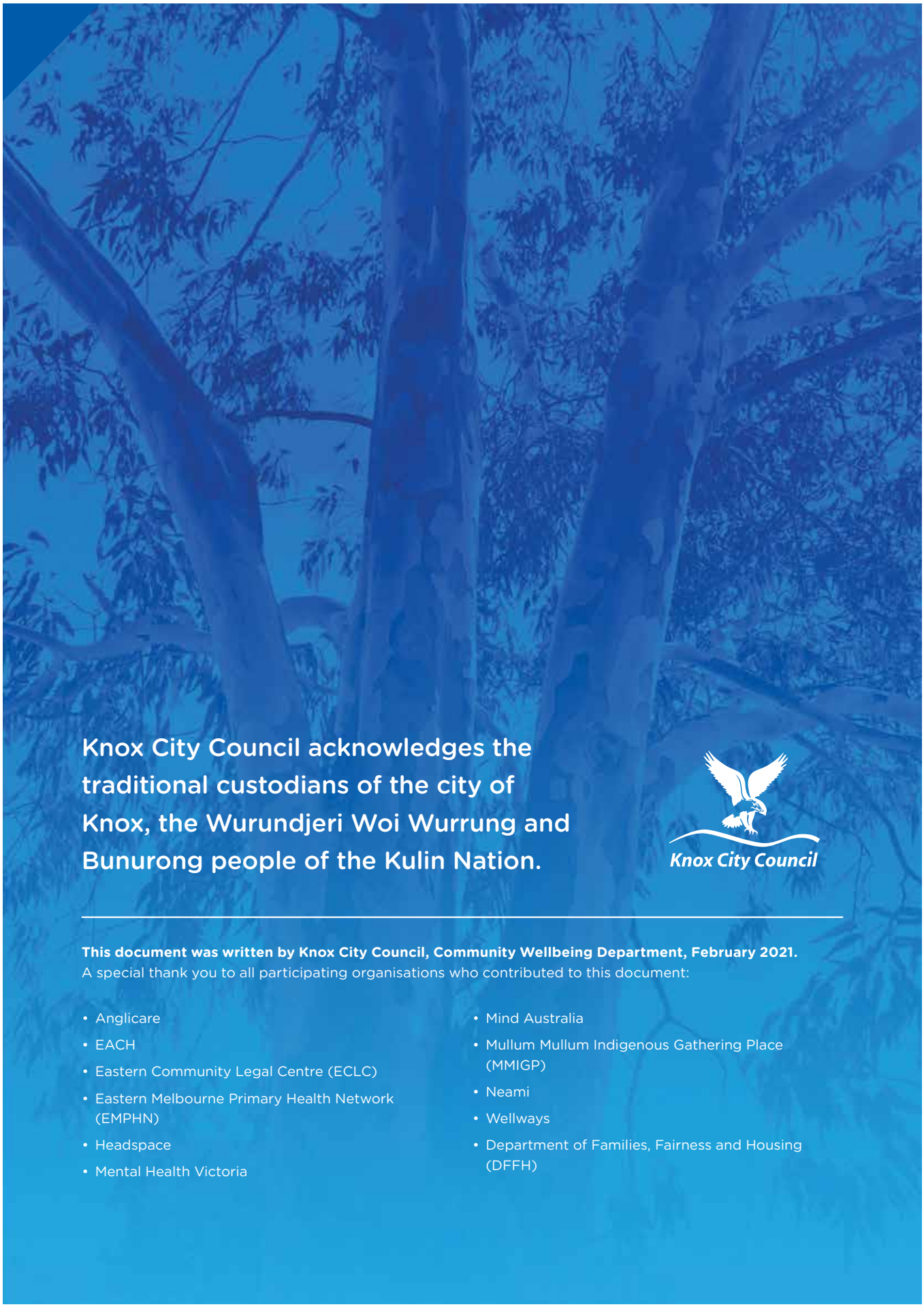
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| | | and art and cultural awareness training. The launch event welcomed over 250 people in October 2023 into the space and took a partnership approach with over 15 organisations involved in the planning and delivery. |
| **26.** Support the engagement of existing services, facilities and programs (e.g. Headspace, Men's Shed, community gardens, multicultural services, First Nations specific services). | ▶ | • The Mental Health support cards, originally developed to help community members easily access information about available support services, were updated and re-designed in 2022. These cards were created and printed in consultation with the Mental Health Roundtable group and are available for the community to collect from locations such as Customer Service at Knox Civic Centre, Knox Leisureworks, and libraries across Knox.<br>• The Knox Community Garden is supported by Knox Council to provide a place of community connection, engaging in nature and active living through gardening.<br>• Headspace operates in Knox to support children and young people aged 12-25 years with their mental health. This includes emotions, physical and sexual health, alcohol and drug support and work and study stress. Further advocacy and funding are needed to increase service capacity to respond to demand and community need for this service.<br>• Knox Council has supported Rowville Men's Shed through grants to purchase equipment such as computers and beekeeping equipment, and the programming of health and wellbeing webinars. Supporting Rowville Men's Shed helps to support the mental health of men in Knox through fostering connection, sense of belonging and active living. |

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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| **27.** Promote and support First Nations people cultural health in schools through partnerships with Koori Education Support Officer (KESOs). | ▶ | • Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) are part of an area-based team of professionals who understand Aboriginal culture and history of the community. KESOs support schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to participate fully in education by providing advice and building capability within schools (Department of Education, 2025).<br>• The First Nations Lead from Council meets quarterly with the Koori Education Roundtable to discuss current trends and opportunities in education across the State with Koori Education Support Officers. |
| **28.** Increase understanding of the needs of women in regard to mental health across different life stages (youth, pregnancy, retirement etc.), and across different cultural groups. | ▶ | • The Knox Maternal and Child Health (MCH) team works in partnership with Eastern Health's Perinatal Emotional Health Service (PEHS) to support new parents who experience mental health concerns. This includes through communicating with identified mothers care teams to provide a wraparound service. |
| **29.** Advocate for resources that enable collaboration and partnerships. | ▶ | • The Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee which meets quarterly, as well as other Advisory Committee's that Council convenes all work continuously to advocate for resources that enable and strengthen partnerships for collaboration.<br>• Council has done considerable advocacy work in efforts to get State Government to locate a Head to Health Adult Mental Health and a Child |

| ADVOCACY | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| | | Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub at the Wantirna Health Precinct. Such a centre was said to benefit over 940,000 people living in the Eastern region of Melbourne, and improve service planning and coordination, and make the system easier to navigate. The Wantirna Health Precinct West Comprehensive Development Plan was approved by the Minister for Planning and gazetted on 30 August 2024 under Amendment C185knox to the Knox Planning Scheme.<br>• Ongoing discussion and partnership with organisations and other Eastern Region Councils continually takes place to help advocate for further funding and resources to state and federal government. |
| **30.** Advocate for adaptable service delivery to improve experiences and support families, carers, and other supporters of those living with mental illness. | ► | • Connect Us is an online platform which helps young people in Melbourne's outer east to find services to support them. It is run in collaboration with Youth Services teams from Knox Council, as well as Maroondah City Council and Yarra Ranges Council. It has a search function which identifies places young people can go for help and find information on services.<br>• Knox Council's Customer Service team endeavour to support community members who are experiencing mental health challenges by completing training regarding how to respond to challenging behaviours. There is also an escalation process where customers can be flagged as potentially experiencing crisis and requiring extra support. When community members identify as needing support, i.e. experiencing financial hardship or homelessness, the customer service team will refer to the Short-Term Support team. Customer service team members and leadership may also call |

| ADVOCACY | | |
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| **Recommendation** | **Status** | **Initiatives** |
| | | emergency services to request a welfare check if they feel a community member is at risk of crisis.<br>• Some Meals on Wheels volunteers have been supported by the Community Access and Support team with Mental Health First Aid training and receive in-house training around mental health awareness. The Team works closely with the Short-Term Support Team when a vulnerable senior is identified to look for ways to engage them with the relevant support service. |


Attachment 1
knox
your city
Knox City Council
Knox City Council
Mental Health
Action Plan
2021 – 2025



Knox City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the city of Knox, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation.

Knox City Council

**This document was written by Knox City Council, Community Wellbeing Department, February 2021.**
A special thank you to all participating organisations who contributed to this document:

- Anglicare
- EACH
- Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)
- Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (EMPHN)
- Headspace
- Mental Health Victoria
- Mind Australia
- Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP)
- Neami
- Wellways
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| **Executive Summary** | **2** |
| **Introduction** | **6** |
| **Knox Mental Health Profile** | **8** |
| The Impact of COVID-19 | 8 |
| Pandemic Mental Health Impacts | 9 |
| Social Isolation | 9 |
| Anxiety | 10 |
| Financial Vulnerability | 10 |
| Health Improvements during the Pandemic | 10 |
| Racial Discrimination | 10 |
| Alcohol Consumption | 11 |
| Family Violence | 11 |
| Other Pandemic Impacts | 11 |
| Mental Health in the Youth of Knox | 12 |
| **The Mental Health Intervention Environment of Knox** | **14** |
| **Addressing Mental Health in Knox City Council Catchment** | **16** |
| Best Practice Interventions in Mental Health | 17 |
| Mental Health Action Plan Examples in Australia | 19 |
| Federal and State Government Actions into Mental Health | 20 |
| Opportunities in the Knox Mental Health Prevention Environment | 21 |
| **Recommendations** | **22** |
| Proposed Interventions | 22 |
| **Conclusion** | **24** |
| Next Steps... | 25 |
| **Glossary** | **26** |
| **Appendices** | **28** |
| Appendix 1. Available Interventions and Services in Knox LGA | 29 |
| Appendix 2. Mental Health Service Pathways | 38 |
| Appendix 3. Federal Government Mental Health Actions | 40 |
| **References** | **41** |

# Executive Summary

**The mental health of Knox residents has been in decline over the past four years with the current COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating these issues. Results from the *Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey* conducted in July 2020 revealed mental health and social isolation resulting in feelings of loneliness to be the most pressing issues for the community. Council has in many ways acted upon improving the state of mental health across the municipality over these four years, however with the sharper decline occurring during the pandemic, council has decided to take a stronger stance in its approach.**

To gain a deeper understanding into the current mental health landscape of Knox and highlight possible areas of opportunity and potential partnerships, a range of local service organisations were engaged in Mental Health Forums in December 2020 and February 2021. It is clear that initiatives to address mental health in the community are best done through partnership and coordination with other organisations to achieve collective impact. Council has consulted with and will continue to work with a number of peak body agencies and service organisations, some of which include Mental Health Victoria, Prevention United, EACH, Headspace and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place.

In addition to the forum, one-on-one meetings were held between council and partners to further explore partnerships and understand services. Input from these organisations were used to outline a shared vision and commitment to future action on mental health. The *Knox City Council Mental Health Action Plan* is the manifestation of this advice and recommendations arising from the forum and meetings, with support from wider demographic and best practice research.

To provide context to the current mental health landscape in Knox, this document shows the wide variety of current activity and interventions employed by council and partners to address mental health. The vast variety of interventions appears to address all areas of the prevention spectrum, as well as largely across the socio-ecological categories, on which they were mapped. Suggesting, that services and interventions are catering for a large variety of people and a diversity of needs. Despite this wealth of service provision and intervention initiatives, the challenge is reported to be the capacity to deal with current demand. Cost is a secondary challenge and barrier to mental health service access, particularly for vulnerable cohorts. Individuals struggling with their mental health may claim up to 20 sessions a year with a mental health professional through Medicare, once they have received a mental health care plan from their doctor (Services Australia, 2021). However, these sessions may incur an out-of-pocket cost if Medicare does not cover the full fee (Services Australia, 2021). Essentially, further treatment and access to professional mental health care can be expensive and ongoing. Thus, making them increasingly inaccessible and resulting in many individuals, especially vulnerable cohorts, falling through the cracks. Therefore, efforts must be directed to mental health promotion and prevention that can be accessed by all, regardless of individual circumstances and privilege, which will also support the secondary and tertiary initiatives.

Mental health initiatives were also scoped against liveability domains in addition to the socio-ecological model to truly capture both the physical and social environments at play in health and wellbeing. This scoping found that fewer initiatives were viewed through a liveability lens and thus may provide an opportunity for council to act in this space of primary prevention to support partner organisations in their current actions.

This exploration of services also showed many cases where council are best placed to partner with active organisations and support their current work. One such example being the promotion of lesser known services utilising council engagement channels, or gauging need through community connections to tailor existing programs to our community.

An array of recommendations can be seen in *Table 1* and were formed in line with four key areas identified by partner organisations in the forum; *health promotion, community education, sector coordination and collaboration and advocacy.* These recommendations were made with a specific focus on population cohorts such as youth, older people, financially disadvantaged, women and people of culturally diverse backgrounds. These cohorts were considered at most need.

*Table 1: Knox Mental Health Action Plan Recommendations*

## Health Promotion

1. **Enhance Liveability factors of all suburbs in Knox City Council (e.g. walkability, housing, food)**
2. **Address and challenge all forms of discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation in the community (racism, bullying, homophobia, people with mental health issues, people with Alcohol and other drugs (AOD) challenges etc.), including the enhancement of existing programs to include mental health prevention**
3. Undertake an analysis of suburbs reporting higher rates of social isolation during the pandemic lockdowns (through a placed-based Liveability Assessment)
4. Improve the state of third places to promote social gathering and cohesion for the strengthening of social capital
5. Focus on Family Violence Prevention as a key driving factor, with specific consideration to trauma and cultural sensitivity
6. Focus on decreasing alcohol consumption and other drug use as a key factor to poor mental health and broader relating issues
7. Promote the Achievement Program to early years settings, schools and workplaces within Knox City Council
8. **Focus on specific underutilised health promotion subject areas to support marginalised communities (e.g. LGBTQIA+, multicultural community, First Nations)**
9. Focus on promoting mental health and wellbeing in the Knox City Council workforce
10. Promote, support or deliver family and carer support groups in the region

## Community Education

11. **Promotion of existing partner programs through council channels to increase awareness to 'hard to reach' groups (e.g. homeless, language other than English)**
12. **Implement parenting and relationship programs to enhance the quality of relationships - Baby Makes 3 (BM3), Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR)**
13. Implement programs and initiatives to support the first 1000 days of life: Infant, Feeding, Activity and Nutrition Trial (InFANT), BM3 as well as family support and resilience
14. **Promote and run mindfulness programs and/or mental health first aid through council for all residents and select cohorts**
15. **Work with primary, secondary and tertiary education settings, targeting students to build resilience skills to address mental health (e.g. relaxation, mindfulness, psychoeducation, meditation, yoga, wayapa, resilience, coping mechanisms, positive mental health practices, arts), in addition to health promoting behaviours (physical activity, healthy eating, adequate sleep, consumption of alcohol)**
16. Promote culturally appropriate mental health awareness and intervention in antenatal and postnatal cohorts

## Sector Coordination and Collaboration

17. **Knox Mental Health Round Table - for collective impact partnered approaches to mental health actions**
18. Implement a mental health and wellbeing specific community grants program - to support community organisations lead initiatives
19. **Greater use and activation of third places to foster social connection (e.g. running free place-based physical activity programs like Active Maribyrnong)**
20. Partner with and utilise existing facilities in Knox to deliver and strengthen current social connection initiatives, including leisure centres, libraries, neighbourhood houses
21. Encourage the co-location of services, potentially leveraging existing council facilities
22. Partner with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to support existing initiatives for the increased health and wellbeing of First Nations people
23. Work collaboratively with carers, families and support people to address their needs and connect them to appropriate services

## Advocacy

24. **Seek advice and input into initiatives from those with lived experience (e.g. community representation group), including those from vulnerable groups, families, carers and supporters**
25. Promote participation in wellness practices (yoga, meditation, yarning circles, wayapa etc.) with guidance from specific cultural groups
26. **Support the engagement of existing services, facilities and programs (e.g. Headspace, Men's Shed, community gardens, multicultural services, First Nations specific services)**
27. Promote and support First Nations peoples cultural health in schools through partnerships with Koori Education Support Officer (KESOs)
28. Increase understanding of the needs of women in regards to mental health across different life stages (youth, pregnancy, retirement etc.), and across different cultural groups
29. **Advocate for resources that enable collaboration and partnerships**
30. Advocate for adaptable service delivery to improve experiences and support families, carers and other supporters of those living with mental illness

***Bolded initiatives indicate the actions most pertinent to partnering organisations**

It is the hope that the *Knox Mental Health Action Plan* forms the basis of strong partnership efforts, collective goals and actions that will improve the mental health of residents, and ensure poor mental health is prevented at the earliest stage.

# Introduction

**The purpose of the *Knox Mental Health Action Plan* is to provide a strategic framework to address the current and emerging mental health needs of the Knox community and to assist in the coordination of interventions in our community moving forward. This action plan comes as a response to the consequences of COVID-19, but also to respond to the ongoing needs of the community more generally.**

Broad social and environmental aspects of mental health will be explored to provide scope for primary prevention opportunities from council with the aim of promoting mental health and wellbeing at the earliest stage. Importantly, this document will also examine the state of mental health in Knox and available interventions, before exploring opportunities for further council impact and greater support for partner organisations. Effectively, this action plan aims to facilitate commitment and strategic action which will make Knox a more liveable setting for its community.

## Background to Mental Health Action in Knox

Knox City Council has long engaged in mental health through different actions and across different departments. In 2018 the *Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee* led and hosted a Mental Health Workshop, attended by local service organisations from a wide variety of fields. The purpose of this workshop was to forge a shared vision and commitment to future action on mental health. The outcomes resulting from this workshop were:

- Establishment of a mental health and support network to strengthen collaboration[1]
- Increasing community access to metal health first aid training[2]
- Advocacy in identifying gaps in NDIS funding[3]

Additionally, Knox City Council maintains a strong collaborative connection and relationship with EMHSCA (Eastern Mental Health Service Coordination Alliance) as signatories to the EMHSCA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Alliance aims to improve the experience of mental health consumers, carers and practitioners through supporting the delivery of more accessible, appropriate and coordinated services.

Since this time, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown yet more challenges and changes at our community. The *Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey* conducted in July 2020 found that many of the challenges born by the pandemic have resulted in self-reported mental

[1] This group functions as a community of practice gathering mainly local government employees

[2] Funding was provided to Neighbourhood houses for the training of community members

[3] Knox participation in Eastern Mental Health Service Coordination Alliance (EMHSCA) and has included mental health actions in its Municipal Disability Leadership Plan

health and social isolation issues (causing feelings of loneliness), as the current major challenges for the community. Both issues being interrelated, have negative long term consequences for community wellbeing and population health.

In gaining understanding of this current situation, council decided to drastically ramp up its actions within the municipality to firstly improve population health generally, but also as a key response to COVID-19 recovery. To better understand the areas in which Knox could partner and act, Knox Mental Health Forums were held in December 2020 and February 2021 to discuss the survey findings, as well as share learnings from other key organisations.

These forums invited select mental health experts from peak bodies and service delivery organisations operating in Knox to provide advice on recommended future mental health actions for council. Participating organisations included:

- Anglicare
- EACH
- Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)
- Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (EMPHN)
- Headspace
- Mental Health Victoria
- Mind Australia
- Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP)
- Neami
- Wellways

These peak bodies and organisations provide mental health services and initiatives directly to the Knox community. The key focal themes for Knox City Council suggested by these agencies were:

- Health Promotion
- Community Education
- Sector Coordination and Collaboration
- Advocacy

These recommendations were made with a specific focus on population cohorts such as youth, older people, financially disadvantaged, women and people of culturally diverse backgrounds. These cohorts were considered at most need.

## Knox Mental Health Action Plan

The following pages of this document outline the demographics of Knox with specific reference to aspects contributing to mental health, the service and intervention landscape of the municipality and future projects and initiatives for partnership and action. This will provide a detailed insight into where opportunity may exist for new and strengthened interventions, as well as further discussion for mental health primary prevention in Knox.

This action plan takes into account the complex and interrelated nature of mental health, looking at a range of individual, environmental, personal and social circumstances which collectively influence the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Mental health has many known drivers, this action plan has chosen to focus on a variety of drivers that are supported by the most recent findings of the *Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey* (Knox City Council, 2020). These areas include: social isolation, anxiety, financial vulnerability, racial discrimination, family violence and alcohol consumption.

Focusing on evidence-based associations and causes of ill-health, this action plan is a piece that fits into a much broader, health promotion strategy at Knox City Council and partner organisations.

# Knox Mental Health Profile

**Mental health is an essential component to overall health and wellbeing and must be at the forefront of interventions that promote a healthy community. Since 2017, Knox residents have reported higher rates of psychological distress than the Victorian average. Residents of Outer Eastern Melbourne (OEM) of which Knox is part, also reported slightly lower levels of life satisfaction than the Victorian average (Department of Health & Human Services [DHHS], 2017; DHHS, 2018a)[4]. Consequently, over a quarter of Knox residents have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression at some point in life, indicating that these poor signifiers may translate to diagnosable mental health conditions (DHHS, 2017). All of these issues are signifiers of poor mental health amongst our community.**

Although the Knox community has been experiencing negative mental health factors, different cohorts within this community record worse experiences of mental health than others. Such disparities can be seen in the self-harm rate of females in Knox as opposed to males for example, which increased from 2017 to 2018 (Women's Health Atlas, 2018). Similarly, residents living in select suburbs in Knox reported higher rates of social isolation during the COVID-19 period. This geographical difference draws further attention to inequalities within the community and possible environmental features influencing poor mental health (Knox City Council, 2020).

It is important to note, the impact of mental illness not only affects the individual experiencing the health issue, but also carers, friends and families of those with mental illnesses. This can have direct negative influences on their own mental health and wellbeing (Shah et al., 2010). Thus, services and initiatives must also address these support networks to ensure their mental health and wellbeing needs are also addressed.

## The Impact of COVID-19

During the pandemic, mental health among the Knox cohort declined even further, as shown by the *Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey* (Knox City Council, 2020). Recent evidence from the Black Dog Institute (2020) also supports this finding, stating that those with pre-existing anxiety disorders and other mental health disorders, including depression, are at risk of increased anxiety during the pandemic. Given our existing exacerbated mental health challenges, mental health and its drivers must be well understood and remain a high priority for Knox City Council.

[4] Effectively, life satisfaction saw a slight fall in OEM between 2017-18 compared to Victoria (DHHS, 2018a).

[5] Survey participants were asked: In what ways, if any, has the COVID-19 impacted on you? This question was open to both positive and negative impacts. An opportunity to provide further information was given later in the survey.

[6] This is important to consider as approximately three quarters of mental illness occurs before the age of 25 years (McGorry & Mei, 2018).

[7] Social support acts as a protective factor for mental health, while decreased social support can lead to social isolation and thus decreased mental health (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001)

[8] Including decreased hours and reduced income

## Pandemic Mental Health Impacts

One of the major survey findings stated that 75% of residents reported a big, or slight impact[5] on their mental health, which was most prominent in those aged 18-29 and least prominent in 65+ year olds (Knox City Council, 2020). Indicating the level of impact on mental health declined across increasing age groups[6]. However, mental healthcare traditionally focuses on the adult population during crisis events, meaning more focus is needed on prevention and early intervention in younger years to minimise the risk of poor mental health developing and transitioning to adulthood (Black et al., 2017).

This disproportionate impact was further observed in those in a family household, compared to lone persons and couples with no children (Knox City Council, 2020). Discrepancies may be due to increased difficulties in managing domestic loads during lockdown as a consequence of home-schooling, limited childcare and reduced support from family and friends[7] (Pierce et al., 2020). Renters were an additional subgroup reporting higher levels of mental health impact, which may be explained due to a higher percentage of renters experiencing changes to employment during the pandemic[8], leading to increased stress and thus poorer mental health (Australian Housing and Urban Research institute, 2020).

## Social Isolation

With 96% of respondents reporting an impact on time spent with family and friends, and an additional 39% naming social isolation as a setback; social isolation clearly emerges as a primary consequence of COVID-19 (Knox City Council, 2020). With already reported high rates of psychological distress, anxiety and depression, social isolation in Knox must be addressed to ensure rates stabilise and decrease to improve the mental health of residents.

Interestingly, as mentioned, the largest discrepancies in those experiencing social isolation occurred between different geographic regions[9] (Knox City Council, 2020). Areas experiencing higher rates of social isolation include the Hills region[10], Rowville, Wantirna and Wantirna South. This suggests broader environmental aspects may influence levels of social isolation, linking into the notion of liveability[11]. Examples of geographical discrepancies could include the greater number of missing footpath links in Rowville (David Lock Associates, 2005), and consequently, the lowest walkability score of all Knox suburbs (Walk Score, 2021). This effectively may have impact on physical activity and accessibility of services[12]. The interrelationship between liveability and mental health from a place-based perspective is complex and should be explored.

[9] This is particularly interesting as this issue did not differ by population groups as with most other indicators

[10] Includes the suburbs of Upper Ferntree Gully, The Basin and Lysterfield

[11] A city in which people can "live in appropriate housing, within walking, cycling or rapid and reliable public transport distance to employment and education, social and health services, healthy food, and good quality public open space" (Whitzman et al., 2012) is considered a liveable city. Liveable cities have increasingly been linked to positive health (Wood et al., 2017)

[12] Similarly, on average residents in Rowville have less than one restaurant, bar or café within a 5-minute walk and thus may have contributed to social isolation in a time where people had very little reason to travel beyond their neighbourhood (lockdown restrictions) (Walk Score, 2021)

## Anxiety

Levels of anxiety[13] however, differed slightly across varying Knox cohorts during the pandemic, with higher rates of worriedness experienced in females, those who speak a language other than English, Rowville residents and those below the poverty line. These higher rates in females may be due to the higher rates of adopting household tasks while working, including home schooling when compared to males (Knox City Council, 2020), whilst higher rates in those who speak a language other than English may be due to ineffective official coronavirus health communications[14] (Grey, 2020).

## Financial Vulnerability

One of the primary impacts from COVID-19[15] was financial vulnerability, with almost 70% of respondents reporting an impact on their financial position (Knox City Council, 2020). Financial vulnerability was particularly felt by those aged 18-29, renters and those below the poverty line (Knox City Council, 2020). This may suggest those aged 15-24 years are considerably more likely to be employed on a casual basis and therefore have a less stable income than older adults (Gilfillan, 2018). Therefore, financial vulnerability should be recognised as a broader determinant in addressing mental health.

## Health Improvements during the Pandemic

Although the pandemic had a large variety of adverse effects on resident's health and wellbeing, many individuals experienced improvements over this period. The most commonly reported improvement was spending more time with kids and family[16], which may have acted as a protective factor to both social isolation and consequent decreased mental health for some cohorts as explained previously. Residents also enjoyed a slower pace of life and increase time for hobbies and projects which again may act as a protective factor to mental health[17] (Head to Health, 2019).

The pandemic has presented unique experiences that have affected the mental health of some individuals. However, there are other broader context issues that also impact mental health regardless of the pandemic of lockdown restrictions; some of which include existing inequalities and behaviours which are discussed below.

## Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination is another broader determinant that impacts mental health and wellbeing. Knox is a diverse and multicultural community[18], however, negative perceptions towards multiculturalism have existed in the past. Consequently, only half of Knox residents previously agreed that multiculturalism makes life in the area better; a lower proportion than Melbourne (Knox City Council, 2016). Whilst the percentage of adults agreeing

[13] Anxiety measures used in the Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey include measures of security, worriedness, confusion and relaxation. The most frequently reported anxiety measure was feeling (very much so) worried, followed by (not at all) relaxed, and (not at all) secure (Knox City Council, 2020).

[14] Another reason could relate to cultural concepts of health and the way the question was posed

[15] As reported in the Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey

[16] The impact on seeing family and friends was also seen as a negative (mentioned above), but this negative most likely relates to restrictions to see people outside one's household.

[17] Individuals with hobbies often experience less stress and have a decreased risk of low mood and depression (Head to Health, 2019).

with this statement has increased in the OEM region (DHHS, 2018a), the Australian Human Rights Commission (2019; 2020) saw a rise in complaints received against the *Racial Discrimination Act* over the past year. One third of racism complaints made between February and May 2020 were related to COVID-19, indicating the pandemic led to a spike in racism in Victoria (Tan, 2020). This is problematic, as individuals experiencing racism are at increased risk of developing mental health issues including anxiety and depression.

Due to Knox's multicultural nature, past attitudes, and the increase in racism in Victoria throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, racism should be elevated as an area of consideration in addressing mental health.

## Alcohol Consumption

Knox has the equal[19] highest alcohol related hospital admission incident per capita compared to neighbouring Local Government Areas (LGAs) (AODstats, 2018, as sighted in Knox City Council, 2019). This is in line with the high monthly increased lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm experienced by adults in Knox (DHHS, 2017). Additionally, the survey showed considerable proportion of respondents reporting an increase in alcohol consumption during the pandemic, with well over a quarter of 30-39 year olds and 40-49 year olds reporting this increase (Knox City Council, 2020). Furthermore, the survey also showed that families with children at home reported an increase in alcohol consumption at a higher rate than lone person households and couples without children. This may indicate alcohol as a coping mechanism for increased stress around helping children with remote learning (Sonnenschein & Grossman, 2020). Conversely, males, 18-29 year olds and lone person households experienced a decrease in alcohol consumption, which may be due to decreased socialisation (Knox City Council, 2020).

## Family Violence

Tying into mental health, family violence is of concern in Knox[20]. Although incident rates are lower than Victoria, rates in Knox have seen an overall increase since 2016, and are higher than neighbouring LGAs. Of concern is a small number of respondents from the survey reporting concerns about anger and violence at home (Knox City Council, 2020). This spike in family violence incidents was a predicted consequence of the pandemic restrictions (Liotta, 2020).

## Other Pandemic Impacts

Further impacts of COVID-19 felt in the Knox community included decreased exercise, eating less healthy food and experiencing trouble buying food. Although these are not immediate mental health factors, they are part of the broader determinants of health and act as risk factors for poor mental health. Residents in Ferntree Gully, Knoxfield and Scoresby experienced higher instances of difficulty buying food[22], whilst Wantirna South and the Hills region had higher rates of exercising less (Knox City Council, 2020).

[18] 30.1% of residents were born overseas in 2016, and a quarter of residents speak a language other than English at home (idcommunity, n.d). In addition, Knox has a growing Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander community (idcommunity, n.d).[19] Knox has equal rates to Maroondah City Council

[20] Knox saw a considerable increase in total family violence incidents from 2019 to 2020 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2020).

[21] Maroondah, Manningham and Yarra Ranges (Crime Statistics Agency, 2020).

[22] In addition to reporting eating less healthily than Knox as a whole

## Mental Health in the Youth of Knox

It is important to consider the youth living in Knox as a special interest group, especially as good mental health in childhood and adolescence translates into good mental health in adulthood (McDaid et al., 2017). According to the *Communities that Care* survey, some groups of Knox students are experiencing significantly higher rates of depressive symptomology than Australian students[23]; rates which have increased in Year 8 and 10 students from 2014 to 2018 (Hosseini et al., 2019). This rate increase is seen progressively from Year 6 to year 10, as well as rates of lifetime alcohol use[24], binge drinking[25] and lifetime marijuana use, all of which are risk factors for poor mental health (Hosseini et al., 2019).

When compared to Australian data, some groups of Year 8 and 10 students in Knox have significantly higher rates of lifetime alcohol use, recent alcohol use[26] and binge drinking, in addition to higher rates of cigarette use and suspension (Hosseini et al., 2019). These areas indicate significant need for intervention to address these behaviours which can have adverse effects on both mental and physical health and wellbeing (Headspace, 2018; Letcher et al., 2015).

The unequal distribution of poor mental health seen in youth is also reflected at present in the huge demand and wait lists for most mental health services, particularly for this cohort as well as children (Pers. Comm. Pritchard 11th February 2020)[27].

**Given the complex and interrelated nature of factors affecting the mental health of Knox residents, an array of interventions are needed to target different risk factors and cohorts to promote mental health and wellbeing.**

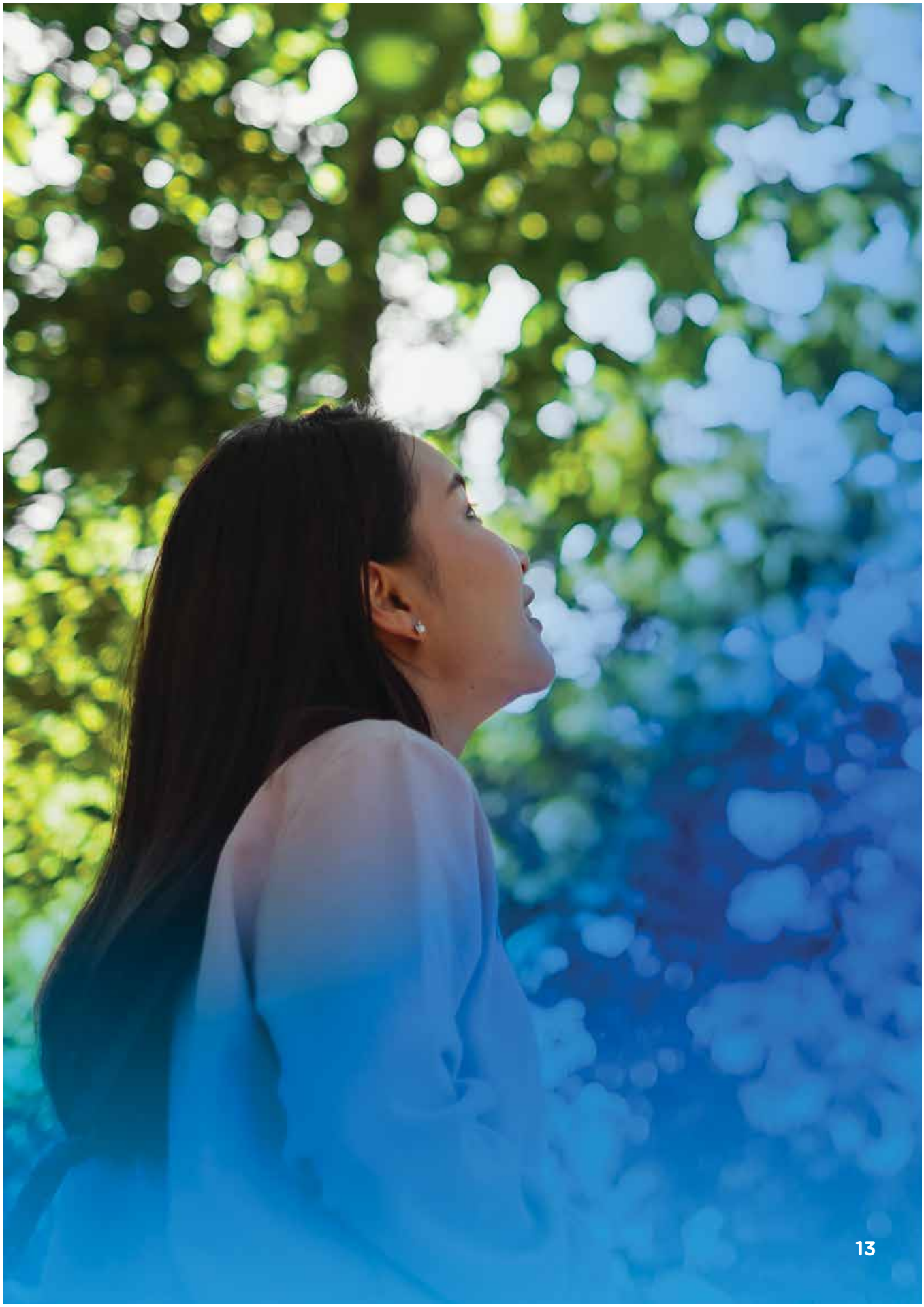
[23] The Communities that Care Knox Youth Survey collects data pertaining to health behaviours of students in years 6, 8 and 10.

[24] Age of first alcoholic drink

[25] Considered four or more drinks in one session

[26] In the last 30 day period

[27] Personal Communication Pritchard, R (EMPHN), 11th February 2020


13

# The Mental Health Intervention Environment of Knox

## The following chapter aims to summarise and present some existing mental health interventions in Knox at the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention levels.

In addressing mental health, it is crucial to take a broad approach and understand the wider determinants that work to facilitate positive mental health. The determinants utilised within this chapter come from the socio-ecological model of health which highlights the importance of focusing on multi-level factors influencing behaviour. The environment in which people work, live and recreate also plays a strong part in influencing mental as well as general health. Factors such as public open space, housing, food access and transport to name a few, shape opportunities and ways of being. These more tangible environmental factors are seen as indicators for liveability. As mentioned, the liveability of an environment has a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of residents and thus, are important to consider in taking a preventive approach to mental health (Lowe et al., 2013). Using both the socio-ecological and liveability models to understand possible interventions allows a holistic and experience driven approach.

In order to determine what appropriate interventions could be developed or strengthened, it is first important to establish what is already available in the Knox community. To capture this information, a range of stakeholders and organisations were engaged in semi-structured interviews to explore what is currently available to the community. The information provided by each agency was collected to create a map of available interventions and services in Knox, which can be seen in *Appendix 1*. Council and partners had a wide variety of programs that influence mental health, however for the scope of this exercise, only programs that were intended to affect mental health directly were included. Services and interventions were mapped according to prevention level, and were sorted by intervention type. A summarised table looking at the number of interventions and initiatives against the socio-ecological model, and liveability domains can be seen in *Table 2*. This is useful to easily see the agglomeration of services, whilst exposing opportunities for further intervention.

For the purpose of this mapping exercise, the following definitions were used to categorise interventions:

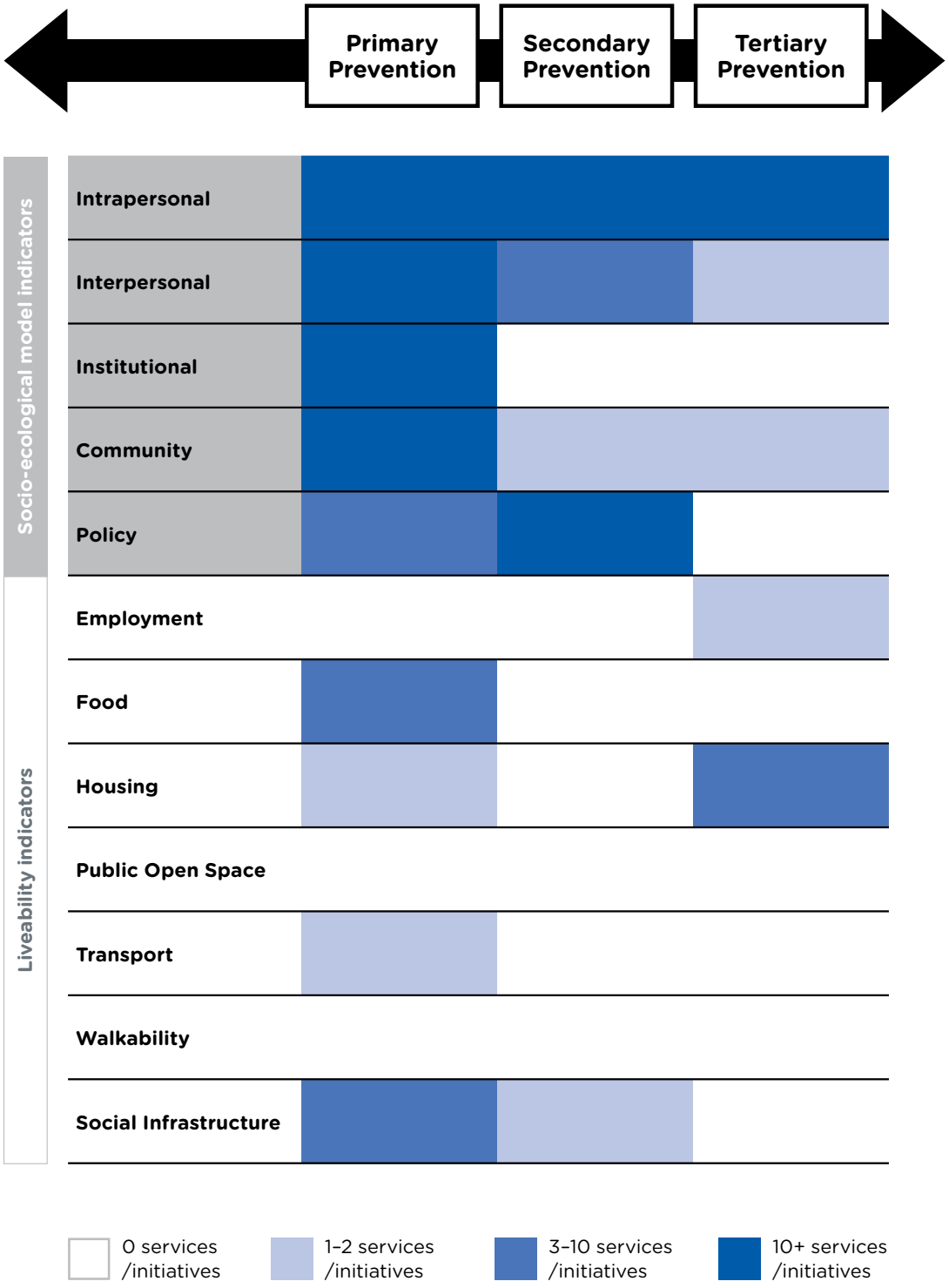
- **Primary Prevention:** aims to prevent the onset of a condition by stopping it from occurring in the first place
- **Secondary prevention:** focuses on the detection and treatment of a mental health condition at its earliest possible stage to reduce its duration and severity
- **Tertiary prevention:** aims to reduce the impact of an established condition on an individual's functioning, quality of life and longevity through treatment and psychosocial supports

(Carbone, 2020)

The mental health service system whose pathways sits largely upon the tertiary end of the spectrum, have not been extensively mapped. This is because it is a large and complex set of clinical services that lie outside the scope of this body of work. Instead, intervention points to access these pathways have been listed. See *Appendix 2* for more details on the tertiary access points.

This mapping is not an exhaustive list of all services and interventions in the municipality, but aims instead to provide a snapshot of the breadth and variety of programs and services currently available to our residents, which importantly allows us to consider further work and partnerships.

*Table 2: Summary Map of Mental Health Services and Initiatives in Knox.*



# Addressing Mental Health in Knox City Council Catchment

**Mental health is a significant burden to our community and has a variety of impacts on individuals and families. According to the Productivity Commission (2020) mental health is a key driver of economic participation and productivity in Australia.**

**Unfortunately, the implications of mental health on individuals, families and communities are immense and can be years in duration. The Royal Commission (2019) indicated that there are several issues in the mental health system that cause harm in our communities, some include general lack of support available to families and carers, and higher prevalence of some cohorts experiencing mental health issues. Effectively mental health affects a major part of our populations and inhibits its functioning and wellbeing.**

Fortunately, many mental health conditions such as anxiety, certain behavioural disorders in childhood, as well as alcohol and substance use conditions can be prevented (Carbone, 2020). Anxiety and depression were amongst the most prevalent mental health conditions reported in the Knox community (Knox City Council, 2020), which would indicate that much of the mental health disparities experienced within our municipality are preventable. One of the largest problems outlined by the Productivity Commission (2020) is the under-investment in prevention and early intervention initiatives, which results in too many people living with mental ill-health for too long. Effectively, people need to seek assistance earlier and live in health promoting environments to aid in the prevention of mental ill-health in the first place.

Mental health services and interventions can take on many modalities, addressing mental health itself specifically, or addressing drivers and known correlating issues such as relationships and drug and alcohol use for example. The previous chapter highlighted the significant work of partner organisations in this catchment, as well as council itself, in addressing mental health issues. Despite these extensive efforts, more work, planning and partnerships can be leveraged to contribute to a mentally and physically healthy community. This chapter will explore the possible interventions and partnerships for the Knox catchment.

## Best Practice Interventions in Mental Health

The area of mental health is immense, extremely complex and largely intertwined with other aspects of health and wellbeing. Essentially the social determinants of health play a substantial role in producing mental health. The Royal Commission (2019) suggest that inclusive, tolerant and supportive communities play a vital role in nurturing good mental health and wellbeing. In fact, evidence suggests that a large and diverse social network is a protective factor against depression, while social isolation is a key risk factor linked to mental illness and a range of adverse health effects[28] (Bhatti & Haq, 2017; Hawthorne 2006; Luanaigh & Lawlor, 2008).

In addition to a diverse network, research has also found that the quality of relationships is fundamental to mental health (Carbone, 2020). Effectively relationships and community cohesion are essential to positive mental health in individuals and the community as a whole. Thus interventions that foster social cohesion and social capital in Knox, will make substantial strides towards positive mental health. Addressing aspects like racism, as indicated earlier, will be a key factor in addressing mental health, as evidence shows a correlation between experiencing racism and poorer mental and physical outcomes in Aboriginal Australians (Larson et al., 2007; Paradies, 2006; VicHealth, 2012).

In a similar capacity, natural and built environments have also been shown to have a significant impact on mental health. Experiencing nature, with specific reference to green and blue environments, has shown positive mental health benefits with reductions in depression and anxiety symptoms (Carbone, 2020). It has been well established that direct interaction with nature has perceived restorative benefits to mental health (Francis et al. 2012; Herzog et al., 1997; Kaplan 1995; Parks Victoria 2015). Knox is home to over 300 parks, reserves and fields that cater for a range of leisure and recreational activities, providing ample opportunity to draw on existing resources in promoting mental health. Built environments are also essential to mental health through the social capital and cohesion that can be facilitated in third places (Jeffres et al., 2009). Libraries, parks and neighbourhood houses all offer opportunities for interaction, and thus should be utilised in providing and strengthening mental health initiatives in Knox.

Other factors as discussed previously that indirectly impact mental health in an adverse manner include financial vulnerability, alcohol and experiencing family violence. Financial vulnerability can lead to stress and significantly higher levels of mental distress, in addition to exacerbating and potentially evoking instances of family violence (Simha et al., 2020; WHO, 2006). Those experiencing family violence often experience longer-term, adverse mental health impacts and are at increased risk of developing mental health problems and mental illness[29] (DHHS, 2018b). Conversely, individuals experiencing mental illness report higher rates of family violence compared to those without mental illness (DHHS, 2018b). Furthermore, alcohol is a depressant drug and can negatively affect one's thoughts and feelings, including anxiety and stress, in addition to contributing to the development or exacerbation of mental health issues (Newton et al., 2018). Alcohol consumption may additionally exacerbate other negative risk factors. Thus, alcohol is a risk factor that should be considered when addressing mental health.

[28] Including anxiety and depression, emotional distress, suicide and suicide ideation in addition to poor sleep, dementia development, high blood pressure and reduced immune function

[29] Including but not limited to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and suicidal ideation

Addressing other social determinants such as physical activity and healthy eating have also been shown to have a positive effect on mental health. In fact, community level programs targeting other outcomes like obesity, have been found to have positive outcomes on mental health presumably through their impacts on shared risk factors (Carbone, 2020): physical activity, healthy eating, outdoor recreation and social interaction. A prospective cohort study, found that: "12% of future cases of depression could have been prevented if all participants had engaged in at least one hour of physical activity each week" (Carbone, 2020 p. 23). Consequently, promoting health through physical activity and healthy eating should form a component in responding to mental health.

Mental health is heavily influenced by people's living conditions and social position, thus addressing social determinants and the environments people live in is essential for improvement (Carbone, 2020).

In addition to environment and social connections there are certain life stages that are more critical in preventing mental ill-health than others. The first 1000 days are critical to a person's future mental health and wellbeing and should be addressed with respective importance (Carbone, 2020; Royal Commission, 2019). In addition to particular age groups, certain cohorts such as Aboriginal people, people of diverse ethnic background, LGBTIQ+, refugee and many other groups experience higher rates of mental illness compared to the white Australian majority (Royal Commission, 2019). This may be because life conditions, racism and resource access can differ to that of the majority. Therefore, special consideration should be taken when developing and strengthening mental health related initiatives to ensure all groups and cohorts in Knox have access to what they need for health and wellbeing.

Further areas of research that have shown to have significant positive impacts on mental health include:

- Parenting programs
- Social and emotional development programs (mindfulness)
- Creating supportive environments for mental health (programs to enhance social networks of older people, bullying prevention programs at school)
- Community level programs that enhance social cohesion

In addition, interventions in placed-based settings such as schools, workplaces, sports clubs etc. have shown significant impact on mental health (Carbone, 2020). This is because these environments are experienced on a daily basis and they combine social capital and built environment factors.

To successfully address mental health, a broad approach must be taken, one which focuses on prevention, environments, fostering of positive relationships and opportunities within the community.

## Mental Health Action Plan Examples in Australia

Given the breadth of drivers that influence mental health, it is possible to focus on a great deal of health priorities. The focus on general health and wellbeing through the social determinants would have a significant effect on the community. Many governments and other agencies have attempted to address mental health disparities in Australian communities. The Queensland Government (n.d.) for example, have chosen to focus on a few areas in their own action plan including:

- Being socially connected
- Having control over one's life
- Having a sense of purpose and future
- Meaningful participation in learning, work and community
- Having access to housing, income and other resources
- Being safe and free from violence and discrimination

More details of their approach can be seen in *Figure 1.*




*Figure 1 Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan model (Queensland Government no date p. 16)*

# Federal and State Government Actions into Mental Health

**Importantly, both Federal and State Governments take action in tackling mental health in Australian communities. Their actions will affect the residents of Knox and therefore the actions that Knox City Council and its partners should take.**

**Federal Government Focus on Mental Health**

The Mental Health Inquiry Report (Productivity Commission, 2020) outlines mental health priorities for the country as being:

- Prevention and early help for people (new parents, stigma, social/emotional development of school aged children)
- Improve people's experience with mental healthcare (person-centred mental health system)
- Improve people's experience with services beyond the health system (recover well and live in community)
- Equip workplaces to be mentally healthy (psychological health and safety in workplaces)
- Instill incentives and accountability for improved outcomes (national strategies, regional planning)

Please see *Appendix 3* for more details.

**State Government of Victoria Focus on Mental Health**

A Royal Commission into mental health was launched by the Victorian Government in 2019. The full report was scheduled for public delivery in February 2021, however the recent pandemic has delayed the process. The interim report however, outlines the following immediate actions:

- a new approach to funding, comprising a new revenue mechanism to enable a substantially increased investment in mental health. This will facilitate delivery of the reforms required to establish a contemporary and enduring mental health system
- the creation of the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing to bring together expertise in lived experience, research and clinical and non-clinical care, disseminating the practice of evidence-informed treatment, care and support across the state
- an additional 170 acute mental health beds for young people and adults in areas of need to help respond to demand
- funding all area mental health services to offer the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement program to expand follow-up care and support for people after a suicide attempt, along with the creation, delivery and evaluation of the first phase of a new assertive outreach and follow-up care service for children and young people who have self-harmed or who are at risk of suicide
- the creation of an Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre and the establishment of social and emotional wellbeing teams in Aboriginal communities throughout the state to support appropriate models of care
- the establishment of Victoria's first residential mental health service designed and delivered by people with lived experience of mental illness
- the development and implementation of supports and structures designed to enhance and expand consumer and family-carer lived experience workforces in the mental health system

- increased opportunities to expand and develop the workforce - including funded graduate positions, postgraduate scholarships and psychiatry rotations, supported overseas recruitment, leadership development and improved data.

In addition to these immediate actions the current recommendations of this interim report include:

- Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Targeted acute mental health service expansion
- Suicide Prevention
- Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing
- A service designed and delivered by people with lived experience
- Lived experience workforces
- Workforce readiness
- New approach for mental health investment
- The Mental Health Implementation Office

The Victorian Government has now started implementing these recommendations. The Final Report comprises five volumes which set out a total of 65 recommendations that build on the initial nine recommendations to transform Victoria's mental health system. Collectively, these recommendations:

- Ensure treatment, care and support are available and accessible
- Focus on redesigning services to move from a crisis-driven model to a community-based model that delivers beneficial outcomes for people
- Are a first for Victoria, for example establishing initiatives led by people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress, and established lived experience leaders throughout the system
- Challenged the system's traditional focus on medical treatment alone by highlighting the importance of community and places in shaping mental health and wellbeing.

The full Final Report can be viewed on the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System website at https://rcvmhs.vic.gov.au

## Opportunities in the Knox Mental Health Prevention Environment

The mapping of the service environment discussed in chapter 3 outlines an extensive range of services and initiatives in the Knox community. However, in discussion with each partner organisation, it was noted that while a good variety of programs, services and interventions exist, the main problem was that functioning capacity had been reached, and organisations were unable to service everyone when they need it. Given the evidence of significant quantity and variety of interventions, the focus of council and it's partnership efforts should be pitched at prevention to assist in the support of these services and programs further downstream. The domains of liveabillity were the area of least focus within the analysis and thus prove to be a good area for council to focus on early intervention, in addition to supporting partnerships in other areas.

Given the unique capacity of council to influence and change the physical environment, addressing the broader determinants of health; including many of the liveability domains presented in *Table 2*, should be of focus. In addition to improving liveability domains, council has the capacity to provide and prepare environments and facilities for better use for partner organisations and their initiatives to address mental health. Therefore, council has the ability to address environments through liveability domains in order to facilitate primary prevention in a way that is not possible for external bodies.

# Recommendations

Considering the information provided in this report, a number of recommendations have been made in line with key themes identified by partner organisations. These recommendations have been developed through careful deliberation and research into expert opinion and current best-practice methods to ensure all are evidence based. These recommendations offer a broad scope and aim to address a wide variety of areas across the socio-ecological and liveability domains.

## Health Promotion

1. **Enhance Liveability factors of all suburbs in Knox City Council (e.g. walkability, housing, food)**
2. **Address and challenge all forms of discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation in the community (racism, bullying, homophobia, people with mental health issues, people with Alcohol and other drugs (AOD) challenges etc.), including the enhancement of existing programs to include mental health prevention**
3. Undertake an analysis of suburbs reporting higher rates of social isolation during the pandemic lockdowns (through a placed-based Liveability Assessment)
4. Improve the state of third places to promote social gathering and cohesion for the strengthening of social capital
5. Focus on Family Violence Prevention as a key driving factor, with specific consideration to trauma and cultural sensitivity
6. Focus on decreasing alcohol consumption and other drug use as a key factor to poor mental health and broader relating issues
7. Promote the Achievement Program to early years settings, schools and workplaces within Knox City Council
8. **Focus on specific underutilised health promotion subject areas to support marginalised communities (e.g. LGBTQIA+, multicultural community, First Nations)**
9. Focus on promoting mental health and wellbeing in the Knox City Council workforce
10. Promote, support or deliver family and carer support groups in the region

## Community Education

11. **Promotion of existing partner programs through council channels to increase awareness to 'hard to reach' groups (e.g. homeless, language other than English)**
12. **Implement parenting and relationship programs to enhance the quality of relationships - Baby Makes 3 (BM3), Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR)**
13. Implement programs and initiatives to support the first 1000 days of life: Infant, Feeding, Activity and Nutrition Trial (InFANT), BM3 as well as family support and resilience
14. **Promote and run mindfulness programs and/or mental health first aid through council for all residents and select cohorts**
15. **Work with primary, secondary and tertiary education settings, targeting students to build resilience skills to address mental health (e.g. relaxation, mindfulness, psychoeducation, meditation, yoga, wayapa, resilience, coping mechanisms, positive mental health practices, arts), in addition to health promoting behaviours (physical activity, healthy eating, adequate sleep, consumption of alcohol)**
16. Promote culturally appropriate mental health awareness and intervention in antenatal and postnatal cohorts

*Table 1: Knox Mental Health Action Plan Recommendations*

## Sector Coordination and Collaboration

17. **Knox Mental Health Round Table - for collective impact partnered approaches to mental health actions**
18. Implement a mental health and wellbeing specific community grants program - to support community organisations lead initiatives
19. **Greater use and activation of third places to foster social connection (e.g. running free place-based physical activity programs like Active Maribyrnong)**
20. Partner with and utilise existing facilities in Knox to deliver and strengthen current social connection initiatives, including leisure centres, libraries, neighbourhood houses
21. Encourage the co-location of services, potentially leveraging existing council facilities
22. Partner with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to support existing initiatives for the increased health and wellbeing of First Nations people
23. Work collaboratively with carers, families and support people to address their needs and connect them to appropriate services

## Advocacy

24. **Seek advice and input into initiatives from those with lived experience (e.g. community representation group), including those from vulnerable groups, families, carers and supporters**
25. Promote participation in wellness practices (yoga, meditation, yarning circles, wayapa etc.) with guidance from specific cultural groups
26. **Support the engagement of existing services, facilities and programs (e.g. Headspace, Men's Shed, community gardens, multicultural services, First Nations specific services)**
27. Promote and support First Nations peoples cultural health in schools through partnerships with Koori Education Support Officer (KESOs)
28. Increase understanding of the needs of women in regards to mental health across different life stages (youth, pregnancy, retirement etc.), and across different cultural groups
29. **Advocate for resources that enable collaboration and partnerships**
30. Advocate for adaptable service delivery to improve experiences and support families, carers and other supporters of those living with mental illness

***Bolded initiatives indicate the actions most pertinent to partnering organisations**

It is the hope that the *Knox Mental Health Action Plan* forms the basis of strong partnership efforts, collective goals and actions that will improve the mental health of residents, and ensure poor mental health is prevented at the earliest stage.

# Conclusion

Mental health in Knox has always been a challenge, however the recent pandemic has exacerbated this issue. There are currently many initiatives happening to address mental health and its drivers across the prevention spectrum in the municipality.

Despite having a good range of services, many organisations are inundated and functioning at capacity; effectively leaving many people waiting for the services they need. In addition to capacity issues, community members may also face barriers in terms of cost, getting the ongoing services they need after their Mental Health Plans are utilised.

Prevention of mental illness and wellbeing is an essential part of the service delivery environment, for any health and wellbeing issue. Importantly a variety of work is being done at the prevention level in the mental health space, as seen in *Table 2*. However, most of this work is at an individual level and little is focused on the environmental drivers that can be addressed through a liveability lens. This gap leaves a significant opportunity for council and one which plays to its strengths.

# Next Steps...

Despite the significant work and opportunities that are presented to the Knox catchment, a collective and unified approach to mental health must be taken to make a positive impact and address the current issues in the future.

This document details a variety of interventions and opportunities that can assist the Knox community in mental health and be delivered over the space of many years. However for these interventions to be effective they require strategic planning, guidance and support from a range of experts and organisations with a variety of capacities in the field of mental health. Thus the first point of business to improve mental health in the city of Knox is to establish a Mental Health Round Table which can set priorities, goals and timelines in which to execute and coordinate the recommended actions and other arising opportunities.

Essentially a collective and diverse partnership is the next essential step to successfully address mental health in the Knox community.

# Glossary

**Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)**
A primary health care service initiated and operated by the local Aboriginal community to deliver holistic, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate health care to the community which controls it, through a locally elected Board of Management" (NACCHO, n.d.).

**Achievement Program**
A free health and wellbeing program that helps schools, early years' settings and workplaces create a healthier environment. There are a number of focus areas within the program that differ slightly for each setting but include healthy eating, physical activity and mental health and wellbeing. The program is aligned to the World Health Organization's model for Health Promoting Schools and Health Workplaces, is delivered by Cancer Council Victoria and is supported by the Victorian Government (State of Victoria, n.d.).

**Active Maribyrnong**
A multifaceted program designed to improve the health and wellbeing of the Maribyrnong community through physical activity (Maribyrnong City Council, 2021).

**AOD**
Alcohol and Other Drugs

**Baby Makes 3 (BM3)**
A family violence primary prevention program aimed at first time parents that works through 'promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women during the transition to parenthood' (VicHealth, 2011).

**Financial vulnerability**
Refers to financial instability, or being exposed to financial risk and/or shock (Lee & Sabri, 2017)

**Infant, Feeding, Activity and Nutrition Trial (InFANT)**
An obesity prevention program for parents with infants aged 3-18 months. The program promotes healthy eating and physical activity behaviours in the first 1000 days of life, which are a crucial time for establishing healthy eating and activity behaviours that can have benefits into adulthood (Deakin University, n.d).

**Intrapersonal**
Individual factors influencing behaviour (Golden & Earp, 2012).

**Interpersonal**
Influence from social relationships (Golden & Earp, 2012).

**Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESOs)**
"Area based professionals who are members of the local Aboriginal community with an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and the histories. KESOs provide advice to schools about culturally inclusive learning environments, and the co-ordination of services to facilitate improved engagement of Koorie children and young people" (Department of Education and Training, 2020).

**Knox COVID-19 Household Impact Survey**
A survey conducted by Council and completed by 1,615 residents from 20 July to 5 August 2020, with the aim of collecting data pertaining to the impacts on COVID-19 in the community.

**Liveability**
Liveable community can be understood as one that promotes the health and wellbeing of community members, in addition to building supportive communities and promoting a sustainable society. The key indicators for a liveability utilised in this report include: employment, food, housing, public open space, transport, walkability and social infrastructure. (Lowe et al., 2013).

**Place-based**
Approaches that are tailored to a specific place/environment by engaging local community members and promoting active participation through shared decision-making in development and implementation (State Government of Victoria, 2020).

**Primary Prevention**
Aims to prevent the onset of a condition by stopping it from occurring in the first place (Carbone, 2020).

**Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR)**
Implemented in primary and secondary schools to develop students' social, emotional and positive relationship skills (Victoria State Government Education and Training, 2018).

**Secondary Prevention**
Focuses on the detection and treatment of a mental health condition at its earliest possible stage to reduce its duration and severity (Carbone, 2020).

**Socio-ecological model of health**
Encompasses the interrelated and interactive nature of individual and environmental characteristics influencing health (Golden & Earp, 2012). For the purpose of this report, the socio-ecological factors considered include intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community and policy influences.

**Tertiary Prevention**
Aims to reduce the impact of an established condition on an individual's functioning, quality of life and longevity through treatment and psychosocial supports (Carbone, 2020).

**Third Place**
Environment in the community which foster community and enable communication and socialisation among people outside of home (first place) and work (second place). Examples may include parks, libraries, recreation centres, coffee shops and public places where people gather (Jeffres et al., 2009).



# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Available Interventions and Services in Knox LGA

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Intrapersonal** (e.g. beliefs, attitudes, behaviours) | 1J, 1K, 1M, 1E, 1F, 1O, 1H, 1P, 1Q, 1R<br>3A, 3B<br>4A<br>5B, 5C, 5D, 5E<br>6A, 6B, 6J<br>8C<br>9B, 9F, 9I, 9J, 9K, 9N, 9Q<br>10<br>11A, 11B, 11C | 1A, 1B, 1N<br>2A, 2B*, 2C*, 2D*, 2E, 2F<br>3C, 3D, 3E<br>4D<br>5B, 5E<br>6D<br>9G | 1G, 1I<br>2E, 2G, 2H*, 2I, 2J*, 2K<br>4D<br>5A<br>6E, 6F, 6G, 6H<br>8A, 8B, 8E<br>9A, 9C, 9D, 9E, 9L, 9M |
| **Interpersonal** (e.g. building of social capital/networks) | 1J, 1K, 1E, 1C, 1H, 1P, 1Q<br>4B<br>6A<br>10<br>11A, 11B, 11D | 2L*<br>5E<br>8C | 8D |
| **Institutional** (socio-culture of schools, health care administration, faith based organisations) | 1J, 1M, 1E, 1H<br>4A<br>5B, 5C<br>6J<br>7<br>9B, 9K, 9N, 9Q<br>10 | | |
| **Community** (e.g. relationships and communications between organisations and institutions | 1J, 1L, 1M, 1E, 1A, 1C, 1D, 1F, 1H, 1R<br>3A, 3B<br>4C<br>5C<br>9B, 9K, 9N, 9O, 9P<br>10 | 2M<br>3E | 6G<br>8E |
| **Policy** (e.g. national, local laws, policy etc.) | 1C<br>6C<br>7<br>9H | 2M | |
| **Employment** | | | 6I |
| **Food** | 6A<br>7<br>9H | | |
| **Housing** | 1A | | 2E, 2N<br>8A |
| **Public Open Space** | | | |
| **Transport** | 1R | | |
| **Walkability** | | | |
| **Social Infrastructure** | 1D, 1G<br>7<br>9H | 1G | |




*Intervention Map of Mental Health Services and Initiatives in Knox*
** Intervention points leading to tertiary mental health pathways*

## The following tables provide an overview of the initiatives listed in the first table in this appendix.

### 1. Knox City Council

**A. Advocacy**
Adult Mental Health Centre and the HeadtoHelp Hub
- Standalone facilities providing collocated multidisciplinary services addressing social disadvantage including financial vulnerability, homelessness, family violence, elder abuse and addictive behaviours

**B. HeadtoHelp Hub Boronia**
- Primarily focused on providing care for first time sufferers as a result of COVID-19, but also for long time sufferers
- Complementary, although separate to Adult Mental Health Centres

**C. Strategic Planning**
- Mental Health Forum
- Mental Health Action Plan

**D. Community Wellbeing Grants**
- As part of our Community and Business Support package
- COVID-19 Supporting Local Services Fund, increased funding to the Minor Grants stream and annual Community Development Fund enabled local community organisations to provide programs and support to their communities' mental health and wellbeing

**E. Sporting Club Mental Health Awareness Training**
- Free sessions on mental health, resilience and wellbeing awareness offered to all sporting clubs in Knox, delivered by Headspace

**F. Youth team Headspace partnership**
- Addressing mental health through a number of initiatives, for example mental health support webinars

**G. Disability Team advocacy**
for increased mental health services that provide early intervention and support services for community

**H. Youth Services programs**
- Offers a range of programs for different cohorts (LGBTQIA+ young people, young parents, schools etc.). including mental health education sessions, and social inclusion programs
- Ongoing Indigenous Program in partnership with EACH

**I. Youth Services**
Counselling services

**J. Public Housing Estates Project**
Council will work alongside people over 55 years old living in housing estates to be socially included and improve their mental and physical wellbeing

**K. Be Kind Campaign**
to be used as part of the messaging for the public housing estates project

**L. Working in partnership with NEAMI**
to support their Preventive Health Initiative (see 5E)

**M. Health and Wellbeing 'Re-Connect' sessions**
delivered by Sport and Life Training (SALT) in 2020

**N. Provide information sessions**
to support community to navigate the mental health service system
- Disability Team

**O. Explore opportunities**
to support parents and carers to participate in mental health first aid training
- Disability Team

**P. Zest4Life**
Over 55s program
- Events, activities, workshops, information sessions; including education on health and social bus outings

**Q. Bright Ideas Network**
offers a range of information, news and events, including a newsletter
- Ageism photo and film exhibition
- Housing expo
- Advocacy

**R. Living Our Best Life Directory**
- Includes groups and services in the community that might help individuals improve their health and wellbeing

## 2. Eastern Health[30]

**A. HeadtoHelp**
Mental health services navigation support

**B. Better Access**
A mental health care plan is needed in consultation with an individual's GP to then access one on one counselling with a mental health practitioner. Potential need for a partial payment

**C. Stepped Care**
Private mental health services and direction for disadvantaged individuals

**D. Neami Psychosocial Support Service**
for those not serviced by an Eastern Mental Health Case Manager

**E. PARC (Prevention and Recovery Care)**
Step Up and Step Down Care: housing for up to 10 people providing psychosocial support and clinical staff to help people stay out of hospital

Either individuals coming from hospital who are not well enough to enter the community, or those from the community as a stepping stone to try and prevent hospital admission

Delivered by Wellways for those that are case managed through Eastern Health

**F. HYDDI**
Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative

**G. Crisis Assessment Treatment Services**

**H. Tertiary Mental Health Services**
via Eastern Health Mental Health Triage

**I. Inpatient services**

**J. NDIS support and service providers**

**K. Specialist Services**
e.g. personality disorder services, eating disorder services, neuropsychiatric services

**L. Community Supports**
Community health services, community houses, self-help and support groups

**M. Share Care Protocol**
Principles of collaboration and communication across sectors, understanding pathways to get good recovery oriented services

**N. Homeless outreach services**

[30] **Access points and referral pathways through Eastern Health are complex with different access points for varying needs and conditions. HeadtoHelp is the best access point for all navigation support and can be accessed by anyone through a central phone number (1800 595 212). Please refer to Appendix 2 for mental health treatment access points, and psychosocial support access points.**

The following table provides an overview of the initiatives listed in the first table in this appendix.

## 3. Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)

**A. Mabels Program**
Early intervention family violence with maternal health nurses within hospitals (currently not available in Knox due to funding restrictions)

**B. Women Engaging and Living Safely (WELS)**
Family violence and child safety

- Provide women who are at risk of, or experiencing family violence with free, confidential legal advice
- For women attending Eastern Health maternity services

**C. Referral Service to mental health services**
Referral to lawyer and social worker for individuals that approach in dire need

- Largely around engaging and supporting homeless people

**D. SAGE**
Wrap around family violence service

- For women in immediate danger
- Team composed of a manager, lawyer, social worker and financial counsellor to consider all aspects of what the individual is experiencing e.g. risk of homelessness, mental health issues, if children are involved etc.

**Elder Abuse Program**

- Includes a lawyer, advocate and financial counsellor with expertise around elder abuse
- ECLC works with Eastern Health to deliver this program

## 4. Headspace

**A. Community Engagement**
(stalls at events and presentations)

- For example, presentations at camps about bullying, online presentations for schools, communities and sporting clubs, stalls at events such as university O week, Knox festival

**B. Group Programs**
(usually in person, online during COVID-19) – regular, free and capped numbers

- Dungeons and Dragons for 12-21 year olds
- Rainbow Support Groups (in conjunction with Knox City Council)
- Paws for Thought
- School Holiday Programs (online due to COVID-19)

**C. Liaison at Knox City Council**
Strong relationships with schools in Knox

- Schools often contact Headspace for advice, services, programs etc. to promote to students

**D. Free walk-in mental health services**
For young people aged 12-25

- General counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, education support, general practitioner access
- These are separate from group initiatives so individuals can access these services without being involved in anything else at Headspace

# 5. Neami and Life Connect

### A. Preventive Health Initiative (PHI)

- Short-term, targeted physical health support for people aged 18+ years experiencing mental health conditions through one-on-one sessions

### B. Partners in Wellbeing

Psychosocial approach

- Free, self-refer services, accessed through a central phone number, to help improve wellbeing, develop strategies to cope better and provide emotional support
- Follows a mental health coaching model which takes a holistic assessment
- Small business component that includes wellbeing support, financial counselling and business coaching delivered by external organisations
- Eligible individuals include those who are 16+ years: experiencing increased life stressors; usual coping strategies are not working; noticing signs of anxiety/depression that have lasted more than a few weeks; are not currently using a community mental health psychosocial support service
- Funded by the Victorian Government and delivered by Naemi National, EACH and Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)

### LIFE CONNECT

An externally funded service of Naemi

### C. Suicide Prevention Training: Reach out and Connect

- 3 x 2.5 hour workshops (across two days when online), facilitated by a team of multi-disciplinary mental health professionals
- Part 1: Suicide in Context
- Part 2: The Suicide Conversation
- Part 3: The Suicide Intervention
- Delivered to workplaces and community groups etc. to upskill in understanding and prevalence of suicide to destigmatise and normalise those feelings
- Delivered by lived experience workers

### D. LifeSkills Wellbeing Workshops

- Manage stress and develop resilience (seen as an important part of suicide prevention)
- Open for anyone in the community

### E. Support after Suicide

- Bereavement counselling to people impacted by suicide
- Group support – provide a supportive environment to process grief and connect with others
- Community support response – offered in settings such as workplaces, schools and clubs, family and friendship groups
- Care coordination – find and connect with services to support wellbeing

The following table provides an overview of the initiatives listed in the first table in this appendix.

## 6. Swinburne University

**A. H.Squad**
(student health ambassadors)
- Online resources surrounding mental health, on-campus events (e.g. R U OK Day, Nutrition Week), small group workshops, nutrition classes, mindfulness workshops

**B. Health Information and Advice**
- Mental health specific (in addition to sexual health, nutrition and healthy living, alcohol and other drugs)
- Online educational articles e.g. 'a guide to seeing a mental health professional'
- Links to external resources including Headspace, Beyond Blue and Black Dog Institute

**C. Respect. Now. Always. National Initiative**
- Initiative by Universities Australia to prevent sexual violence in universities and improve university responses to and support those who have been affected

**D. Assault reporting and help**
- Safer Community Team: offers advice, support, intervention and risk management for students who have experienced or witnessed inappropriate, concerning or threatening behaviour
- 'Make a report' link to report assault on the university website
- 24-hour campus security – free security escort services after hours

**E. After hours' crisis line**

**F. On campus crisis support**
Wantirna campus nurse

**G. Psychology and counselling services**
(generally free access to all services)
- Mental health nurses, psychologists and social workers
- Specialised support services for sexual assault, drug addiction, trauma, Asperger's and ADHD
- Sexual assault and family violence; in partnership with ECASA and EDVOS
- Alcohol and drug use; in partnership with Access Health and Community (Hawthorn Campus)

**H. Accessibility Services**
- Education Access Plan (EAP)
- Equitable assessment arrangements

**I. Employment Assistance Program**

**J. Staff wellbeing programs/activities/ information/advice**

## 7. Cancer Council- Achievement Program

**Free health and wellbeing program facilitated by EACH in the city of Knox**

- The program is a framework composed of seven key areas of health:
  - Healthy Eating and Oral Health
  - Physical Activity and Movement
  - Sexual Health and Wellbeing
  - Mental Health and Wellbeing
  - Sun Protection
  - Safe Environments
  - Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Each of these areas have a specific set of targets to achieve, leading to healthy changes to the school's physical environment, policies and practices, and health promoting activities
- Once achieved, schools receive Victorian Government recognition

**Schools participating in Knox include:**

- Birch Street Children and Family Centre
- Scoresby West Preschool
- Templeton Orchards Preschool
- Bayswater North Kindergarten (Maroondah)
- Alice Johnson Preschool
- Cooinda Kindergarten, Boronia West
- Windermere Preschool
- The Basin Preschool
- Oban Preschool (Maroondah)
- Upper Ferntree Gully Kindergarten
- Birch Street Children and Family Centre
- Scoresby West Preschool
- Holy Trinity Primary School, Wantirna

## 8. Wellways

**A. Pathways to home**
Outreach program primarily delivered in Maroondah as part of the Victorian Government Homeless and Rough Action Plan

- Engages with people experiencing rough sleeping by supporting them to connect with their community, and connect with services they need including physical and mental health services, drug and alcohol services, legal and housing services

**B. NDIS program support and service provider**

**C. Family, friends and carer support**

- Free of charge

**D. Community and peer education programs**

- Programs for people experiencing mental health issues and for families, friends and carers

**E. PARC in partnership with Eastern Health**
(see 2E)

The following table provides an overview of the initiatives listed in the first table in this appendix.

## 9. EACH

**A. Ngarrang Gulinj-al Boordup Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Team (AHWT)**
Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program

- i – The AHWT support and assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members to access required health and community services
- ii – The team includes Aboriginal Health Facilitators, a Nurse Care Coordinator and an Outreach Worker Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer who work together to provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members with chronic health conditions (including mental illness) to improve their self-management

**B. Life Connect**
In partnership with Neami (see 5C)

**C. Preventive Health Initiative**
(PHI) (See 5E)

**D. Counselling based services**
for adults

**E. Tertiary mental health services**

**F. Financial counselling**
Funded and in partnership with Knox City Council

**G. Partners in Wellbeing**
(see 5F)

**H. Achievement program**
(see 7)

**I. Promotion of health tips**
via social media channels

**J. Telehealth tip sheet**
for internal customers during the pandemic

**K. Suicide Prevention Training Package**
Developed in partnership with LivingWorks and delivered to 300 staff via a webinar

**L. Alcohol and other drugs programs**

**M. Project Hope & Thrive**
Predominantly drug and alcohol service operating under a holistic and dual diagnosis framework addressing being with co-occurring substance use and mental health needs

**N. Communities That Care (CTC)**
Evidence-based community-change process for reducing youth problem behaviours. Through the analysis of data collected in 2014 and 2018 CTC youth surveys for students in year 6, 8 and 10, Communities that Care Knox aim to use evidence based programs to reduce alcohol consumption in young people under 18, strengthen families, and strengthen young people's commitment to school

**O. Partnering with Pledge**
Grassroots focus in Knox to address gender equity

- iii – Knox Local Champions for Gender Equity Awards – given to individuals who have made a significant contribution towards achieving greater gender equality in Knox
- iv – Poster competition – designing posters around what gender equality means to them

**P. Together for Equality and Respect**
Partner of this Women's Health East initiative

**Q. Gender equality tubs**
containing resources and activities given to early years' services

## 10. Eastern Football and Netball League

**Information sessions**
Outlining available supports within the community, and key challenges/issues presenting as a result of COVID-19

- In conjunction with Eastern Health, Sport and Life Training (SALT) and Headspace

## 11. Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering

A. Elders network
Informal, relaxed and culturally safe environment providing opportunities for social interaction

B. Youth programs
Planned activities, Culture Group and Hip Hop

- Share experiences and develop relationships with other young Indigenous youth in the Eastern Metropolitan Area

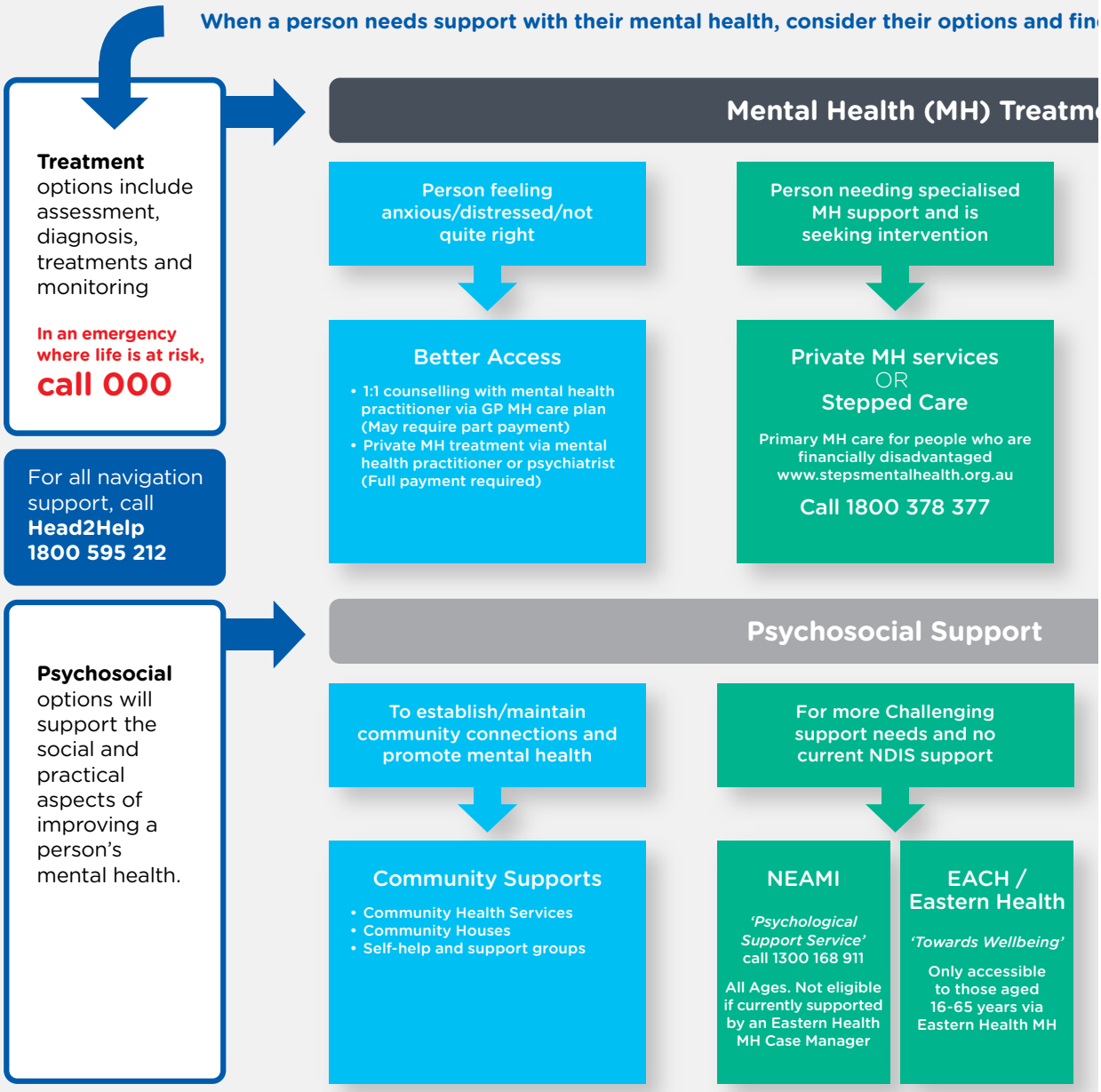
C. Women's network
Promoting health and wellbeing

- Provides social activities for Indigenous Women and their families

D. Men's network
Support men's group to strengthen families

- Focus groups based on culture, recreation and education is the core basis of engaging the men as well as building linkages to other Indigenous Men's group around the region
- Indigenous men's group providing mentorship to other programs

## Appendix 2.
## Mental Health Service Pathways



d out who is already involved




**In terms of mental health treatment, there are three main access points:**

1. Better Access – for people feeling anxious, depressed or not quite right. This involves consulting with a GP to develop and receive a Mental Health (MH) care plan, before accessing one-to-one counselling with a mental health practitioner
2. Private Mental Health Services or Stepped Care – for people needing specialised mental health support and are seeking intervention. Stepped Care is primarily mental health care for people who are financially disadvantaged
3. Tertiary Mental Health – for people in Mental Health crisis and in need of rapid intervention. Occurs through presenting to the Emergency Department, ideally or through Eastern Health Mental Health Triage

**Eastern Health further offer access points for psychosocial support as follows:**

1. Community Supports including community health services, community houses and self-help and support groups to establish and maintain community connections and promote mental health
2. NEAMI 'Psychosocial Support Service' for those of all ages who are not supported by an Eastern Health Mental Health case manager, and EACH/Eastern Health 'Towards Wellbeing' for those aged 16-65 years via Eastern Health Mental Health. These services address more challenging support needs for those without current NDIS supports
3. NDIS support and services for those under 65 years and eligible

The EMPHN has commissioned a new online navigation platform for Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug supports to improve the ease of navigation for consumers.

# Appendix 3.
# Federal Government Mental Health Actions

## Priority Reforms

### Prevention and early help for people

- Support the mental health of new patients
- Make the social and emotional development of school children a national priority
- National stigma reduction strategy
- Follow-up care for people after suicide attempts
- Empower indigenous communities to prevent suicide

### Improve people's experiences with mental heathcare

- Create a person-centred mental health system
  - Evidence-based mental health assessment and referral processes that help find the services that are best for them
  - Identify, support and include families and carers as part of mental healthcare
- Get people the right services at the right time
  - Expand supported online treatment, group therapies and access to mental healthcare via telehealth
  - Review limits on psychological treatment funded through Medicare and trial variations
  - Alternatives to emergency departments that are designed for people with mental illness
  - Expand community based mental healthcare, including hospital outpatient clinics and outreach services
- Improve mental healthcare outcomes
  - Address adverse outcomes from prescribing practices of mental health medication
  - Reduce the gap in life expectancy for people with severe mental illness and physical illness
- Care continuity and coordination

### Improve people's experiences with services beyond the healthcare system

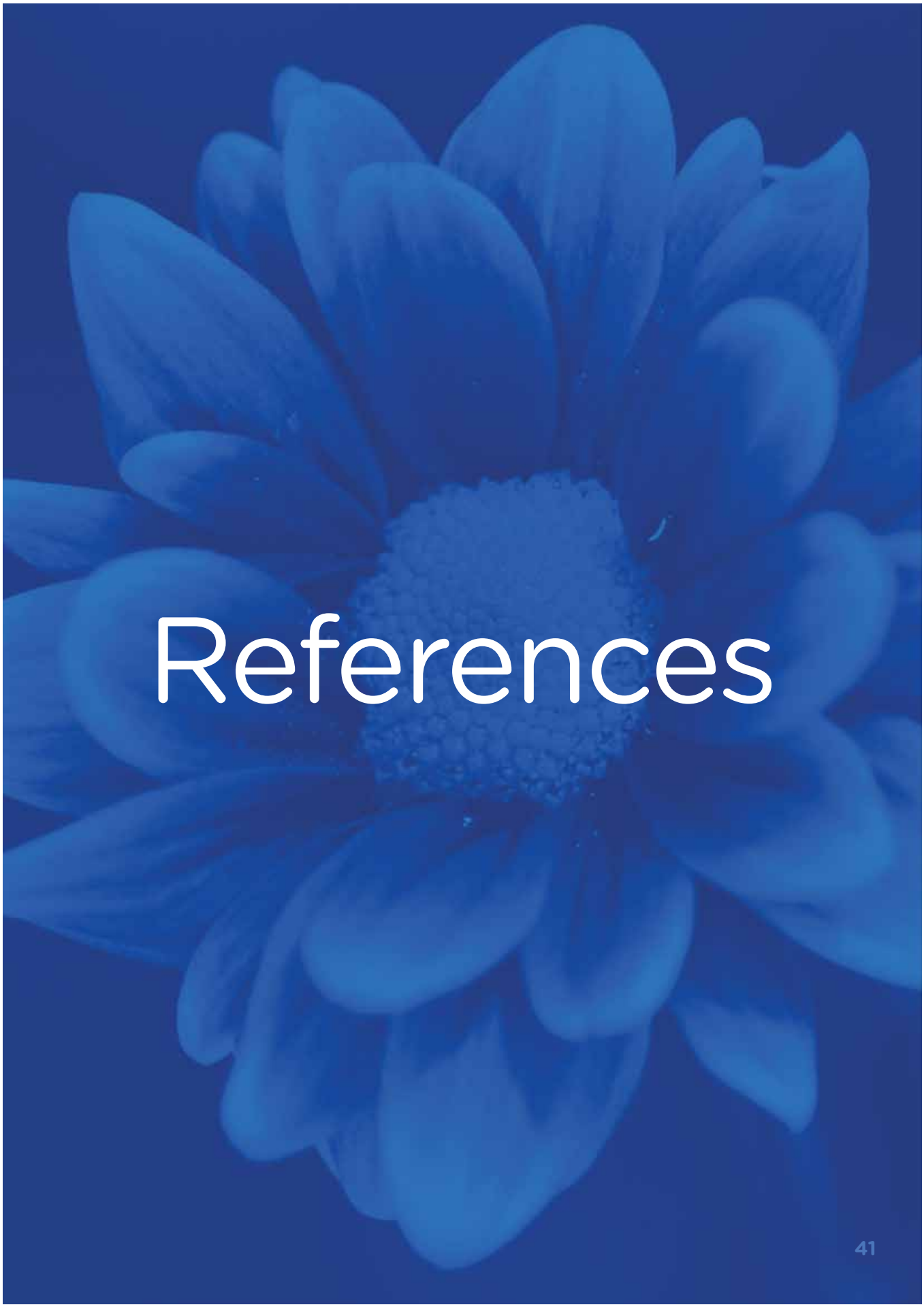
- Meet demand or community support services that help people with mental health illness recover and live well in the community
- Commit to no discharge from care into homelessness
- Increase assistance for police responding to mental illness related incidents
- Legal representation for people facing mental health tribunals

### Equip workplace to be mentally healthy

- Elevate importance of physiological health and safety in workplaces
- No liability clinical treatment for mental health related workers compensation claims
- Expand the individual placement and support for people with mental illness

### Instil incentives and accountability for improved outcomes

- Develop implementation plans for national strategies that integrate healthcare and other services
- Commit to regional planning, decision making and commissioning with systematic cooperation and creation of new commissioning agencies if outcomes not improved
- Expand the remit and independence of the National Mental Health Commission
- Consumer and carer participation and advocacy in all aspects of the mental health system
- Strengthen evaluation, culture, focusing on the outcomes that matter to people and reporting at service provider


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41

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# 8.7 Knox Disability Advisory Committee Membership Recruitment and Annual Report

| | |
|---|---|
| **Final Report Destination:** | Council |
| **Paper Type:** | For Decision |
| **Author:** | Disability Inclusion Team Leader, Alison Treeby |
| **Manager:** | Acting Manager Community Access and Support, Lana Harris |
| **Executive:** | Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley |

**SUMMARY**
The Knox Disability Advisory Committee assists Council by advising on strategic disability related issues, contributing to inclusive policy development, ensuring Council practices consider the needs and rights of people with disabilities and their carers and promoting disability awareness in the community.

This report seeks approval for the reappointment of five Committee members for a two-year term from September 2025 to September 2027.

This report also provides an overview of the Committee's achievements over the past 12 months.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council:
1. Appoint the following current Knox Disability Advisory Committee member for a second term for the period September 2025 to September 2027 as presented in Confidential Attachment 2.
2. Note the achievements of the Committee over the past 12 months.
3. Thank the outgoing member of the Knox Disability Advisory Committee for their valuable contribution: Vicki Morrow – Community Representative.

## 1. DISCUSSION

The Knox Disability Advisory Committee (KDAC), established in 1999, plays a key role in advising Council on strategic issues affecting Knox residents with disabilities and their carers. KDAC provides informed guidance to support Council's decision making on matters of access and inclusion. The Committee also contributes to the monitoring and implementation of the "Knox CARES Strategy 2022–2027" (Connection, Access, Respect, Equality, and Safety), which incorporates the Council's Disability Action Plan. In addition to its advisory role, KDAC advocates for the rights of people with disabilities and works to ensure that local services and programs are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to community needs.

### 1.1 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for KDAC (refer Attachment 1) are aligned with the Council Committees Policy adopted by Council in September 2022.

The objectives of the Committee are to:

- Report to Council on its work and advise Council of strategic issues regarding Knox residents with disabilities, their families and carers.
- Assist Council in the development of policy and action planning about issues of access and inclusion.
- Work with Council officers to ensure that all of Council's policies, programs and protocols reflect the needs and rights of residents with disabilities, their families and carers.
- To provide a central point for Council and the Knox community for the identification of issues relevant to people with disabilities, their families and carers.
- To promote disability awareness within Council and the wider Knox community.

At the end of August 2025, six members of the Committee come to the end of their first two-year term. The remaining ten KDAC members' term does not conclude until October 2026.

As outlined in Section 3.1 of the Terms of Reference (refer Attachment 1) all members are eligible to re-apply for a second two-year term.

**1.2 Selection Process**

In May 2025, five of the six eligible Committee members expressed interest in a second term on KDAC.

The Terms of Reference provide:

- A maximum of seven community members with a disability;
- A maximum of four unpaid carers of a person with a disability;
- A maximum of four industry or professional representatives; and
- One to two Councillors.

In 2024, Council endorsed a fifth industry or professional representative given the strength and number of applications from industry or professional representative, noting this is an exception to the Terms of Reference.

Since membership meets the requirements in the Terms of Reference, no recruitment is needed at this time.

Recommended second term Committee members are provided in Confidential Attachment 2.

**1.3 KDAC Achievements – September 2024 to September 2025**

KDAC is comprised of members with lived experience of disability and strong, practical knowledge of the issues impacting people with disabilities and their carers. The Committee reflects a diverse range of abilities and perspectives. It meets bi-monthly, with meetings designed to gather feedback and advice on presentations related to key focus areas in the "Knox CARES Strategy 2022–2027" (including the Disability Action Plan) and the "Knox Disability Access and Inclusion Work Plan 2022–2026". KDAC also provides input on emerging issues affecting people with disabilities in the Knox community. The Committee remains highly active, playing a vital role in strengthening Council's response to access and inclusion challenges. Members also contribute by sharing relevant information with community members and local service providers.

The following table provides an overview of the Committee activities and contribution to key Council projects over the last 12 months:

| Topic | Action | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Family Violence | Community Strengthening presented an update on the Free from family violence local government project. | KDAC provided feedback and input regarding how family violence can impact people with a disability and their families. Family Violence Help Card circulated for distribution. |
| International Day of People With Disability | Committee member was featured in Knox News. | Committee member's story was shared with community via Knox News, social media and e-newsletters. |
| Social Connections | Presentation on "Keeping it Reel" Fishing Program targeting socially isolated men. | KDAC provided with overview of Program including benefits and target group which included men with disability. |
| NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission | Presentation of information and updates regarding the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission. | Discussion regarding how the significant changes impact Knox residents and how we can provide information and support.<br>KDAC was provided with information regarding the NDIS changes to share with community and networks. |
| NDIA | Latrobe NDIA provided an overview of NDIS legislation changes and updated resources to support people accessing the NDIS. | KDAC discussed impacts of changes on community members and provided feedback to Latrobe. Committee shared updated links to resources with networks. |
| Accessible Transport | Robbie Phelan from Modular Transport Access Solutions presented the innovative technology being developed to improve accessibility on trains and trams. | KDAC provided feedback on accessibility issues they have encountered and shared information on this innovative technology development with their networks. |
| Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure | Sustainable Futures provided an overview of the Draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Policy. | KDAC provided input and feedback regarding issues and barriers to accessible EV charging and parking across Knox. |
| Inclusive Language | Discussion and group activity to look at the importance of using language that promotes inclusion. | Committee provided feedback and discussed how Council can make communications accessible and inclusive. |
| Increasing Diversity of Representation in Council | Current and past KDAC members participated in two professional Council photo | KDAC contributed to the growing Council photo library of Knox residents of all ages, abilities and |

| Topic | Action | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Communications | shoots. | identities. |
| Climate Response Plan | Sustainable Futures presented the mid-term review of Council's Climate Response Plan. | The Committee were provided with an update on actions taken, the key themes and factors impacting community. Feeback provided on barriers encountered by people with a disability. |
| Domestic Animal Management Plan | Community Laws presented an overview of the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan. | KDAC provided input and feedback regarding issues and barriers for people with a disability to responsible pet ownership across Knox. |
| Local Social Enterprise – Employment Option for People With a Disability | Knoxbrooke presented an overview of their non-profit social enterprise based in Bayswater. | KDAC discussed this disability employment option as one of a range of options needed. The Committee discussed how Knoxbrooke could work with Council and local service providers to build partnerships. |
| Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 | Several KDAC members attended the Advisory Committee Workshop held in June 2025. | KDAC members provided input and feedback on the Plan, actions and potential future Year 2 actions. |
| Access Keys | Disability Inclusion Team presented information and activity to assess the current Council Access Key Accessible Guides. | KDAC provided feedback and input on how we can improve and promote our accessibility guides for venues and events. |

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

It is standard practice for Council officers to invite community members and industry representatives, relevant to the Committee's purpose, to nominate suitable candidates for participation in KDAC. As the current membership aligns with the requirements outlined in the Terms of Reference, no additional recruitment was necessary at this time.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Committee provide input and advice to Council on matters relating to people with a disability. Advising on Council policies, programs and protocols to reflect the needs of residents with disabilities and their carers. The Committee also provides a central point for Council and the Knox community to identify issues relevant to people with disabilities and their carers.

The Committee considers social implications when providing advice to Council, aligned to goals and objectives within the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**
Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**
KDAC provides input and advice to Council on matters relating to environmental and amenity issues as applicable.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
Council has supported the Committee since 1999 through a small allocation of resources within Council's annual budget and Long-Term Financial Forecast. Council officers also provide administrative support to this Committee.

**7. RISKS**
The major risks associated with Council not consulting with the disability community are:

- Stigma and discrimination – lack of consultation can contribute to stigma and discrimination against individuals with a disability, further marginalising vulnerable populations; and
- Public perception – inadequate response to disability issues can erode public trust and diminish community support for initiatives aimed at addressing access and inclusion.

The focus of the KDAC is to inform Council on issues of access and inclusion and promote disability awareness within Council and in the wider community.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**
**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**
Strategy 2.1 - Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**
Strategy 4.1 - Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.
Strategy 4.2 - Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**
There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Attachment 2 is included in the confidential agenda, as it contains confidential information pursuant to Council's Governance Rules and Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2020, as it relates to:

- personal information, [including names, addresses information being the names and details of prospective committee members which would be unreasonable to disclose publicly, or to disclosure before they are appointed.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Terms of Reference - KDAC - 2022-2026 [**8.7.1** - 6 pages]

Terms of Reference

# Knox Disability Advisory Committee

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Directorate: | Connected Communities | | |
| Approval by: | Council | Responsible Officer: | Team Leader Disability Inclusion |
| Approval Date: | 19 December 2022 | Version Number: | 1 |
| Review Date: | 19 December 2026 | | |

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory Committee is to promote disability awareness within Council and the wider community and assist Council in the development of policy and planning about issues of access and inclusion.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the Knox Disability Advisory Committee are:

- To report to Council on its work and advise Council of strategic issues regarding Knox residents with disabilities[1], their families and carers;
- To assist Council in the development of policy and action planning about issues of access and inclusion;
- To work with Council officers to ensure that all of Council's policies, programs and protocols reflect the needs and rights of residents with disabilities, their families and carers;
- To provide a central point for Council and the Knox community for the identification of issues relevant to people with disabilities, their families and carers; and
- To promote disability awareness within Council and the wider Knox community.

## 3. Membership, Period of Membership and Method of Appointment

The Knox Disability Advisory Committee shall comprise the following:

- A maximum of 7 community members with a disability;
- A maximum of 4 unpaid carers of a person with a disability;
- A maximum of 4 Industry or professional representatives; and
- 1-2 Councillors

1

KDAC adopts *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 definition of disability which states* people with disability include, but are not restricted to, those who have long-term physical, mental, cognitive, intellectual or sensory impairments. People with disability have specific needs, priorities and perspectives based on their individual identities including their gender, age, sexuality, race and cultural background, and can face additional barriers and inequities.

### 3.1 Selection and Recruitment of Community and Professional Industry Representative Members

The process to appoint community and Industry or professional representatives will be advertised on Council's website, digital platforms and through local networks. Applicants must make application via an expression of interest process.

Submissions will be assessed alongside the following selection criteria:

- Have a lived experience of disability and/or interest in and good working knowledge of the disability sector
- Offer insight into the social, cultural, environmental and economic factors that impact Knox residents with a disability
- Live, work or study in Knox

The approach and method for appointing representatives will include the following:

- Community and Industry or professional members will be selected by a panel comprising a Councillor and 2 Council Officers from the relevant service unit;
- The method of appointment will be via an expression of interest process;
- Members will be appointed for a two year term;
- All members will be eligible to re-apply for appointment, however continuous membership for longer than four years will not be considered; except in special circumstances;
- Council will be responsible for appointing all Councillor, community and professional/industry representative members; and
- Casual vacancies which occur due to community members being unable to complete the full term of their appointments may be filled by co-opting suitable candidates from a previous selection process for the remainder of the previous incumbents' terms. The selection panel will make a recommendation to the CEO, who will have the authority to appoint the recommended candidate to the Committee for the remainder of the previous incumbent's term.

Industry or professional representatives unable to attend a Committee meeting are able to nominate a proxy or alternate member from the organisation they represent. Any proxy attendance should be notified to Council's nominated officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. It is expected the appointed industry or professional representative will provide an appropriate briefing of the Committee purpose and objectives and relevant meeting notes to enable active participation and contribution of the proxy representation to the meeting.

The Committee may invite observers to meetings from time to time. This is at the discretion of the Committee.

Guests may also be invited to attend and participate at meetings, this would generally be for a specific purpose and/or specified period of time. This is at the discretion of the Committee.

### 3.2 Councillors

Council will appoint Councillor representation annually.

Unless otherwise appointed to the Committee by Council, the Mayor is, by virtue of the Office, an ex officio member of the Committee. It is important that whilst the Mayor may not chair these meetings, appropriate recognition should be given to the presence of the Mayor if in attendance.

The role of Councillors is to participate in the meetings, listen to community and stakeholder views and keep the Council informed, through reports on committees by Councillors at Council meetings, on issues of community interest being considered at meetings.

**3.3 Council Officers**

Council officers will be nominated to support the Committee by the CEO as required to provide advice and administrative support to the Committee.

## 4. Delegated Authority and Decision Making

The Committee acts in an advisory capacity only and has no delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of Council. The Committee provides advice or makes recommendations to Council and staff to assist them in their decision making.

## 5. Meeting Procedures

The Committee will meet on a bi-monthly basis and an annual schedule of meetings will be agreed upon at the first meeting of the Committee in each year.

The Committee is not required to give public notice of its meetings and its meetings are not open to the public.

Meetings will follow standard meeting procedure protocols, which are in summary:

- Commence on time and conclude by the stated completion time;
- Be scheduled and confirmed in advance with all relevant papers distributed (as appropriate) to each member;
- Encourage fair and respectful discussion;
- Focus on the relevant issues at hand; and
- Provide advice to Council, as far as practicable, on a consensus basis.

From time to time, the Committee may decide that a joint meeting of two or more Council Committees will be beneficial for progressing the work of the Committee or for sharing ideas and providing updates on key issues of relevance in progressing the work of the Council Plan. Such committee meetings will only occur where requested and agreed by two or more Council Committees.

## 6. Chair

The position of Chairperson shall be held by a Councillor and shall be reviewed annually immediately following Councillor appointments to committees. The position of Chairperson is to be agreed upon between Councillors. When this cannot be achieved, the Mayor of the day shall determine the Chair.

If the Chairperson is not present at a meeting, any other Councillor who has been appointed to the Committee shall be appointed Chairperson. In the absence of any other Councillor representative/s, a staff member appointed by the relevant Director may Chair the meeting.

## 7. Agendas and Minutes

Agendas and meeting notes must be prepared for each meeting.

The Agenda must be provided to members of the Committee not less than four (4) days before the time fixed for the holding of the meeting.

Officer reports that fail to meet the timelines as detailed above, will then be considered supplementary reports and will only be permitted to be included in the relevant agenda with the approval of the Chair of the Committee.

The Chairperson must arrange for meeting notes of each meeting of the Committee to be kept.

The meeting notes of a Council Committee must:

(a) contain details of the proceedings and recommendations made;

(b) be clearly expressed;

(c) be self-explanatory; and

(d) incorporate relevant reports or a summary of the relevant reports considered by the Committee.

Meeting notes must be:

(a) distributed to all Committee Members within 14 days of the meeting; and

(b) submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for information.

## 8. Voting

As this is an Advisory Committee, voting on issues is not required. Any recommendations will generally be developed through consensus. Where a matter cannot be agreed the differing opinions should be clearly expressed in the notes of the meeting.

## 9. Conflict and Interest Provisions

In performing the role of Advisory Committee member, a person must:

- Act with integrity;
- Impartially exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the local community;
- Not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person;
- Treat all persons with respect and have due regard to the opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities of other persons;
- Commit to regular attendance at meetings; and
- Not make improper use of information acquired because of their position or release information that the member knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

Meetings of the Advisory Committee will typically constitute a Meeting Conducted under the Auspices of Council pursuant to Council's Governance Rules and Councillors are consequently required to comply with the conflict of interest provisions as set down in the Local Government Act 2020 and Chapter 5 of the Council's Governance Rules.

Councillors must:

- Disclose that conflict of interest by explaining the nature of the conflict of interest to those present immediately before the matter is considered;
- Absent themselves from any discussion of the matter; and
- As soon as practicable, provide the CEO with a written notice recording the nature of the conflict.

Typically, where a member of staff or a community member has a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in relation to a matter before the Advisory Committee, they must disclose the matter to the Advisory Committee before the matter is considered or discussed. Disclosure must include the nature of the interest and be recorded in the meeting notes. It will be at the discretion of the Chairperson if the staff and/or community member remains or leaves the room whilst the matter is discussed, and this must also be recorded in the notes of the meeting.
All members of the Advisory Committee must agree to participate in training on the Conflict and Interest provisions. Training shall be provided in consultation with Council's Governance team.

## 10. Planning and Reporting

The Committee will formulate an annual work plan that aligns with Council's Community Plan and Council Plan and may also highlight any emerging issues which will also be documented. The business of the Committee throughout the ensuing year should align with the work plan and list of emerging issues. From time to time the Committee may be requested to include training or other business in their agendas such as occupational health and safety, emergency management and First Nations matters.

The Committee will prepare a formal report on an annual basis in line with their stated objectives. The report must be adopted by the Committee and should directly reflect the objectives and the performance measures of the Committee as set out in the Terms of Reference. Once adopted by the Committee the report will be presented to Council.

## 11. Administration Support

Administration support will be provided by the Connected Communities Directorate.

## 12. Personal Support

The provision of resources for the personal support of Committee members to attend KDAC meetings is provided by Council as required.

## 13. Contact with the Media

Contact with the Media by Advisory Committee members will be conducted in accordance with the Councillor and Staff Media Policies. Community members should defer any media enquiries to the Chairperson in the first instance and then Council Communications team, if deemed necessary and should take care not to respond as a representative of the Council or Committee.

## 14. Review Date

The Committee must be reviewed on a regular basis, with a review date generally not exceeding a 4 year period. If the Committee has a relevant function at the end of the standard review period, a report must be presented to Council including a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference and seeking endorsement

from Council to continue act for a further period.

## 15. Meals

Council will provide reasonable meals for the Committee meetings at times that immediately precede, follow or extend through normal meal times. The provision of meals will be determined by the CEO or delegate, and be within the capacity of the relevant department's budget.

## 16. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this terms of reference. Where an update does not materially alter this terms of reference, such a change may be made administratively and approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, changes to Federal or State Government department names or legislation; or other minor amendments that do not have material impact on the provisions or intent of the terms of reference. Where any change or update is considered to be a material change, it must be considered by Council or a relevant Delegated Committee.

## 8.8 Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Decision
**Author:** Acting Manager, Community Access and Support, Lana Harris
**Manager:** Acting Manager Community Access and Support, Lana Harris
**Executive:** Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley

**SUMMARY**
Council first adopted a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy and Procedure at the Council Meeting held on 24 June 2019. Revisions to the Policy and Procedure were adopted at the Council Meeting held on 22 March 2021. The Policy was first introduced to establish a strategic framework for addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in Knox. It outlines the Council's commitment to proactive leadership through awareness, education, and cross-sector collaboration to prevent homelessness, enhance access to housing and deliver essential support services to those experiencing homelessness.

This report also outlines the current situation for people sleeping rough in Knox, Council's response, and the complex challenges involved in supporting this vulnerable community.

The last Census occurred in 2021 when states and territories were under COVID-19 Pandemic related restrictions. State and territory governments, including the Victorian government, also worked with service providers to give temporary accommodation to people sleeping rough or in crisis situations to help protect them and the community from pandemic spread.

As such, 2021 homelessness estimates reflect the unique accommodation circumstances of those experiencing homelessness at the time of the Census. Despite this, homelessness in Knox increased by nearly 20% from the 2016 Census. Additionally, 2025 has seen a substantial increase in demand for food and essential items, driven by increasing cost-of-living pressures, including rent and mortgage stress, increasing rates of family violence, rising use of alcohol and other drugs, and more mental health needs; factors also reported by local agencies and members of the Knox Emergency Relief Network.

The current Policy and Procedure had a review date of March 2024, at which point a review was initiated. A cross-Council Working Group was established to review the documents and provide input to enhance the process for those responding to individuals sleeping rough. This resulted in clear, coordinated guidance tailored to the diverse responsibilities across Council, and other agencies.

The review identified the current Policy and Procedure did not clearly articulate the responsibilities for specific Council Departments and teams when responding to notifications for people sleeping rough and was not clear on circumstances that can trigger an Amenity Local Law 2020 response for public amenity and safety issues. Throughout 2024 to now, the Working Group focused on the procedure supporting Policy implementation. As a result of the Working Group's efforts, there has been a more coordinated approach to responding to notifications of people sleeping rough.

The Short Term Support team have led the pilot of these proposed revisions in 2025 and now collaborate more closely with stakeholder Council teams including: Community Laws, Open Space, Facilities Maintenance and Sport and Leisure Services to ensure a more integrated and effective response.

Only minor updates are proposed for the drafted Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy. (Refer to Attachment 1 with tracked changes and Attachment 2 – draft Policy with revisions included).

Through this review process it was identified it has been an anomaly for Council to adopt an operational procedure. As such, Council is now requested to rescind the current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure included for reference as Attachment 3.

Operational procedures exist to provide organisation guidance on the means to affect implementation of the policy. Through the review of the Policy, the updated operational procedure now outlines a coordinated and best -practice response, informed by benchmarking with other councils and stakeholder agencies.

Upon endorsement of the revised Policy, communication will occur to impacted Departments and teams to share this information.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council:
1. Endorse the Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy provided as Attachment 2.
2. Rescind the Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure provided as Attachment 3.
3. Note Council's ongoing commitment to a coordinated and best practice response in responding to homelessness and rough sleeping.

## 1. DISCUSSION

### 1.1 Background

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census night in 2021, more than 122,000 people were estimated to be experiencing homelessness in Australia, up from 116,000 (an increase of 5.2%) since 2016. Of the people experiencing homelessness in 2021, 56% were male, 58% were younger than 35 and 20% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) origin (ABS 2021).

Of people experiencing homelessness in Australia in 2021:

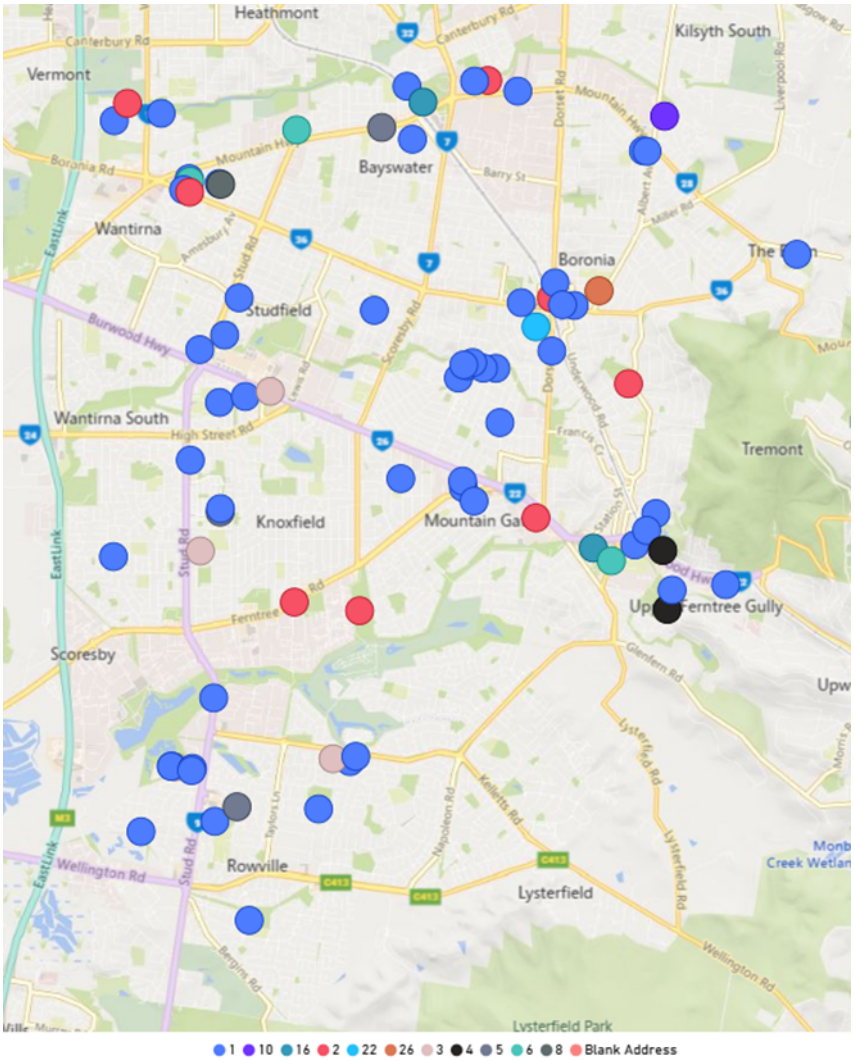
- 47,900 (39%) were living in "severely" crowded dwellings.
- 24,300 (20%) were in supported accommodation for the homeless.
- 7,600 (6.2%) were living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (also termed rough sleeping) (ABS 2021).

At that time, the Census data indicated 427 people in Knox were identified as homeless (rough sleeping) (ID Demographics Housing Monitor). Awareness and the number of individuals sleeping rough has been on the rise in Knox since 2021. However, the actual number is likely to be far greater than reported with 8,562 people in Outer Eastern Melbourne receiving specialist homelessness services in 2023-2024. (DFFH Social housing and homelessness report 2023-24).

In Knox, reports of people rough sleeping have increased significantly over the past three years. In 2022-2023 reports received by Council were 54. This number escalated to 88 for 2023-2024, and 112 for 2024-2025, noting that additional people rough sleeping, go unreported which would further increase the incidence.

The map below, based on the most recent data reported to Council in July 2025 illustrates the widespread nature of reports concerning individuals sleeping rough across the Knox municipality. While the bright blue dots represent single notifications —which are the most common—areas marked with green dots indicate clusters of multiple reports of individuals sleeping rough. Black, red and pink dots also appear across the map, reflecting varying levels of reporting.

**Image 1 – Incidence of Rough Sleeper Notifications – July 2025**




Many factors influence these increased numbers, with cost-of-living pressures increasingly impacting low-income households, rental and mortgage stress, family violence, and increasing mental health needs – all contributing to rising numbers of people who are homeless and people who are rough sleeping. These individuals face significant health risks, vulnerability to crime, and social exclusion. Those most vulnerable in our community are women and children, people with a disability, seniors, First Nations Peoples and single men (often with complex needs).

### 1.2 Challenges

Established in 2021, the Short Term Support (STS) team was created to assist senior residents to navigate aged care services, and vulnerable Knox residents with complex care needs, as well as housing needs for five State Government affordable housing estates in Knox. The STS team works collaboratively with Council teams and external providers to connect individuals and families with information, referral services and support for a range of issues, including social isolation and loneliness, financial hardship, mental health challenges, practical daily needs, and housing support.

The Short Term Support team is the triage point for assessing reports to Council for people rough sleeping, and this often requires a response from multiple agencies and Council teams. Currently, there is limited funding and support from other levels of Government to adequately address this growing crisis in local communities. While Council often receives calls and complaints urging immediate action, the reality is that frontline outreach services, local housing providers, and emergency relief agencies face significant resource constraints. These limitations affect their ability to deliver immediate relief, support long-term housing stability, and address the complex health and wellbeing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

In this context, Council needs to balance community expectations around safety and public amenity with an empathic, coordinated response that recognises the systemic challenges involved. Officers will continue to engage with services to collect data and information to inform decision-making, track outcomes, and evaluate the effectiveness of Council's response.

This is a statewide problem, as such all Victorian local governments have asked the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to advocate for more local services, help to establish new ways for local government to address changing community needs; as well as continuing advocacy to enable more social and affordable housing supply.

As a result of growing concern, MAV's 2024–27 Strategic Plan identified homelessness as a priority area of focus, despite the fact that homelessness has not been considered a traditional local government responsibility. There is recognition that a housing response is only one element to aiding community health and wellbeing responsibilities.

Homelessness is not an immediately solvable problem, and now increasing numbers requires a further structured process to support both people sleeping rough and local community expectations and amenity.

### 1.3 Coordination and Collaboration

Council plays a key role in bringing together government agencies, non-profit organisations, community groups, and individuals with lived experience of homelessness or rough sleeping. Their insights are vital in identifying gaps and informing more effective responses, policies, and strategies.

The Knox Emergency Relief Network is a strong example of this collaborative approach. Meeting bi-monthly, it includes representatives from EACH, Infolink, the Salvation Army, local Churches, and Council staff. These organisations work together to support vulnerable community members, primarily by coordinating food and material aid to meet immediate needs.

Through these close community connections, Council is well positioned to raise awareness and build understanding around the experiences and needs of people who are rough sleeping, while also considering broader community safety and public amenity.

The Short Term Support team further strengthens this work through established partnerships with housing agencies such as Uniting Housing, Anchor, and Sacred Heart Mission, enabling better access to housing and support services for those in need.

Currently Council, together with other Eastern Region Councils, is a member of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA) that aims to ensure everyone with low to moderate incomes in the region can access safe, secure, and affordable housing. Council is also a member of the Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter Group (the Charter Group) who advocate for increased social housing provision and response to homelessness in the east and southeast of Melbourne. Thirteen Councils representing 2 million residents in Melbourne's east and southeast have joined in a unified voice calling for urgent action for more social housing to end homelessness. The alliance of Councils has adopted a Charter to guide this campaign, The Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter 2020 (reference - EAHA.org.au/advocacy).

**1.4 Review of the Policy**

Throughout 2024, the internal Working Group met bi-monthly to improve the coordination of Council's response to people sleeping rough in Knox. The Working Group includes Council Officers from key teams including Community Laws, Short-Term Support, Facilities, Biodiversity, Community Strengthening and Open Space who respond to people rough sleeping on Council land, in Council buildings and in public places such as local business precincts. Throughout this period, the Working Group reviewed both existing Policy and procedure, led by Community Strengthening department and the Short-Term Support Team. The review focused on key discussion points including:

- What is working well?
- Ongoing and emerging challenges.
- Policy gaps.
- Process improvements.
- Feedback from agencies.

The group considered the impact of rough sleeping on individual Departments, the broader community, and instances where legal implications arise—particularly in relation to breaches of the Amenity Local Law 2020. Taking these factors into account, the Working Group identified changes which have been incorporated into the revised Policy (refer Attachments 1).
The revisions incorporated enable a more integrated and aligned approach across Council Departments and teams and ensures increased role clarity for all involved stakeholders. Ongoing conversations with key agencies such as Knox Infolink, Foothills Community Care and members of Knox Emergency Relief Network also informed the review of the Policy and operational procedure by highlighting opportunities to streamline and enhance the experience for people when engaging with Council teams. This included further acknowledging that people sleeping rough have rights and deserve respect, while also at times balancing community expectation and need to respond to amenity and safety issues and refer to relevant legislation in these circumstances.

Council provides essential funding to several agencies to support homeless people including:

- Knox Infolink – provide material aid and information for families and individuals experiencing hardship.
- Foothills Community Care - provide meals and support to vulnerable people.
- EACH – provide general and financial counselling services for Knox residents.

These are examples of three critical service providers to aid the plight of homelessness and people rough sleeping.

The following table provides a summary of the proposed key changes included in the draft Policy and Procedure documents:

| Policy Current State | Revised Policy Proposed Changes |
|---|---|
| The Policy does not refer to Council responsibilities under the Amenity Local Law 2020 to include enforcement provisions that can be applied in certain circumstances for people sleeping rough. | No specify implications for the Policy, but an important reference that the operational procedure need to provide clarity and guidance for circumstances in relation to public amenity and/or safety issues when to use enforcement under Amenity Local Law 2020. |
| Does not reference staff safety mechanisms | 6.3 Council is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all staff. Appropriate safety measures will be implemented and maintained to protect staff from risk when engaging with individuals who are rough sleeping. This includes providing clear protocols, risk screening and support to ensure staff can carry out their duties safely and confidently. |

**1.5 Implementation of the Revised Policy**

Lead by the Short Term Support team, the proposed changes to Policy, and supporting operational procedure, have been piloted through 2025 and further refined through this process.

The Policy ownership has also transferred from Community Strengthening to Community Access and Support to streamline the escalation process when a rough sleeping report is received.

Upon endorsement of the revised Policy, the Working Group will reconvene to socialise the Policy and the STS team will work collaboratively with the group to ensure there is a consistent approach to respond to notifications of people sleeping rough. Training will be arranged for staff to ensure shared understanding, competency and readiness to address the needs of people who are rough sleeping effectively as required.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

Through a benchmarking process, with members of the Charter Group it was noted, at that time Knox City Council was the only municipality to have a policy and procedure that responds to

people sleeping rough. Other member Councils had either a standalone protocol or guidelines to support Council responses.

The practice Knox adopted in 2019 remains a solid approach, with guiding principles based on human rights and clear workflows to support Council Officers in the field responding to this complex issue.

Given the proposed changes to the Policy are fundamentally administrative in nature, engagement was focused on benchmarking with other councils to inform the development of the updated operational procedure and ensure alignment with sector best practice.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

When people have secure and affordable housing that is appropriate to their life circumstances, other needs can be met, such as employment, education, and life opportunities. Some people in Knox are at risk of being denied this basic human right due to housing affordability issues and rental stress. A continued focus on educating the community about the importance of diverse and affordable housing options is essential to challenging misconceptions surrounding social and affordable housing. Collaboration with Community Strengthening for advocacy is an important focus for Knox City Council.

The updated Policy (refer Attachments 2) has been prepared to streamline our processes so that minimum distress or discomfort is experienced by those most vulnerable, and with permission, they are referred to appropriate services to support their often-complex needs.

In supporting people sleeping rough, Council is committed to the following principles:

- People who are rough sleeping have diverse backgrounds and needs that should be considered in any response with sensitivity and respect.
- People who are rough sleeping have the right to access public spaces without discrimination, as affirmed by Human Rights Standards.
- Knox City Council believes people who are rough sleeping should be treated with the same dignity and respect as any other member of the public; people who are rough sleeping have the same entitlement to be in public spaces and participate in community life.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental issues to note.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

No direct financial or resource implications. This work is delivered within annual operating budget requirements.

However, there are instances when rough sleeping can sometimes result in the accumulation of waste and damage to public spaces, which Council is then responsible for addressing. These clean-up efforts place an ongoing financial and operational burden on Council resources, highlighting the need for coordinated responses that balance compassion with community amenity and sustainability.

**7. RISKS**

Although Council is not mandated or adequately resourced by other levels of Government to respond to the needs for people rough sleeping, it remains a highly visible community concern. The following highlights some of the main risks associated with this issue:

- Public Safety: Concentrations of rough sleepers in public spaces can lead to safety concerns for both individuals experiencing homelessness and the broader community, including instances of crime and public disorder;
- Stigma and Discrimination: Lack of response can contribute to stigma and discrimination against individuals experiencing homelessness, further marginalising vulnerable populations; and
- Public Perception: Inadequate response to homelessness can erode public trust and diminish community support for initiatives aimed at addressing social issues.

Council and frontline services, including Victoria Police, are working collaboratively to manage the risks associated with rough sleeping. However, each service operates within its own scope of responsibility and authority.

When Council receives notifications about individuals sleeping rough, the Short Term Support (STS) team refers these cases to the Salvation Army's homelessness outreach service. The Outreach team then engages with the individual to offer alternative accommodation options and information about available support services.

Council is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all staff. Appropriate safety measures are implemented and maintained to protect staff from risk when engaging with individuals who are rough sleeping. This includes providing clear protocols, risk screening and support to ensure staff can confidently carry out their duties safely and confidently.

Council's Community Laws officers become involved when the individual is in breach of the Amenity Local Law 2020 and/or is exhibiting behaviours that pose a risk to public safety. In such cases, the STS and Community Laws teams work together to determine an appropriate course of action.

Victoria Police may intervene when the individual is trespassing or presents a significant risk to the community, ensuring that legal and safety concerns are appropriately addressed. No Council officers have the delegated authority to move a person on from a location. Only a member of Victoria Police has this authority under the Summary Offences Act 1996 to direct a person, in certain circumstances, to move on. When this authority is used, it is generally to provide respite for the local community or restore public amenity, but it is never a permanent solution. With often established relationships with local community, Community Laws officers and outreach services accompany Victoria Police when the rough sleeper is on council owned land and required to be relocated.

Despite the best efforts of all services, there is limited, or at times, no solution available. The focus is aimed at supporting individuals with immediate needs such as food and material aid to keep connected to services and adequate support to live whilst sleeping rough.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**

Strategy 1.5 - Our community's health and wellbeing is improved through proactive planning, delivery, partnerships and advocacy that enable access to services, education and programs.

**Planning our future city**

Strategy 6.1 - There is improved access to a diverse range of housing options through effective planning, advocacy, and identifying opportunities for social and affordable housing supply. range of housing options through effective planning, advocacy, and identifying opportunities for social and affordable housing supply.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Draft Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy - Tracked [**8.8.1** - 7 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - Knox Homelessness and Sleeping Rough Policy [**8.8.2** - 6 pages]
3. Attachment 3 - Knox Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure [**8.8.3** - 9 pages]

Policy

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Policy Number: | 2019/03 | Directorate: | Connected Communities |
| Approval by: | Council | Responsible Officer: | Lana Harris |
| Approval Date: | ~~22 March 2021~~25th August 2025 | Version Number: | 3 |
| Review Date: | ~~22 March 2024~~25th August 2030 | | |

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide direction for decision making and management processes in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping in the Knox municipality. This Policy articulates Council's aspirations to increase awareness and community education on the cause of homelessness and where possible, partner with key stakeholders to prevent homelessness and monitor accessibility to key housing providers, and other support services, where homelessness is an issue.

## 2. Context

Having access to housing is one of our most basic human rights[1] yet 122,494~~116,000~~ people were estimated to be homeless on Census night in 2021~~16~~ in Australia, an increase of 5.2~~4.6~~% since 201~~1~~6[2]. Homelessness is a complex social issue and local government is only one stakeholder amongst many.

The Knox Census homeless figures, in conjunction with local services data, indicates that homelessness, rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness is increasing. As a community we need to be responsive to this need and work together to address this growing concern. Whilst the rate of homelessness in Knox is lower than Greater Melbourne, Knox has a growing demographic of people who are homeless. ~~now has the highest number of homeless people compared to the other Outer East Local Government areas.~~[3]

## 3. Scope

3.1 Knox City Council believes that people who are homeless should be treated with the same dignity and respect as any other members of the public.

3.2 This Policy, and accompanying Procedure, provides direction for all Knox City Council staff working with people encountering homelessness, rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness. It also outlines Council's approach to working with other organisations who provide services to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, within Knox.

3.3 This Policy is applicable to all Council Staff, Contractors and Councillors.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 ~~Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008.~~
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 ~~2018, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016*, cat. no. 2049.0.55.001,~~ http://www.abs.gov.au~~~~.
[3] ~~Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016*, cat. no. 2049.0.55.001,~~ http://www.abs.gov.au~~~~.

~~Business Continuity Plan~~
~~Insert Work Area~~

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3.4 This Policy and accompanying Procedure informs Council's response to homelessness and rough sleeping in all Council owned and managed properties. This Policy does not apply to private property.

## 4. References

4.1 **Knox City Council ~~Community & Council Plan 2017-2021~~Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029**

- ~~Goal 2: We have housing to meet our changing needs.~~Theme 1: Enhancing Community Connection to vital services and resources. Strategy 1.5
- ~~Goal 6: We are healthy, happy and well.~~Theme 6: Planning for our future city

4.2 **Relevant Legislation**

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).
- Local Government Act 1989 (Vic).
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic).
- Knox City Council Amenity Local Law 2020.

4.3 **Charter of Human Rights**

This Policy has been assessed against the rights contained within the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and is deemed compatible with the Charter.

4.4 **Related Council Policies and Procedures**

- Knox Housing Support and Nomination Rights Policy.
- Knox City Council Staff Code of Conduct.
- Knox City Council Child Safe Policy.
- Knox City Council Child Safe Statement of Commitment.
- Knox City Council Homelessness Procedure.

4.5 **Related Council Plans and Documents**

- ~~Knox Community Access and Equity Implementation Plan 2017-2022.~~
- Knox City Council Municipal Emergency Management Plan ~~2019-~~2022~~.~~ 2025
- ~~Knox City Council Affordable Housing Action Plan 2015-2020.~~
- Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023 -2027
- ~~Knox City Council Minimum Supply of Social Housing, Eastern Metropolitan Region (2014-2036).~~

## 5. Definitions

| | |
|---|---|
| At risk of homelessness | A person is at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. |
| Child / Young Person | Any person aged below 18 years of age. |
| Contact Officer – Short Term Support team (STS) ~~Specialised Access Team (SAT)~~ | A Knox City Council staff member(s) from the ~~Specialised Access~~Short Term Support Team nominated to refer Homeless Persons and Rough Sleepers to appropriate specialist services. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Council | Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy. |
| Council People / Person | **Staff** - Any permanent, part-time, temporary or casual employee of Knox City Council.<br><br>**Contractor/Agency/Labour Hire Worker** - Any contractor or agency/labour hire worker who provides services or undertakes work on behalf of Knox City Council.<br><br>**Volunteer/s -** A member of the public when contributing directly to a Council program/service/event and who:<br>- is registered as a Council volunteer; or<br>- is part of any count with regard to volunteer hours contributed to Council programs/services/events.<br><br>For the purposes of this Policy, the definition of a volunteer also includes students on work/student placement from an educational institution.<br><br>**Councillor/s** An elected representative of the Knox municipality. |
| Homelessness | A person is homeless if their current living arrangements are in a dwelling that is inadequate; they have no security of tenure; or they do not have control, or access, to space for social relations. This may also include people living in improvised dwellings, tents and sleeping out; those living in supported accommodation for the homeless; those staying temporarily with other households; those living in boarding houses; those in other temporary lodgings; and those living in severely overcrowded buildings. |
| Location | This document is applicable to Council-owned and managed properties, buildings and land. |
| Rooming house | A building where one or more rooms are available to rent, and four or more people in total can occupy those rooms. May also be referred to as a boarding house. |
| Rooming house resident | A person who rents a room in a rooming house as their only or main residence. A resident does not need to have a tenancy agreement to live in a rooming house. |
| Rough sleeper | Rough sleeper refers to people who live on the streets and who sleep in places that are not designed to be slept in (for example building doorways, bus-shelters, parks, under-passes, cars and carparks, etc.). Rough sleepers do not have a place to live, or a place to call home. |
| Squatter | A person who is occupying a building, land or property that they do not own, rent or otherwise have permission to use. |

~~Business Continuity Plan~~
~~Insert Work Area~~

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## 6. Council Policy

6.1 Knox City Council considers all residents to be equal and therefore treats all citizens fairly and without judgement. The Council acknowledges that like everyone else people who are homeless have the right to be in public places and participate in any public event, providing they do not sleep or set up their living abode in an area that causes an obstruction or poses a risk to the local businesses or surrounding community.

6.2 Knox City Council Staff will implement the Homelessness Policy and Procedure and all of its requirements when identifying a homeless person in the course of their work, thus ensuring a consistent response by Council to people who are rough sleeping, homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Policy and Procedure will also ensure that people who are rough sleeping, homeless or at risk of homelessness are connected with appropriate services that can assist in supporting their needs.

6.3 Council is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all staff. Appropriate safety measures will be implemented and maintained to protect staff from risk when engaging with individuals who are rough sleeping. This includes providing clear protocols, risk screening and support to ensure staff can carry out their duties safely and confidently.

~~6.2~~

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~~6.3~~6.4 Knox City Council will work in partnership with relevant local funded community agencies who have expertise in the area of homelessness, to provide timely assistance where required.

~~6.4~~6.5 Knox City Council will identify gaps in service provision for people who are homeless and advocate, with community partners, for increased funding for homelessness as required.

~~6.5~~6.6 Knox City Council will advocate to State and Federal Government for appropriate services and address other underlying issues that people who are homeless may experience, including mental illness, alcohol and other drugs issues.

~~6.6~~6.7 Knox City Council commits to raising awareness around the issue of homelessness and the rights of homeless people with Council staff and the wider community about homelessness.

~~6.7~~6.8 Knox City Council will continue to implement the Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan to advocate and deliver (where negotiations succeed) social and affordable outcomes in Knox.

~~6.8~~6.9 In the course of Council infrastructure upgrading including open space, landscape design, public amenity and public facilities, consideration will be given to community members' access to drinking water, shelter from the elements including rain and shade from the sun.

~~6.9~~6.10 Knox City Council will work in partnership with local Outreach stakeholders to provide assertive homelessness outreach services to those who are homeless and/or sleeping rough across the Knox municipality.

## 7. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy.

Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this Policy, it must be considered by Council.

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Policy Number:** | 2019/03 | **Directorate:** | Connected Communities |
| **Approval by:** | Council / CEO | **Responsible Officer:** | Lana Harris |
| **Approval Date:** | TBC | **Version Number:** | 3 |
| **Review Date:** | TBC | | |

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide direction for decision making and management processes in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping in the Knox municipality. This Policy articulates Council's aspirations to increase awareness and community education on the cause of homelessness and where possible, partner with key stakeholders to prevent homelessness and monitor accessibility to key housing providers, and other support services, where homelessness is an issue.

## 2. Context

Having access to housing is one of our most basic human rights [1]yet 122,494 people were estimated to be homeless on Census night in 2021 in Australia, an increase of 5.2% since 2016[2]. Homelessness is a complex social issue and local government is only one stakeholder amongst many.

The Knox Census homeless figures, in conjunction with local services data, indicates that homelessness, rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness is increasing. As a community we need to continue to be responsive to this need and work together to address this growing concern. Whilst the rate of homelessness in Knox is lower than Greater Melbourne, Knox has a growing demographic of people who are homeless.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021

## 3. Scope

3.1 Knox City Council believes that people who are homeless should be treated with the same dignity and respect as any other members of the public.

3.2 This Policy, and accompanying Procedure, provides direction for all Knox City Council staff working with people encountering homelessness, rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness. It also outlines Council's approach to working with other organisations who provide services to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, within Knox.

3.3 This Policy is applicable to all Council Staff, Contractors and Councillors.

3.4 This Policy and accompanying Procedure informs Council's response to homelessness and rough sleeping in all Council owned and managed properties. This Policy does not apply to private property.

## 4. Homelessness and Sleeping Rough Policy

4.1 Knox City Council considers all residents to be equal and therefore treats all citizens fairly and without judgement. The Council acknowledges that like everyone else people who are homeless have the right to be in public places and participate in any public event, providing they do not sleep or set up their living abode in an area that causes an obstruction or poses a risk to the local services, businesses or surrounding community.

4.2 Knox City Council Staff will implement the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy and Procedure and all of its requirements when identifying a homeless person in the course of their work, thus ensuring a consistent response by Council to people who are rough sleeping, homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Policy and Procedure will also ensure that people who are rough sleeping, homeless or at risk of homelessness are connected with appropriate services that can assist in supporting their needs, acknowledging this aid or service is often refused.

4.3 Council is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all staff. Appropriate safety measures will be implemented and maintained to protect staff from risk when engaging with individuals who are rough sleeping. This includes providing clear protocols, risk screening and support to ensure staff can carry out their duties safely and confidently.

4.4 Knox City Council will work in partnership with relevant local funded community agencies who have expertise in the area of homelessness, to provide timely assistance where required.

4.5 Knox City Council will identify gaps in service provision for people who are homeless and advocate, with community partners, for increased funding for homelessness as required.

4.6 Knox City Council will advocate to State and Federal Government for appropriate services and address other underlying issues that people who are homeless may experience, including mental health illness, alcohol abuse and other drugs issues.

4.7 Knox City Council commits to raising awareness around the issue of homelessness and the rights of homeless people with Council staff and the wider community about homelessness.

4.8 Knox City Council will continue to implement the Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan to advocate and deliver (where negotiations succeed) social and affordable outcomes in Knox.

4.9 During Council infrastructure upgrades including open space, landscape design, public amenity and public facilities, consideration will be given to community members' access to drinking water, shelter from the elements including rain and sun.

4.10 Knox City Council will work in partnership with local Outreach stakeholders to provide assertive homelessness outreach services to those who are homeless and/or sleeping rough across the Knox municipality

4.11 Short Term Support team will actively communicate to the community to inform them of support services offered by Council and the discrete mean to refer someone to service or self refer.

## 5. References

**5.1 Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Theme 1:** | Enhancing Community Connection to vital services and resources. |
| **Strategy 1.5:** | Our community's health and wellbeing is improved through proactive planning, delivery, partnerships and advocacy that enable access to services, education and programs. |
| **Theme 6:** | Planning our future City |
| **Strategy 6.1:** | There is improved access to a diverse range of housing options through effective planning, advocacy, and identifying opportunities for social and affordable housing supply. |

**5.2 Relevant Legislation**

- Local Government Act 2020
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic).
- Knox City Council Amenity Local Law 2020.

**5.3 Charter of Human Rights**

- This policy has been assessed against and complies with the charter of Human Rights.

**5.4 Related Council Policies and Procedures**

- Councillor Equal Opportunity Policy
- Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023 -2027
- Knox City Council Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2022 - 2025
- Knox Housing Support and Nomination Rights Policy.
- Knox City Council Staff Code of Conduct.
- Knox City Council Child Safe Policy.
- Knox City Council Child Safe Statement of Commitment.
- Knox City Council Responding to People Sleeping Rough Procedure.

## 6. Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| **At risk of homelessness** | A person is at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. |
| **Child / Young Person** | Any person aged below 18 years of age. |
| **Contact Officer – Short Term Support Officer** | A Knox City Council staff member(s) from Short Term Support Team nominated to refer Homeless Persons and Rough Sleepers to appropriate specialist services. |
| **Council** | Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy. |
| **Council People / Person** | **Councillor/s** An elected representative of the Knox municipality<br>**Staff** - Any permanent, part-time, temporary or casual employee of Knox City Council.<br>**Contractor/Agency/Labour Hire Worker** - Any contractor or agency/labour hire worker who provides services or undertakes work on behalf of Knox City Council.<br>**Volunteer/s -** A member of the public when contributing directly to a Council program/service/event and who:<br>- is registered as a Council volunteer; or<br>- is part of any count with regard to volunteer hours contributed to Council programs/services/events.<br>- For the purposes of this Policy, the definition of a volunteer also includes students on work/student placement from an educational institution. |
| **Homelessness** | A person is homeless if their current living arrangements are in a dwelling that is inadequate; they have no security of tenure; or they do not have control, or access, to space for social relations. This may also include people living in improvised dwellings, tents and sleeping out; those living in supported accommodation for the homeless; those staying temporarily with other households; those living in boarding houses; those in other temporary lodgings; and those living in severely overcrowded buildings |
| **Location** | This document is applicable to Council -owned and managed properties, buildings and land. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Rooming House** | A building where one or more rooms are available to rent, and four or more people in total can occupy those rooms. May also be referred to as a boarding house. |
| **Rooming house resident** | A person who rents a room in a rooming house as their only or main residence. A resident does not need to have a tenancy agreement to live in a rooming house. |
| **Rough Sleeper** | Rough sleeper refers to people who live on the streets and who sleep in places that are not designed to be slept in (for example building doorways, bus-shelters, parks, under-passes, cars and carparks, etc.). Rough sleepers do not have a place to live, or a place to call home. |
| **Squatter** | A person who is occupying a building, land or property that they do not own, rent or otherwise have permission to use. |

## 7. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively on approval of the [Chief Executive Officer / Director].

Examples of minor administrative changes include change to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact.

Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this Policy, it must be considered by [Council / Chief Executive Officer].

Procedure

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Policy Number: | 2019/04 | Directorate: | Community Services |
| Approval by: | Council | Responsible Officer: | Manager Community Wellbeing |
| Approval Date: | 22 March 2021 | Version Number: | 2 |
| Review Date: | 22 March 2024 | | |

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to provide a coordinated approach to supporting rough sleepers in Knox, including guidance to all Knox Council Staff who become aware of a person who is experiencing homelessness, or is at risk of homelessness. Awareness may arise via:

- The person themselves requesting assistance;
- The course of a Council Officer's work; or
- A notification or request for assistance from a concerned resident, trader or community organisation.

## 2. Context

Having access to housing is one of our most basic human rights[1] yet 116,000 people were estimated to be homeless on Census night in 2016 in Australia, an increase of 4.6% since 2011[2]. Homelessness is a complex social issue and local government is only one stakeholder amongst many.

The Knox Census homeless figures in conjunction with local services data indicates that homelessness and those at risk of homelessness is increasing. As a community we need to be responsive to this need and work together to address this growing concern. Whilst the rate of homelessness in Knox is lower than Greater Melbourne, Knox now has the highest number of homeless people compared to the other Outer East local government areas.[3]

## 3. Scope

3.1 This Procedure is applicable **to** all Council owned and managed properties.

3.2 This Procedure does not apply to people who are sleeping rough on private property.

3.3 This Procedure should be used by all Council Staff who come into contact with people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness in the course of their work. This contact may be in person, via telephone, or through a third-party enquiry from a concerned resident or trader.

[1] Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008.
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016*, cat. no. 2049.0.55.001, http://www.abs.gov.au .
[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016*, cat. no. 2049.0.55.001, http://www.abs.gov.au .

*For Knox City Council use only*

3.4 Knox City Council considers all residents to be equal and therefore treats all citizens fairly and without judgement. The Council acknowledges that like everyone else people who are homeless have the right to be in public places and participate in any public event, providing they do not sleep or set up their living abode in an area or manner that creates an impact upon the local businesses or surrounding community.

3.5 **Knox Council will continue to build and extend partnerships** with a range of local community organisations, support services and housing providers in Knox that provide expertise on homelessness. These partnerships include homeless service providers and other allied support services and referral protocols to other agencies.

## 4. References

4.1 **Knox City Council Community & Council Plan 2017-2021**

- Goal 2: We have housing to meet our changing needs.
- Goal 6: We are healthy, happy and well.

4.2 **Relevant Legislation**

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).
- Knox City Council Amenity Local Law 2020.
- Local Government Act 1989 (Vic).
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic).

4.3 **Charter of Human Rights**

This Procedure has been assessed against the rights contained within the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and is deemed compatible with the Charter.

4.4 **Related Council Policies**

- Knox Housing Support and Nomination Rights Policy.
- Knox City Council Staff Code of Conduct.
- Knox City Council Child Safe Policy.
- Knox City Council Child Safe Statement of Commitment.
- Knox City Council Homelessness Policy.

4.5 **Related Council Plans and Documents**

- Knox Community Access and Equity Implementation Plan 2017-2022.
- Knox City Council Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2019-2022.
- Knox City Council Affordable Housing Action Plan 2015-2020.
- Knox City Council Minimum Supply of Social Housing, Eastern Metropolitan Region (2014-2036).

## 5. Definitions

| | |
|---|---|
| At risk of homelessness | A person is at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation. |
| Child / Young Person | Any person aged below 18 years of age. |
| Contact Officer-Specialised Access Team (SAT) | A Knox City Council staff member(s) from the Specialised Access Team (SAT) nominated to refer Homeless Persons and Rough Sleepers to appropriate specialist services. |
| Council | Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy. |
| Council Staff | **Staff** - Any permanent, part-time, temporary or casual employee of Knox City Council.<br><br>**Contractor/Agency/Labour Hire Worker** - Any contractor or agency/labour hire worker who provides services or undertakes work on behalf of Knox City Council.<br><br>**Volunteer/s -** A member of the public when contributing directly to a Council program/service/event and who:<br>• is registered as a Council volunteer; or<br>• is part of any count with regard to volunteer hours contributed to Council programs/services/events<br><br>For the purposes of this Procedure the definition of a volunteer also includes students on work/student placement from an educational institution.<br><br>**Councillor/s** - An elected representative of the Knox municipality. |
| Homelessness | A person is homeless if their current living arrangements are in a dwelling that is inadequate; they have no security of tenure; or they do not have control, or access, to space for social relations. Can include those living in improvised dwellings, tents and sleeping out; those living in supported accommodation for the homeless; those staying temporarily with other households; those living in boarding houses; those in other temporary lodgings; and those living in severely overcrowded buildings. [4] |
| Location | This document is applicable to Council-owned and managed properties, buildings and land. |
| Rooming house | A building where one or more rooms are available to rent, and four or more people in total can occupy those rooms. May also be referred to as a boarding house. |

[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012.

| | |
|---|---|
| Rooming house resident | A person who rents a room in a rooming house as their only or main residence. A resident does not need to have a tenancy agreement to live in a rooming house. |
| Rough sleeper | Rough sleeper refers to people who live on the streets and who sleep in places that are not designed to be slept in (for example building doorways, bus-shelters, parks, under-passes, cars and carparks etc.). Rough sleepers do not have a place to live, or a place to call home. |
| Squatter | A person who is occupying a building, land or property that they do not own, rent or otherwise have permission to use. |

## 6. Procedure

This Procedure outlines the steps Council Staff should take if they come in contact with a person who is homeless, at risk of homelessness, or is rough sleeping, in the course of their normal duties (whether in person, via direct contact by telephone, or by third party contact from a concerned resident).

**6.1 Where there are special circumstances**

For the purposes of this Procedure, special circumstances refer to circumstances where a person who is homeless or at risk of homelessness is also:

- A person is aged 55 years and over (refer to 6.1.1); or
- A child/young person, or accompanied by a child/young person (refer to 6.1.2); or
- Affected by family violence (refer to 6.1.3).
- Impacted by mental health or an intellectual disability.

6.1.1 **Aged 55 years and over:**

- Where a person is aged 55 years or over, they should be referred to Council's SAT Contact Officer on # 8303.

6.1.2 **There is a child / young person:**

- Council is mandated to meet legislative requirements in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), including, Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- If Council staff become aware of a child or young person who is homeless, they should contact one of Council's designated SAT Contact Officers to discuss any safety and wellbeing concerns for that child[5].
- A child or young person is **not** to act as an interpreter for an adult, contact should be made with an Interpreter service, a qualified accredited interpreter from TIS National and Language Loop should be used. Bilingual Council staff members or family members should not be utilised to interpret or translate documents.
    - VITS Language Loop: 03 9280 1941
- If the child or young person is **in immediate danger Victoria Police should be called on 000,** then a Council SAT Contact Officer notified.

[5] Once contacted a rough sleeping contact officer will ensure that Child Safe Standards, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and mandatory reporting requirements are adhered to.

**Council's SAT Contact Officer**

- **If you believe that a child or young person under 18 is in immediate danger, you should call Victoria Police on 000.**

6.1.3 **There is family violence**

For victim/survivors of family violence who need to leave their home, or have already left, you can refer them to:

| Agency name | Type of assistance | Contact number |
|---|---|---|
| EDVOS | Family violence service for women and children in Eastern Metropolitan Melbourne. | 9259 4200 |
| Safe Steps | 24-hour family violence crisis response service for women and children experiencing family violence. | 1800 015 188 |
| 1800RESEPCT | 24-hour service that supports anyone affected by sexual assault and family violence, including men. | 1800 737 732 |
| Seniors Rights Victoria | Assistance for older men and women who have experienced elder abuse. | 1300 368 821 |
| UnitingCare Harrison | Homelessness support. | 1800 825 955 |

**For perpetrators** who are homeless due to being *excluded from the home* based on a Family Violence Safety Notice (issued by Victoria Police) or a Family Violence Intervention Order (Interim Order or Final Order that is issued by the Magistrates Court of Victoria), refer them to:

| Agency name | Type of assistance | Contact number |
|---|---|---|
| MensLine Australia | Support and information for men. | 1300 789 978 |
| Lifeline | Crisis support & suicide prevention. | 13 11 14 |
| UnitingCare Harrison (Knox) | Homelessness Support. | 1800 825 955 |
| Anchor Inc. (Lilydale) | Homelessness Support. | 9760 6400 |
| SalvoCare Eastern (Kew) | Homelessness Support. | 9853 5680 |
| Wesley Mission Vic (Ringwood) | Homelessness Support. | 8870 4000 |

**6.2 When a Council Person comes across a person who is sleeping rough in the course of their work, they are to:**

6.2.1 Make note of your observations of the person who is rough sleeping including their location, a description of the person, any observations or concerns about the situation or the person's behaviour and any risks to the safety of an outreach worker, using the 'Homelessness Recording Tool' (Appendix One)[6]. Refer the matter to Council's SAT Contact Officer. **There are no expectations of Council Officers to take any other action other than refer to Council's SAT Contact Officer.**

[6] To activate this procedure a Privacy Impact Assessment form will be completed and filed.

6.2.2 If possible, offer Council's brochure *Knox Homelessness Resource* that contains information about free meals and food parcels as well as service providers who may be able to assist with accommodation.

6.2.3 If the person does not request or need assistance from an Outreach provider, the person should be advised they are welcome to ring the SAT Contact Officer in the future if they change their mind. No further action is required from the SAT Contact officer, however other departments within Council may still engage with the person around issues that could contradict Local laws or issues surrounding trespassing.

*If concerned about the health of person who is rough sleeping, or if their behaviour is causing immediate safety concerns, Council staff should call 000. You should also notify Council's SAT Contact Officer.*

6.2.4 If a rough sleeper has an unregistered dog or cat, the SAT Contact Officer will contact Community Laws who will consider options to assist the rough sleeper to retain and register their animal in line with Legislative requirements. This may include an assessment of the situation prior to Council subsidising all or part of the cost of registration.

**6.3 Emergency Event**

If the person is homeless following an emergency event, the caller should be referred to the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO) on 9298 8484 (during office hours) or 9298 8000 (after hours). If Emergency Management are unable to assist, they will make a referral for the person to an appropriate agency.

**6.4 Eviction or other reason**

If the person is at risk of homelessness due to imminent eviction from a rental property or mortgagee repossession, or they are staying with friends or family with no permanency, they can be referred to one of the following agencies:

| Agency name | Type of assistance | Contact number |
|---|---|---|
| Eastern Community Legal Centre | Free legal assistance. | 9762 6235 |
| Victoria Legal Aid | Free legal assistance. | 1300 792 387 |
| Consumer Affairs Victoria | Free assistance – tenant rights. | 1300 558 181 |
| Anchor Inc. (Lilydale) | Homelessness Support. | 9760 6400 |
| SalvoCare Eastern (Kew) | Homelessness Support. | 9853 5680 |
| UnitingCare Harrison (Knox) | Homelessness Support. | 9051 3000 |
| Wesley Mission Vic (Ringwood) | Homelessness Support. | 8870 4020 |

**Note that Council does not provide emergency accommodation or legal advice for Knox residents.**

**6.5 Rooming Houses**

6.5.1 **Unregistered or Unsafe Rooming Houses**

Where there is a reasonable belief that a rooming house is unregistered or unsafe, refer the matter to Council's Building Services and Health Services teams. These teams are able to work with the rooming house owner by inspecting the property and issuing Notices to achieve compliance.

**CRS Code: BENQUI**

6.5.2 **Resident eviction**

If you are contacted by a person living in a rooming house who is concerned about being evicted, or has been evicted from a rooming house, refer them to:

| Agency name | Type of assistance | Contact number |
|---|---|---|
| UnitingCare Harrison | Homelessness support. | 9051 3000 |
| Consumer Affairs Victoria | Free assistance – rooming house resident rights. | 1300 558 18 |

**6.6 When there is a squatter on an abandoned private property**

6.6.1 If notified there is a person squatting on privately-owned property, refer the caller to Victoria Police (131444).

6.6.2 If there are broken windows or structural damage to the building, refer to Building Services.

**CRS Code: BENQUI**

Council can provide advice to a property owner to secure the property by boarding up windows and doors to deter squatters.

6.6.3 If you have contact with a person who is rough sleeping on private property and they request information on housing services, refer them to:

| Agency name | Type of assistance | Contact number |
|---|---|---|
| UnitingCare Harrison | Homelessness support. | 9871 8700 |
| Eastern Community Legal Centre | Free legal assistance (for property owner or squatter). | 9762 6235 |
| Victoria Legal Aid | Free legal assistance (for property owner or squatter). | 1300 792 387 |

6.6.4 If the contact is in person, provide them with Knox City Council's 'Homelessness Resource Brochure'.

**6.7 When a person who is homeless approaches Council**

6.7.1 Offer Council's brochure 'Homelessness Resource Brochure' that contains information about free meals and food parcels as well as service providers who may be able to assist with accommodation.

6.7.2 Make note of your observations of the person who is rough sleeping including their location, a description of the person, any observations or concerns about the situation or the person's behaviour and any risks to the safety of an outreach worker, using the 'Homelessness Recording Tool' (Appendix One)[7]. Refer the matter to Council's SAT Contact Officer.

6.7.3 If possible, you should inform the person that an Outreach team member will visit to discuss housing options.

6.7.4 The Council **SAT Contact Officer** will contact the Outreach provider to initiate an onsite visit.

[7] To activate this procedure a Privacy Impact Assessment form will be completed and filed.

6.7.5 If the person does not request or need assistance from an outreach program, the person should be left alone. If the situation changes, you will need to begin this process again.

If you have immediate concerns about the health of person who is rough sleeping, or if their behaviour is causing immediate safety concerns, you should call 000. You should also notify Council's **SAT Contact Officer.**

**6.8 When a community member contacts Council to raise concerns about a person who is homeless and rough sleeping in a public space then the following steps are to be taken:**

6.8.1 Refer the matter to Council's SAT Contact Officer with all details you are able to obtain from the caller (recorded in the Homelessness Recording Tool in Appendix 1) and advise the caller you are doing this.

**6.9 When a homeless person or rough sleeper is impacting on local businesses or the surrounding community then the following steps are to be taken:**

6.9.1 If the Council SAT Contact Officer has referred the case to an Outreach program and the referral and/ or assistance has been refused and if it is determined that the situation is having an impact upon the local businesses or surrounding community, the matter may be referred to Community Laws, the relevant Council Department (refer to Standard Operating Procedures) or the Local Police.

**6.10 When there is a safety risk or concern for a person who is rough sleeping or when a person who is rough sleeping poses a risk to public safety**

6.10.1 If the person who is sleeping rough is demonstrating instances of:

- Persistent anti-social behaviour or
- Exhibiting other wellbeing concerns,

The matter should be referred to the Council's SAT Contact Officer who will engage with an Outreach program, or the Victorian Police.

**6.11. When not to intervene**

6.11.1 Council staff should not approach a person who is rough sleeping if:

- That person's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety and security of people around them; or
- That person's behaviour is likely to result in damage to property or have a negative impact on natural and cultural conservation of environment, including cultural heritage, water pollution and fire risks.

If you witness such behaviour, call Victoria Police 000.

## 7. Administrative Updates

Changes to this procedure that do not materially affect the implementation of Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Management Team and or the Chief Executive Officer. Any material changes to the procedure will be communicated to Councillors.

Where changes to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Procedure impact the objectives of Council's Policy, the Policy will be reviewed by Council in advance of any amendment to the procedure.

## Appendix One – Homelessness Recording Tool

| Date | Location | Description of person | Risk management | Knox City Council action | Exhibiting behaviour (intoxication, violent, disoriented etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

# 8.9 2025-26 Amended Budget

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Decision
**Author:** Chief Financial Officer, Navec Lorkin
**Executive:** Chief Executive Officer, Bruce Dobson

**SUMMARY**
The 2025-26 Amended Budget is presented for consideration. This report recommends Council adopt the 2025-26 Amended Budget, including updates to capital works, for management reporting purposes.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
That Council:
1. Adopt the Amended Budget (Attachment 1), which will be used for management reporting purposes.
2. Allocate the funding identified for the "Pavilion Upgrade" project in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program to the development of the detailed design for the Lewis Park Pavilion.

**1. DISCUSSION**
This report includes an amended budget to reflect changes which have occurred since the adoption of the 2025/26 Budget. These changes relate to matters arising as part of the finalisation of the year-end accounts, such as changes in the timing of project revenue and expenditure, timing of delivering grants programs and reconciliation of the waste charge to actuals. The proposed amendments promote greater transparency and accountability in Council's financials, although this process is not a legislative requirement.

**1.1 Amended Budget**
The amended budget aligns with the 'Amended Budget Principle' financial strategy adopted as part of the 2025/26 Budget. The principle states Council will amend the Budget for internal management reporting purposes to ensure prudent and transparent budgeting and financial planning.

The amended budget is formed for internal management reporting purposes and there are no specific Local Government Act 2020 requirements within this internal budget process. The complete Amended Budget Principle is provided below for reference:

*Council will amend the Budget for internal management reporting purposes to ensure prudent and transparent budgeting and financial planning.*

*Council will ensure a rigorous approach to budget management. The budget will be amended where necessary following finalisation of the annual accounts.*

*Amended budgets enable Council to review and approve variances to revenue and expenditure resulting primarily from external factors, ensuring accountability and optimal budget control for*

*management reporting purposes. Amendments to the adopted budget will be considered under the following circumstances:*

- *Additional income has been received*
- *Reduction in income due to identified reasons*
- *Transactions required subsequent to finalisation of end of year accounts*
- *Expenditure increase matching additional income*
- *Additional non-discretionary expenses*
- *Deferred expenditure*
- *Sound accounting processes to meet audit requirements.*

*In the circumstance where additional cash surplus is identified (after taking into account cash requirements in future years), this surplus will firstly be considered for transfer into a defined benefits reserve and secondly for opportunities to reduce planned borrowing.*

*New expenditure identified (if any) should be considered within the overall priority listing of works across Knox. This may include bringing forward foreshadowed works in a staged approach. Existing commitments of staff and project management resources will be considered to ensure deliverability prior to endorsement of additional expenditure.*

*The Annual Report will detail performance against the original Budget as adopted by Council as the Budget.*

**1.2 Summary of Amended Budget**
The Amended Budget financial statements (Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flows and Capital Works) are included in Attachment 1, along with summary comments on variances between the Amended and Adopted Budgets.

**1.2.1 Amended Budget Operating Summary**
The 2025-26 Amended Budget is showing an underlying operating surplus of $11.808 million against an adopted budget surplus of $19.454 million, an unfavorable variance of $7.646 million which is primarily related to non-cash items such as increased depreciation and timing differences for delivering projects.

The main variances relate to:

***Revenue***

- Victorian Grants Commission general purpose and local roads grants totaling $98,000 more than budget ($43,000 in general purpose, operating and $55,000 in local roads, capital).
- Operational and capital grants received totaling $0.553 million were treated as unearned income in 2024-25 and carried forward to 2025-26 in accordance with accounting standards.
- Estimated disposal costs for land relating to Kingston Links and Boronia Road $0.528 million as the Comprehensive Income Statement requires that net loss (gain) on assets is reported within the income section.

***Expenditure***

- $4.289 million increase in depreciation related to the net asset revaluation increment as at 30 June 2025. The increase is primarily attributable to the additional recognition requirements under AASB 13, which include traffic management and other site preparation costs. Overall, asset valuations increased by $253 million in 2024–25, resulting in a corresponding increase in depreciation expense.
    - Depreciation shows how Council's assets (like roads and buildings) wear out or age over time. It does not involve cash leaving the bank, rather guides how much should be invested each year to keep renewing assets through the capital works program.
- $1.268 million carry forward expenditure from 2024/25 into 2025/26 for unearned grants funds and completion of projects;
- $0.847 million relating to waste ($0.412 million to complete the kerbside reform bin lid changeovers in 2025–26, and $0.435 million over-collected in 2024–25, which will be applied to the 2026–27 Waste Charge, resulting in a reduction).
- $0.940 million increase related to additional capital carry-forwards that is expected to be expensed. Expensing occurs where assets do not meet capitalisation requirements such as IT products that move from on premises to being in the cloud.

The comprehensive income statement in Attachment 1 provides further detail of these changes.

**1.2.2 Amended Budget Capital Summary**

Table 1 is a reconciliation of the movements from the 2025/26 Adopted Budget to the proposed 2025/26 Amended Budget.

**Table 1: Reconciliation of 2025-26 Adopted Budget to 2025-26 Amended Budget**

| **Description** | **Amount $'000** | **Comment** |
|---|---|---|
| **2025-26 Adopted Capital Expenditure Budget** | **57,845** | Council adopted the 2025/26 Budget on 23 June 2025 (which included $15.723 million in carry-forward identified from 2024-25 to be moved to 2025-26) |
| ***Plus*** | | |
| *Additional net carry-forward from 2024-25 (unspent capital budget)* | *3,180* | The draft budget adopted for public feedback and questions in May 2025 and the endorsed budget from June 2025 incorporate a projected end of year carry forward position for all capital works projects, which is identified in early March, which is the best estimate at this time. The year-end reconciliation identifies funds which were budgeted but not spent and require carry-forward in order to complete committed projects. |
| **2025-26 Amended Capital Budget Total Expenditure** | **61,025** | |

The Statement of Capital Works included in Attachment 1 incorporates the adjusted Capital Works program for 2025-26. The Capital Works program in the 2025-26 Amended Budget is influenced by the following key element:

- Adjusted Carry Forward budget – the draft budget adopted in May 2025 and the endorsed budget from June 2025 incorporate a projected end of year carry forward position for all capital works projects, which is identified in early March. Given that these projections are made more than 3 months prior to the end of the financial year, they reflect an estimate only by project managers as to year end position. The end of year expenditure position has been updated to reflect verified carry forward requirements across the program.

The Statement of Capital Works included in Attachment 1 contains a full list of all the changes proposed to the capital works program.

The 2025-26 Adopted Budget included a carry-forward allocation for Carrington Park, moving funding from 2024-25 to 2026-27 to align with the anticipated construction schedule. As part of the 2024-25 year-end reconciliation, the following additional projects were also identified for carry-forward from 2024-25 to 2026-27:

| Amount | Project |
|---:|---|
| 205,332 | High Street Road bus stop connections: site investigations and design have been completed. Consultation with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) has concluded and design approval has been obtained. Landowner consent from Parks Victoria must now be obtained, necessitating a rephasing. |
| 96,314 | Ferntree Gully Road Knoxfield Shared Path: the required approval to use private land for a public shared path was not obtained from the landowners and the associated body corporate. The landowners and body corporate will be re-engaged in the future in accordance with the Cycling Action Plan |
| 19,000 | Meridian Parade additional lighting: following further consultation with United Energy it was determined a scope and budget adjustment is required. The revised project scope will be reconsidered in future. |
| 76,830 | Napoleon Road electronic 40km/h signs at school crossings: an application has been submitted to DTP, which has provided its feedback and a recommended scope of works. Community consultation is occurring on the proposed scope. Subject to the community consultation at and the DTP approval processes, delivery is expected to occur in 2026-27. |

**1.3 2024-25 Capital Budget Savings**

In undertaking the assessment of the capital program at the conclusion of 2024/25 and taking into account projects requiring carry-forwards from 2024/25 to 2025/26, $3.020 million in savings was identified. These savings primarily from a number of projects being completed under budget.

Officers recommend that these savings be considered as part of the 2026-27 Budget process for items such as a reduction in borrowings in future years, or to further asset-back the discretionary reserves.

**1.4 Lewis Park Detailed Design**

The adopted budget includes $630,000 for the detailed design of a Pavilion in 2025-26. Officers are recommending that this allocation be used to progress the design of Lewis Park which should

not only be viewed in the context of the existing use of the site but also as an overall long term strategic investment in the Knox Central Activity Centre, and the direction of successive Councils to redevelop Council's land in the heart of the Activity Centre.

It is also relevant to highlight that the amount of $630,000 for the design of Lewis Park is relative to the size and scale of the development proposed. A decision later to downsize or change to another site would mean a new design would need to be completed and this would be an additional cost.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement has been undertaken in the preparation of this report.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct social implications arising from this report.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not have any specific environmental or amenity issues for discussion.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The overall financial position as shown in the Amended Budget remains satisfactory with an improvement in the working capital ratio to 1.46 in the 2025-26 Amended Budget against 1.34 in the 2025-26 Adopted Budget.

The Amended Budget does not impact the indebtedness ratio, which remains below 60% as required to remain within the borrowings covenants.

**7. RISKS**

| Risk Identified | Risk Control |
|---|---|
| Indebtedness ratio goes above 60% and results in TCV recalling outstanding borrowings | • Continue to look for opportunities to reduce borrowings in future years<br>• Continue to monitor the ratio through the quarterly performance reports<br>• Continue to have a key focus on this ratio through the annual budget process<br>• The Adopted 2025-2035 Financial Plan has indebtedness below 60% across the 10-years |

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.1 - Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Amended Budget Financial Statements [**8.9.1** - 8 pages]

# Amended Budget
# Comprehensive Income Statement
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| Description | Notes | 2025/26 Adopted Budget $'000 | 2025/26 Amended Budget $'000 | Variance $'000 | Variance % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Income** | | | | | |
| Rates and charges | | 153,826 | 153,826 | - | 0.0% |
| User fees | | 13,677 | 13,677 | - | 0.0% |
| Statutory fees and charges | | 5,458 | 5,458 | - | 0.0% |
| Grants - operating | **1** | 19,651 | 20,482 | 831 | 4.2% |
| Grants - capital | **2** | 10,383 | 10,202 | (181) | -1.7% |
| Contributions - monetary | **3** | 5,000 | 5,076 | 76 | 1.5% |
| Contributions - non monetary | | 2,000 | 2,000 | - | 0.0% |
| Net (loss) gain on disposal of assets | **4** | 10,506 | 9,924 | (582) | -5.5% |
| Share of net profits (or loss) of associates and joint ventures | | 4 | 4 | - | 0.0% |
| Other income | | 1,803 | 1,803 | - | 0.0% |
| **Total Income** | | **222,308** | **222,452** | **144** | **0.1%** |
| | | | | | |
| **Expenses** | | | | | |
| Employee costs | | 77,377 | 77,377 | - | 0.0% |
| Materials and services | **5** | 77,100 | 80,165 | (3,065) | -4.0% |
| Contributions and Donations | **6** | 6,138 | 6,164 | (26) | -0.4% |
| Depreciation | **7** | 25,329 | 30,158 | (4,829) | -19.1% |
| Amortisation - intangible assets | **8** | 903 | 878 | 25 | 2.8% |
| Amortisation - right of use assets | | 1,176 | 1,176 | - | 0.0% |
| Borrowing costs | | 3,599 | 3,599 | - | 0.0% |
| Finance costs - leases | | 419 | 419 | - | 0.0% |
| Bad and doubtful debt - allowance for impairment loses | | 317 | 317 | - | 0.0% |
| Other expense | | 796 | 796 | - | 0.0% |
| **Total expenses** | | **193,154** | **201,049** | **(7,895)** | **-4.1%** |
| **Surplus/(Deficit)** | | **29,154** | **21,403** | **(7,751)** | **-26.6%** |
| **LESS** | | | | | |
| Grants - capital - non recurrent | | 7,700 | **7,519** | (181) | -2.4% |
| Contributions and donations - capital | | - | **76** | 76 | 0.0% |
| Contributions - non - monetary | | 2,000 | **2,000** | - | 0.0% |
| **Underlying Surplus (Defecit)** | | **19,454** | **11,808** | **(7,646)** | **-39.3%** |

# Amended Budget
# Comprehensive Income Statement
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| Notes: | | $'000 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Operating grants received in the 2024/25 financial year but unspent as at 30 June 2025; to be expended and recognised in the 2025/26 financial year | 788 |
| | Adjustment to Victorian Grants Commission General Purpose Grant based on actual 2025/26 funding allocation | 43 |
| 2 | Capital grants received in the 2024/25 financial year but unspent as at 30 June 2025; to be expended and recognised in the 2025/26 financial year<br>- the variance between the actual unearned capital grants and the budgeted figure | 337 |
| | Adjustment to Victorian Grants Commission Local Road Funding based on actual 2025/26 funding allocation | 55 |
| | Adjustment to capital grants due to the timing of receipt of the capital grants, together with the timing of the expending of capital grant | (865) |
| | LRCI grants receivable | 293 |
| 3 | Contributions receivable on capital projects | 76 |
| 4 | Disposal of land for Kingston Links and 566R Boronia Road | (582) |
| 5 | Expenditure to be incurred on operating grants received in 2024/25 financial year but unspent as at 30 June 2025 | (788) |
| | Waste services: $0.412 million to complete the kerbside reform bin lid change overs in 2025/26 and $0.435 million over collected in 2024/25 that will be applied to the 2026/27 Waste charge, resulting in a reduction | (847) |
| | Expenditure carried forward from 2024/25 to 2025/26 to complete capital projects. Expensing occurs where assets do not meet capitalisation requirements such as IT products that move from on premises to being in the cloud or painting of a building. | (940) |
| | Expenditure carried forward from 2024/25 into 2025/26 to complete projects | (490) |
| 6 | Expenditure carried forward from 2024/25 into 2025/26 to complete initiatives | (26) |
| 7 | Adjusted for updates in capital works program, and taking into account the net asset revaluation increment at year-end | (4,829) |
| 8 | Adjusted to reflect the final 2024/25 financial year result | 25 |

# Amended Budget
# Balance Sheet
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| | Notes | 2025/26 Adopted Budget $'000 | 2025/26 Amended Budget $'000 | Variance $'000 | Variance % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Current Assets** | | | | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | | 37,123 | 40,276 | 3,153 | 8.5% |
| Trade and other receivables | | 21,898 | 21,898 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Inventories | | 13 | 13 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Prepayments | | 1,408 | 1,408 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Other assets | | 2,460 | 2,460 | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total Current Assets** | **1** | **62,902** | **66,055** | **3,153** | **5.0%** |
| **Non-Current Assets** | | | | | |
| Investments in associates | | 2,810 | 2,990 | 180 | 6.4% |
| Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment | | 2,354,569 | 2,591,562 | 236,993 | 10.1% |
| Right-of-use assets | | 5,987 | 5,987 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Intangible assets | | 2,419 | 1,879 | (540) | -22.3% |
| **Total Non-Current Assets** | **2** | **2,365,785** | **2,602,418** | **236,633** | **10.0%** |
| **Total Assets** | | **2,428,687** | **2,668,473** | **239,786** | **9.9%** |
| **Current Liabilities** | | | | | |
| Trade and other payables | | 13,465 | 13,465 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Trust funds and deposits | | 2,690 | 2,690 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Provisions | | 19,518 | 17,760 | 1,758 | 9.0% |
| Interest-bearing loans and borrowings | | 10,336 | 10,336 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Lease liabilities | | 899 | 899 | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total Current Liabilities** | **3** | **46,908** | **45,150** | **1,758** | **3.7%** |
| **Current Non-Liabilities** | | | | | |
| Provisions | | 2,923 | 2,988 | (65) | -2.2% |
| Interest-bearing loans and borrowings | | 69,790 | 69,790 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Lease liabilities | | 5,365 | 5,365 | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total Current Non-Liabilities** | **4** | **78,078** | **78,143** | **(65)** | **0.1%** |
| **Total Liabilities** | | **124,986** | **123,293** | **1,693** | **-1.4%** |
| **Net Assets** | | **2,303,701** | **2,545,180** | **241,479** | **10.5%** |
| **Equity** | | | | | |
| Accumulated surplus | | 773,158 | 760,917 | (12,241) | -1.6% |
| Reserves | | 1,530,543 | 1,784,263 | 253,720 | 16.6% |
| **Total Equity** | **5** | **2,303,701** | **2,545,180** | **241,479** | **10.5%** |

# Amended Budget
# Balance Sheet
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| Notes: | | $'000 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Current asset items have been amended to reflect the final 2024/25 year result and adjustments reflected in the 2025/26 Amended Budget | 3,153 |
| 2 | Non-current assets items have been amended to reflect the final 2024/25 financial year result, and has taken into account the net asset revaluation increment of $253.0 million | 236,633 |
| 3 | Current liability provisions have been amended to reflect the final 2024/25 financial year result | 1,758 |
| 4 | Non-Current liability provisions have been amended to reflect the final 2024/25 financial year result | (65) |
| 5 | Movement in equity represents the difference in total assets and liabilities, and reflects Council's net worth to the City's ratepayers. The increase is primarily the result of revaluation movements | 241,479 |

# Amended Budget
# Statement of Cash flows
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| | Notes | 2025/26 Adopted Budget $'000 | 2025/26 Amended Budget $'000 | Variance $'000 | Variance % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cash Flows from Operating Activities** | | | | | |
| Rates and charges | | 153,411 | 156,380 | 2,969 | 1.9% |
| User fees | | 13,576 | 13,564 | (12) | -0.1% |
| Statutory fees and fines | | 5,415 | 5,410 | (5) | -0.1% |
| Grants - operating | | 19,651 | 19,694 | 43 | 0.2% |
| Grants - capital | | 6,468 | 5,951 | (517) | -8.0% |
| Contributions - monetary | | 5,000 | 5,076 | 76 | 1.5% |
| Interest received | | 950 | 950 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Other receipts | | 853 | 853 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Net movement in trust deposits | | 66 | - 259 | (325) | -492.4% |
| Employee costs | | (76,884) | (76,927) | (43) | 0.1% |
| Materials and services | | (77,237) | (88,461) | (11,224) | 14.5% |
| Contributions and donations | | (6,138) | (6,164) | (26) | 0.4% |
| Short-term, low value and variable lease payments | | (31) | (31) | 0 | 0.0% |
| Other payments | | (765) | (765) | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Net Cash Provided By / (Used In) Operating Activities** | **1** | **44,335** | **35,271** | **(9,064)** | **-20.4%** |
| **Cash Flows from Investing Activities** | | | | | |
| Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment | | 11,256 | 11,838 | 582 | 5.2% |
| Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment | | (52,645) | (54,885) | (2,240) | 4.3% |
| Proceeds from sale of investments | | 0 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 100% |
| **Net Cash Provided By / (Used In) Investing Activities** | **2** | **(41,389)** | **(40,547)** | **842** | **2.0%** |
| **Cash Flows from Financing Activities** | | | | | |
| Finance costs | | (3,625) | (3,641) | (16) | -0.4% |
| Proceeds from borrowings | | 6,000 | 6,000 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Repayment of borrowings | | (9,680) | (9,680) | 0 | 0.0% |
| Interest paid - lease liability | | (419) | (419) | 0 | 0.0% |
| Repayment of lease liabilities | | (1,031) | (1,031) | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Net Cash Provided By / (Used In) Financing Activities** | **3** | **(8,755)** | **(8,771)** | **(16)** | **0.2%** |
| **Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash Held** | **4** | (5,809) | (14,047) | (8,238) | 141.8% |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year | | 42,932 | 54,323 | 11,391 | -26.5% |
| **Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of Year** | | **37,123** | **40,276** | **3,153** | **8.5%** |

# Amended Budget
# Statement of Cash Flows
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| Notes: | | $'000 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Net cash provided/(used in) operating activities items have been amended to reflect the final 2024/24 year result, particularly the movement in trade debtors and creditors, and adjustments reflected in the 2025/26 Amended Budget | (9,064) |
| 2 | Net cash provided/(used in) investing activities items have been amended to reflect the final 2024/25 year result and adjustments reflected in the 2025/26 Amended Budget; including additional capital expenditure related to carry-forwards, non-current assets held for sale at year-end, and additional cash held in term deposits | 842 |
| 3 | Net cash provided/(used in) financing activities items have been amended to reflect the final 2024/25 year result and adjustments reflected in the 2025/26 Amended Budget | (16) |
| 4 | The net decrease in cash held variance is primarily resulting from carry-forwards where the cash was not spent in 2024/25 with expenditure now expected to be spent 2025/26, together with the movement in trade debtors and trade creditors | (8,238) |

# Amended Budget
# Statement of Capital Works
# for the year ended 30 June 2026

| Description | Notes | 2025/26 Adopted Budget $'000 | 2025/26 Amended Budget $'000 | Variance $'000 | Variance % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Land and Buildings | 1 | 16,322 | 17,202 | (880) | -5.4% |
| Plant, machinery and equipment | 2 | 1,949 | 2,584 | (635) | -32.6% |
| Computers and telecommunications | 3 | 5,341 | 7,329 | (1,988) | -37.2% |
| Artworks | | 210 | 210 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Roads | 4 | 9,307 | 9,486 | (179) | -1.9% |
| Bridges | | 973 | 973 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Footpaths and cycleways | 5 | 5,735 | 6,029 | (294) | -5.1% |
| Drainage | 6 | 4,868 | 4,761 | 107 | 2.2% |
| Recreational, leisure and community facilities | 7 | 10,721 | 9,812 | 909 | 8.5% |
| Off street car parks | 8 | 1,616 | 1,397 | 219 | 13.6% |
| Other infrastructure | 9 | 803 | 1,242 | (439) | -54.7% |
| **Total Capital Works Expenditure** | | **57,845** | **61,025** | **(3,180)** | **-5.5%** |
| **Represented by** | | | | | |
| Asset renewal | | 39,318 | 38,830 | 488 | 1.2% |
| Asset upgrade | | 17,270 | 19,571 | (2,301) | -13.3% |
| Asset new | | 1,227 | 2,594 | (1,367) | -111.4% |
| Asset expansion | | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total Capital Works Expenditure** | | **57,845** | **61,025** | **(3,180)** | **-5.5%** |
| **LESS Operating Projects Expenditure** | | 5,200 | 6,140 | 940 | -18.1% |
| **Net Capital works (capitalised expendture excluding operating projects expenditure)** | | **52,645** | **54,885** | **(2,240)** | **-4.3%** |

Notes have been provided detailing the adjustments to the projects where there has been movements from the Adopted Budget, together with the primary reason for the amendment

**Reason Codes**

CF: Project carried-forward as works not completed/started in the 2024/25 financial year

MY: Multi-year project timing difference

## Amended Budget
## Statement of Capital Works
## for the year ended 30 June 2026

| Notes | Project Name | 2025/26 Adopted Budget $'000 | 2025/26 Amended Budget $'000 | Variance $'000 | Reason Code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Park Ridge Reserve - Pavilion Refurbishment | 1,268 | 1,770 | 502 | MY |
| | Tormore Reserve - Facility Redevelopment | 4,861 | 5,322 | 461 | MY |
| | Update to Family and Children Service Facilities Signage | 0 | 27 | 27 | CF |
| | Community Toilet Replacement Program | 430 | 580 | 150 | CF |
| | Community Facilities Signage Upgrades | 0 | 66 | 66 | CF |
| | Early Years Hubs - Playspace Works | 0 | 300 | 300 | CF |
| | Carrington Park - Pavilion Upgrade | 1,000 | 1,180 | 180 | MY |
| | Building Renewal Program | 5,515 | 4,709 | (806) | CF |
| 2 | Plant & Machinery Replacement Program | 1,949 | 2,584 | 635 | CF |
| 3 | Computers and Telecommunications | 5,341 | 7,328 | 1,987 | MY |
| 4 | Chandler Road, Boronia - Road Renewal | 440 | 611 | 171 | CF |
| | Wyandra Way, Rowville - Local Area Traffic Management | 0 | 8 | 8 | CF |
| 5 | Green Spine Corridor - Shared Path, Chandler Road, Boronia | 200 | 485 | 285 | CF |
| | Macauley Place, Bayswater - Shared Path | 256 | 481 | 225 | CF |
| | Mountain Highway, The Basin - Footpath, between Wicks Rd and Claremont Ave | 0 | 250 | 250 | CF |
| | Footpath Renewal Program | 3,730 | 3,264 | (466) | CF |
| 6 | Forest Road to Koolunga Reserve, Ferntree Gully - Wetland | 206 | 349 | 143 | CF |
| | 193 Forest Rd, Boronia - Flood Mitigation Works | 0 | 52 | 52 | CF |
| | Liberty Avenue Reserve - Wetland/Harvesting System | 50 | 443 | 393 | CF |
| | Drainage Renewal Program | 4,092 | 3,398 | (694) | CF |
| 7 | Wantirna Reserve, Wantirna - Masterplan Implementation | 1,125 | 1,261 | 136 | CF |
| | Gilbert Park Skate Park Extension | 843 | 600 | (243) | CF |
| | Seniors Exercise Parks | 0 | 252 | 252 | CF |
| | Llewellyn Reserve Dirt Bike Jumps | 0 | 42 | 42 | CF |
| | Playground Renewal Program | 2,413 | 1,317 | (1,096) | CF |
| 8 | Car Parks Renewal Program | 984 | 765 | (219) | CF |
| 9 | Knox Leisureworks Strategic Review | 0 | 315 | 315 | CF |
| | Stud Road - Onroad Bicycle Facilities | 0 | 24 | 24 | CF |
| | Boronia Basketball Stadium Demolition | 0 | 100 | 100 | CF |

# 8.10 Infrastructure Capital Works Program Annual Report 2024-25

| | |
|---|---|
| **Final Report Destination:** | Council |
| **Paper Type:** | For Noting |
| **Author:** | Coordinator Capital Works Planning, John Bixby |
| **Manager:** | Manager Strategic Infrastructure, Matthew Hanrahan |
| **Executive:** | Director, Infrastructure, Grant Thorne |

**SUMMARY**
This report provides an update on the delivery outcomes of the 2024/25 Infrastructure Capital Works Program. A total of 157 projects and renewal programs were scheduled for delivery. Of these, 133 projects (85 per cent) have been completed or remain on schedule, while 24 projects are behind schedule. The amended program budget was $67.79 million, with expenditure of $55.04 million.

Key highlights from the program include an investment of $6.9 million across 419 community building renewal projects and $9.1 million directed to improvements in Council's network of local roads. A further $5.4 million was allocated to the major upgrade at the Knox Athletics Track, and $4.1 million was invested in footpath and shared path improvements. Environmental outcomes were also achieved through the creation of new wetlands at Gilbert Park and Egan Lee Reserve, and the conversion of 1,657 major road streetlights to energy-efficient LED technology.

Program performance reflects strong delivery outcomes and effective financial management. Asset renewal achieved a 98 per cent completion rate, with 95 per cent of the budget expended. Overall project delivery indicates that 84.7 per cent of projects and programs have been completed or remain on schedule, with project expenditure reaching 81.2 per cent of the amended budget. Both delivery performance and expenditure outcomes continue to demonstrate steady improvement since 2021.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council receive and note the Infrastructure Capital Works Annual Report for 2024/25.

**1. DISCUSSION**
The Capital Works Program is the largest service Council delivers to the Knox community, with more than $55 million invested into community infrastructure improvements during 2024/25. This investment was supported by grant funding from state and federal government or third parties (i.e. State Sporting Associations), which accounted for $7.04 million of the total expenditure figure. These improvements support the extensive range of services provided by Council, as well as programs delivered by local community groups and volunteers.

The attachment to this report 'Capital Works Annual Report 2024-25', provides a succinct report of performance and successful achievements for the 2024-25 Capital Works Program, noting this report includes only infrastructure related projects.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

Communication and decision making is aided by monthly progress briefings with the Executive Leadership Team and regular liaison with Program and Delivery Coordinators. Council is provided with a Capital Works Status report as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As with other levels of Government, Council's commitment to its investment in the Capital Works program has economic benefits through the provision of both direct and indirect employment opportunities for local businesses and the local community. Council's ongoing investment in capital works continues to enhance the social fabric across Knox through the direct provision of community infrastructure and the services they support.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

The subject of this report has been considered in the context of climate change and its relevance to the Knox Climate Response Plan 2021 – 2031. Implementation of the projects will positively impact upon Council's exposure to climate risks through adoption of a long-term strategic approach to infrastructure provision.

Council officers will continue to source opportunities to procure recycled content in construction materials and participate in and monitors trials of new recycled and reclaimed materials.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Through the introduction of Council's Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure Policy in 2019, Council has the ability to reduce its consumption of valuable natural resources. The reduction in consumption has a longer lasting effect in that it will reduce Council's operating costs into the future, reduce carbon emissions, protect local waterways and biodiversity values, reduce the use of potable drinking water and assist in Council delivering on many of its established strategies. Council is also progressing trials for the specification and use of recycled materials in both road and shared path projects.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The infrastructure capital works projects are funded as part of the broader Capital Works Program approved by the Council. On 24 June 2024 Council adopted its 2024/25 Annual Budget, which included the Capital works Program. The amended budget included a total Capital Works Program of $67.79 million allocated for infrastructure works. Out of 157 infrastructure projects, 133 were either completed or initiated in 2024/25. Several projects were still ongoing at the end of the year and will continue into 2025/26. Financially, $55.04 million was spent, accounting for 81.2% of the amended Infrastructure Capital Budget for 2024/25.

**7. RISKS**

A potential risk for the Council's Capital Works Program is the ineffective management and monitoring of the program, coupled with insufficient communication to stakeholders.
To mitigate these risks Council's performance in Capital Works is regularly assessed through internal audits focusing on project management practices and opportunities for program delivery improvements and quarterly reporting to Council. Risks to capital projects can arise from market conditions, leading to underperforming assets that require additional investment, or from project failures resulting in cost overruns or delivery variances. The objective of this report is to offer an

overview of achievements within the Council's Capital Program for the financial year, and to communicate the context of outcomes.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**

Strategy 1.1 - A variety of transport options is available through the effective planning, advocacy and management of efficient, active, sustainable and accessible transport modes, particularly in growth locations.
Strategy 1.2 - Our community can access diverse training and life-long learning opportunities through delivery, promotion and partnerships with relevant organisations.
Strategy 1.3 - Local businesses and our economy are strong and resilient and there are increased employment opportunities through development, attracting investment, embracing technology and innovation, and advocacy.

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**

Strategy 2.1 - Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.

**Caring for and enhancing our environment**

Strategy 3.1 - Our environment is healthy and sustainable by considering environmental factors when planning for and making decisions.
Strategy 3.2 - Green spaces and waterways are protected, enhanced and enjoyed through planning, promotion and maintenance of our built and natural environment.

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.1 - Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.
Strategy 4.2 - Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.
Strategy 4.5 - Council is financially sustainable through long-term strategic, financial and asset planning, and the responsible prioritisation, allocation and use of resources.

**Being a strong voice for safety**

Strategy 5.1 - Our community feels safer in public spaces and facilities through planning, maintenance, education, design and proactive program delivery for Council owned and managed spaces and via advocacy for others.

**Planning our future city**

Strategy 6.2 - High quality, integrated community services and facilities are available through the planning, design and maintenance of multifunctional places that promote connection and utilisation.
Strategy 6.3 - Our evolving neighbourhoods are liveable and sustainable through planning and design that responds to population growth and our community's changing needs.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Capital Works Annual Report 2024 25 [**8.10.1** - 34 pages]

# Capital Works Program

## 2024-2025 Annual Report



Knox Athletics Track upgrades
Knox Park, Knoxfield

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LANDOWNERS

Knox City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land in Knox. The Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities come from a variety of different nations within Australia including the Torres Strait, the Traditional Custodians and Stolen Generation. As such, we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's histories.

Located at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, Knox has many places of historic significance to the Kulin Nation. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the traditional knowledge of First Nations peoples and the traumatic stories of colonisation. Reconciliation and truth telling are inseparable when healing and relationships are the goal. Deep listening to the stories of the dreaming, cultures, histories and the impact of colonisation on First Peoples and Country is the first step in understanding, respect, relationships and healing.

The journey ahead for Knox involves the land, the Traditional Custodians, the local First Peoples communities, and the wider community. Walking together and listening together to create a culturally safe and culturally rich community for all.

**Woi-wurrung language used with permission of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation*

# CONTENTS


| | |
|---|---|
| **Summary** | **4** |
| **About the capital works program** | **5** |
| **Project delivery performance** | **7** |
| **Financial performance** | **8** |
| **Expenditure breakdown** | **9** |
| **Highlights** | **10** |
| **Photo gallery** | **12** |
| **Project and renewal program listing and status** | **18** |
| **Observations: challenges and trends** | **29** |
| **Lessons learned** | **30** |
| **Historical capital works program performance** | **31** |
| **Asset renewal program – key performance measures** | **32** |
| **Asset condition data and renewal status** | **33** |

## SUMMARY

### HIGHLIGHTS

- $6.9m invested across 419 community building renewal projects.
- $9.1m invested into Council's network of local roads.
- $5.4m invested into a major upgrade at Knox Athletics Track.
- $4.1m invested into footpath and shared path improvements.
- New wetlands created at Gilbert Park and Egan Lee Reserve.
- 1,657 major road streetlights converted to energy-efficient LEDs.

### PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

**Asset Renewal: 98% completion rate and 95% budget expenditure**

Exceeded or achieved both targets, reflecting strong delivery and fiscal discipline.

**Project Delivery: 84.7% of projects/programs completed or on schedule.**

| Key Metric | Result |
|---|---|
| **Total Projects and Renewal Programs:** | 157 |
| **Projects Completed or On Schedule:** | 133 (85%) |
| **Projects Behind Schedule:** | 24 (15%) |

**Project Expenditure: 81.2% of amended budget expended.**

Steady improvement in both project delivery and budget expenditure since 2021.

### OBSERVATIONS

- Delays from third-party approvals, contractor shortages, and weather.
- Increased delivery complexity due to accelerated grant timelines.
- Opportunities identified to mitigate risk and improve scoping and early-stage design.

## ABOUT THE CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM

The Capital Works Program is the largest service Council delivers to the Knox community, with more than **$55 million** invested into community infrastructure improvements during 2024-25. This investment was supported by grant funding from state and federal government or third parties (i.e. State Sporting Associations), which accounted for $7.04 million of the total expenditure figure. These improvements support the extensive range of services provided by Council, as well as programs delivered by local community groups and volunteers.

Enhancing community infrastructure is vital to fostering economic growth, improving quality of life, and ensuring community safety and wellbeing. Investment in high-quality roads, paths, buildings, sporting facilities, open spaces, wetlands and waterways, public art, and playgrounds directly benefits those who live, work, study, and play in Knox. It also improves access to essential services and supports stronger community connections. Ensuring these infrastructure improvements align with best-practice environmental and water management and broader sustainability principles is a key priority.

Before projects or renewal programs were included in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program, they must have demonstrated a clear community need and aligned with one or more of the following Key Directions listed within the **2021-31 Community Plan** and **2021-25 Council Plan**.

### Opportunity and innovation

Knox strives to be a city of opportunity, embracing innovation and change, and providing local learning and employment opportunities for all. It's a place where people and business can thrive.

### Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure

Building on what's great about our city, Knox's housing and infrastructure will meet the changing needs of our community.

### Natural environment and sustainability

Knox's natural environment is protected and enhanced to ensure sustainability for future generations.

### Connection, resilience and wellbeing

Knox is a place to call home. Our community is strong, healthy and we support and respect each other.

### Civic engagement and integrity

Knox Council is a trusted and respected leader in our community, acting appropriately and ensuring all voices are heard.

Upon alignment being demonstrated, proposed projects or renewal programs were considered for inclusion within the Capital Works Program as part of Council's annual budget process.

When preparing Council's Capital Works Program as part of the annual budget process, funding priorities were allocated in the following order, in accordance with Council's Funding Allocation Policy.




Once included within the Capital Works Program, all projects and renewal programs were planned and delivered in line with relevant Council strategies, policies, and procedures. This includes consideration of universal design (UD), environmentally sustainable design (ESD), crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), water sensitive urban design (WSUD), compliance with Australian and regulatory standards, sound governance, and other relevant planning frameworks.

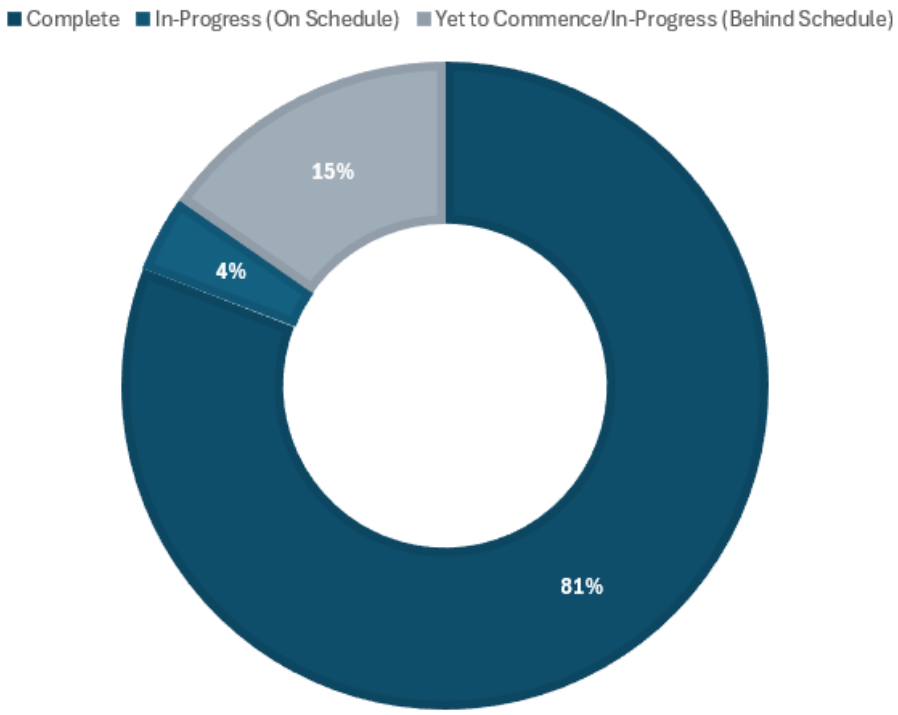
This report outlines the progress of all 2024-25 Capital Works projects and renewal programs (excluding Information Technology projects), provides a financial summary of the Program, identifies key challenges and emerging trends, and offers insights into asset condition and future renewal needs.

## PROJECT DELIVERY PERFORMANCE

The 2024-25 Capital Works Program comprised a total of 157 specific items, including 118 stand-alone projects and 39 renewal programs (excluding Information Technology projects).

Examples of these renewal programs include the Road Resurfacing Renewal Program, which delivered 66 individual small-to-medium scale road resurfacing projects across Council's local road network, and the Building Renewals Program, which encompassed 419 small-to-medium scale renewal projects across Council's extensive portfolio of community buildings. Overall, 1,090 small-to-medium scale projects were completed through the 39 renewal programs in 2024-25.

Of these 157 specific items within the 2024-25 Capital Works Program, 81% were completed within the financial year and a further 4% of multi-year projects remained on schedule, with completion anticipate during 2025-26. The remaining 15% of projects were behind schedule.




Further details on the status of each project and renewal program within Council's 2024-25 Capital Works Program are provided in the *Project and Renewal Program Listing and Status* section of this report.

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

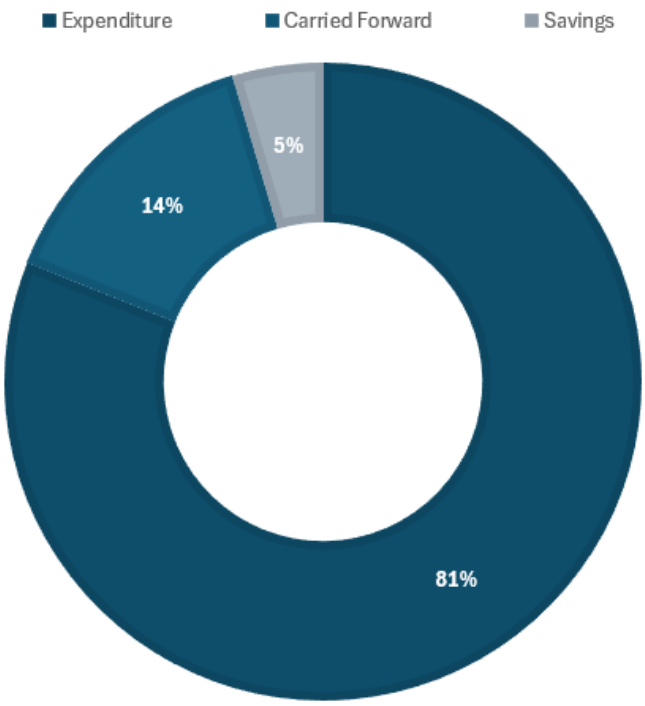
On 24 June 2024 Council adopted its 2024-25 Annual Budget, which included the Capital Works Program. Numerous budget amendments occurred throughout the 2024-25 financial year due to, among other reasons, the awarding of grant funding, financial contributions from sporting clubs or community groups, insurance payments and developer contributions being received.

The most significant budget amendment occurred on 16 September 2024 when Council resolved to carry forward $8,207,333 into the 2025-26 budget to fund four sporting pavilion upgrade projects. This consisted of:

- $3,359,779 – Carrington Park Pavilion Upgrade
- $1,000,000 – Park Ridge Reserve Pavilion Upgrade
- $1,985,000 – Tormore Reserve Pavilion Upgrade
- $1,862,554 – Wally Tew Reserve Pavilion Upgrade

Collectively, following these amendments, the capital works program budget in 2024-25 was amended to $67,794,377.

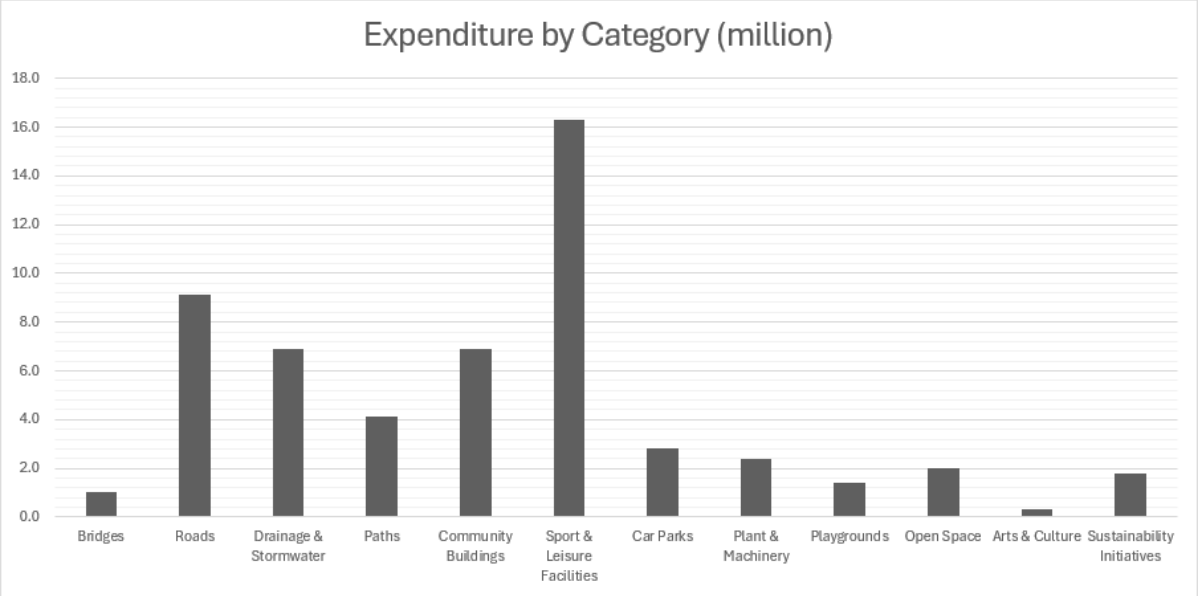
As summarised in the graph below, 81% of the amended budget was expended across all projects within the 2024-25 capital works program, with 14% carried-forward.



## EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN

The infographic and chart below provide an overview of capital works expenditure distribution across all major infrastructure categories for 2024-25. This expenditure includes all Council and external funding sources (i.e. income received via grants, sporting club and/or community contributions, developer contributions, etc.).



## HIGHLIGHTS

Key highlights from the 2024-25 Capital Works Program included:



### ROAD NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS

$9.1 million invested into improvements to Council's road network and supporting infrastructure.

### COMMUNITY BUILDINGS RENEWAL

$6.9 million invested into improvements to Council's community buildings network, including community centres, sporting pavilions, community halls, and family and children's services.





### KNOX ATHLETICS TRACK UPGRADES

New and upgraded track surface, track lighting, shade sails, and field event infrastructure. Total project investment was $5.4 million.

### PATH NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS

$4.1 million invested into improvements to Council's extensive footpath and shared (bicycle) path networks.



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### NEW WETLANDS

New wetlands established at Gilbert Park (pictured) and Egan Lee Reserve. These wetlands will provide opportunities for the community to recreate and provide new habitat for local wildlife, whilst also improving Council's drainage network.

### UPGRADED CRICKET FACILITIES

Major upgrades to the cricket training facilities at Fairpark Reserve (pictured), Windermere Reserve and Marie Wallace Bayswater Oval.





### LEWIS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

New wetlands and walking paths, an upgraded sportsfield (Oval No. 2) and new energy-efficient sportsfield lighting.

### LED STREETLIGHT REPLACEMENTS

Conversion and upgrade of 1,657 energy-efficient LED streetlights on major roads.



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## PHOTO GALLERY

Including renewal programs, approximately 1,200 projects of varying scale were delivered by Council as part of the 2024-25 Capital Works Program. Some examples are provided below.



### NEW BIKE REPAIR STATIONS

New Bike Repair Station at Marie Wallace Bayswater Park, Bayswater – one of five new installations throughout Knox.

### NEW SYNTHETIC TURF SOCCER FIELD

New Synthetic Turf Soccer Field at Egan Lee Reserve in Knoxfield.





### NEW TENNIS COURT LIGHTING

New energy-efficient Tennis Court Lighting to Courts 1 to 6 at Knox City Tennis Club in Wantirna South.

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**NEW PLANT & MACHINERY**

High Pressure Drain Jetting Truck – one of 63 items purchased through the Plant, Machinery & Vehicle Renewal Program






**CAR PARK UPGRADE**

Carpark Upgrade, including new energy-efficient lighting, at Egan Lee Reserve in Knoxfield.

**NEW WETLANDS**

New Wetland at Egan Lee Reserve in Knoxfield





**CAR PARK UPGRADE**

Carpark Upgrade and Extension at Knox Park (Soccer Facility) in Knoxfield.

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**NEW CHANGEROOMS**

New Modular Changerooms and Amenities at Park Ridge Reserve in Rowville.





**ROAD RENEWAL**

Road Renewal of Templeton Road and (some associated intersections) in Wantirna.

**FLOOD MITIGATION**

Flood Mitigation Improvements at Cardiff Street in Boronia.





**WANTIRNA RESERVE UPGRADES**

Masterplan Implementation (in progress) at Wantirna Reserve in Wantirna – including new dog park, playground and stormwater management improvements.

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**BAYSWATER OVAL CRICKET NETS**

New Cricket Training Facility at Marie Wallace Bayswater Oval in Bayswater.





**ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

New Access Ramp at Boronia Progress Hall in Boronia.

**ROAD RECONSTRUCTION**

Road Reconstruction of Station Street in Ferntree Gully.





**PLAYGROUND RENEWAL**

Playground Renewal at Sovereign Crest Reserve in Rowville.

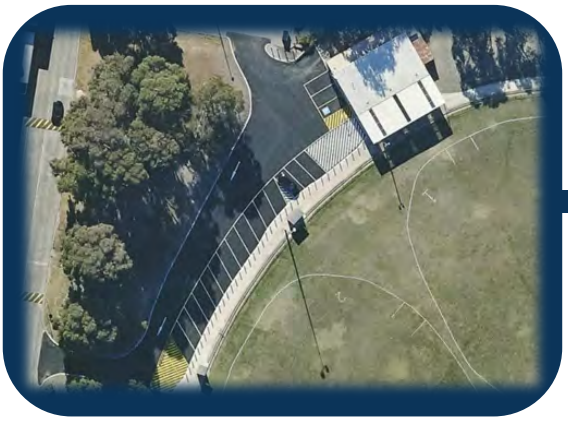
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**SCHULTZ RESERVE IMPROVEMENTS**

Landscape Plan Implementation at Schultz Reserve in Wantirna – including new playground, paths and park furniture.





**CARPARK UPGRADE**

Carpark Upgrade at Stud Park Reserve in Rowville.

**NEW ARTWORK IN BORONIA**

New Lanternz Sculptures along Erica Avenue in Boronia.





**ENERGY EFFICIENT BUILDING**

New Solar Panels & Batteries at Knox Outer Eastern Foodshare (Templeton Orchards) in Wantirna.

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**NEW WATER TANK MURAL**

New Tank Mural at Marie Wallace Bayswater Park in Bayswater.





**STORMWATER POND RENEWAL**

Stormwater Pond Renewal at Bergins Road Bushland Reserve in Rowville.

**BRIDGE RENEWAL**

Bridge Renewal at Reta Matthews Reserve/Hazelwood Road in Boronia.





**OPEN SPACE REVEGETATION**

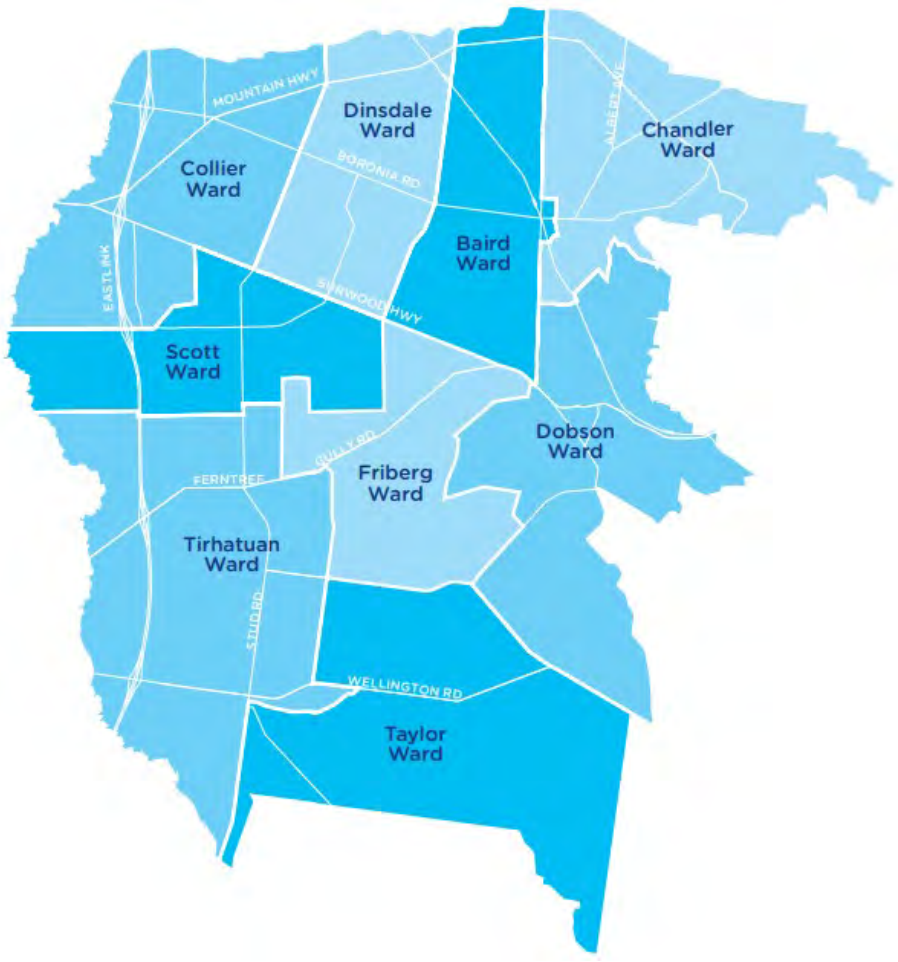
11,748m$^2$ of Revegetation (13,000+ new indigenous plants) throughout Knox's open space areas.

## PROJECT & RENEWAL PROGRAM LISTING AND STATUS

The following table provides a status update (as of 30 June 2025) for each project or renewal program (excluding Information Technology projects) included in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program. It also includes Ward locations, which correspond to the Knox municipal map shown below.

Of the 157 projects/renewal programs within the Program, 133 were either completed or are in-progress and deemed on schedule, with the remaining 24 in-progress but deemed behind schedule. Definitions of each category are provided below.

| | |
|---|---|
| ● | **Completed/In-Progress (On Schedule)** – Projects completed or multi-year projects where construction was planned to commence in 2024-25 and continue in 2025-26. |
| ● | **In-Progress (Behind Schedule)** – Projects where construction was planned to commence and be completed in 2024-25, however this did not occur. |



| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **193 Forest Road, Boronia – Stormwater Upgrades**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Site investigations and detailed design complete. Works commenced in May 2025 however delays were experienced due to latent site conditions, tree removal and unplanned asphalt works. Works expected to be completed by end-July 2025. | Chandler | 🔴 |
| **Acacia Road – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Dobson | 🟢 |
| **Access Key Plans for Early Years Centres**<br>Project Closed – Following Council's decision to change the delivery of this service to a private provider (as of January 2025), responsibility for these works now rests with the service provider. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Agora Boulevard Traffic Treatment (Burke Road to Wattletree Road)**<br>Project Closed – Community consultation with residents is complete. The treatment proposed was not supported by residents and the project was removed from the New & Upgrade Program. | Baird | 🟢 |
| **All Indoor Leisure Sites Security Upgrades (Scope & Design)**<br>Complete. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Ambleside Homestead Upgrade Review**<br>Complete. | Dobson | 🟢 |
| **Artwork Renewal Program**<br>Completed 14 small scale projects. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Asbestos Removal Program**<br>Completed 21 small scale projects. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Bicycle and Shared Path Renewal Program**<br>Completed 10 small to medium scale projects. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Bike Repair Stations**<br>Completed five small scale projects. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Billoo Renovations to provide additional licenced spaces**<br>Project Closed – Following Council's decision to change the delivery of this service to a private provider (as of January 2025), responsibility for these works now rests with the service provider. | Collier | 🟢 |
| **Borg Crescent – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | 🟢 |
| **Boronia Basketball Stadium Demolition**<br>Complete – demolition of the building completed in June 2025. The site will remain closed until September 2025 whilst turf re-establishment occurs. | Baird | 🟢 |
| **Boronia Park Retarding Basin – Flood Management Works**<br>In Progress (deferred to a future year) – High-level flood modelling has been completed. Further investigation and modelling of the flood mitigation options prepared is required. This is best to occur running parallel with development of the future Boronia Park Precinct Plan (year to be confirmed). | Baird | 🔴 |
| **Boronia Progress Hall – Access Ramp**<br>Complete. | Baird | 🟢 |
| **Brenock Park Drive Footpath and Bus Stop Works (Design)**<br>In Progress (deferred to a future year) – Site investigations have been completed, and the project scope has been confirmed. Consultation with the Department of Transport & Planning (DTP) and Public Transport Victoria (PTV) remains ongoing and the design will be finalised in future, upon approvals from both external parties being obtained. Upon finalisation of the design, the construction stage will be considered as part of the 2026-27 budget process. | Dobson | 🔴 |
| **Bridges Renewal Program**<br>Completed 18 small to medium scale projects. Awaiting approval from Melbourne Water to construct the new shared path bridge at Colliers Reserve. | Various | 🟢 |
| **Building Code Australia Compliance Program**<br>Completed 108 small scale projects. | Various | 🟢 |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Building Renewal Program**<br>Completed 419 small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Cardiff Street – Flood Mitigation Works**<br>Complete. | Baird | |
| **Carpark Renewal Program**<br>Completed two large scale projects. | Various | |
| **Carrington Park – Pavilion Upgrade (Design)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Completion of the design and tender documentation is anticipated to occur by December 2025. The design process was delayed due to a secondary tender process being required to appoint an architect, and finalisation of the sportsfield layout which determined the number of changerooms/amenities provided. | Friberg | |
| **Carrington Park Leisure Centre – Squash Courts**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Carrington Park – Stormwater Harvesting Upgrade**<br>Yet to Commence (deferred to a future year) – This project was deferred and is proposed to be incorporated into the Sportsfield Upgrade & Realignment project that is earmarked to occur in 2026-27. There are strong synergies between these two projects, and it was determined that it is more cost effective and less impactful on stakeholders to undertake the works at the same time. | Friberg | |
| **Carrington Park (Tennis/Scouts) – Carpark Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Chandler Road – Road Reconstruction (Construction Year 1 of 2)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – This multi-year project was combined with the Green Spine Corridor (Chandler Road) project to improve efficiency. Community engagement process is complete. A contractor has been appointed and works commenced in January 2025. Delays are due to limited daytime working hour conditions applied by VicRoads, with a large portion of works needing to occur during non-peak times (at night and on weekends). Completion expected in November 2025. | Chandler | |
| **Community Facilities Signage – Upgrades**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – scoping and design completed for signage at Marie Wallace Bayswater Park, H.V. Jones Reserve and Rowville Men's Shed. Installation across all sites will be completed by late 2025. | Various | |
| **Community Planning to Support Boronia Railway Station Development**<br>Complete – Workshops, meetings with the Department of Transport & Planning (DTP) and consultation with the Level Crossing Removal Project Alliance occurred throughout the year. Additional planning activities will occur as required ahead of development occurring in future. | Baird | |
| **Community Toilet Replacement Program – Upper Ferntree Gully**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Concept design completed. Detailed design and building permit processes are progressing. Works set to commence in September 2025, with completion expected in late 2025. Delay due to the planning permit process, which was complicated by the land being owned by VicTrack and a prolonged approval process. | Dobson | |
| **Coonara Community House Education Centre – Bathroom Sinks**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Cricket Run-Up and Goal Square Renewal Works**<br>Completed 14 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Cultural Venues Accessibility Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Various | |
| **Cypress Avenue Footpath (east side between 37 Cypress Avenue and Boronia Road)**<br>Complete. | Baird | |
| **Drainage Pit and Pipe Renewal Program**<br>Completed approximately 100 small to medium scale projects. | Various | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Early Years Facilities - Landscaping Upgrades Program**<br>Complete. | Various | |
| **Early Years Hubs – OHS Playspace Works (Scoping)**<br>Complete. | Various | |
| **Egan Lee Reserve – Carpark Extension**<br>Complete. | Scott | |
| **Egan Lee Reserve – Top Oval Renewal**<br>Complete. | Scott | |
| **Egan Lee Reserve – Wetland Construction**<br>Complete. | Scott | |
| **Eildon Parade, Rowville – LATM Treatment**<br>Complete. | Taylor | |
| **Electronic Entry to Sporting Pavilions Program**<br>Completed one small scale project. | Various | |
| **Energy Performance Contract Implementation**<br>Complete. | Various | |
| **Energy Retrofits for Community Buildings Program**<br>Completed 12 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **EV Charging Stations in Council Facilities (for fleet charging)**<br>Complete. | Various | |
| **Fairpark Reserve – Cricket Net Renewal**<br>Complete. | Baird | |
| **Fairpark Reserve - Pavilion Upgrade (incorporating U3A extension)**<br>Complete – The installation of three small shade sails in front of the sporting pavilion, and the landscaping improvements are complete. Site wayfinding signage has been ordered, and installation will occur in July 2025. The future installation of the remaining larger shade sail continues to be investigated and remains subject to South East Water approval due to underground services. | Baird | |
| **Ferntree Gully Road Shared Path (O'Connor Road and Henderson Road)**<br>Project Closed – Community consultation with residents is complete. The required approval to use private land for a public shared path was not obtained from the landowners and the associated body corporate. The landowners and the body corporate will be re-engaged when this section of Ferntree Gully Road is scheduled for a shared path project, in accordance with the Knox Cycling Action Plan. This is currently earmarked to be scoped in 2027-28. | Friberg | |
| **Flood Mitigation Upgrade Works – Reactive Complaints Program**<br>Completed 10 small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Food Act Compliance – Kitchen Retrofitting Program**<br>Completed one medium scale project. | Various | |
| **Footpath Renewal Program**<br>Completed eight small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Francis Crescent Community Building – Stage 1 of Rear Garden Works**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Future Project Design (Stormwater Upgrades)**<br>Completed 20 small scale projects. | Various | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Gilbert Park – Masterplan Implementation (Stage 3)**<br>Yet to Commence (carried into 2025-26) – This project was placed on hold whilst a significant grant was sought from State Government (Sport & Recreation Victoria). Funding of $250,000 was awarded in June 2025. Works will occur between October and December 2025, utilising a combination of Council and State Government funding. | Friberg | |
| **Gilbert Park – Wetland Construction**<br>Complete | Friberg | |
| **Gilmour Park – Shade Shelter**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Grayson Drive – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Green Spine Corridor (Chandler Road)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – This 2024-25 project was combined with the Chandler Road Reconstruction project to improve efficiency. Community engagement process is complete. A contractor has been appointed and works commenced in January 2025. Delays are due to extremely limited daytime work hour conditions applied by VicRoads, with a large portion of works needing to occur during non-peak times (at night and on weekends). Completion expected in November 2025. | Chandler | |
| **H.V. Jones Reserve Community Hall – Accessible Toilet (Design)**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **H.V. Jones Reserve Community Room – Accessible Bathroom (Design)**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Hakea Place – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Harley Street North – Road Reconstruction**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Harold Street On-road Bicycle Facilities**<br>Complete. | Collier | |
| **Hartington Drive – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Collier | |
| **High Risk Road Failures Program**<br>Completed 17 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **High Street Road Bus Stop Connections**<br>In Progress (deferred to a future year) – Site investigations and design have been completed. Consultation with the Department of Transport & Planning (DTP) has concluded and design approval has been obtained. The construction stage will be considered as part of the 2026-27 budget process, after landowner consent from Parks Victoria has been obtained. | Collier | |
| **Kenross Court – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Collier | |
| **Kevin Avenue, Ferntree Gully Flood Investigation**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Kings Park Reserve – Masterplan Implementation**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Design complete and dog park works have commenced on site in May 2025. This project was paused whilst a significant grant was sought from State Government (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action). Co-funding of $300,000 was awarded in March 2025. Anticipated completion is September 2025, with a lawn establishment period of 4-6 weeks required before opening in spring 2025. | Dobson | |
| **Kings Park Reserve – Stormwater Harvesting Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Knox Athletics Track – Lighting Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Knox Athletics Track – New Shade Structures**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Knox Athletics Track Renewal & Upgrades**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Knox BMX Track Renewal Works**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Knox Central (Former Operations Centre)**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Knox City Tennis Club – Carpark Upgrade (Design)**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Knox City Tennis Club – LED Court Lighting Upgrades**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Knox Gardens Reserve – Cricket Net Renewal (Design)**<br>Complete. | Scott | |
| **Knox Hockey Facility Development**<br>Complete. | Collier | |
| **Knox Leisureworks Strategic Review**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Stage 1 of this project (technical assessment and facility audit) commenced in May 2025 and is progressing well. Completion of this stage is expected in September 2025. Following this, Stage 2 (feasibility assessment) will commence, with an earmarked completion in early-2026. | Baird | |
| **Knox Park – Carpark Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Knox Regional Netball Centre – Indoor Court Line Marking**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Knox Regional Netball Centre – Outdoor Court Renewals**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Knox Regional Netball Centre – Wayfinding Signage**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Knox Skate & BMX Park – Carpark Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Lakesfield Reserve – Cricket Net Renewal (Design)**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Lakesfield Reserve – Landscape Plan**<br>Project Closed – An assessment on the playground infrastructure was undertaken to determine current condition and remaining life. The assessment highlighted the existing infrastructure has at least 10 years remaining life and does not need to be renewed or upgraded. Maintenance undertaken has prolonged the lifespan of this asset. This project will be removed from the Renewal Program and re-considered in future. Condition assessments will continue to occur annually to identify any changes to asset condition and if reprioritisation is required. | Dobson | |
| **Lewis Park – Masterplan Implementation (Stage 1 - Waterways)**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Lewis Park Oval No. 2 – Floodlighting Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Lewis Park Oval No. 2 – Sportsfield Renewal**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Liberty Avenue Reserve – Wetland/Harvesting System**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Further feasibility has been undertaken, and the design and cost estimate have been finalised. A grant opportunity was identified through Melbourne Water and a submission seeking a $350,000 contribution towards the project was sought which delayed works commencing. The grant submission was ultimately unsuccessful. Works earmarked to be completed in early-2026. | Taylor | |
| **Llewellyn Reserve Dirt Jump Facility (Design and Construct)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Community consultation has commenced. Site investigations, concept designs and cost estimates will be obtained by September 2025. Construction of the project will be considered as part of the 2026-27 Budget process. | Scott | |
| **Lupton Way – Future Public Art Lighting**<br>Complete. | Baird | |
| **Macauley Place, Bayswater - Shared Safety Zone (Detailed Design and Construction Year 1 of 2)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Site investigations, extensive community consultation and design processes are complete. No objections were received. Works are expected to occur during spring 2025. | Dinsdale | |
| **Major Crescent Reserve – Landscape Plan Implementation**<br>Complete. | Taylor | |
| **Major Roads LED Streetlight Replacement**<br>Completed 1,657 streetlight replacements. | Various | |
| **Make-Safe Storage Rooms Across All Children & Family Centres**<br>Project Closed – Following Council's decision to change the delivery of this service to a private provider (as of January 2025), responsibility for these works now rests with the service provider. Notification has been issued to the respective service providers who have undertaken risk assessments and actioned accordingly. | Various | |
| **Marie Wallace Bayswater Oval – Cricket Net Renewal**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Marie Wallace Bayswater Oval – Sportsfield Renewal (Design)**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Marie Wallace Bayswater Oval – Stormwater Harvesting Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Marie Wallace Bayswater Park Community Pavilion – Fit for Purpose**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Meridian Parade – Additional Lighting**<br>Yet to commence (deferred to a future year) – Following further consultation with United Energy it was determined a scope and budget adjustment is required. The revised project scope will be considered as part of the 2026-27 budget process. | Scott | |
| **Miscellaneous Industrial Roads – Pavement Rehabilitation Program**<br>Completed four small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Mount View Road Footpath (South side between Dawson Street and Willow Road)**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Mountain Highway Footpath – Wicks Road to Claremont Avenue**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – The site survey has been completed however problematic site conditions resulted in numerous other site investigation processes being delayed. Contractors have flagged challenges and risks associated with geotechnical investigation and locating of services on site. Significant traffic management costs are also associated with these processes. A report will be presented to Council in late-August to discuss the next steps. | Chandler | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Napoleon Road Electronic 40km/h Signs at School Crossings**<br>In Progress (deferred to a future year) – An application has been submitted to the Department of Transport & Planning (DTP), which has provided its feedback and a recommended scope of works. Community consultation is occurring on the proposed scope. Subject to the community consultation and DTP approval processes, delivery of this project could be considered as part of the 2026-27 budget process. | Dobson | |
| **Oak Avenue Footpath (between Dorset Road and Rangeview Road)**<br>Project Closed – An initial scope was proposed however the design process was paused in the early stages following a site inspection that highlighted there are too many difficulties to achieve a practical and acceptable solution. Following liaison with the ward Councillor, residents in Oak Avenue were advised that the project is not proceeding. The project will be removed from the Capital Works Program. | Chandler | |
| **Oversowing of Sportsfields**<br>Completed 14 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Park Ridge Reserve – Modular Changerooms & Existing Pavilion Refurbishment (Construction Year 1 of 2)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Stage 1 of the works (Modular Changerooms) has been completed. Stage 2 (Existing Pavilion Refurbishment) is expected to occur between September and December 2025. Works were required to be staged to accommodate the needs of the community sporting clubs which use the existing pavilion. | Taylor | |
| **Parking Management Plan Implementation**<br>Completed four small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Parkland Asset Renewal Program**<br>Completed 12 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Parks Furniture Renewal Program**<br>Completed 12 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Parks Signage Renewal Program**<br>Completed 10 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Plant, Machinery & Vehicle Renewal Program**<br>Completed – 63 items purchased (23 cars/utilities, 26 small plant and 14 trucks/plant). Delivery of some items purchased will occur during 2025-26 due to prolonged lead times. | Various | |
| **Playground Renewal Program**<br>Completed 11 small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Programmed Road Renewal Works from June Annual Audits**<br>Complete. | Various | |
| **Public Art Project**<br>Completed eight small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Public Tennis / Netball / Basketball Court Renewals**<br>Completed 25 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Reserves Paths Renewal Program**<br>Completed three small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Revegetation Plan (Unstructured Recreation)**<br>Completed four medium scale projects totalling 11,748m$^2$ of revegetation (13,000+ new indigenous plants). | Various | |
| **Road Surface Renewal Program**<br>Completed 66 small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Roadside Furniture Renewal Program**<br>Completed 17 small scale projects. | Various | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Roadside Plantings Renewal Program**<br>Completed seven small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Rowville Community Centre – Indoor Scoreboards/Backboards**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Sasses Avenue – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Sasses Avenue / Boronia Road, Bayswater – Intersection Improvements**<br>Complete. | Dinsdale | |
| **Schultz Reserve – Landscape Plan Implementation**<br>Complete. | Collier | |
| **Scoresby (Exner) Reserve – Tennis Court Renewals**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Scoresby Road/Victoria Road/Devenish Road Intersection (Re-Design)**<br>Complete. | Baird | |
| **Seniors Exercise Parks**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Design completed. Works commenced in June 2025 at both sites (Wally Tew Reserve and Marie Wallace Bayswater Park), with completion expected in September 2025. | Various | |
| **Significant Municipal Site (Passive Open Space) Renewal Program**<br>Completed four small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Solar in Community Facilities**<br>Completed six small to medium scale projects. | Various | |
| **Sportsfield Fencing Renewals**<br>Completed 15 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Sportsfield Infrastructure Replacement Program**<br>Completed 10 small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Sportsfield Irrigation Infrastructure Replacement Program**<br>Completed four small scale projects. | Various | |
| **Station Street – Road Reconstruction**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Stockton Avenue Reserve Footpath**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Stud Park Reserve – Carpark Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Stud Road (Service Road) – Road Reconstruction (Design)**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Stud Road On-road Bicycle Facilities (Design)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Site investigations and concept design completed. The concept design was supported by the community during the consultation phase. The detailed design is in progress and expected to be completed in September 2025. This was delayed slightly whilst awaiting feedback from the Department of Transport & Planning (DTP). | Tirhatuan | |
| **Sundew Avenue, Iris Crescent and Herbert Street, Boronia – LATM Treatment (Design)**<br>Complete. | Baird | |
| **Templeton Road – Road Reconstruction**<br>Complete. | Collier | |
| **Tormore Reserve – Fencing Renewal**<br>Complete. | Baird | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Tormore Reserve – Pavilion Redevelopment (Construction Year 1 of 2)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Construction is progressing on site. Slight delays have been experienced due to latent site conditions, including the identification and subsequent removal of asbestos underneath the existing building's concrete slab. Works are currently expected to be completed in March 2026. | Baird | |
| **Turramurra Drive – Kerb Outstands at Arcadia Park**<br>Complete. | Tirhatuan | |
| **Update Family & Children's Service Signage (Preschool to Kindergarten)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Signage installation completed at Eildon Parade. Installation at a further 10 sites will be completed by September 2025. | Various | |
| **Upper Ferntree Gully Rail Link – Shared Path Construction**<br>In Progress (deferred to a future year) – A Functional Layout Plan was developed before being submitted to Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM) in January 2025 for review. The design will be finalised upon receiving MTM's feedback or approval. The construction stage will be considered as part of the 2026-27 budget process. | Dobson | |
| **Veronica Street Footpath (between Underwood Road and 20 Veronica Street, south side)**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Wally Tew Reserve – Pavilion Upgrade (Detailed Design and Construction Year 1 of 2)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – The detailed design has been completed and works commenced on site in April 2025. Works are expected to be completed by April 2026, in readiness for the 2026 football season. | Dobson | |
| **Wally Tew Reserve – Stormwater Harvesting Upgrade**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Wally Tew Reserve Oval No. 1 – Sportsfield Renewal**<br>Complete. | Dobson | |
| **Wantirna Reserve – Carpark Upgrade**<br>In Progress (deferred to a future year) – Design of two carpark areas (east of scout hall and south of hockey field) are complete. These designs were integrated with the Wantirna Reserve Masterplan priorities. This project was deferred to allow the higher priority playground and dog park projects to proceed. Proceeding with these two projects first ensures a situation where a new carpark is damaged during construction of the playspace and dog park is avoided. The construction stage will be considered as part of the 2026-27 budget process, upon completion of the playground and dog park works. | Collier | |
| **Wantirna Reserve – Masterplan Implementation (Playspace and Dog Park) (Detailed Design and Construction Year 1 of 2)**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – The detailed design has been completed and works commenced on site in June 2025. Works have progressed well, with completion earmarked for November 2025. | Collier | |
| **Wantirna Reserve – Wetland (Design)**<br>Complete – Following further investigation, an opportunity to incorporate flood mitigation options into the playspace and dog park project was identified, achieving an efficient and cost-effective outcome. These works will occur between June and November 2025. | Collier | |
| **Water Sensitive Urban Design Renewal**<br>Completed 11 small to medium scale projects. | Various | |

| PROJECT & UPDATE | WARD | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Wetland Construction – Forest Road to Koolunga Reserve, Ferntree Gully**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – The site is environmentally sensitive and popular with the community. Care, consideration and consultation has occurred during the extensive site investigations and development of a Future Directions Plan, which are both now complete. The site investigations identified a need to renew the existing large pit on site, with these works best to occur in conjunction with the Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT) installation, providing cost and operational efficiencies whilst minimising impacts. Detailed design of the GPT and existing large pit renewal is progressing well, with completion anticipated in August 2025. Construction is earmarked to occur in the warmer and drier months of spring/summer 2025-26. | Chandler | |
| **Windermere Reserve – Cricket Net Renewal**<br>Complete. | Friberg | |
| **Wyandra Way, Rowville – LATM Treatment**<br>In Progress (carried into 2025-26) – Project nearing completion, with line-marking to occur in the coming months. | Friberg | |

## OBSERVATIONS: CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

Throughout the year several projects and renewal programs encountered challenges that impacted anticipated completion timelines. Key contributing factors included:

- Delays in securing approvals from third parties.
- Limited contractor availability and/or a lack of market response.
- Skilled labour shortages affecting appointed contractors.
- Extended lead times for the supply of materials, equipment, and plant/vehicles.
- Awaiting outcomes of grant funding submissions.
- Latent site conditions and adverse weather impacts.
- Changes to infrastructure standards or best practice guidelines.
- Scope or design alterations during project delivery.

In addition, several previously unplanned projects – now being delivered by Council via external grant funding – faced further delivery-stage challenges due to accelerated planning and design phases. Collectively, these projects account for a significant portion of the carry-forward figure referenced in the Project Delivery and Financial summaries.

These challenges, along with the lessons learned, will be reviewed in detail. In line with Council's commitment to continuous improvement, there will be a strong focus on identifying opportunities to enhance all stages of the project lifecycle – from conception through to completion – to improve future delivery outcomes.

In addition to the earmarked carry-forward projects, savings were realised across the 2024-25 Capital Works Program. These savings resulted from a combination of factors, including:

- Market stabilisation in the construction sector, with material and labour costs not escalating as significantly as in the preceding five years.
- Unused contingency allocations across multiple projects and renewal programs.
- Cost reductions through the consolidation of various projects into larger works packages (e.g. sportsfield renewals, sports lighting, and road improvements).
- Successful grant funding that reduced Council's required financial contribution.
- Strategic modifications to project scopes, enabling more cost-effective solutions without compromising outcomes (e.g. renewal of stormwater harvesting infrastructure).
- Deferral or cancellation of some projects, as detailed in the *Project & Renewal Program Listing and Status* section of this report.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Each year, Council reviews how well it delivered the Capital Works Program – not just what was completed, but how projects were planned, funded, scoped, designed, and built. This helps improve performance in future years. Here are the key lessons learned from delivery of projects within the 2024-25 Program:

### EARLY PLANNING MATTERS

Some projects were delayed due to long approval processes or unexpected site conditions. We've learned the value of allowing more time early in the process for permits and third-party approvals and undertaking comprehensive site investigations.

### PARTNER COORDINATION IS CRITICAL

Some project delays came from waiting on decisions from other agencies. Improved coordination and regular planning meetings are now being built into project timelines, especially during the initial planning, feasibility and scoping stages.

### FLEXIBILITY DELIVERS VALUE

Projects that demonstrated linkages (i.e. sportsfield upgrades and sportsfield lighting) were bundled together. This helped save costs, minimise disruption to user groups and the community, and improve delivery efficiency. We'll continue using this approach where practical.

### LABOUR AND SUPPLY CHAINS STILL UNDER PRESSURE

Skilled worker shortages and longer wait times for materials remain challenges across the construction industry. In response to this, we're adjusting timelines to reflect market conditions and working more closely with contractors to plan ahead.

### COMMUNITY VOICES SHAPE PROJECTS

Some projects were paused or changed after feedback from residents or user groups. This shows the importance of early and meaningful engagement and listening to community needs before finalising project scopes and designs.

### IMPROVING HOW WE TRACK PROGRESS

New systems and processes are being introduced to better track project planning, statuses and performance. This means fewer surprises mid-project, improved financial oversight and more transparent reporting to project stakeholders and the broader Knox community.

## HISTORICAL CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

Council's annual Capital Works Program continues to show steady improvement, with more projects being completed or progressing on schedule, and a greater share of the adopted budget being expended or saved each year.

As reported annually, in the five years between 2016/17 and 2020/21 the percentage of projects completed or in progress ranged between 84% and 90%, while the percentage of budget expenditure/savings identified ranged between 32% and 58.7%.

In the four years since, performance has trended upward, as summarised below:

| Year | Projects Completed/In Progress | Budget Expended/Savings |
|---|---|---|
| 2021/22 | 92% | 76% |
| 2022/23 | 97% | 78% |
| 2023/24 | 91% | 75% |
| 2024-25 | 98% | 77% |

*Historical capital works performance figures obtained from the 2021/22 Annual Capital Works Report (Sept. 2022).*

Key drivers of the continued improvement demonstrated include:

- Enhanced forward planning and project scoping.
- Stronger project management and clearer prioritisation.
- Improved interdepartmental collaboration.
- Increased levels of community and stakeholder engagement.
- Stronger governance and project oversight.
- Increased focus on data-driven decision making.
- Stronger financial discipline and long-term planning.
- A more stable construction sector following COVID-19 disruptions.

Council expects this momentum to continue, supported by ongoing investment in capability building, process refinement, and stakeholder engagement – ultimately delivering better value to the Knox community and supporting Council's long-term strategic goals.

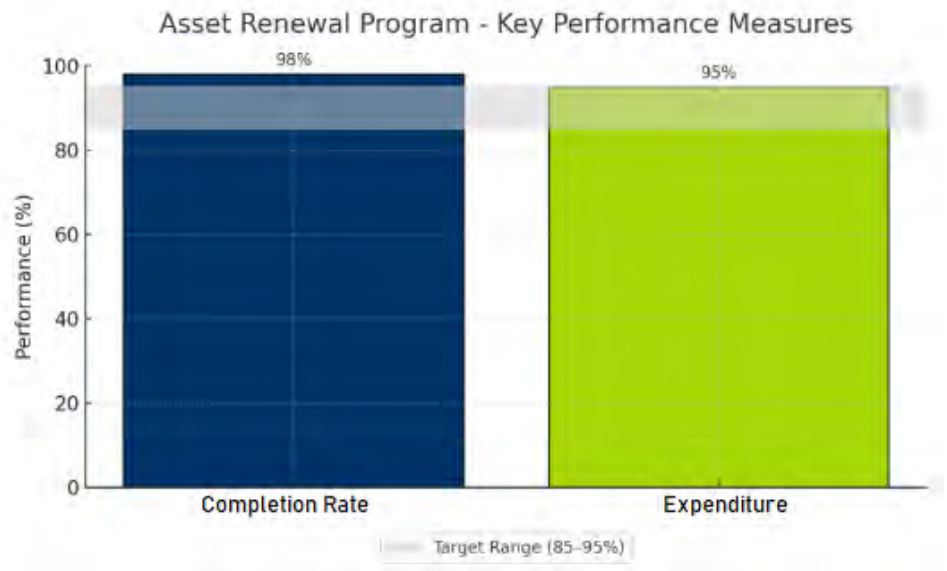
## ASSET RENEWAL PROGRAM – KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Council continually monitors its performance in renewing and maintaining its infrastructure assets to ensure they remain safe, functional, and fit for community needs. As part of this commitment, annual targets are set for both the completion rate and expenditure of asset renewal projects and programs. These targets typically range between 85% and 95%, providing a benchmark for effective delivery and efficient use of resources.

For the 2024-25 Asset Renewal Program, performance exceeded expectations, with the majority of projects delivered on time and within budget. A performance summary is provided below:

- **Projects/Renewal Programs:** 53
- **Adopted Budget:** $38.37 million
- **Target Completion Rate:** 85–95%
- **Target Expenditure:** 85–95%
- **Actual Completion Rate:** 98% (52 projects/renewal programs) – *Target exceeded*
- **Actual Expenditure:** 95% ($36.52 million) – *Target achieved*

This strong performance reflects Council's continued focus on delivering high-quality asset renewal outcomes for the community.



## ASSET CONDITION DATA AND RENEWAL STATUS

Asset renewal is essential for maintaining the reliability, safety, and efficiency of community infrastructure over time. As assets age, they become more prone to failure, less efficient, and more expensive to maintain, which can disrupt operations for Council and the community.

Programmed and timely renewal ensures infrastructure continues to meet service level standards, complies with applicable regulations, and supports Council's and the community's goals. It also enables the integration of modern technologies and design, improves sustainability, and minimises the risk of failure. Overall, a strategic asset renewal program is critical for long-term value, operational continuity, and risk management.

Detailed in the table below are updates on eight of Council's key asset renewal programs. Asset management plans, which are periodically reviewed and adopted by Council, inform these programs before subsequent forecasting is undertaken.

During the development of each of these asset management plans extensive audits are undertaken to establish the condition rating, life expectancy and the amount of funding required to provide these assets to the community at the desired service level.

Each adopted plan outlines service level targets to renew the worst condition assets, those deemed to be condition 4 (poor) and condition 5 (very poor), in the optimum achievable time to optimise service delivery, mitigate risk to Council, minimise maintenance costs and establish sustainable rehabilitation programs.

The initial focus of these programs is to ensure that sufficient renewal funding is available to address any backlog of works required. Further, it also recognises that a sustainable level of ongoing funding is then required in future to ensure Council's asset network continues to remain at an acceptable condition level.

| Renewal Program | Asset Category | Year Started | % of Network in Condition 4 or 5 (Initial Audit) | Initial Target for Elimination of Condition 4 or 5 | Most Recent Audit | % of Network in Condition 4 or 5 (Most Recent Audit) | Next Audit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Road Sub-Structure and Kerb & Channel | Road Pavement | 2005/06 | 7.80% | 2016 | 2023 | 1.60% | 2027 |
| Road Sub-Structure and Kerb & Channel | Kerb & Channel | 2005/06 | 0.10% | 2016 | 2023 | 0.00% | 2027 |
| Bicycle/Shared Paths | Shared Paths | 2005/06 | 51.60% | 2020 | 2022 | 12.60% | 2025 |
| Sports Lighting (>10m Poles) | Open Space | 2016 | 3.45% | Undefined | 2025 | 1.92% | TBD |
| Carparks | Carparks | 2007 | 48.40% | 2027 | 2020 | 0.69% | 2025 |
| Road Surface | Road Surface | 2006/07 | 19.90% | 2021 | 2023 | 14.20% | 2027 |
| Footpaths | Footpaths | 2005/06 | 6.10% | 2011 | 2023 | 1.05% | 2027 |
| Buildings | Buildings | 2008 | 2.00% | 2028 | 2024 | 0.76% | 2028 |
| Bridges & Culverts | Bridges | 2007 | 86.00% | 2016 | 2025 | 4.81% | 2028 |

The table above outlines the condition, renewal progress, and planned audits for various asset categories within Council's infrastructure renewal programs. The "% of Network in Condition 4 or 5" represents assets in poor or very poor condition, with targets set for their elimination.

As demonstrated, most asset categories show a significant reduction in poor or very poor condition percentages since their respective initial audits were undertaken. The most significant improvements have been made in the Carparks category, which has dropped from 48.40% in 2007 to 0.69% in 2020, and the Bridges & Culverts category which has dropped from 86.00% in 2007 to 4.81% in 2025.

Despite notable improvement in the Bicycle/Shared Paths category, 12.60% of paths are still considered to be in a poor or very poor condition, requiring further investment from Council which is expected to occur in the coming years.

Overall, the data reflects strong progress being made by Council in asset renewal, with most categories achieving substantial improvements toward target condition levels.

## 8.11 Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy Review

**Final Report Destination:** Council
**Paper Type:** For Decision
**Author:** Safer Communities Officer, Kathleen van der Weerden
**Manager:** Manager Community Strengthening, Kerryn Jansons
**Executive:** Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley

**SUMMARY**
A draft Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy has been developed (refer to Attachment 1) following a review of Council's Electronic Gambling Machine Policy 2020 (refer to Attachment 2). This draft Policy was informed by community and stakeholder engagement, benchmarking, desktop data capture and analysis, as well as local and State policy context review.

The draft Policy adopts a public health approach and responds to the emerging needs in the community by broadening the focus from Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) to address other forms of gambling harm.

The draft Policy aligns with, and responds to, the key health and wellbeing priority "Reduce harm from alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling" outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029.

Council recognises that gambling is a legitimate form of entertainment in Australia and many people can participate without experiencing harm, however, research consistently shows that gambling can, and does, lead to significant harm for some individuals, families and the wider community.

Knox residents face greater financial losses from EGMs than Metropolitan Melbourne. In 2024-2025, $79 million was lost to 771 EGMs across 11 venues, averaging $217,000 per day. Gambling losses/amount lost is defined as the amount wagered (bet) by gamblers less the amount won by gamblers.

In Knox the average loss per adult per annum was $586.24, which is higher than the Metropolitan Melbourne average of $548.12 per adult. This highlights a greater prevalence of gambling-related harm in the region.

There is also growing concern about the harm caused by other forms of gambling such as sports betting and online gambling. In 2022–2023, the total losses in Victoria to all forms of gambling was $7.4 billion, with 46% of gambling losses to EGMs and 35% from wagering.

Recent trends, such as the widespread availability of mobile internet devices, have exacerbated the risks of technology-based gambling, including online sports betting.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy for the purposes of community consultation;
2. Notes that community consultation on the draft Policy will occur from the 30 September for a three-week period, and that feedback will be considered prior to finalising the Policy.

## 1. DISCUSSION

### 1.1 Background

Knox City Council's commitment to preventing and minimising gambling harm has evolved over time, starting with its first Gambling Policy in 2001. The most recent iteration, the Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020, primarily focuses on Council's statutory roles in planning, regulating, and managing the operation of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) within the municipality.

Council has direct influence, through its statutory role in planning and decision-making processes in regards to EGM's, however, it is important to recognise and respond to all forms of gambling harm that impact the Knox community.

The review of the EGM Policy provided Council with an opportunity to understand changing local experiences of gambling harm in the community and ensure Council's Policy responds appropriately.

### 1.2 Local Context

Gambling related harm is increasingly recognised as a significant public health issue. Harms associated with gambling include financial losses, mental health issues, addiction, and social impacts such as family violence that can have significant negative impact on individuals, families and the broader community.

While gambling harm can affect anyone, there are factors that can put certain groups at greater risk, including age, gender, socio-economic background, employment status, educational levels and income.

Knox residents faced greater financial losses from EGMs than Metropolitan Melbourne in 2024-2025 $79 million was lost to EGMs from Knox residents, averaging $217,000 per day. According to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC), Knox has experienced an increase of 3.4% in losses to EGMs in the last year (2024–2025), in contrast to the CPI increase of 2.1% for the same period.

Knox currently has 11 gaming venues (four clubs and seven hotels). Across these 11 venues there are currently 771 EGMs operating. The municipality is currently 451 EGMs below the municipal cap of 1,222 EGMs. A municipal cap is a maximum and not a benchmark. Knox is currently operating at 63% of the legal EGM limit.

In 2022-2023, the latest available data, the total losses across all forms of legal gambling in Knox was estimated at $191 million. Recent trends, such as the widespread availability of mobile internet devices, have exacerbated the risks of technology-based gambling, including online sports betting.

**Table 1: Knox Gaming Venues EGM Numbers and Losses**

| Venue Name | Losses July 2024 to June 2025 | Average Loss per EGM | EGM Numbers | Owned By |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Club Venue** | | | | |
| Knox Club, Wantirna | $9.24M | $92,397 | 100 | The Knox Club |
| Wantirna Club | $4.69M | $48,366 | 97 | Richmond Football Club |
| Wantirna Hill Club | $4.56M | $76,001 | 60 | Vermont Football Club |
| Ferntree Gully Bowling Club | $946,222 | $27,830 | 34 | Ferntree Gully Bowling Club |
| **Hotel Venue** | | | | |
| Stamford Hotel, Rowville | $14.34M | $168,719 | 85 | ALH Group |
| Boronia Club Hotel | $10.94M | $136,756 | 80 | ELR Hotels Pty Ltd |
| Bayswater Hotel | $10.83M | $135,456 | 80 | ALH Group |
| Knox Tavern, Wantirna South | $8.57M | $111,278 | 77 | Supreme Knox Pty Ltd |
| The Royal Hotel, Ferntree Gully | $6.32M | $91,572 | 90 | ALH Group |
| Club Hotel, Ferntree Gully | $4.65M | $116,237 | 40 | ALH Group |
| Ferntree Gully Hotel | $4.14M | $84,600 | 49 | ALH Group |

A Gambling Profile was commissioned and completed in 2024 (refer to Attachment 3). A background paper has also been produced to summarise the key findings of the Profile and has been included as Appendix 1 in the draft Policy.

### 1.3 Council's Role in Preventing Gambling Related Harm

Council has an important role in preventing and minimising gambling related harm, particularly through its role in planning and regulation. This is guided by our requirements under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Council's approach to gambling harm prevention is shaped by a combination of key legislative instruments, Council's strategic priorities, and public health principles. This includes the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, which identifies "Reduce harm from alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling" as a key health and wellbeing priority.

The Priority Areas in the draft Policy are based on the role of Local Government in gambling harm prevention and include:

| | |
|---|---|
| Planning and Regulation | Council recognises that through effective planning and regulation we can prevent exposure and minimise gambling-related harms in the community. Council will assess each application for EGMs and will take into consideration each case individually based on merit. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Building Community Capacity | Council recognises that to reduce gambling harm caused to individuals and the community it is important to build capacity of the community to understand the risks of gambling and to share information that supports gambling harm prevention and minimisation. |
| Leadership | Council recognises in order to influence change in the broader community it is important to demonstrate leadership to prevent and minimise harm from gambling. |
| Advocacy | Council recognises that to effect change at a broader level, change is needed at all levels of government. Council will identify advocacy opportunities and work in partnership, where appropriate to strengthen advocacy efforts. |

**1.4 Benchmarking**

In 2024, Council conducted a benchmarking exercise against 17 Local Government gambling policies to ensure Knox's Policy is evidence informed, relevant to local needs and realistic in scope. Three of the benchmarked policies were solely focused on EGMs while the remainder were broader gambling policies. The Councils involved in the benchmarking exercise were Banyule, Casey, Geelong, Greater Dandenong, Darebin, Glen Eira, Kingston, Macedon Ranges, Manningham, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Monash, Nillumbik, Wangaratta, Whittlesea, and Wodonga.

The benchmarking exercise looked at the scope of the Policy, policy framework, principles, strategic directions and approaches. The key findings were:

- Most Councils are moving towards having a broader Gambling Harm Prevention Policy to recognise the harms associated with all forms of gambling.
- Most Councils adopted a public health approach to preventing and minimising harm.
- It is important to include principles that can set the foundations for a strong policy, including adopting a public health approach, ensuring actions are evidence-informed, and applying a gender lens.
- Councils framed their strategies and actions around Council's roles and responsibilities, including advocacy, collaboration and partnerships, capacity building, planning and regulation, and Council's relationship with the gambling industry.
- The importance of building strong collaborative partnerships in both the development and implementation of the Policy.

**1.5 Equity Impact Assessment**

An Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken in the development of the draft Policy. As a result of the EIA, the following recommendations have been incorporated into the draft Policy and associated policy positions:

- Inclusion of Guiding Principles to help guide decision making and ensure implementation of the Policy meets the needs of our diverse community;
- When collecting data, identify and explore the existing and emerging gambling related harm experienced by specific priority population groups; and

- When developing communications tools ensure they are in appropriate formats, relevant for priority population groups and the general community.

### 1.6 Key Changes to the Policy

#### 1.6.1 Broadening Scope to Include all Forms of Gambling

The current EGM Policy 2020 is limited in scope, focusing solely on addressing harm associated with EGMs. It does not address the broader harms experienced in the community from other forms of gambling, including online gambling and sports betting.

In response to the evolving landscape of gambling related harm in Knox, the draft Policy adopts a broader public health approach, which will allow Council to address the broader social, economic, environmental, and built environments that influence gambling harm in the community.

#### 1.6.2 Introduction of Guiding Principles

A set of Guiding Principles has been developed to provide a clear and consistent framework for Council to help guide decision making and ensure the values that underpin the draft Policy are embedded in implementation.

The Guiding Principles are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Public Health Approach | Council will utilise a public health approach to ensure it addresses the broader social, economic, environmental, and built environments that influence gambling harm in the community. |
| Evidence-informed | Council will regularly collect and analyse gambling data to help understand the local impact of gambling in the community and inform future policy and decision-making. |
| Partnerships | Council will seek out greater alignment and collaboration both within Knox and across the broader Eastern region to amplify efforts to prevent and minimise gambling harm. |
| Intersectionality | Council will apply an intersectional approach, recognising that effective actions need to take into consideration the diverse and overlapping needs of priority population groups. |

#### 1.6.3 Simplifying the Language for Policy Positions

The language used in the Policy Positions has been simplified to enhance clarity and accessibility. This will ensure the intent is clear for each area and that Council's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

Simplifying the language supports effective implementation of the draft Policy by staff and provides the community with a clear statement on Council's commitment to addressing gambling related harm in the community.

## 2. ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, Council conducted a range of community consultation with residents and stakeholders to help inform the development of the draft Gambling Harm Prevention Policy. Council undertook consultative activities including:

- Feedback sought from Council's Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee, Sport and Leisure Advisory Committee, Youth Advisory Committee, Active Ageing Advisory Committee, Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee, Disability Advisory Committee and Early Years Advisory Committee;
- Survey conducted for operators of EGM venues;
- Survey available through Council's "Have Your Say" platform for the wider community; and
- Feedback sought from key services including Ngwala Willumbong (Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation), Eastern Access Community Health (EACH) and Gamblers Help.

In total, 106 responses were received and key themes that emerged included:

- The harmful effects of EGMs and online betting were identified as significant concerns across the community;
- There was concern that gambling advertising contributes to the normalisation of gambling and increases the risk of harm;
- The addictive nature of gambling, particularly EGMs and online gambling, was highlighted as a major risk factor;
- The accessibility of gambling, both online and through EGMs, was noted as a critical issue in facilitating harm;
- The impact of gambling harm on vulnerable populations, particularly children and young people, was a recurring theme; and
- There was strong support for Council taking an active role in preventing gambling harm and providing leadership in this area.

A set of draft Policy Positions were developed and presented to relevant Council Departments to seek feedback and ensure they correctly reflect Council's roles and responsibilities. Feedback has been considered and changes made to the Policy Positions where necessary.

The draft Policy Positions were also tested with the Victorian Local Governance Association's (VLGA) Program and Policy Lead to ensure that Council's direction meets best practice. Key feedback included that using a public health approach is valuable, the appropriateness of the draft Priorities, and having an overview of each Priority helps define their objectives.

Following Council approval, the draft Policy will go out for community consultation for three weeks to ensure that what the community told us has been reflected in the draft Policy. The final draft Gambling Harm Prevention Policy will then be presented to Council for approval.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Council recognises that gambling is a legitimate form of entertainment in Australia, however, gambling is also recognised as a significant, global health concern, which impacts individuals, families and the wider community. According to the Victorian Population Gambling and Health Survey 2023, almost one quarter (23.9%) of Victorian adults gamble at least monthly.

The harms experienced from gambling is not limited to financial, it also includes psychological distress, relationship conflict, cultural harms, health problems, impacts to work or study and crime.

By broadening the scope of the draft Policy to incorporate all forms of gambling, Council can ensure actions address the broader social, economic, environmental, and built environments that influence gambling harm in the community.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**
Implementation of the recommendations is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**
There are no environmental considerations associated with this report.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
The draft Gambling Harm Prevention Policy and associated action will be implemented within existing resources within Council.

**7. RISKS**
There are no major risks involved with implementing the proposed Policy. Any minor risks encountered will be mitigated by ensuring adherence to the scope of the draft Policy.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**
**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**
Strategy 1.5 - Our community's health and wellbeing is improved through proactive planning, delivery, partnerships and advocacy that enable access to services, education and programs.

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**
Strategy 2.1 - Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.

**Being a strong voice for safety**
Strategy 5.4 - People feel safe in their homes and in the community through the development of partnerships, planning and promotion of programs, services and education that focus on connection, safety and respect.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
The Officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**
This report is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, as it does not raise any human rights issues.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**
There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Policy DRAFT Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy 2025 08 14 [**8.11.1** - 19 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - Policy - IN FORCE - Electronic Gaming Machine Policy - V 4 - 2020-09-21 [**8.11.2** - 7 pages]
3. Attachment 3 - Knox Gambling Policy Profile - Final Version - November 2024 [**8.11.3** - 65 pages]

Attachment 1

# Draft Knox Gambling Harm Prevention Policy

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Policy Number: | Issued by Governance | Directorate: | Connected Communities |
| Approval by: | Council | Responsible Officer: | Manager Community Strengthening |
| Approval Date: | 29 September 2025 | Version Number: | 1 |
| Review Date: | 3 Years from Meeting Date | | |

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to state Council's commitment to preventing and minimising the health, social and economic harms associated with all forms of gambling in the Knox community. The Policy guides Council's decision making on gambling harm prevention.

The Policy aligns with, and responds to, the key health and wellbeing priority 'Reduce harm form alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling' outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029.

This Policy replaces Council's previous Electronic Gaming Machine Policy and takes a public health approach to ensure the social and economic impacts are considered in Council actions.

## 2. Scope

While Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) is the form of gambling over which Council has direct influence through its statutory role in planning and decision-making processes, this Policy responds to all forms of gambling harm that impacts the Knox community and applies to:

- Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs);
- Online gambling;
- Sports betting;
- Keno;
- Commercial bingo;
- Casino games; and
- Horse/dog race wagering.

This Policy does not cover lower risk gambling activities such as lotteries, fundraising raffles and community bingo.

## 3. Context

Council recognises that gambling is a legitimate form of entertainment in Australia, however gambling is also recognised as a significant, global health concern, which impacts individuals, families and the wider community. Almost one quarter (23.9%) of Victorian adults gamble at least monthly.[1]

In 2022-2023 the total loss across all forms of legal gambling in Knox was estimated at $191 million[2]. Gambling losses/amount lost is defined as is the amount wagered (bet) by gamblers less the amount won by gamblers.

Knox residents faced greater financial losses from electronic gaming machines (EGMs) than Metropolitan Melbourne in 2024-2025, with $79 million EGM losses, averaging $217,000 per day[3].

A full summary of gambling data can be found in Appendix 1.

## 4. Guiding Principles

A set of guiding principles has been developed to guide decision making and underpin the implementation of the Policy. These principles are:

**Public Health Approach**

Council will utilise a public health approach to ensure it addresses the broader social, economic, environmental, and built environments that influence gambling harm in the community.

**Evidence-informed**

Council will regularly collect and analyse gambling data to help understand the local impact of gambling in the community and inform future policy and decision-making.

**Partnerships**

Council will seek out greater alignment and collaboration both within Knox and across the broader Eastern region to amplify efforts to prevent and minimise gambling harm.

**Intersectionality**

Council will apply an intersectional approach, recognising that effective actions need to take into consideration the diverse and overlapping needs of priority population groups.

[1] Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study 2023
[2] City of Greater Dandenong, Social Statistics
[3] VGCCC, Monthly Expenditure Data Report, August 2025.

## 5. Council Policy

Four priority areas have been developed that align to where Council can have the largest influence in preventing and minimising harm, these are:

- Planning and Regulation;
- Building Community Capacity;
- Leadership; and
- Advocacy.

### 5.1 Planning and Regulation

Council recognises that through effective planning and regulation we can prevent exposure and minimise gambling-related harms in the community. Council will assess each application for EGMs and will take into consideration each case individually based on merit:

5.1.1 Council will actively discourage and oppose any application for new EGM licenses, an increase in EGMs, a new EGM venue or transfer of EGMs where the application is seen to cause a net social or economic impact that is detrimental to the local area and in areas where the community is most at risk of harm from gambling.

5.1.2 Council will continue to collaborate with neighbouring municipalities when responding to EGM license applications.

5.1.3 Council will not enter into new lease to any club or organisation that operates EGMs on Council owned or managed land nor will they support any increase in the number of EGMs held by the gambling venue that currently leases Council-owned land.

5.1.4 Council will not support any future applications for EGMs on Council-owned or managed land.

5.1.5 Council will ensure all planning decisions and advice related to gambling matters will be made with reference to this Policy and the relevant provisions in Knox Planning Scheme.

### 5.2 Building Community Capacity

Council recognises that to reduce gambling harm caused to individuals and the community it is important to build capacity of the community to understand the risks of gambling and to share information that supports gambling harm prevention and minimisation:

5.2.1 Council will work with community organisations and sports clubs to foster the development of alternative recreational and social activities.

5.2.2 Council will partner with key stakeholders to educate staff, community groups and sporting clubs on the risks associated with gambling harm and where to seek help.

5.2.3 Council will continue to raise awareness of gambling harm in the community, including understanding the impacts of gambling, the health and wellbeing impacts, local EGM numbers and losses and understanding the risks and harms associated with EGMs and other forms of gambling.

5.2.4 Council will provide notice to the community when there is an application for a new EGM license, an increase in EGMs or a transfer of EGMs and provide an avenue, where possible, for the community to provide feedback.

5.2.5 Council will promote Gambler's Help and family violence support services in all communications regarding gambling harm.

**5.3 Leadership**

Council recognises in order to influence change in the broader community it is important to demonstrate leadership to prevent and minimise harm from gambling:

5.3.1 Council will embed reducing gambling harm as a priority area in Councils strategic documents, including future Council and Health and Wellbeing Plans.

5.3.2 Council will not provide community grants, financial assistance, or in-kind support to organisations or businesses that operate EGMs or other forms of gambling more strongly related to gambling harm, excluding Council's obligations as a landlord.

5.3.3 Council will not accept direct financial contributions from the gambling industry and will not promote events or activities held at venues with EGMs.

5.3.4 Council will not hold any activity, event, function or program at venues that operate EGMs.

5.3.5 Council will endeavor to filter and block gambling related internet sites for devices connected to the Council's core ICT Network.

**5.4 Advocacy**

Council recognises that to effect change at a broader level, change is needed at all levels of government. Council will identify advocacy opportunities and work in partnership, where appropriate to strengthen advocacy efforts:

5.4.1 Council will take a proactive approach to advocacy and will continue to advocate for best practice regulatory reforms to reduce harmful practices in the gambling industry by advocating for:

- A permanent reduction to gambling room operating hours, with all gambling rooms to be closed between midnight and 10am;
- The reduction of the maximum bet on EGMs to $1 per spin;
- Reforms to the Community Benefit Scheme, including a more transparent reporting process and the exclusion of sponsorships and operating costs as claimable community benefit;
- Greater transparency of the State Government Community Support Fund at a municipal level; and
- The banning of sports betting advertising, particularly during live viewing of sport; the banning of gambling inducements; and the banning of targeted online gambling to young people.

5.4.2 Council will increase its advocacy for gambling harm prevention in Knox through its partnerships and focus on collaborative action with State Government, peak bodies, community stakeholders and other councils.

## 6. Implementation and Review

This Policy informs and applies to all relevant Council planning, policy, programs and decision making. Implementation of this Policy is undertaken by relevant Departments across Council.

Council will review this Policy every three years or as necessary when evidence base or legislation changes.

## 7. References

7.1 Relevant Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Gambling Regulation Act 2003
- Interactive Gambling Act 2001

7.2 Charter of Human Rights

- This Policy has been assessed against and complies with the charter of Human Rights.

7.3 Related Council Policies

- Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029
- Knox Planning Scheme
- Knox Gambling Policy Review Profile 2024

## 8. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this policy. Where an update does not materially alter this policy, such a change may be made administratively on approval of the Chief Executive Officer. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, it must be considered by Council.

## Appendix 1 - Knox City Council Gambling Harm Prevention Policy Background Paper

Gambling is defined by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission as an activity which includes a prize of money (or something of value) offered or won; a person paying (or staking) money or valuables to participate; an outcome involving chance, even if influenced by skill.

Knox City Council's commitment to preventing and managing gambling harm has evolved over time, starting with its first Gambling Policy in 2001. The most recent iteration is the Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020, which primarily guides Council's statutory roles in planning, regulating, and managing the operation of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) within the municipality.

While EGMs is the form of gambling over which Council has direct influence through its statutory role in planning and decision-making processes, it is important to recognise and respond to all forms of gambling harm that impacts the Knox community.

Gambling is recognised as a significant, global public health concern. Taking a public health approach recognises that:

- Gambling, like tobacco and alcohol, are addictive products and need to be regulated;
- Certain population groups will be more vulnerable to harm;
- Evidence must inform the selection of appropriate strategies; and
- Success will come from working in partnership with community clubs, support services and businesses.

The intention of the Gambling Harm Prevention Policy is to build on the Electronic Gambling Machine Policy to take a public health approach to ensure the social and economic impacts are considered in Councils actions.

The Policy aligns with and responds to the key health and wellbeing priority 'Reduce harm from alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling' outlined in the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029.

**Legislation and Policy context**
Council's Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy is guided by the following State and Local legislations and policies:

- Planning and Environment Act 1987;
- Gambling Regulation Act 2003;
- Local Government Act 2020;
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008;

- Knox City Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029; and
- Knox Planning Scheme.

**Gambling in Australia**

In Australia, gambling is an entrenched part of the culture and often viewed as a legitimate form of entertainment. Gambling is recognised as a significant, global health concern, which impacts individuals, families and the wider community. In 2022–2023 the total losses in Victoria, to all forms of gambling were $7.4billion, with 46% of gambling losses to EGMs and 35% from wagering[4].

The harms experienced from gambling is not limited to financial, it also includes psychological distress, relationship conflict, cultural harms, health problems, impacts to work or study and increased crime. The most reported harm from gambling was financial, followed by psychological harm and relationship stress[5].

Participation in gambling is continuing to decline with just over half (53.3%) of Victorian adults participating in gambling in 2023, compared to 69% in 2018–2019. However, harm among people who gamble has increased, with 13% reporting at least one form of gambling harm, compared to 9.6% in 2018–2019[2].

More than two thirds (70 per cent) of gambling-related harm is experienced by people whose behaviour is not classified as 'problem gambling'. Almost half of Australians who gambled in 2022 (46 per cent) were classified as being at some risk of gambling harm in the past 12 months[6]. Those most likely to experience gambling harm gambled on casino table games (36%), followed by sports (35%), bingo (32%) and EGMs (29%)[2].

Estimates are that for each 'problem gambler' harm is experienced by up to six others. Affected others are more likely to be female, aged between 25 and 44 and earn a low-to-middle income[2].

Most people gamble solely in a physical gambling venues (56%) compared to online (31.5%), with only 12.6% of people gambling in both venues and online[2]. The average gambling amounts losses per adult are highest for EGMs and around 80% of presentations to counselling agencies relate to problems associated with EGMs.

There is growing concern about the harm caused by other forms of gambling such as sports betting and online gambling. In 2022–2023 the total losses in Victoria, to all forms of gambling were $7.4 billion, with 46% of gambling losses losses EGMs and 35% from wagering[7].

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4 The Social Costs of Gambling to Victoria 2023
5 Victorian population gambling and health study 2023 Final report, September 2024
6 Parliament of Australia (2023) You win some, you lose more. Online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm. Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
7 The Social Costs of Gambling to Victoria 2023

Recent trends, such as the widespread availability of mobile internet devices, have exacerbated the risks of technology-based gambling, including online sports betting. Sports betting is highly accessible due to mobile phone apps and there has been a significant increase in advertising on social media. Almost 8 in 10 Victorians were exposed to gambling advertising in the last week[2].

**Gambling in Knox City Council**

In 2024-2025, there were $79 million gambling losses to EGMs averaging $217,000 per day. Knox residents faced greater financial losses from electronic gaming machines (EGMs) than Metropolitan Melbourne. On average, EGMs took $586.24 per adults, which is higher than the $548.12 per adult across Metropolitan Melbourne. This highlights a greater prevalence of gambling-related harm in the region.

Following a reduction in EGM expenditure because of the closure of gaming venues during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Knox has experienced an overall increase in total EGM player loss since the gaming opened in the 2021-2022 Financial Year.

**Table 1: EGM losses over 10 years**

| Financial Year | EGM losses across all gaming venues |
|---|---|
| 2015/16 | $73.82M |
| 2016/17 | $75.06M |
| 2017/18 | $75.86M |
| 2018/19 | $73.89M |
| 2019/20 | $53.49M |
| 2020/21 | $40.31M |
| 2021/22 | $56.21M |
| 2022/23 | $78.30M |
| 2023/24 | $76.62M |
| 2024/25 | $79.24M |
| **Total losses 2015-2025** | **$682.8M** |

Knox currently has 11 gaming venues (four clubs and seven hotels). Ferntree Gully has four venues, Wantirna and Wantirna South each have two venues, and Bayswater, Boronia and Rowville each have one venue.

There are several gaming venues located in close proximity to the municipality's northern, western and south-western boundaries in the Cities of Maroondah, Whitehorse, Monash and Greater Dandenong respectively. Knox's gaming venues are highly accessible with all of them located along or in close proximity to major arterials (Burwood Highway, Boronia Road, Mountain Highway and Wellington Road).

**Figure 1: Locations of EGM venues in Knox City Council**

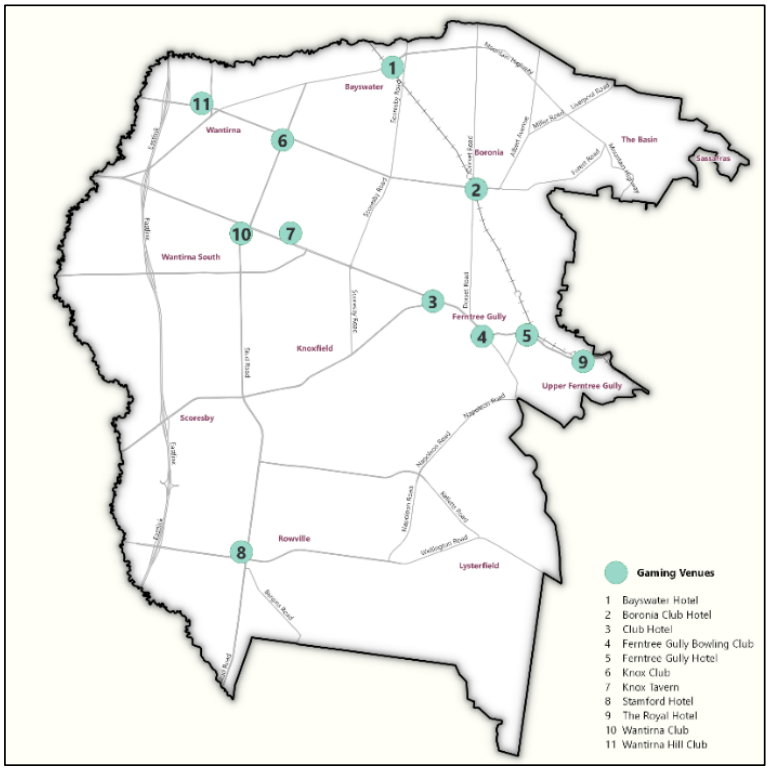
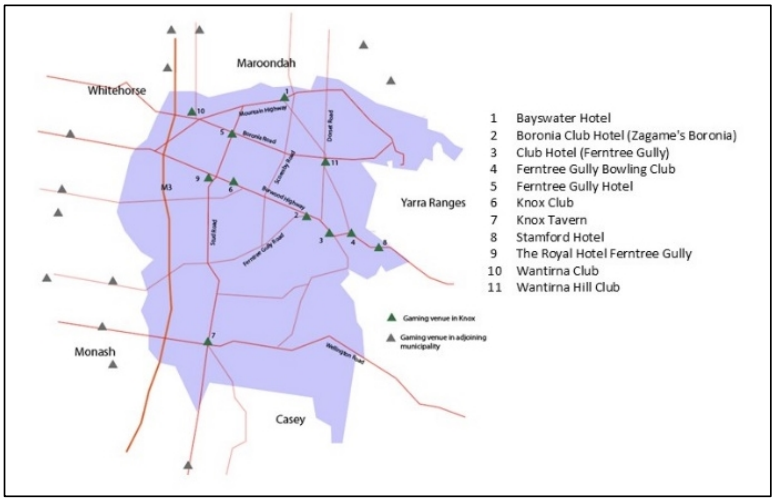



**Figure 2: Venue location in relation to adjoining municipalities**



Across these 11 venues there are currently 771 EGMs operating. This is the 10th highest number per LGA in Victoria in 2024[8]. The municipality is currently 451 EGMs below the municipal cap of 1,222 EGMs as per the Ministerial Order of 2017. A municipal cap is a maximum and not a benchmark. It is based on an average of 10 EGMs per 1,000 adults applied across all municipalities in Victoria not covered by a regional cap. Knox is currently operating at 63% of the legal limit.

**Table 2: Knox Gaming venues EGM Numbers and Losses**

| Venue Name | Losses July 2024 – June 2025 | Average Loss per EGM | EGM Numbers | Owned by |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Club venue** | | | | |
| Knox Club, Wantirna | $9.24M | $92,397 | 100 | The Knox Club |
| Wantirna Club | $4.69M | $48,366 | 97 | Richmond Football Club |
| Wantirna Hill Club | $4.56M | $76,001 | 60 | Vermont Football Club |
| Ferntree Gully Bowling Club | $946,222 | $27,830 | 34 | Ferntree Gully Bowling Club |
| **Hotel venue** | | | | |
| Stamford Hotel, Rowville | $14.34M | $168,719 | 85 | ALH Group |
| Boronia Club Hotel | $10.94M | $136,756 | 80 | ELR Hotels Pty Ltd |
| Bayswater Hotel | $10.83M | $135,456 | 80 | ALH Group |
| Knox Tavern, Wantirna South | $8.57M | $111,278 | 77 | Supreme Knox Pty Ltd |
| The Royal Hotel, Ferntree Gully | $6.32M | $91,572 | 90 | ALH Group |
| Club Hotel Ferntree Gully | $4.65M | $116,237 | 40 | ALH Group |
| Ferntree Gully Hotel | $4.14M | $84,600 | 49 | ALH Group |

[8] VGCCC 'current gaming expenditure by LGA-monthly' May

**Figure 3: Knox Gaming Venues Losses**

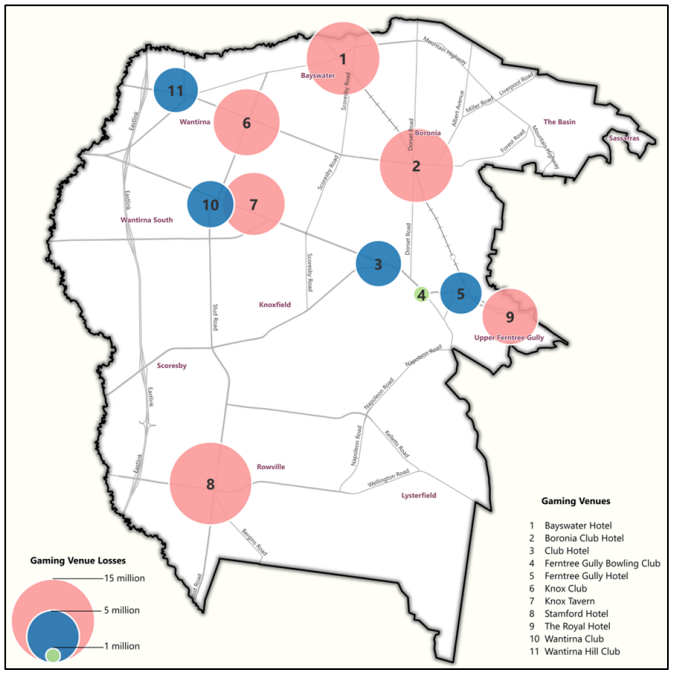
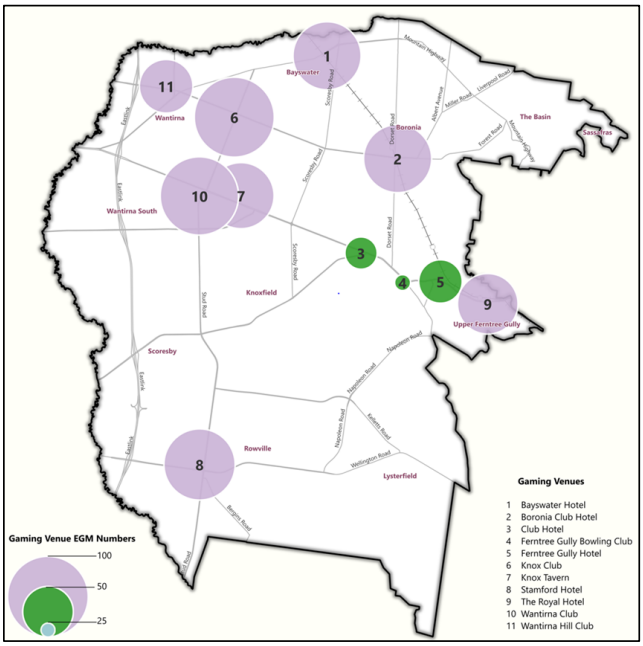



**Figure 4: Knox Gaming Venues EGM Numbers**



The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage and/or advantage based on a range of Census characteristics. The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is one of the SEIFA indexes used to show disadvantage indicators (e.g. unemployment, low incomes or education levels, single parent families, low skilled occupations, poor English proficiency).

In 2021, Knox LGA had a lower disadvantage score than Greater Melbourne, with an IRSD value of 1,042.2 compared to 1,018.0 for Greater Melbourne. A higher IRSD value indicates less disadvantage.

At the suburb level:

- Lysterfield had the least disadvantage, with an IRSD value of 1,097.2; and
- In contrast, Bayswater was the most disadvantaged suburb, with the lowest IRSD value of 1,002.5.

In Knox, EGMs are disproportionately clustered in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage, as indicated by the SEIFA Index. These locations often have higher rates of unemployment and lower household incomes, making residents more susceptible to gambling related harm.

**Figure 5: Heat map of gaming venue location and SEIFA Index**

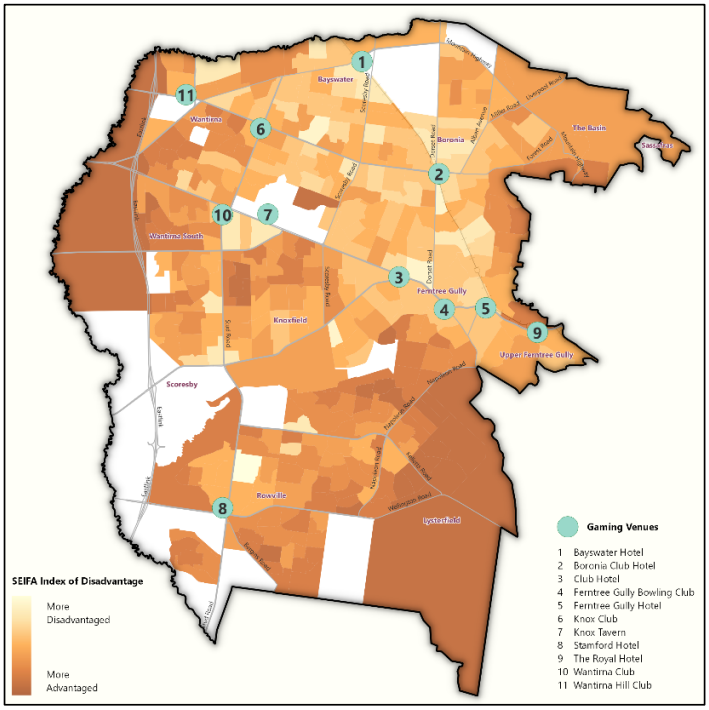
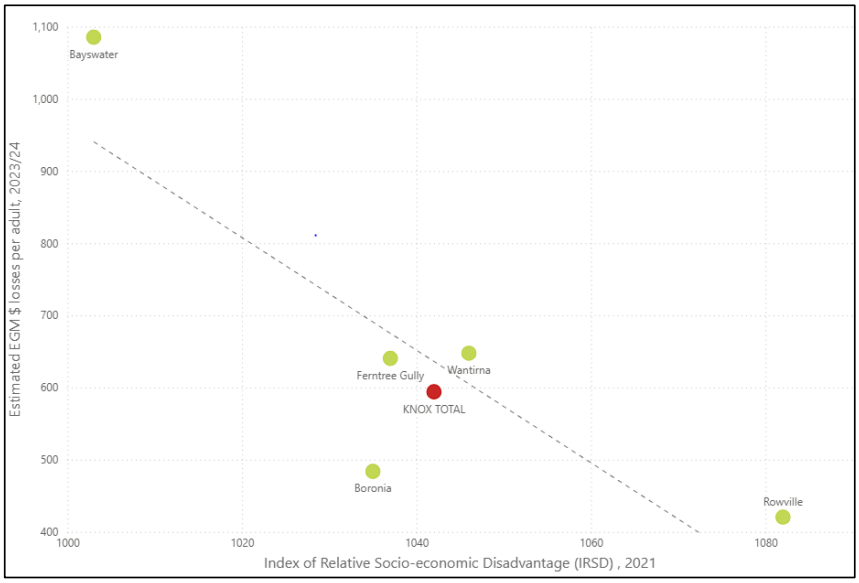


**Figure 6: EGM losses per capita against SEIFA for Knox suburbs**




**Priority Population Groups**

**Women**

Gambling participation rates are almost equal amongst men (70%) and women (68.3%)[9]. However, the prevalence of women's participation in gambling is steadily increasing[10] due to factors such as the increased accessibility of online gambling and social factors such as boredom and loneliness[11].

The incidence of family violence in Knox recorded 12.2 incidents per 1,000 which is higher than the rates for Metropolitan Melbourne at 11.6 per 1,000 in 2022-2023. Women tend to use EGMs for longer duration time than males[12]. The reason for this could be that gaming venues are attractive to women, particularly those experiencing family violence,[13] as they feel safe, provide what is perceived to be a cheap source of entertainment and are open for long periods when other facilities are closed.

According to the University of QLD 2025, while men have traditionally higher gambling rates, the

[9] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[10] Hing, N. and Breen, H. (2001) "An empirical study of sex differences in gaming machine play among club members" *International Gambling Studies* Vol 1, pp 1-8.
[11] McCarthy, S, Thomas, S, Bellringer, M and Cassidy, R (2019) *Harm Reduction Journal* Women and gambling-related harm: a narrative literature review and implications for research, policy, and practice 16.18.
[12] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[13] Hing, N., O'Mullan, C., Nuske, E., Breen, H., Mainey, L., Taylor, A., … Rawat, V. (2020). *The relationship between gambling and intimate partner violence against women* (Research report, 21/2020). Sydney: ANROWS.

sports betting companies are now targeting women to increase their consumer base.

**Men**
1 in 4 men who gambled were classified as being at risk of, or experiencing, problem gambling [14].
Males are more likely than females to engage in high frequency gambling[15].
Men are significantly more likely than women to bet on sports (13.9 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively). This has increased from 10.9 per cent of men and 2.5 per cent of women in 2014, and 9.3 per cent of men and 2.1 per cent of women in 2008[9].

**Young People**
Young people are impacted by gambling harm at a higher rate than those aged over 65 years, with over a quarter of those aged 18–24 years who gambled experiencing harm[12].

Online gambling is heavily promoted and easily accessible via smartphones and is designed to appeal to young people. Additionally, gambling-like elements in video games, such as loot boxes, have become increasingly prevalent, raising concerns about their addictive nature. Video games, including gaming features such as 'loot boxes' have been shown in research to have links with increased gambling and gambling harm by adolescents[16].

**LGBTIQA+**
Approximately 11.2% of Knox residents identify as LGBTIQA+. LGBTIQA+ people generally display lower levels of gambling behaviour and both problem gambling severity and harms.
Approximately 28% of participants were classified as problem gamblers and 68% experienced a range of gambling-related harms[17]. LGBTIQA+ people who are more likely to visit late night venues on their own will typically visit EGM venues as they are open late and are deemed to be 'safe spaces' and can be used to combat feelings of loneliness, isolation, grief and loss[18].

**First Nations**
Approximately 1,022 residents identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (0.6%). Young adults account for 23.1% of First Nations in Knox. There has been a 38% increase in population from 2016-2021, Knox has the 2nd largest First Nations population in the East of Melbourne.

In Victoria, about 75% of First Nations people gamble, which is about the same as the general population. Injustice from colonisation and trauma makes First Nations people 10–20 times more likely to experience gambling harm[19].

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14 Tajin R, Quinn B, Wong C, O'Donnell K, Rowland B, Prattley J & Jenkinson R 2022, Insights #2 Report Findings from Ten to Men: The Australian longitudinal study on Male Health, 2013 – 2021, Australian Government.
*15 Victorian population gambling and health study 2023 Final report, September 2024.*
*16 Rockloff M, Russell A, Greer N, Lole L, Hing N, & Browne M 2020, Loot boxes: Are they grooming youth for gambling? CQUniversity.*
17 Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Examining risk and protective factors for the development of gambling-related harms and problems in Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities, October 2020.
18 Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Examining risk and protective factors for the development of gambling-related harms and problems in Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities, October 2020.
19 Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Reducing gambling harm in First Nations communities – a guide for health workers.

**People with a Disability**
In Knox, 18.5% of people had a self-reported disability and 6% of people require assistance in their day-to-day lives due to disability.

Due to cognitive impairment, people with intellectual disability may have difficulty interpreting and calculating risk, placing them at risk of gambling harm. People with lifelong disability exhibit similar characteristics to other groups at risk of gambling harm, for example low income, reduced employment, social isolation and receiving Centrelink benefits[20].

**Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)**
33% of Knox residents were born overseas and 29% speak a language other than English at home.

CALD communities tend to participate in gambling less than the overall population, however those who gamble may be more likely to experience problems. This can be due to different beliefs about luck and chance and issues around stigma and shame about seeking help.[21]

**Older Adults**
Approximately 28,425 (17.5%) people in Knox are aged 65 years and over. Research shows that older adults gamble largely due to loneliness as well as ease of access to gaming venues. Gaming venues in Australia often offer incentives targeting older people, for example discounted meals.[22]

**Low Income Households**
There is an estimated 430 homeless people in Knox. This is a 12% increase in homelessness in Knox from 2016. 1 in 9 residents live in a low income household (around <$500 per week).

Research has found that the lower a household's income, the greater proportion of their household disposable income is spent on gambling. Among households in the lowest quintile, 'problem gamblers' spent on average 27% of their household's disposable income on gambling, compared with households in the highest income quintile, whose 'problem gamblers' spent on average of 4%.[23]

**Equity Impact Assessment**
An Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken in the development of the Policy, as a result of the EIA, the following recommendations have been incorporated into the Policy and associated strategic directions:

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[20] Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, People with intellectual disability and their lived experiences of gambling research report, September 2020.
[21] Australian Gambling Research Centre, Gambling in culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia discussion paper No. 7, October 2016.
[22] Gambling Help Queensland, Older people and gambling
[23] Australian Gambling Research Centre, Gambling activity in Australia Findings from wave 15 of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey research report, 2017.

- Introducing guiding principles to help guide decision making and ensure implementation of the Policy meets the needs of our diverse community. Proposed guiding principles are; public health approach, evidence-informed, partnerships, and intersectionality;
- When collecting data, identify and explore the existing and emerging gambling related harm experienced by specific priority population groups; and
- When developing communications tools ensure they are in appropriate formats that are relevant for priority population groups and the general community.

**Benchmarking**
In 2024, Council conducted a benchmarking exercise against 17 local government gambling policies to ensure Knox's Policy is evidence informed, relevant to local needs and realistic in scope. Three of the benchmarked policies were solely focused on EGMs while the remainder were broader gambling policies. The Councils involved in the benchmarking exercise were Banyule, Casey, Geelong, Greater Dandenong, Darebin, Glen Eira, Kingston, Macedon Ranges, Manningham, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Monash, Nillumbik, Wangaratta, Whittlesea, and Wodonga.

The benchmarking exercise looked at the scope of the policy, policy framework, principles, strategic directions and approaches. The key findings were:

- Most councils are moving towards having a broader Gambling Harm Prevention Policy to recognise the harms associated with all forms of gambling;
- Most councils adopted a public health approach to preventing and minimising harm;
- It is important to include principles that can set the foundations for a strong policy, including adopting a public health approach, ensuring actions are evidence-informed, and applying a gender lens;
- Councils framed their actions around council's roles and responsibilities, including advocacy, collaboration and partnerships, capacity building, planning and regulation, and council's relationship with the gambling industry; and
- The importance of building strong collaborative partnerships in both the development and implementation of the Policy.

**Consultation**
In 2024, Council conducted a range of community consultation with resident and stakeholders to help inform the development of the Gambling Harm Prevention Policy. Council undertook a range of consultative activities including:

- Feedback was sought from Councils Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee, Sport and Leisure Advisory Committee, Youth Advisory Committee, Active Ageing Advisory Committee, Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee, Disability Advisory Committee and Early Years Advisory Committee;
- Survey conducted for operators of EGM venues;

- Survey available through Council's 'Have Your Say' platform for the wider community; and
- Feedback sought from key services including Ngwala Willumbong, Eastern Access Community Health (EACH) and Gamblers Help.

In total, 106 responses were received and key themes that emerged included:

- The harmful effects of EGMs and online betting were identified as significant concerns across the community;
- There was concern that gambling advertising contributes to the normalisation of gambling and increases the risk of harm;
- The addictive nature of gambling, particularly EGMs and online gambling, was highlighted as a major risk factor;
- The accessibility of gambling, both online and through EGMs, was noted as a critical issue in facilitating harm;
- The impact of gambling harm on vulnerable populations, particularly children and young people, was a recurring theme; and
- There was strong support for Council taking an active role in preventing gambling harm and providing leadership in this area.

This local feedback aligns with recent research where most Australians expressed concern about the availability of gambling and its impacts on the community, believing that there are '*too many opportunities for gambling nowadays*' (77%) and that gambling is '*dangerous for family life*' (68%) and '*should be discouraged*' (59%).[24]

**Definitions**

| | |
|---|---|
| Community Group(s) | A legal entity operating as a not-for-profit that provides services, support or activities to the Knox community. |
| Council | Means Knox City Council. |
| Community Benefits Statement | EGM venue operators submit an annual Community Benefit Statement confirming at least an 8.3% portion of club EGM gaming revenue supports community purposes. This enables clubs to qualify for gambling tax reductions. |
| Community Support Fund | A fund governed by the Gambling Regulation Act 2003. It mandates a portion of gambling revenue from hotels is collected by the Victorian government and directed back to initiatives and projects to reduce gambling harm, support families and youth as well as arts and tourism. |

[24] Australian Gambling Research Centre, Gambling Participation, experience of harm and community views, research snapshot, March 2023.

| | |
|---|---|
| Electronic Gaming Machine | Computerised gambling device that displays symbols on a simulated reel. There are used in games of chance involving wagers, where the machine randomly determines the positions of symbols and a 'win' is returned as a credit in the machine.<br><br>They are also referred to as EGMs, pokies, pokie machines. |
| Expenditure/Loss | The net amount spent/lost, or the amount wagered less the amount won, by people who gamble. |
| Family Violence | Family and domestic violence is any violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in current or past family, domestic or intimate relationships. It is a major health and human rights issue that can affect anyone, no matter their gender, age, location, socio-economic and health status, cultural background, sexual identity, abilities, ethnicity, religion or family type. |
| Gambling-related harm | Any initial or increased negative impact due to gambling. These impacts can be felt by individuals, families, communities or populations, including people who do not directly participate in gambling. The effects can affect resources, relationships and health and exacerbate existing inequalities. |
| Harm Prevention | Also known as harm reduction which aims to decrease the adverse consequences of gambling. |
| Net Community Benefit | A planning concept that acknowledges that a decision can be considered desirable, even when it imposes a cost on some parts of the community, provided that the total benefits outweigh the total disadvantages. |
| Non-gambling facilities | Alternative recreation facilities include hotels, clubs, cinemas, restaurants, bars, theatres, galleries, exhibition centres, sporting venues, libraries and neighbourhood houses. |
| Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission | The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) is Victoria's independent gambling authority responsible for licensing and compliance. |
| Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas | The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is developed from census data including income, education, occupation, employment, housing and family structure; and ranks regions as to the relative level of social and economic wellbeing. It defines socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources |

and their ability to participate in society.

Attachment 2

Policy

# Electronic Gaming Machine

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Policy Number: | 2001/09 | Directorate: | Community Services |
| Approval by: | Council | Responsible Officer: | Manager Community Wellbeing |
| Approval Date: | 21 September 2020 | Version Number: | 4 |
| Review Date: | 21 September 2023 | | |

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to articulate to the community and gaming industry Council's position on electronic gaming machines in the municipality. It is a 'whole of Council' social policy guiding Council's statutory roles in preventing and minimising gambling-related harm in the community.

This Policy also guides Council in assessing the potential social and economic impacts associated with applications for gaming licenses and planning permits to operate electronic gaming machines in the municipality and in adjoining municipalities.

This Policy updates the Knox Electronic Gaming Policy 2016 by integrating current electronic gaming machine data.

This Policy has also been assessed against and complies with the Charter of Human Rights.

## 2. Context

The City of Knox has 11 gaming venues and 767 electronic gaming machines. The Ferntree Gully Bowling Club operates on land owned and managed by Council.

In the 2018-19 financial year, expenditure[1] on electronic gaming machines was $73, 890,071.24 and expenditure per adult was $571.61. There were 5.93 electronic gaming machines per 1,000 people.

In this financial year, compared with metropolitan municipalities and Victoria, the City of Knox had a higher total expenditure (loss) on electronic gaming machines and expenditure (loss) per adult. The municipality also had a higher number of total electronic gaming machines, electronic gaming machines per 1,000 adults, and venues. Relative to the other 31 metropolitan municipalities, Knox was ranked fifteenth for total expenditure (loss) on electronic gaming machines, tenth for electronic gaming machines per 1,000 adults and fifteenth for expenditure (losses) per adult.

Since 2009, however, the number of electronic gaming machines, total expenditure and number of electronic gaming machines per 1,000 adults has dropped in the City of Knox. This has occurred alongside similar trends across Victoria and metropolitan municipalities, a growth in population and the introduction of statutory harm minimisation measures.

The City of Knox has lower levels of socio-economic disadvantage compared with Greater Melbourne and Victoria, but higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage compared with the Eastern Metropolitan Region. In particular, there are concentrations of socio-economic disadvantage in Bayswater, Boronia and Ferntree Gully. Four of the eleven gaming venues are located in Ferntree Gully. Socio-economic disadvantage and high access to electronic gaming machines are indicators of gambling-related harm.

[1] The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation defines expenditure as 'the total amount lost by players'.

**The Role and Functions of Local Government**

Council has a statutory obligation to:

- Assess a planning permit application to install or use electronic gaming machines within the framework of the planning provisions of the Knox Planning Scheme and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*; and
- Assess the potential social and economic impacts of an application for a gaming licence in the municipality or adjoining municipality in accordance with the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and, if required, make a submission on behalf of the community to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation.

Clause 52.28 of the Knox Planning Scheme enables Council to prohibit electronic gaming machines in designated shopping complexes and all strip shopping centres[2]. Council does not have the same defined roles in relation to other forms of gambling.

Council also has broader statutory roles under the *Local Government Act 1989* and *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, which focus on exercising good governance and promoting and protecting the health and wellbeing of the community. Additionally, Council seeks to mitigate harms arising from other forms of gambling through its membership of the Alliance for Gambling Reform, which is a national advocacy organisation, and initiatives informed by the Knox Community and Council Plan 2017-21[3].

Council's roles and functions that relate to minimising harm from electronic gaming machines fall into four distinct but overlapping functions and roles.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Plan, regulate and enforce | • Research, review and analyse community and health profile.<br>• Prepare planning provisions for electronic gaming machines in the Knox Planning Scheme.<br>• Assess applications for planning permits to install and use electronic gaming machines.<br>• Enforce planning permit conditions.<br>• Review research on the determinants and impacts of gambling-related harm. |
| 2. Manage and deliver | • Manage Council assets.<br>• Deliver non-gambling services and facilities.<br>• Support the delivery of services and facilities by agencies addressing gambling-related harm. |
| 3. Inform, educate and engage | • Disseminate information on the risks and harms associated with electronic gaming machines.<br>• Disseminate information on the availability of non-gambling social, leisure, entertainment and recreation facilities. |
| 4. Facilitate, represent, partner and advocate | • Make submissions to the VCGLR on the potential social and economic impacts of applications for gaming licences.<br>• Facilitate discussions with venue operators to guide the appropriate location and operation of gaming venues.<br>• Parter with and/or facilitate Council's participation in government, business and community alliances, working groups and forums.<br>• Advocate for changes to the regulatory framework to reduce gambling-related harms. |

[2] Department of Planning and Community Development, 2006, Amendment VC 39 Gaming, State Government of Victoria
[3] Goal 6, Strategy 6.1

## 3. Scope

The Policy covers electronic gaming machines and their use in the municipality. This Policy applies to:

- Knox City Council, in its role as the responsible authority under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, in making decision on planning permit applications to use or install electronic gaming machines and in making submissions to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*;
- Knox City Council, as a land owner, lessor, manager and regulator of land used to operate electronic gaming machines;
- Existing and potential operators of gaming venues in the City of Knox;
- Individuals, families and community in the City of Knox affected by gambling related harm; and
- Community groups, service providers and agencies responsible for the delivery of non-gambling facilities and activities and services for people affected by gambling-related harm.

## 4. References

4.1 Community & Council Plan 2017-2021
- Goal 5 – We are happy, healthy and wise

4.2 Relevant Legislation
- Gambling Regulation Act, 2003
- Planning and Environment Act, 1987
- Local Government Act, 1989
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act, 2008

4.3 Charter of Human Rights
- This Policy has been assessed against and complies with the Charter of Human Rights Act, 2006.

4.4 Related Council Policies and background documents
- Knox Planning Scheme
- Knox City Council Gaming Policy Direction Paper, 2015
- Knox Gambling Profile Update, June 2020

4.5 Related Council Procedures
- Electronic Gaming Policy Procedure for making a submission to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation

## 5. Definitions

| | |
|---|---|
| Club | A place of assembly with a full club licence and permission to operate electronic gaming machines. |
| Community | People who live, work, shop, visit or study in the Knox municipality. |
| Community Group(s) | Means a legal entity who provide services, support or activities to the Knox community and may be the beneficiary of community contributions. |
| Community contributions | A financial contribution to community organisations made by a venue operator as a condition of approval by the VCGLR. |
| Convenience gambling | Gambling that comes about as a result of people going about other business and other concerns being confronted with opportunities to gamble that they have not set out to |

| | |
|---|---|
| | find.[4] This has the potential to result in spontaneous or impulse rather than predetermined decisions to gamble. |
| Council | Means Knox City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy. |
| Electronic Gaming Machine | Any device, whether wholly or partly mechanically or electronically operated, that is so designed that:<br>(a) it may be used for the purpose of playing a game of chance or a game of mixed chance and skill; and<br>(b) as a result of making a bet on the device, winnings may become payable (*Gambling Regulation Act* 2003, S1.3). |
| Expenditure | The net amount spent/lost or the amount wagered less the amount won, by people who gamble. It is gross profit (or gross winnings) due to the operators of each particular gambling activity.[5] |
| Gambling sensitive use | A service or facility used by people directly or indirectly affected by gambling-related harm. |
| Gambling-related harm | The adverse impacts from gambling on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and society. These harms affect resources, relationships and health. The impact from gambling-related harm may be short-lived and episodic but can be durable, having enduring consequences and exacerbating existing inequalities. The impact of these harms can be felt by individuals, families and communities.[6] |
| Harm Minimisation | Harm minimisation or reduction has been defined as follows:<br>"Harm reduction refers to a policy or program directed towards minimising or decreasing the adverse health, social and economic consequences of gambling behaviour for individuals, families, communities and society. A harm reduction strategy does not require abstention from gambling".[7] |
| Hotel | A venue with a general liquor licence and permission to operate electronic gaming machines. |
| Individual(s) | Means a resident(s) of the Knox Municipality. |
| Non-gambling facilities | Alternative non-gaming entertainment and recreation facilities include hotels, clubs, cinemas, restaurants, bars, theatres, galleries, exhibition centres, sporting venues and indoor recreation facilities. |
| VCGLR | The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) is the independent statutory authority that regulates Victoria's gambling and liquor industries. |

## 6. Council Policy

### 6.1 Policy Statement

Council is committed to mitigating the negative impacts of electronic gaming in the municipality by adopting a harm minimisation approach in relation to the use of electronic gaming machines. This

[4] Queensberry Hotel Pty Ltd v Minister for Planning and Community Development [2013] VCAT 444)
[5] Armstrong, A., & Carroll, M. (2017). *Gambling activity in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
[6] Wardle, Heather and Reith, Gerda and Best, David and McDaid, David and Platt, Stephen (2018) *Measuring gambling-related harms: a framework for action*. Gambling Commission, Birmingham, UK.
[7] Canadian Public Health Association (2000) in https://www.adelaide.edu.au/saces/docs/problemgamblingandharmtowardnationaldefinition.pdf

commitment is underpinned by its Community and Council Plan 2017-2021 goals, which seek to enable a community that is safe and secure; healthy, happy and well; and has confidence in Council's decision-making.

Council recognises that electronic gaming machines can pose a threat to public health and wellbeing due to the harm this activity can cause for individuals, families and the community. However, it accepts that the use of electronic gaming machines is a legal form of entertainment, which may be associated with some benefits for people who do not experience harm from gambling. Council, therefore, does not advocate for the prohibition of electronic gaming.

6.2 Policy Goal

Council is committed to mitigating the negative social and economic impacts of electronic gaming on local communities.

Council's goal is, therefore, to demonstrate leadership in preventing and mitigating the negative social and economic impacts of electronic gaming machines on the community.

6.3 Policy Objectives

The key strategic objectives of the Electronic Gaming Machine Policy are:

6.3.1 To strengthen Council's capacity to manage the location and operation of electronic gaming machines through transparent, consistent and coordinated decision-making processes, regulation and enforcement; and

6.3.2 To reduce the potential public health and wellbeing harm caused to individuals and the community by electronic gaming machines through engaging and collaborating with key stakeholders, disseminating information on the risks and impacts associated with gambling-related harms, facilitating access to non-gambling activities and advocacy.

6.4 Electronic Gaming Machine Policy Actions

The strategies in the Policy have been developed utilising data from the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation and other credible sources and are in line with the four key roles and functions that Council can undertake in relation to electronic gaming.

6.4.1 Key Roles and Functions 1: Plan, Regulate and Enforce

6.4.1.1 Manage the location and operation of gaming venues and electronic gaming machines in Knox by:

- Discouraging proposals for new gaming venues or the relocation of electronic gaming machines in or in close proximity to communities at an elevated risk of gambling-related harms;
- Discouraging proposals for electronic gaming machines to be located within 400 metres (convenient walking distance) or in a clear line of sight of facilities and services associated with day to day activities, or gambling sensitive uses;
- Discouraging a proposal for electronic gaming machines if there are reasonable grounds to consider that the operation of the gaming venue and its associated activities may adversely affect the amenity of the surrounding area through opening hours of the venue, management of patrons, generation of noise or disturbance, or other off-site amenity impacts; and
- Discouraging proposals for electronic gaming machines in areas with a high density of electronic gaming machines per 1,000 adults.

6.4.1.2 Oppose applications for new gaming venues or an increase in the number of electronic gaming machines within or outside the City of Knox which would result in a net social and economic detriment for the Knox community. Refer to Electronic Gaming Policy Procedure for making a submission to the VCGLR (Appendix A).

6.4.1.3 Identify and understand the impacts of electronic gaming machines by collecting, analysing and reporting data on electronic gaming machine activity and its impact on the Knox community on a regular basis.

6.4.1.4 Integrate the Electronic Gaming Machine Policy and supporting evidence in the Knox Gambling Profile 2020 into Council plans and policies and decision-making processes.

6.4.2 Key Roles and Functions 2: Manage and Deliver/Provide

6.4.2.1 Discourage the operation of electronic gaming machines on Council-owned land by:

- Not renewing a lease to any club which operates or entering into a new lease with a club that intends to operate electronic gaming machines on Council-owned land;
- Not supporting any increase in the number of electronic gaming machines held by the gaming venue which currently leases Council-owned land[8];
- Not accepting sponsorship from organisations or businesses that derive their income from electronic gaming machines; and
- Not providing community grants, financial assistance or in-kind support to an organisation or business that operates electronic gaming machines.

6.4.2.2 Identify opportunities to continue providing non-gambling social, leisure, entertaining and recreation facilities.

6.4.2.3 Facilitate access to alternative recreational and social activities by engaging with community organisations and gaming venues to encourage, support and grow additional recreational and social activities in Knox, particularly where gaming venues are located and populations are vulnerable to the high cost of living and have limited access to local services and facilities.

6.4.2.4 Prohibit Knox City Council ratepayer directly funded or sponsored meetings, functions or events of any kind at a Knox hotel or club that operates electronic gaming machines.

6.4.3 Key Roles and Functions 3: Inform, Educate and Engage

6.4.3.1 Raise awareness of the risks and harms associated with electronic gaming machines by collaborating with relevant organisations to support community education and information campaigns which focus on:

- Expenditure on electronic gaming machines in Knox; and
- The health and wellbeing impacts of electronic gaming on individuals, families and community businesses.

6.4.3.2 Continue to engage with stakeholders and the community when preparing submissions to the VCGLR on gaming applications and assessing planning permit applications to install and use electronic gaming machines.

[8] There is only one club with electronic gaming machines that currently leases Council land.

6.4.4 Key Roles and Functions 4: Facilitate, Represent, Partner and Advocate

6.4.4.1 Advocate for electronic gaming machine reform in partnership with State-wide alliances and stakeholders for gaming reform in the following areas:

- Transparent and equitable allocation of State Government revenue acquired from taxes from electronic gaming machines;
- The community contribution made by clubs with electronic gaming machines; and
- The implementation of best-practice harm minimisation measures relating to gaming venue design, operation, standards, regulation and administration.

6.4.4.2 Continue to participate in the initiatives of the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

6.4.4.3 Continue to collaborate with adjoining municipalities when preparing appropriate responses to applications for gaming licences or planning permits to install and use electronic gaming machines within and beyond the Knox municipal boundary.

## 7. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may arise that lead to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this Policy, it must be considered by Council.

# KNOX GAMBLING POLICY PROFILE 2024

November 2024

Knox Gambling Policy Profile 2024
NOVEMBER 2024

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## Contents

Figures ..... iii
Tables ..... iii
Acronyms ..... iv
Glossary ..... v
1 Introduction ..... 1
1.1 Background and scope of tasks ..... 1
1.2 Methodology ..... 1
2 Context ..... 2
2.1 Strategic location ..... 2
2.2 Gambling in Victoria ..... 2
2.3 Knox gambling profile ..... 4
2.3.1 Gaming venues ..... 4
2.3.2 Electronic gaming machines ..... 5
2.3.3 Electronic gaming machine player loss ..... 6
2.3.4 Benchmarking key electronic gaming machine indicators ..... 8
2.4 Community and health profile ..... 9
2.4.1 Population size and growth ..... 9
2.4.2 Socio-economic and health profile ..... 10
2.4.3 Crime and safety ..... 11
3 Regulatory and strategic framework ..... 12
3.1 Regulatory framework ..... 12
3.1.1 Overview ..... 12
3.1.2 Federal ..... 12
3.1.3 State ..... 12
3.1.4 Local government's statutory roles ..... 16
3.1.5 Gaming venue approval ..... 18
3.2 Knox strategic framework ..... 18
3.2.1 Plans and policies ..... 18
3.2.2 Knox Planning Scheme ..... 19
4 Feedback from stakeholder engagement and community consultation ..... 21
5 Understanding gambling-related harm ..... 22
5.1 Definition of gambling-related harm ..... 22
5.1.1 Framing harm from gambling ..... 22
5.1.2 A public health approach to gambling-related harm ..... 22
5.2 Gambling behaviours and expenditure ..... 23
5.3 Risks, prevalence and determinants ..... 24

5.3.1 General ..... 24
5.3.2 Socio-economic determinants of harm ..... 25
5.3.3 Technological and environmental determinants of harm ..... 28
5.4 Vulnerability to gambling-related harm ..... 34
5.4.1 Intersectionality of risks and impacts ..... 34
5.4.2 Vulnerability in Knox ..... 34
6 Towards reviewing the *Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020* ..... 35
6.1 Benchmarking ..... 35
6.1.1 Titles of the social policy ..... 35
6.1.2 Role of the social policy ..... 35
6.1.3 Scope ..... 35
6.1.4 Framework ..... 36
6.1.5 Council's policy positions ..... 36
6.1.6 Principles for a strong and defensible policy and action plan ..... 36
6.1.7 Framing key components of the policy ..... 37
6.1.8 Structure of the strategies and actions ..... 39
6.1.9 Collaboration with stakeholders ..... 40
6.2 Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020-2023 peer review ..... 42
7 Conclusion and next steps ..... 44
7.1 Conclusion ..... 44
7.2 Recommendations ..... 44
Appendix 1– Bibliography ..... 45
Appendix 2– Key gaming indicators ..... 47
Appendix 3 – Socio-economic profile ..... 49
Appendix 4 – Benchmarking Council social policies ..... 50
Appendix 5 – Gender Impact Assessment Framework ..... 55
Purpose of a Gender Impact Assessment ..... 55
Gender impact considerations of a gambling policy ..... 55
Gender Impact Assessment Framework ..... 55

## Figures

Figure 1 - Methodology....1
Figure 2 – Strategic location....2
Figure 3 – Average loss per Victorian adult by gambling product, 2016-17 to 2022-23....3
Figure 4 – Venue location....4
Figure 5 – Player loss, Knox and metropolitan municipalities, 2013-14 to 2023-24....6
Figure 6 – Player loss per attached EGM entitlement and venue type, 2023-24....8
Figure 7 – Knox's population size and growth, 2021-2041....9
Figure 8 – Council's statutory roles....17
Figure 9 – Decision-making framework....18
Figure 10 – Proportion of gambling households' disposable income spent on gambling, by income quintile....28
Figure 11 – EGM player losses in Victoria, 2013-14 to 2023-24....28
Figure 12 – EGM player loss as a percentage of total gambling player loss, 2011-12 to 2020-21....29
Figure 13 – Per capita gaming and wagering losses in Victoria, 2020-21....29

## Tables

Table 1 – EGMs, Knox, 2023-24....5
Table 2 – Player loss per Knox venue, 2023-24....7
Table 3 – Knox's community socio-economic and health profile compared to the Eastern Metropolitan Region....10
Table 4 – Stakeholder engagement and community consultation feedback....21
Table 5 – Participation in gambling activities in Victoria, 2008, 2017 and 2018-19....24
Table 6 – Prevalence of gambling-related harms across Victorian regions....25
Table 7 – Protective and risk factors for EGMs....31
Table 8 – Approaches to framing the strategies and action plans....38
Table 9 – Scope of strategies and actions....39
Table 10 - Stakeholders....40
Table 11 – Peer review of *Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020-2023*....42
Table 12 – Player loss 2023-24....47
Table 13 – Adults per venue, density EGMs per 1,000 adults, player loss 2023-24....48
Table 14 – Gender Impact Assessment Framework....56

## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACMA** | Australia Communications and Media Authority |
| **EGM** | Electronic Gaming Machine |
| **GIA** | Gender Impact Assessment |
| **LGA** | Local Government Authority |
| **SEIA** | Social and Economic Impact Assessment |
| **VCAT** | Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal |
| **VGCCC** | Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission |

## Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **Advocacy** | Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. |
| **Cluster of gaming venues** | Three gaming venues located within a radius of 400m.[1] |
| **Community** | People who have a stake and interest in Knox, including:<br>• Those who live, work, study, conduct business or provide services in the municipality.<br>• Those involved in local community groups or organisations.<br>• Those who visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the municipality.<br>• Those who share an interest, a sense of identity or a shared common goal. |
| **Community Benefit Statement** | Community benefit statements provide the framework for reporting expenditure on community benefits by club and racing club venue operators that receive gaming revenue in a financial year. A community benefit statement verifies whether the community benefit provided by the club is equal to at least 8.33 per cent of its net gaming machine revenue. Completion of community benefit statements is mandated by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003.* |
| **Community contributions** | A community contribution is a cash or in-kind contribution made by clubs and hotels often considered when assessing the social and economic impacts of a gaming licence or planning permit for electronic gaming machines (EGMs). The value cash community contribution is typically determined by the number of EGMs proposed. In-kind community contributions may consist of providing certain facilities free of charge to community groups. The provision of community contributions is secured through conditions on gaming licences and in some cases, in planning permit conditions. |
| **Community Support Fund (CSF).** | Hotels operating electronic gaming machines (EGMs) are required to pay 8.33 per cent of this revenue to the CSF which is a trust fund governed by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003.* The funds are directed back to the community (not necessarily the community from which the revenue was generated) to support initiatives such as programs supporting people affected by gambling-related harm and substance abuse; youth programs; sport and recreation programs; art and tourism programs; and costs associated with administering the CSF. The payment to the Community Support Fund is mandated by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003.* |
| **Council** | Knox City Council |
| **Council-owned land** | Land owned by Council, including vacant land, discontinued roads, and any building and development thereon. |
| **Electronic gaming machine** | An electronic gaming machine is a computerised gambling device that has a video screen displaying symbols on simulated reels. Cash is inserted into the machine and buttons are used to place bets. The machine randomly |

[1] Francis Hotel Pty Ltd v Melbourne CC (includes Summary) (Red Dot) [2012] VCAT 1896 (12 December 2012)

| | |
|---|---|
| | determines the position of symbols on the screen. Wins are returned as credits back into the machine.<br>They are also referred to as EGMs, pokies, pokie machines.[2] |
| **Equity** | Equity means that available information, spaces, services and programs should deliver outcomes equal for all. This requires that services are able to consider and respond to the intersecting forms of disadvantage and discrimination to truly cater to all diverse needs.[3] |
| **Expenditure** | The monetary amount lost by people who gamble. Typically referred to as player loss. |
| **Gambling** | Gambling/betting requires a player to risk losing something of value (usually money) for the chance of winning more. Gambling outcomes may depend on correctly predicting an uncertain outcome (such as a particular horse coming first in a race), or luck (such as a winning combination of symbols on an electronic gaming machine).[4] |
| **Gambling-related harm** | Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population.[5] These harms include relationship breakdown, compromised mental and physical health and wellbeing, financial losses, demand for services, lost work productivity and crime.<br>Gambling-related harm can be divided into seven key areas: Financial harm, relationship disruption, emotional or psychological distress, decrements to health, cultural harm, reduced work or study performance and criminal activity. These harms can further be considered as general harms (which occur at any time), crisis harms, which are associated with attempts to seek help, and legacy harms, which occur long after gambling has ceased.[6] |
| **Gaming** | For the purposes of this report, gaming refers to gambling using electronic gaming machines. |
| **Gaming venue** | A gaming venue is classified as a 'gaming premises' under the Knox Planning Scheme. The definition of a 'gaming premises' is 'land used for gambling by gaming, and where there is the ability to receive a monetary reward'.<br>The Gambling Regulation Act 2003 permits the use of EGMs in venues with a pub licence (hotel operating under a General Liquor Licence), club licence (operating under a Full Club Liquor Licence) and racing club licence (operating under a Full Club Liquor Licence).<br>The Gambling Regulation Act 2003 defines a club as a 'club, society or other association of persons by whatever name called and whether incorporated or unincorporated'. |

[2] VRGF
[3] Introducing gender impact assessments | Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au)
[5] Browne, M, Langham, E, Rawat, V, Greer, N, Li, E, Rose, J, Rockloff, M, Donaldson, P, Thorne, H, Goodwin, B, Bryden, G & Best, T 2016, Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[6] VRGF

| | |
|---|---|
| | There is no definition of a hotel or racing club under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003.<br>Some clubs operating EGMs in Victoria provide sporting activities such as golf, tennis or bowls. |
| **Gender impact assessment** | A process of critically thinking about how policies, programs and services will meet the different needs of women, men and gender diverse people.<br>The aim of a gender impact assessment is to create better and fairer outcomes and ensure all people have equal access to opportunities and resources. |
| **Harm minimisation** | For the purposes of this report, harm minimisation refers to a range of statutory and non-statutory measures that seek to reduce the potential for gambling to cause harm in the community in instances where there is access to opportunities to gamble. These measures typically involve design of the technology and management of gambling settings. |
| **Harm prevention** | For the purposes of this report, harm prevention refers to a range of non-statutory measures which seek to avoid the risk of gambling-related harm from occurring in the first place. These measures focus on protecting those most at risk of gambling-related harm by avoiding access to opportunities to gamble. |
| **Partnership** | A relationship between Council and stakeholders, and between stakeholders themselves involving shared responsibilities for implementing a range of actions that seek to achieve a common goal such as upholding the community's health and wellbeing. |
| **Policy** | Sets out Council's views with respect to a particular matter. It includes a set of principles or rules that provide a definite direction for the organisation. |
| **Public Health Approach** | A public health approach involves utilising scientific knowledge, evidence-based strategies, and community-based interventions to improve the health and well-being of populations by focusing on prevention, health promotion, and addressing the underlying determinants of health. |
| **Stakeholder** | An individual or group identified with a strong interest in a particular topic in regard to the decision-making of the Council and are directly affected by the outcome of any decisions. |
| **Vulnerable groups** | Groups within the community at an elevated risk of gambling-related harms as a result of their age, socio-economic status, gender, cultural and linguistic background or exposure to opportunities to gamble. |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and scope of tasks

Knox City Council (Council) is committed to protecting and improving the health and wellbeing of its community, particularly those at risk of gambling-related harm.

Council's strategic planning framework acknowledges its various roles in preventing gambling-related harm in the community.

The Knox Electronic Gaming Machine (Pokies) Policy 2020 requires review and updating to ensure it aligns with the contemporary statutory and strategic framework managing gambling activities in the municipality.

The Knox Gambling Policy Profile 2024 (the Report) provides the evidence underpinning the review of the Knox Electronic Gaming Machine (Pokies) Policy 2020.

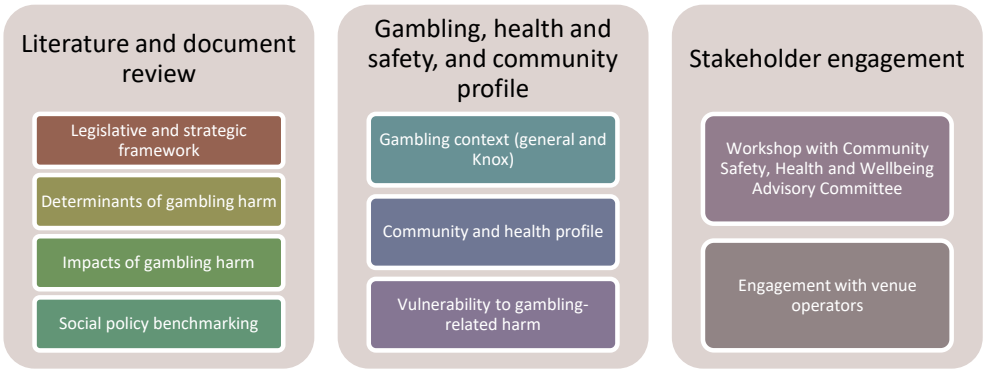
The Report covers the following:

- The current gambling context, both in general and within the municipality.
- The legislative and policy environment within which gambling takes place in the municipality, including Council's statutory roles in preventing and minimising gambling harm.
- The social and health profile of the community with a focus on groups at an elevated risk of gambling harm including women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, CALD groups, low socio-economic families. This includes the intersectionality of health issues associated with gambling harm.
- Factors that support or cause the gambling harm to occur for individuals, families and communities and which of these factors local government can realistically influence to prevent and reduce local problems associated with gambling harm.
- The prevalence of and vulnerability to gambling harm in the municipality.
- Key principles underpinning Victorian local government social gambling policies which will guide the review of Council's existing social gambling policy.

## 1.2 Methodology

The preparation of the Report involved the following (refer to Figure 1):

**Figure 1 - Methodology**




The literature and documents included in the review is provided in Appendix 1.

# 2 Context

This section describes the physical and community context within which gambling takes place in Knox.

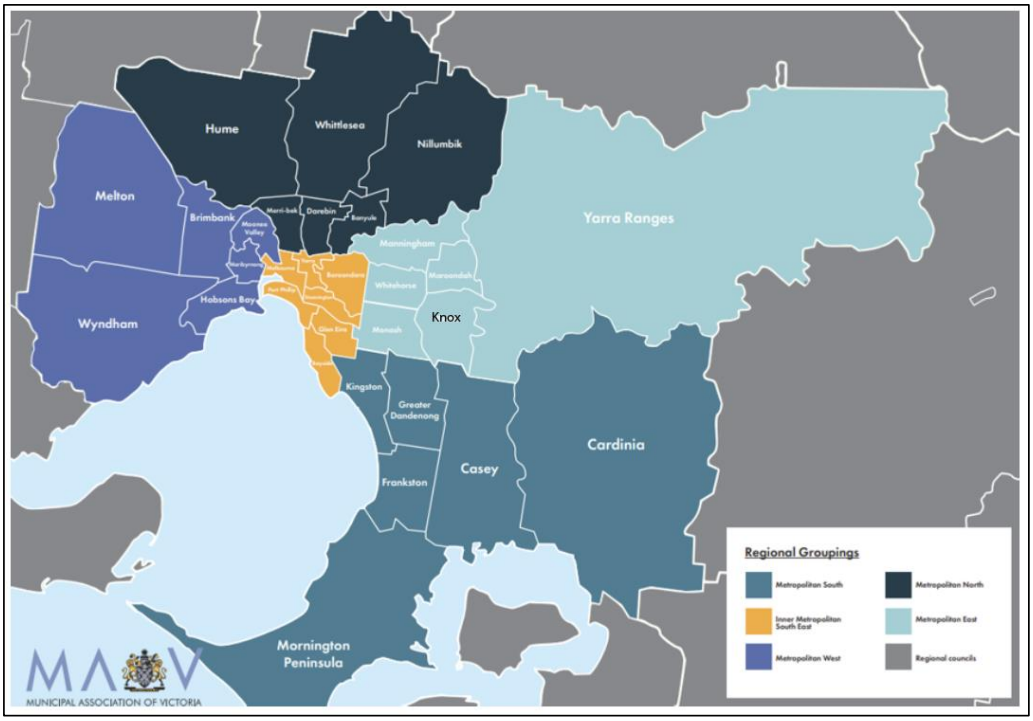
## 2.1 Strategic location

Knox (the municipality) is located in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, between 20 and 25 kilometres south-east of the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD).

The municipality is adjoined by the City of Maroondah to the north, the Cities of Whitehorse and Monash to the west, the City of Greater Dandenong to the south-west, the City of Casey to the south and Yarra Ranges Shire to the east (refer to Figure 2).

The municipality includes the areas of Wantirna, Wantirna South, Bayswater, Boronia, The Basin, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Knoxfield, Scoresby, Rowville North, Rowville Central, Rowville South and Lysterfield (refer to Figure 2).

**Figure 2 – Strategic location**




Source: MAV

## 2.2 Gambling in Victoria[7]

In 2018-19 Victorians lost $2.699 billion to EGMs. EGM player loss decreased in 2019–20 ($1.988 billion), 2020–21 ($1.565 billion) and 2021-22 ($2.237 billion) due to COVID-19-related venue closures. Following the end of COVID-19-related closures, EGM player losses increased to $3.03 billion in THE 2023-24 Financial Year.

[7] Source for Sport and race betting: State Revenue Office (SRO) Annual Review 2022-23
Source for Pokies, Casino and Lotteries: Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) Annual Reports 2016-17 to 2022-23

Casino losses (table games and EGMs) were $1.679 billion in 2018–19. Casino losses decreased in 2019–20 ($1.235 billion), 2020–21 ($399 million) and 2021-22 ($645 million) due to COVID-19-related closures. Following the end of COVID-19-related closures, casino losses increased to $983 million in 2022-23.

Lotteries losses increased from $642 million in 2018-19 to $764 million in 2022-23. Lottery sales were only slightly impacted by COVID-19-related closures.

In 2019, Victoria introduced a Point of Consumption Tax (POCT) for sport and race betting expenditure. This means that all sport and race betting losses by Victorian punters are recorded in Victoria for taxation purposes, regardless of whether they bet with a Victorian bookmaker or one licensed interstate.

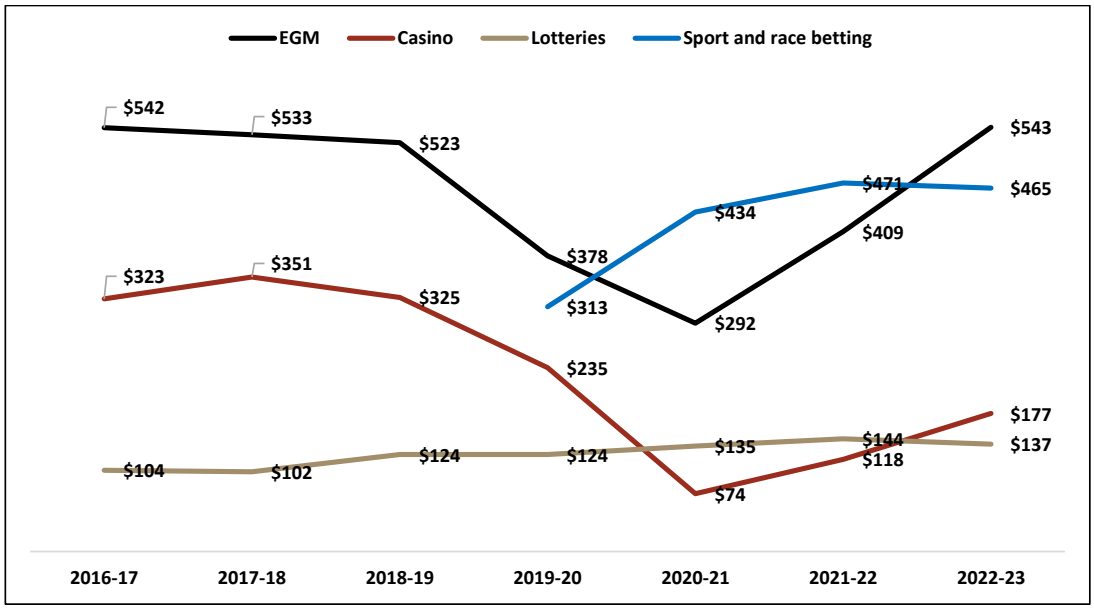
Sport and race betting losses increased from an estimated $1.65 billion in 2019–20 to $2.58 billion in 2022–23.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic average gambling losses per adult increased for lotteries and sport and race betting while average gambling losses per adult for casino gambling and EGMs decreased (refer to Figure 3).

Traditionally, average gambling losses per adult are highest for EGMs (refer to Figure 3).

Between 2016-17 and 2022-23 average losses per adult for EGMs and lotteries increased while the average losses per adult for casino gambling and sport and race betting has decreased (refer to Figure 3).

**Figure 3 – Average loss per Victorian adult by gambling product, 2016-17 to 2022-23**




Source: VGCCC

## 2.3 Knox gambling profile

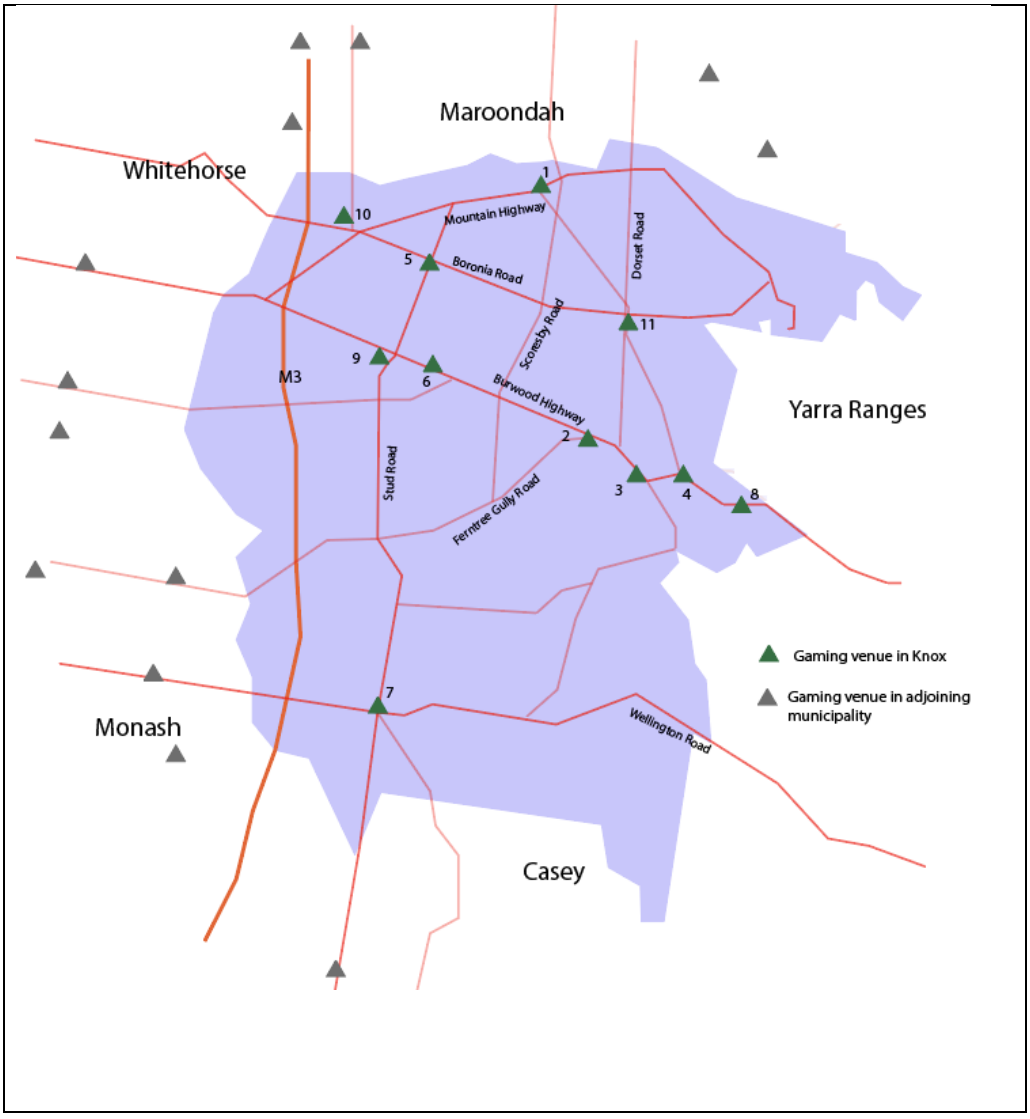
### 2.3.1 Gaming venues

Knox currently has 11 gaming venues (four clubs and seven hotels). Ferntree Gully has four venues, Wantirna and Wantirna South each have two venues, and Bayswater, Boronia and Rowville each have one venue.

There are several gaming venues located in close proximity to the municipality's northern, western and south western boundaries in the Cities of Maroondah, Whitehorse, Monash and Greater Dandenong respectively (refer to Figure4).

Knox's gaming venues are highly accessible with all of them located along or in close proximity to major arterials (Burwood Highway, Boronia Road, Mountain Highway and Wellington Road). Refer to Figure 4.

**Figure 4 – Venue location**



| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Bayswater Hotel |
| 2 | Boronia Club Hotel (Zagame's Boronia) |
| 3 | Club Hotel (Ferntree Gully) |
| 4 | Ferntree Gully Bowling Club |
| 5 | Ferntree Gully Hotel |
| 6 | Knox Club |
| 7 | Knox Tavern |
| 8 | Stamford Hotel |
| 9 | The Royal Hotel Ferntree Gully |
| 10 | Wantirna Club |
| 11 | Wantirna Hill Club |

Source: SymPlan and VGCCC

### 2.3.2 Electronic gaming machines

There are currently 771 attached electronic gaming machines (EGMs) and 861 EGM licences in the municipality (refer to Table 1).

**Table 1 – EGMs, Knox, 2023-24**

| Ref | Venue | Address | Venue Type | Attached EGMs | EGM licences |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bayswater Hotel | 780 Mountain Highway Bayswater | Hotel | 80 | 105 |
| 2 | Boronia Club Hotel (Zagame's Boronia) | 112 Boronia Road Boronia | Hotel | 80 | 80 |
| 3 | Club Hotel (Ferntree Gully) | 848 Burwood Highway Ferntree Gully | Hotel | 40 | 45 |
| 4 | Ferntree Gully Bowling Club | 14 Merricks Close Ferntree Gully | Club | 34 | 34 |
| 5 | Ferntree Gully Hotel | 1130 Burwood Highway Ferntree Gully | Hotel | 49 | 70 |
| 6 | Knox Club | Cnr Stud & Boronia Roads Wantirna | Club | 100 | 100 |
| 7 | Knox Tavern | 1 Capital City Boulevard, Knox District Centre Wantirna South | Hotel | 77 | 77 |
| 8 | Stamford Hotel | Cnr Stud & Wellington Road Rowville | Hotel | 85 | 103 |
| 9 | The Royal Hotel Ferntree Gully | 1208 Burwood Highway Ferntree Gully | Hotel | 69 | 90 |
| 10 | Wantirna Club | 350 Stud Road Wantirna South | Club | 97 | 97 |
| 11 | Wantirna Hill Club | 715 Boronia Road Wantirna | Club | 60 | 60 |
| | **Knox** | | | **771** | **861** |

Source: VGCCC

There are 90 licensed EGMs currently not operating.

The municipality is currently 451 EGMs below the municipal cap of 1,222 EGMs as per the Ministerial Order of 2017. A municipal cap is a maximum and not a benchmark. It is based on an average of 10 EGMs per 1,000 adults applied across all municipalities in Victoria not covered by a regional cap.

The adjoining municipalities are subject to the following regional caps:

- Casey to the south is subject to a total cap of 1,325 EGMs consisting of a regional cap of 867 EGMs over selected localities[8] and a municipal cap of 458 EGMs over the rest of the municipality.
- Greater Dandenong to the south-west is subject to a regional cap of 989 which applies to the entire municipality.
- Monash to the west is subject to a total cap of 1,393 EGMs consisting of a regional cap of 616 over selected localities[9] and a municipal cap of 777 over the rest of the municipality.

A regional cap is imposed over the localities considered to be at an elevated risk of gambling-related harms due to their high expenditure, high levels of socio-economic disadvantage and high density of EGMs per 1,000 adults.

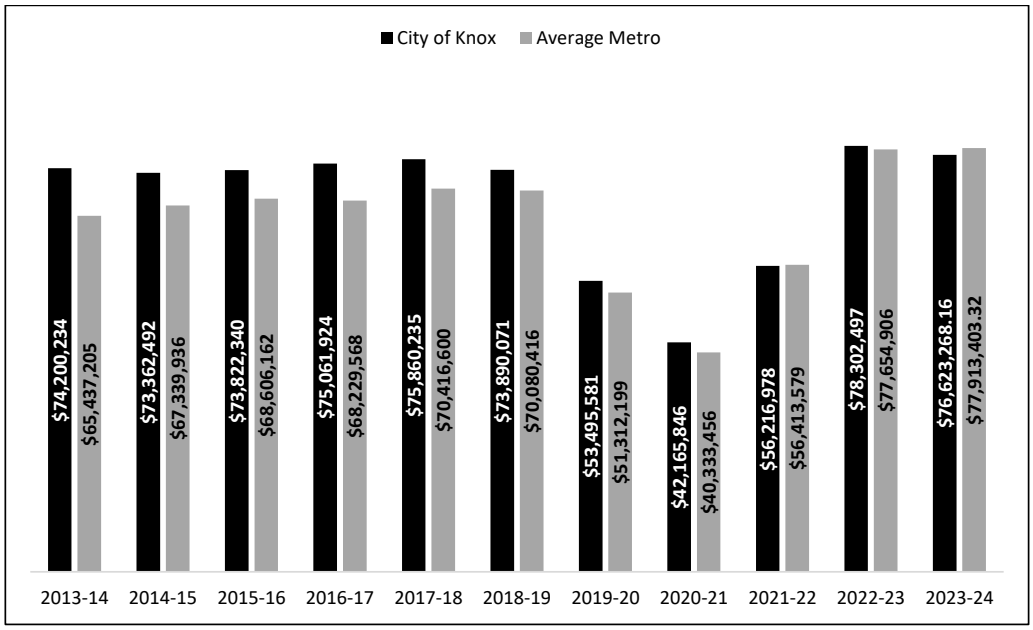
### 2.3.3 Electronic gaming machine player loss

Player loss is the money spent on EGMs, often referred to as EGM expenditure.

#### Municipal

In the 2023-24 Financial Year EGM player loss in Knox was $76.6 million.[10] This is the second highest it has been in the past decade and is lower than the total player loss in the 2022-23 Financial Year (refer to Figure 5).

**Figure 5 – Player loss, Knox and metropolitan municipalities, 2013-14 to 2023-24**




Source: VGCCC

Following a reduction in EGM expenditure because of the closure of gaming venues during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Knox has experienced an overall increase in total EGM player loss since the gaming opened in the 2021-22 Financial Year.

[8] Berwick, Botanic Ridge, Cranbourne, Cranbourne East, Cranbourne North, Cranbourne South (north of Browns Road within the City of Casey), Cranbourne West, Devon Meadows (north of Browns Road within the City of Casey), Doveton, Eumemmerring, Hallam, Hampton Park, Junction Village, Lynbrook, Lyndhurst, Narre Warren, Narre Warren South)
[9] Ashwood, Chadstone, Clayton, Hughesdale, Huntingdale, Oakleigh, Oakleigh East, Oakleigh South, Mulgrave and Notting Hill
[10] $78,302,496.93

### Venue specific

In the 2023-24 Financial Year (refer to Table 2):

- the Stamford Hotel and Boronia Club Hotel had the highest total player loss ($13.6 million and $11 million respectively)
- The Stamford Hotel and Boronia Club Hotel had the highest player loss per attached EGM entitlement.

**Table 2 – Player loss per Knox venue, 2023-24**

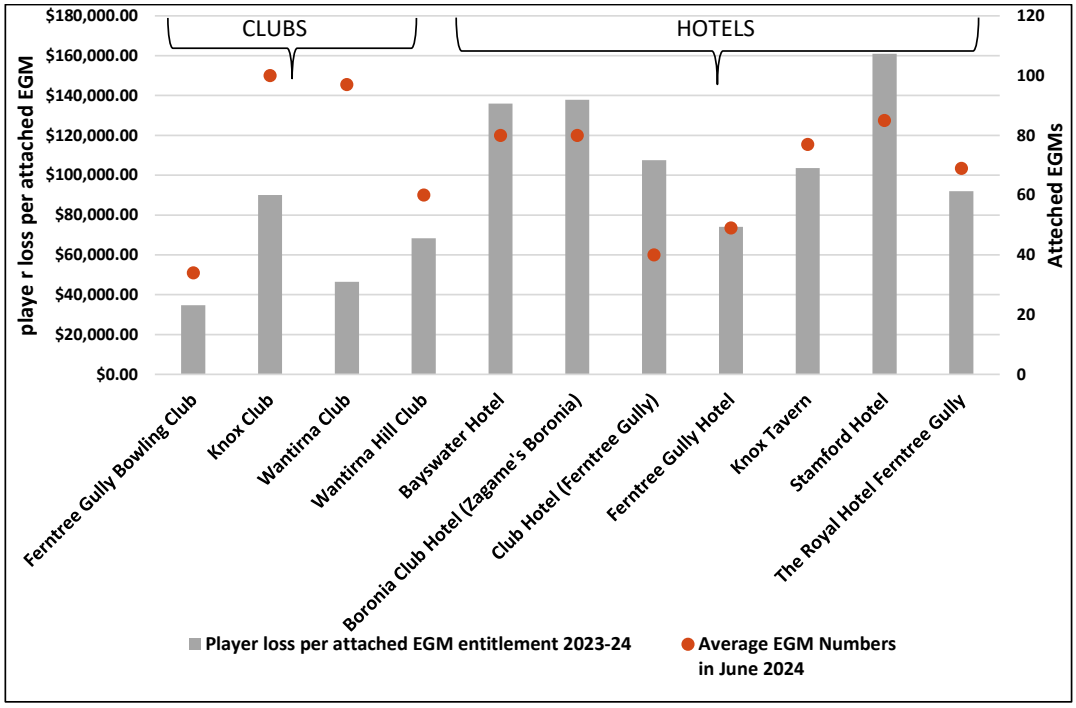
| | Venue Type | Attached EGMs | Licensed EGMs | Player loss | Player loss per attached EGM entitlement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ferntree Gully Bowling Club | Club | 34 | 34 | $1,182,152.57 | $34,769.19 |
| Knox Club | Club | 100 | 100 | $9,006,091.78 | $90,060.92 |
| Wantirna Club | Club | 97 | 97 | $4,505,821.97 | $46,451.77 |
| Wantirna Hill Club | Club | 60 | 60 | $4,101,317.05 | $68,355.28 |
| Bayswater Hotel | Hotel | 80 | 105 | $10,879,316.89 | $135,991.46 |
| Boronia Club Hotel (Zagame's Boronia) | Hotel | 80 | 80 | $11,029,022.02 | $137,862.78 |
| Club Hotel (Ferntree Gully) | Hotel | 40 | 45 | $4,301,129.24 | $107,528.23 |
| Ferntree Gully Hotel | Hotel | 49 | 70 | $3,626,181.81 | $74,003.71 |
| Knox Tavern | Hotel | 77 | 77 | $7,971,444.16 | $103,525.25 |
| Stamford Hotel | Hotel | 85 | 103 | $13,677,213.01 | $160,908.39 |
| The Royal Hotel Ferntree Gully | Hotel | 69 | 90 | $6,343,577.66 | $91,935.91 |
| **Knox average** | | **70** | **78** | **$6,965,751.65** | **$95,581.17** |
| **Knox** | | **771** | **861** | **$76,623,268.16** | |
| *Average metro clubs* | | | | *$5,328,997.33* | *$82,552.66* |
| *Average metro hotels* | | | | *$8,889,773.58* | *$143,743.68* |
| *Average metro* | | | | *$7,467,738.34* | *$119,513.68* |
| *Average Victorian venues* | | | | *$6,108,923.84* | *$115,676.35* |

Source: VGCCC

As demonstrated in Figure 6, Knox's larger venues do not necessarily have the highest player loss per attached EGM entitlement. The relationship appears to be between total player loss and venue type with the municipality's hotels having a higher player loss per attached EGM entitlement than clubs. For example, the Knox Club and Wantirna Club have the most EGMs but a lower player loss per attached EGM entitlement than all the hotels other than the Club Hotel.

Interestingly, the only venue in the municipality that offers recreation activities and is located on Council owned land had the lowest player loss per attached EGM entitlement of all the venues in the municipality.

**Figure 6 – Player loss per attached EGM entitlement and venue type, 2023-24**




Source: VGCCC

### 2.3.4 Benchmarking key electronic gaming machine indicators

In the 2023-24 Financial Year Knox compared favourably in relation to total player loss, player loss per attached EGM and player loss per venue relative to metropolitan municipalities and the average for the adjoining municipalities (refer to Appendix 2).

In the 2023-24 Financial Year, relative to metropolitan municipalities, Knox compared unfavourably in relation EGM losses per adult, number of adults per venue and density of EGMs per 1,000 adults (refer to Appendix 2).

## 2.4 Community and health profile

The information in this section guides the preparation of a Gender Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix 5).

### 2.4.1 Population size and growth

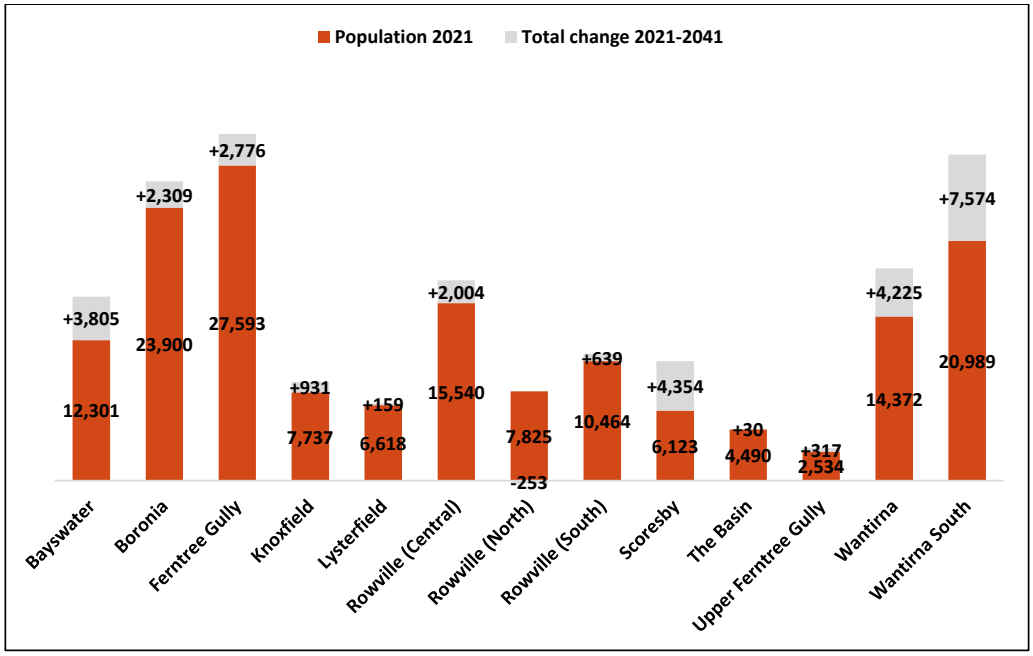
The estimated resident population in Knox for 2023 is 161,766.[11]

Knox's population is concentrated in the central part of the municipality along a north-south axis, with population densities being lowest in the localities closest to the western and eastern municipal boundaries.

The municipality's population is expected to grow by 28,871 people between 2021 and 2041 with the greatest absolute increase projected in Wantirna South, Wantirna and Scoresby (refer to Figure 7).

Knox's gaming venues are concentrated in the localities with the largest existing and projected populations (Ferntree Gully has four venues, with Wantirna and Wantirna South each having two gaming venues).

**Figure 7 – Knox's population size and growth, 2021-2041**




Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, compiled by .id consulting

[11] ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021, compiled by .id consulting

### 2.4.2 Socio-economic and health profile

Compared to the Eastern Metropolitan Region Knox's community is less culturally diverse, less financially vulnerable but has higher proportions of people with low educational attainment and compromised mental and physical health and wellbeing (refer to Table 3).

**Table 3 – Knox's community socio-economic and health profile compared to the Eastern Metropolitan Region**

| Higher proportions | Lower proportions |
|---|---|
| **Households** | |
| One parent families (11.2 per cent compared to 10.1 per cent) | Lone person households (20.7 per cent compared to 22.2 per cent) |
| **Cultural diversity** | |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (0.6 per cent compared to 0.5 per cent) | People speaking a language other than English (28.7 per cent compared to 32.7 per cent)<br>Recent arrivals (11.1 per cent compared to 18 per cent)<br>People not fluent in English (4.3 per cent compared to 5.4 per cent)<br>Population born in China (5.3 per cent compared to 7.9 per cent). |
| **Income and employment** | |
| Personal income $28,800 to $42,599 (24.3 per cent compared to 23.1 per cent)<br>Disengaged young people aged 15-24 years (6.5 per cent compared to 5.1 per cent) | Low-income households (19 per cent compared to 19.4 per cent)<br>Unemployment rate (4.4 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent) |
| **Housing tenure and costs** | |
| Households with rental stress (20.5 per cent compared to 31.6 per cent)<br>Households with mortgage stress (16.5 per cent compared to 18.1 per cent) | Renting social housing (2 per cent compared to 1.6 per cent) |
| **Education** | |
| Not applicable | People with below Year 11 schooling (23.1 per cent compared to 19.1 per cent)<br>People with no qualifications (36.9 per cent compared to 33.1 per cent) |
| **Health and wellbeing** | |
| People with a long term health condition (33.4 per cent compared to 31 per cent)<br>People with a mental health condition (8.7 per cent compared to 7.8 per cent) | Not applicable |

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, compiled by .id consulting

### 2.4.3 Crime and safety

#### Criminal offences and family violence

In March 2024, compared to the Eastern Region, Knox had a lower rate of:

- recorded criminal offences per 100,000 population (6,292.5 and 6,876.7 respectively)
- family incidents per 100,000 population (1,219.7 and 1,472.7 respectively).

The suburbs which have consistently had the highest number of recorded criminal incidents over the past five years are Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Wantirna South, Rowville and Bayswater.

Between 2020 and 2024 the rate of recorded criminal incidents per 100,000 people in Knox fell by 13.7 per cent. However, in this period the rate of family incidents per 100,000 people in the municipality increased by 4.7 per cent.

#### Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

impacts of the two lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 on the wellbeing of Victorians have been the subject of two waves of research undertaken by VicHealth. The findings of the second wave of research indicate the following impacts on wellbeing as a result of the Pandemic:[12]

- a reduction in subjective wellbeing
- an increase in high psychological distress and poor social connection and
- an increase in reliance on low-cost unhealthy food, and a slight increase in food insecurity.
- Sub-populations with significantly less favourable results compared with Victorians include people aged 25-34 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people who are unemployed and people speaking languages other than English at home.[13]

Research undertaken on the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on gambling found almost one in three people signed up for a new online betting account with one in 20 starting to gamble online. Young men aged 18-34 years were most likely to sign up for new online accounts.[14]

Recent figures produced by the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency indicate the key crime measures have begun to stabilise after a reduction during the Pandemic. In the past year there has been an increase in the number of offences, number and rate of alleged offender incidents, victimisation rate and number and rate of family incidents across Victoria.

While there has not been a specific study of the potential impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the wellbeing of the community in Knox, it is likely these events have had similar impacts on the mental and physical health and wellbeing, and vulnerability to gambling-related harm in Knox's communities at an elevated risk of harm.

[12] VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study: Follow-up survey (2020), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne https://doi.org/10.37309/2020.PO1011
[13] VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study: Follow-up survey (2020), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne https://doi.org/10.37309/2020.PO1011
[14] Jenkinson, R et al (2020) *Gambling in Australia during COVID-19* Australian Gambling Research Centre

# 3 Regulatory and strategic framework

This section discusses the federal, state and local government regulatory and strategic framework within which gambling takes place in Knox and decisions on new gaming venues and EGMs are made by the Victorian State Government and Council.

## 3.1 Regulatory framework

### 3.1.1 Overview

Gambling is banned in Australia unless it is carried out under a licence.[15] There is no single overarching statute regulating gambling activities in Australia, nor is there a single overarching gambling authority. Instead, gambling in Australia is regulated at both the state/territory and federal level.[16]

Licensed are required for both online and in-venue gambling on lotteries, wagering and sports betting, and the use of EGMs in pubs and clubs.

The Federal Government Department of Social Services shares responsibility for online gambling harm minimisation with the states.

### 3.1.2 Federal[17] [18]

The Australian Constitution provides the federal government with powers to enact legislation regulating interactive gambling through the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The *Interactive Gambling Act 2001* prohibits online casino gaming, 'slot machines', instant lotteries wagering services that accept 'in place' betting on live sports events and poker in Australia.

The federal government has enacted 'rules' that restrict gambling advertising and odds promotion during broadcasts of live sport, with one key objective being to limit its exposure to children. These rules have been extended to online streaming of live sport. [19]

The Federal Government, together with the State and Territory Governments, has introduced the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering (National Framework) that applies to all licensed online wagering service providers and will offer protection to all active account holders. The National Framework consists of 10 measures to empower individuals and minimise the harm from online gambling. The measures include a voluntary opt-out pre-commitment scheme and BetStop, the free national self-exclusion register that allows people to block themselves from all licensed Australian online and telephone gambling providers. Registration varies from three months up to a lifetime and precludes people from opening a betting account, placing a bet or receiving direct marketing messages.

### 3.1.3 State

#### Legislative instruments

As the closest tier of government to the community, Council is responsible for creating environments that establish and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviours and prevent harm from gambling. This responsibility is defined by a suite of legislative instruments.

The *Local Government Act 2020* provides local governments with the authority to ensure the peace, order and good governance in its municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community. The Act states this role is to be fulfilled in collaboration with other Councils, Governments and statutory bodies.

[15] You win some, you lose more (aph.gov.au)
[16] Gambling Laws and Regulations Report 2024 Australia (iclg.com)
[17] Gambling Laws and Regulations Report 2024 Australia (iclg.com)
[18] Gambling reforms | Department of Social Services, Australian Government (dss.gov.au)
[19] Gambling Laws and Regulations Report 2024 Australia (iclg.com)

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* gives local government specific statutory responsibilities to plan for and contribute to protecting and improving health and wellbeing by creating supportive environments, strengthening the community's capacity to lead healthy lives, developing and implementing public health policies and programs, intervening if the community's health is potentially affected and collaborating with others involved in building healthy communities. The Act promotes evidence-based planning and decision-making and is founded on the precautionary principle which means if there is a risk to the community's health and wellbeing, the absence of scientific evidence should not justify postponing measures to prevent or control the risk.

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* requires local governments to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services.[20] Section 9(1) of the Act requires Council to prepare a gender impact assessment (GIA) when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct and significant impact on the public. Section 9(2) specifies what the GIA must contain. The Act is founded on the following gender equality principles:

1) All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
2) Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
3) Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
4) Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
5) Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
6) Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
7) All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
8) Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
9) Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
10) Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* is the key legislative tool involved in assessing planning permit applications for gaming venues. There is no reference to health and wellbeing in the objectives of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987.*

The purpose of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* is to guide planning for the use, development and protection of land in Victoria. The Act sets out the regulations for the operation and amendment of the Knox Planning Scheme, and other processes relating to the operation of land use in the municipality. Under this act Councils are required to have regard to the number of objectors in considering whether the use of development of land may have a significant social effect. This requirement also applies to decisions on applications considered under Clause 52.28 Gaming of the Knox Planning Scheme. EGMs may only be installed and operated once a planning permit has been approved (either by Council or on review by the Tribunal).

The *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* is the statutory instrument regulating the assessment of gaming venues and licences.

[20] Section 1 (b) Gender Equality Act 2020

Relevant objectives of the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (GRA) are:

(a) to foster responsible gambling in order to—

(i) minimise harm caused by problem gambling; and

(ii) accommodate those who gamble without harming themselves or others;

(ab) to ensure that minors are neither encouraged to gamble nor allowed to do so; and

(f) to promote tourism, employment and economic development generally in the State.

The maximum number of attached EGMs in an approved venue is 105.

Although there is overlap between the considerations under these two statutory instruments, there are differences. The key differences are:

1) The achievement of a positive or neutral impact on the wellbeing of a community is a statutory requirement under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* whereas the achievement of net community benefit is a key consideration under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
2) The *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* focuses on whether the premises are suitable for gaming whereas both the location and the premises are key considerations under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987.*
3) The *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* considers the impact on the municipality as a whole whereas the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* considers the impact on a more defined area around the site namely adjoining and nearby land uses.

### Regulation

The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) is Victoria's independent gambling authority responsible for licensing and compliance. The Office of Liquor and Gaming is a division within Victoria's Department of Justice and Community Safety responsible for policy, legislation, regulation and major licensing. On 1 July 2024 the VGCCC took more responsibility for gambling harm minimisation, incorporating most of the functions of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

Licences regulate retail lotteries (at newsagencies and other approved retail venues), fixed-odds betting (at racecourses, over the phone and via the internet) and retail betting (through totalisator agency boards or TABs) in Victoria.

Other factors regulated by the Victorian government are gambling advertisements on broadcast media and in-stadia and static advertising such as advertisements, logos on sports uniforms and advertisements placed on billboards and other infrastructure.

All gambling taxes and licence fees are collected by the Victorian State Government.

### Redistribution of gaming revenue to the community

There are three ways venue operators of clubs and hotels redistribute a portion of the revenue from EGMs back into the community.

1. The Community Support Fund (CSF) is a trust fund governed by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* to direct a portion of gaming revenue earned in hotels back to the community. As prescribed by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* hotels are required to pay 8.33 per cent of the revenue generated from the operation of EGMs in hotels to the CSF. CSF funds are provided to government portfolio departments for making grants to community-based organisations and councils, supporting them in building strong and sustainable communities. The funds are not necessarily distributed to the councils experiencing the greatest level of harm from gambling or generating the largest proportion of funds from gambling revenue.

2. The *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* requires club venue operators to prepare and lodge an audited community benefit statement (CBS) with the VGCCC for every financial year in which they receive gaming machine revenue. A community benefit statement verifies whether the community benefit provided by the club is equal to at least 8.33 per cent of its net gaming machine revenue.
3. Community contributions are made by both club and hotel venue operators and are considered when assessing the potential social and economic impacts of gaming licences and planning permit applications. They may consist of cash contributions distributed to community organisations and/or in-kind contributions in the form of free use by community organisations of facilities in the venue and subsidised meals. The value of the cash community contributions is determined by the number of EGMs. Unlike payments to the CSF and completion of the CBS, community contributions are not mandated by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003.* They are enforced through conditions on gaming licences and in some instances, planning permits.

### Harm minimisation

The following statutory harm minimisation measures and guidelines are applicable to hotels and club gaming venues operating EGMs across all municipalities in Victoria:

- **Municipal and regional caps:** These are limits on the number of EGMs permissible in a municipality intended to manage the density of EGMs per 1,000 adults. Municipal limits are determined by applying a density of 10 EGMs per 1,000 adults. Regional limits are specific to areas considered vulnerable to gambling-related harms due to high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, EGM expenditure and density of EGMs per adults.
- **Responsible Service of Gambling:** All gaming venue employees working in gaming machine areas while open to the public must complete an approved Responsible Service of Gaming training course within the first six months of starting to work in the gaming machine area.
- **Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct:** Section 3.4.12B of the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* requires all venues to have a Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct in place.
- **YourPlay Self-exclusion program**: Section 3.4.12A of the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* make it compulsory for all venues to implement a self-exclusion program. This program enables a person to ban themselves from gaming venues, TABs and gambling websites.
- **Spin rate**: From 1 December 2025 any new EGMs approved by the VGCCC must have a spin rate of at least three seconds per gaming, allowing patrons time to take a break and limit the amount of money that can be lost.
- **Mandatory Pre-commitment:** From July 2024 all EGMs in Victoria are required to incorporate mandatory pre-commitment limits
- **Maximum bet limits:** From 1 December 2025 the maximum amount of money that can be loaded onto an EGM at any time will be reduced from $1,000 to $100.
- **Opening hours:** Section 3.3.9. of the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* allows opening hours to a maximum of 20 hours each day and requires is a continuous 4 hour break from gaming after every 20 hours of gaming. The Victorian State government has announced amendments to existing opening hours commencing in July 2024 which will require gaming venues to close for a six hour shut down period between 4am and 10am.[21]

[21] Landmark Reforms To Reduce Gambling Related Harm | Premier of Victoria

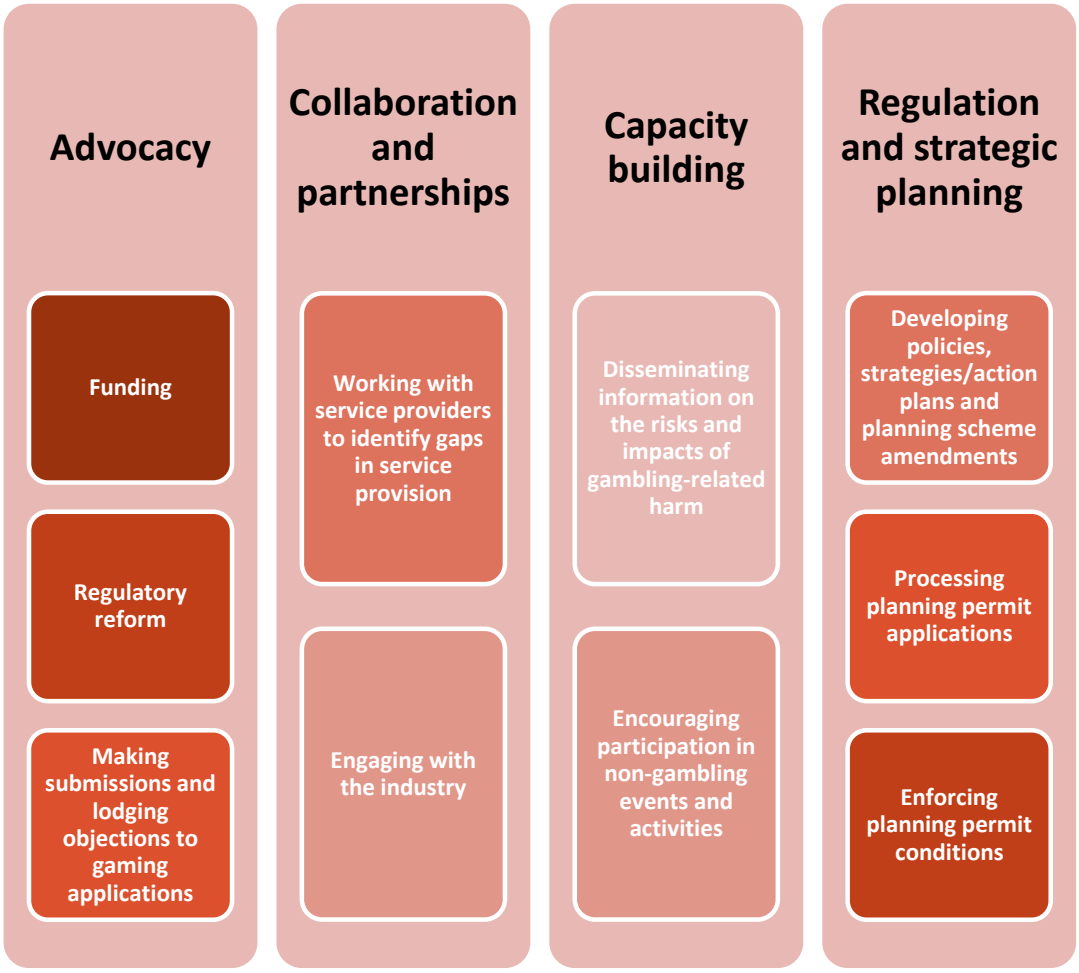
- **Signage and advertising:** Signage identifying that a venue operates EGM measuring $2m^2$ is permitted on the facades of hotels and clubs. These signs must be in white lettering on a single colour background with no decorative ridges or illumination.
- **Ban on smoking in licensed premises:** On the 1st of September 2002 smoking was prohibited in gaming areas and premises in Victoria.
- **Removal of ATM's:** Venues may not provide, or allow another person to provide, access to ATMs within an approved gaming venue, the exterior walls of an approved gaming venue, any land owned or leased by the gaming venue operator in which the gaming venue is located and, on any carpark owned or operated by the venue operator used primarily by the gaming venue patrons.
- The VGCCC **Venue Manual** provides the necessary information assisting gaming venue operators to meet their regulatory and compliance obligations. The Manual covers a range of matters including gaming machine area (size, layout and facilities); gaming hours; patron interaction and support; display of notices, signs and rules; and advertising of gaming products.
- In October 2013 the Minister issued guidelines relating to the **location of children's play areas** in gaming venues. These guidelines seek to minimise exposure of the gaming area to children in play areas by maximising distance, restricting access, and minimising the visibility and audibility of the gaming area. These guidelines align with the general prohibition of gambling and gaming among minors.
- In February 2017 the Minister issued guidelines stating that the Commission should not approve gaming machines in **buildings with permanent residential accommodation** as this could increase exposure to gaming for residents, children and people at risk of gambling-related harms.
- There is a prohibition on **betting** all under 19 **sports competitions**, and any betting on the performance of individual players under 18 in junior and senior sport. [22]

### 3.1.4 Local government's statutory roles

Council fulfills the statutory roles established by the above suite of legislative instruments in collaboration with other agencies such as peak bodies, service providers, advocacy groups and the industry (refer to Figure 8).

[22] VGCCC orders ban on betting on minors in sport events | Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission

**Figure 8 – Council's statutory roles**

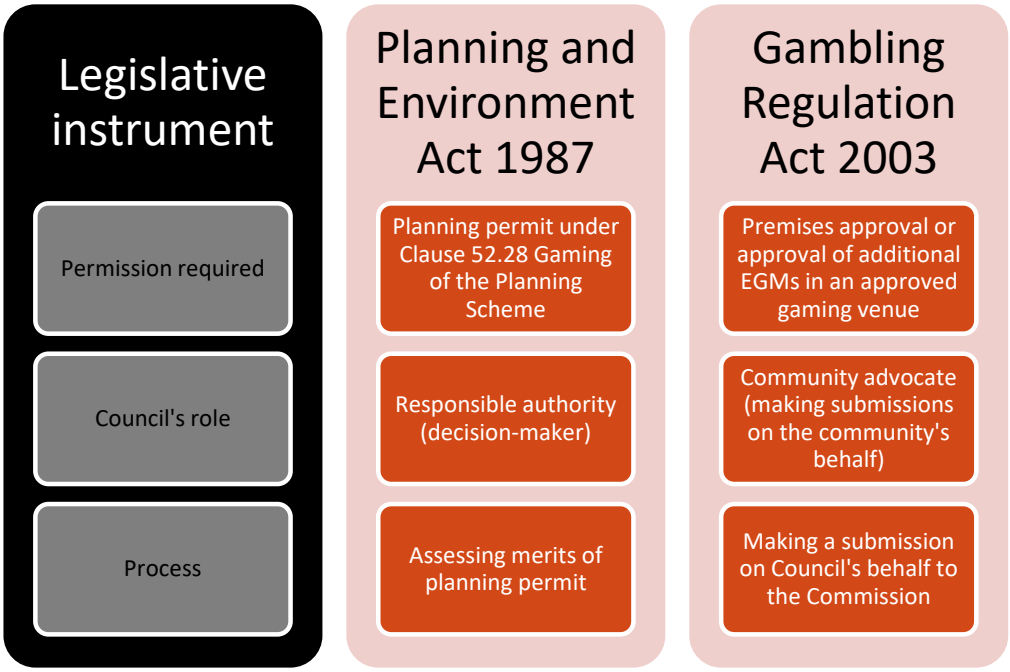



Source: SymPlan

### 3.1.5 Gaming venue approval

Two approvals are required to operate EGMs in Knox i.e. a planning permit under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and a gaming licence under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (refer to Figure 9).

**Figure 9 – Decision-making framework**




Source: SymPlan

## 3.2 Knox strategic framework

### 3.2.1 Plans and policies

The Council Plan 2021-2025 (which includes the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) identifies several roles Council plays in leading, guiding and managing the city and community. These include advocate, partner, provide, fund, educate, plan, regulate and research. Two of the six priorities underpinning the Plan are mental health and family violence. One of the key directions underpinning these Plans is connection, resilience and wellbeing. This is to be achieved by supporting the community to improve their mental and social health and fostering safety within the community.

Gambling, including online gambling, was identified by the community as a health issue during the preparation of the Community 2021-2031 and Council Plan 2021-2025

The Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020, which articulates Council's position on EGMs in the municipality, is based on a public health approach to preventing and minimising gambling harm. The Policy guides Council's statutory roles which are plan, regulate and enforce; manage and deliver; inform, educate and engage; and facilitate, represent, partner and advocate. The Policy also guides Council in assessing the potential social and economic impacts associated with applications for gaming licenses and planning permits to operate EGMs in the municipality and in adjoining municipalities. The scope of this Policy is restricted to EGMs and therefore does not guide Council's harm prevention and minimisation roles associated with other forms of gambling, including online gambling.

A peer review of this Policy is provided in Section 6.2.

### 3.2.2 Knox Planning Scheme

**Standard provisions in Victorian Planning Schemes**

Relevant clauses in the Planning Policy Framework seek to achieve the following:

- Clause 11 Settlement:
  - Accommodate the need for community health, wellbeing and safety; economic viability and diversity of choice.
  - Ensure existing and emerging communities have good access to services, retail, tourist, commercial, entertainment and cultural facilities and activities.
- Clause 17 Economic development:
  - Provide a strong economy.
  - Encourage development that meets the community's needs for retail, entertainment, office, tourist and other commercial services.
- Clause 19.02-3S Cultural facilities:
  - Develop a strong cultural environment and increase access to arts, recreation and other cultural facilities.
- Clause 63 Existing uses – allow for the continuation of existing uses.
- Clause 65 Decision guidelines – consider the orderly planning of the area, and the effect on the human health and amenity of the area.
- Clause 71 Operation of the Planning Policy Framework - Integrate all planning policies and balance conflicting objectives in favour of net community benefit and sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

**Knox specific policies**

Two strategies under Objective 5 in **Clause 21.07-2 Activity Centres** are:

- Direct large entertainment uses serving a regional catchment into Knox Central, Bayswater, Boronia, and Rowville activity centres.
- Discourage non-residential uses which operate until late at night in residential areas where late night commercial activity does not currently exist.

The policy basis underpinning **Clause 22.05 Gaming** acknowledges that EGM gambling is a legitimate form of recreation associated with both social and economic benefits and harms. It also notes the relationship between EGM expenditure and socio-economic disadvantage. The policies in this Clause seek to achieve the following objectives:

- To ensure that gaming premises are located, designed and operated to minimise negative social and economic impacts, and adverse impacts on the amenity of the surrounding area.
- To discourage new gaming machines in relatively disadvantaged suburbs as defined by the Socio-Economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage.
- To encourage gaming machines in locations where they are accessible but not convenient.
- To ensure a net community benefit from the use of gaming machines.

**Clause 52.28 Gaming** was introduced into the Victoria Planning Provisions by VC39 in 2006. The purposes of this Clause are:

- To ensure that gaming machines are situated in appropriate locations and premises.
- To ensure the social and economic impacts of the location of gaming machines are considered.
- To prohibit gaming machines in specified shopping complexes and strip shopping centres.

This Clause prohibits the location of gaming machines in strip shopping centres and shopping complexes defined in the schedule to this clause. The clause defines a strip shopping centre is an area that meets all of the following requirements:

- It is zoned for commercial use.
- It consists of at least two separate buildings on at least two separate and adjoining lots.
- It is an area in which a significant proportion of the buildings are shops.
- It is an area in which a significant proportion of the lots abut a road accessible to the public generally.

One of the decision guidelines in this Clause is whether the gaming premises provides a full range of hotel facilities or services to patrons or a full range of club facilities or services to members and patrons.

The schedule to Clause 52.28 Gaming includes 17 shopping complexes in which EGMs are prohibited. These are located in Boronia, Rowville, Ferntree Gully, Wantirna South, Studfield and Scoresby.

The schedule prohibits EGMs in all strip shopping centres in the municipality.

Amendments to Clause 52.28 introduced in 2018 by VC148 made provisions for councils to include schedules specifying guidelines relating to appropriate locations for gaming venues and machines, guidelines relating to appropriate venues for gaming machines and information which must accompany an application considered under this clause. The Knox Planning Scheme is currently in the old format which has not yet been amended in line with VC148.

There is the opportunity to investigate updating the schedule to Clause 52.28 of the Knox Planning Scheme to include objectives and provide guidance on appropriate locations for EGMs, appropriate venues and documentation which needs to accompany a planning permit application all of which are currently located in a local planning policy at Clause 22.05 Gaming. There is the further opportunity to examine whether the existing list of shopping complexes listed in the Schedule is still appropriate.

## 4 Feedback from stakeholder engagement and community consultation

This section summarises the key themes arising from the stakeholder engagement and community consultation process undertaken during the preparation of the report (refer to Table 4).

Specific feedback on these themes is integrated in the discussions in Sections 5 and 6 of this report.

**Table 4 – Stakeholder engagement and community consultation feedback**

| Theme | Source | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Knox Advisory Committees and Mental Health Summit | Online survey for EGM venues | Have Your Say respondents |
| Advertising normalises gambling and increases risk of harm. | √ | | |
| The accessibility of in venue and online gambling increases gambling in the community. | | | √ |
| Electronic gaming machines are a risky form of gambling | | | √ |
| Online gambling is increasingly causing harm. | | | √ |
| Digital gambling increases accessibility. | √ | | |
| Social media, computer games, advertising and digital access increases exposure for young people. | √ | | |
| Education and awareness among young people and adults can reduce the risk of harm. | √ | | |
| Young people model their gambling behaviour on parents. | √ | | |
| Electronic gaming machines and video games present the highest risk of harm. | √ | | |
| Raise awareness of access to support networks effective in preventing and minimising harm. | √ | √ | √ |
| Council plays an important leadership role in preventing gambling harm. This includes awareness raising and supporting the gambling industry to reduce their reliance on gambling revenue. | | | √ |
| Council does not play a leadership role in preventing gambling harm. | | | √ |
| Need to increase access to non-gambling social, leisure and entertainment facilities and activities. | | | √ |
| Gambling causes harm to the individual such as self-harm, financial hardship, family violence, relationship breakdown; and the broader community such as the costs of service provision, law enforcement | | | √ |
| Prevent the growth of electronic gaming machines in the municipality. | | | √ |
| Implement additional built in harm minimisation measures. | | | √ |
| Council should not support the gambling industry e.g. by holding events or supporting funded projects held in gaming venues. | | | √ |
| The presence of electronic gaming machines in venues increases exposure. | | | √ |
| The choice to gamble is personal. | | | √ |
| People with mental health issues are at an increased risk of gambling harm. | | | √ |

# 5 Understanding gambling-related harm

This section discusses contemporary gambling behaviours and expenditure trends in Australia and Victoria. It describes the concept of gambling-related harm and outlines the social, technological and environmental determinants of gambling-related harm.

## 5.1 Definition of gambling-related harm

### 5.1.1 Framing harm from gambling

Early gambling policies reflected the contemporary research which conceptualised gambling harm through the lens of individual responsibility caused solely by individual behaviours[23] and a diagnosable mental health problem. Approaches to minimising gambling harm have in the past promoted individual responsibility, with strategies focussing on supporting 'problem gamblers' to 'gamble responsibly'. These downstream measures focus on individualised behavioural solutions rather than population wide approaches[24].

In recent years there has been increasing acknowledgment of the socio-economic, environmental or venue design factors, and the features of the gambling product itself, that contribute to this risk. The framing of harm has shifted from 'problem gambling' and the 'problem gambler' to gambling harm, with acknowledgement this harm is experienced by all people across the continuum, including those at low, moderate and high risk of harm.[25] There has also been acknowledgement that harm is experienced not only by the gambler, but also by their families and the broader community.[26]

Gambling-related harm is now recognised as:

> *Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population.*[27]

### 5.1.2 A public health approach to gambling-related harm

Gambling is recognised as a significant, global public health concern.[28]

A public health approach to gambling harm is based on the following principles:

- Gambling, like tobacco and alcohol, are addictive products and therefore need to be regulated.
- Anyone can experience some level of harm from gambling, with greater harm being experienced by those who are vulnerable.[29] This is discussed further in Section 4.4.
- All members of society have the right to live without unnecessary and preventable risk to health and safety from gambling products and gambling industry practices, whether land-based or online.[30]

[23] Global Local: Gambling (lgiu.org)
[24] Thomas, S.L., Crawford, G., Daube, M., Pitt, H., Hallett, J., McCarthy, S., Francis, L. and Edmunds, M. (2023), Time for policies on gambling to benefit health - not the gambling industry. Health Promot J Austral, 34: 267-271. https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.721
[25] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[26] Li, E., Browne, M., Rawat, V., Langham, E., & Rockloff, M. (2016). Breaking Bad: Comparing Gambling Harms Among Gamblers and Affected Others. Journal of Gambling Studies, 33(1), 223–248. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10899-016-9632-8
[27] Browne, M, Langham, E, Rawat, V, Greer, N, Li, E, Rose, J, Rockloff, M, Donaldson, P, Thorne, H, Goodwin, B, Bryden, G & Best, T 2016, Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[28] Global Local: Gambling (lgiu.org)
[29] Protecting the public from being harmed or exploited by gambling and the gambling industry | ADPH
[30] Protecting the public from being harmed or exploited by gambling and the gambling industry | ADPH

- Strategies will address health across the whole community rather than focus on the individual. This involves developing and implementing 'upstream' actions which seek to prevent harm from arising in addition to addressing harm when it is manifest.
- Strategies should focus on reducing both demand and supply, with a primary focus on prevention.[31]
- Strategies address harm experienced by the individual gambler, as well as the indirect harm experienced by the gambler's family, friends and the broader community.
- There are multiple determinants of harm including socio-cultural, political, economic, environmental and health.
- A range of stakeholders and agencies are responsible for preventing and minimising harm. This indicates a partnership and intersectional approach across a range of stakeholders and agencies.
- Strategies and actions need to be based on a strong and transparent evidence base.

Contemporary studies into the health impacts of gambling-related harms consider all levels of risk i.e. low risk, moderate-risk gamblers as well as those previously referred to as 'problem gamblers'. [32] A recent study, within the framework of a public health approach, found of those at risk, 50 per cent, 25 per cent and 15 per cent are considered at low, moderate and high risk of gambling-related harm respectively.[33]

## 5.2 Gambling behaviours and expenditure

Gambling is a legal form of entertainment which is part of Australian culture.

It is estimated Australians spend approximately $25 billion on legal forms of gambling every year, the most of any country in the world. [34] Australia has 76 per cent of the world's non-casino EGMs which are located in hotels and clubs.[35]

There has been a small decrease in overall gambling activities in the last decade in Victoria with just over two thirds of Victorian adults (69 per cent) gambling in 2018-19 compared to 73.1 per cent in 2008. [36] There has however been an increase in gambling using casino table games and sports betting (refer to Table 5).

[31] Statutory levy on gambling may do more harm than good | The BMJ
[32] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[33] Browne, M., Langham, E., Rawat, V., Greer, N., Li, E., Rose, J., … Best, T. (2016). Assessing gambling- related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective. Victoria Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[34] Parliament of Australia (2023) *You win some, you lose more. Online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm.* Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
[35] Alliance For Gambling Reform – Position Paper *A mandatory Registered Cashless Gambling Card System to Address gambling harm and criminal gaming activity* January 2023
[36] Alliance For Gambling Reform – Position Paper *A mandatory Registered Cashless Gambling Card System to Address gambling harm and criminal gaming activity* January 2023

**Table 5 – Participation in gambling activities in Victoria, 2008, 2017 and 2018-19**

| Gambling activity | 2008 | 2014 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| At least one gambling activity | 73.1% | 70.1% | 69.0% |
| Lotteries | 47.5% | 46.9% | 44.4% |
| Raffles, sweeps or other competitions | 42.9% | 41.6% | 37.4% |
| Horse or harness racing or greyhounds | 16.4% | 20.6% | 19.8% |
| EGMs | 21.5% | 16.7% | 14.1% |
| Scratch tickets | 15.3% | 10.7% | 11.2% |
| Casino table games | 4.6% | 5.1% | 6.1% |
| Sports betting (excluding fantasy and eSports) | 4.0% | 4.8% | 5.8% |
| Informal private betting | 3.5% | 2.8% | 3.4% |
| Keno | 2.3% | 3.7% | 3.3% |
| Telephone prize draw | 7.4% | 5.8% | 2.4% |
| Bingo | 2.1% | 2.6% | 1.5% |
| eSports | Not reported | Not reported | 0.4% |
| Fantasy sports | Not reported | Not reported | 0.3% |
| Anything else | 0.0% | 0.7% | 0.9% |

Source: Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.

Different groups in Australia reported different rates of gambling participation. Common factors associated with higher rates of participation in sports, racing and pokies included:

- being male
- younger age (18–34 years; except for horse racing where participants aged 55+ were equally as likely to bet as young people)
- being employed
- living with dependent children.[37]

## 5.3 Risks, prevalence and determinants

### 5.3.1 General

Almost half of Australians who gambled in 2022 (46 per cent) were classified as being at some risk of gambling harm in the past 12 months. [38]

The prevalence of 'problem gambling' in Victoria has remained largely unchanged, from 0.8 per cent in 2014 to 0.7 per cent in 2018–2019.[39] The proliferation of online gambling has increased the potential for harm in the community.[40]

More than two thirds (70 per cent) of gambling-related harm is experienced by people whose behaviour is not classified as 'problem gambling'.

[37] Australian Gambling Research Centre. (2023). Gambling participation and experience of harm in Australia. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
[38] Parliament of Australia (2023) *You win some, you lose more. Online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm.* Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
[39] Browne, M., Langham, E., Rawat, V., Greer, N., Li, E., Rose, J., … Best, T. (2016). Assessing gambling- related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective. Victoria Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[40] Hetherington, B and Phillips, T (2023) *Gambling Harm and the Online Gambling Environment* Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

Harm resulting from someone else's gambling is strongly related to harm from one's own gambling, particularly amongst people classified as 'problem gamblers'. It is estimated for every person whose behaviour is classified as a 'problem gambler', six other people are negatively affected.[41]

The prevalence of harm varies across the Victorian electoral regions. The Knox is located in the Eastern Metro Region which has an average prevalence of gamblers with one or more harms, and extra severe harms relative to all Victorian gamblers (refer to Table 6).

**Table 6 – Prevalence of gambling-related harms across Victorian regions**

| Electoral region | One or more harms | One or more extra severe harms |
|---|---|---|
| Northern Metro | 11.2 | 2.3 |
| Southern Metro | 8.0 | 14.0 |
| South-Eastern Metro | 12.4 | 2.3 |
| **Eastern Metro** | **9.5** | **1.6** |
| Western Metro | 10.6 | 2.1 |
| Northern Victoria | 9.1 | 1.6 |
| Eastern Victoria | 8.7 | 1.8 |
| Western Victoria | 7.4 | 1.7 |
| **All Victorian Gamblers** | **9.6** | **1.8** |

Source: Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.

### 5.3.2 Socio-economic determinants of harm

The following groups within the community are at an elevated risk of harm.

#### Gender

The prevalence of women's participation in gambling is steadily increasing[42] due to factors such as the increased accessibility of online gambling and social factors such as boredom and loneliness.[43] Gambling participation rates amongst men and women are almost equal (70 per cent compared with 68.2 per cent respectively.[44]

The evidence with regards the prevalence of gambling-harm among men and women is mixed with some evidence finding with gambling-harm affects men and women relatively equally[45] and other evidence finding men are more likely to experience harm compared to women (1 per cent and 0.5 per cent respectively).[46]

Research has identified the following gender specific gambling behaviours:

[41] Hetherington, B and Phillips, T (2023) *Gambling Harm and the Online Gambling Environment* Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
[42] Hing, N. and Breen, H. (2001) "An empirical study of sex differences in gaming machine play among club members" *International Gambling Studies* Vol 1, pp 1-8
[43] McCarthy, S, Thomas, S, Bellringer, M and Cassidy, R (2019) *Harm Reduction Journal* Women and gambling-related harm: a narrative literature review and implications for research, policy, and practice 16.18
[44] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[45] Palmer du Preez et al. (2021) 'Theoretically informed gender analysis for gambling harm reduction: a New Zealand study' *Harm Reduction Journal* 18:111
[46] Hing, N. and Breen, H. (2001) "An empirical study of sex differences in gaming machine play among club members" *International Gambling Studies* Vol 1, pp 1-8

- Men are significantly more likely than women to bet on sports (13.9 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively). This has increased from 10.9 per cent of men and 2.5 per cent of women in 2014, and 9.3 per cent of men and 2.1 per cent of women in 2008. [47]
- Women are less likely to use EGMs compared with men (12 per cent compared with 15.5 per cent)[48].
- Women tend to use EGMs for longer duration time than males[49]. The reason for this could be that gaming venues are attractive to women, particularly those experiencing family violence[50], as they feel safe, provide what is perceived to be a cheap source of entertainment and are open for long periods when other facilities are closed. Regular female EGM users are more likely to be either young (18 – 24 years) or old (60 years).
- Research shows people who socialised more in LGBTQI+ venues are less likely to gamble as these venues do not contain EGMs. However, LGBTQI+ people who gamble on their own are more likely to visit EGM venues as they are open late and deemed to be 'safe places'.[51] This research also found some LGBTQI+ people used gambling to avoid dealing with their LGBTQI+ status or the stress of 'coming out'. The research also shows LGBTQI+ people are less likely to experience gambling harm and have fewer friends who gamble. However, this group has higher levels of psychological distress, higher levels of impulsivity and lower levels of resilience, suggesting they are potentially more likely to be vulnerable to harm caused by their gambling.[52]

**Age[53]**

Young adults aged 18–34 years are more than twice as likely to be at risk of harm compared to those aged 55 years and older.[54] As discussed below, the normalisation of gambling on platforms such as online gambling and eSports, poses a particularly high risk of harm on young people.

Research found that while 82 per cent of regular EGM gamblers overall met the criteria for at-risk gambling, 89 per cent of 18-34 year olds were in that category. The same held true for regular online gamblers, with 68 per cent of all bettors being at-risk, compared to 82per cent of 18-34 year olds.[55]

Young people on low incomes, who may also be more willing to take financial risk, are therefore at an elevated risk of harm.[56]

Younger women are at greater risk of several levels of gambling harm, with just under one quarter being classified as being at the greatest risk. This compares to 3 per cent older women and ten per cent of middle aged women which are considered to be at high and moderate risk of harm

[47] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[48] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[49] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[50] Hing, N., O'Mullan, C., Nuske, E., Breen, H., Mainey, L., Taylor, A., … Rawat, V. (2020). *The relationship between gambling and intimate partner violence against women* (Research report, 21/2020). Sydney: ANROWS.
[51] Rachel Bush, Alex M. T. Russell, Andrea Waling, Petra K. Staiger, and Nicki A. Dowling 2021, Examining risk and protective factors for the development of gambling-related harms and problems in Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities, Melbourne.
[52] Rachel Bush, Alex M. T. Russell, Andrea Waling, Petra K. Staiger, and Nicki A. Dowling 2021, Examining risk and protective factors for the development of gambling-related harms and problems in Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities, Melbourne.
[53] Hing, N et al (2022) *NSW Youth Gambling Study 2022: Qualitative Research* NSW Government
[54] Australian Gambling Research Centre. (2023). Gambling participation and experience of harm in Australia. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
[55] Greer, N., Jenkinson, R., Vandenberg, B., & Sakata, K. (2023). *Regular pokies gambling in Australia, 2022: National Gambling Trends Study*. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
[56] Badji, S, Black, N, Johnston, D 2021, Proximity to gambling venues, gambling behaviours and related harms, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.

respectively.[57] This is because younger women are diversifying their gambling behaviours and are more likely to gamble on multiple products - including sports betting- while older women most likely to gamble on just one product.[58] However, older women had a lower perception of harm caused by their own gambling because they perceived the social benefits associated with gaming venues such as social interaction and inclusion outweighed the costs associated with losses on EGMs.[59]

A key risk factor for gambling-related harm among young people is regularly observing their parents and other influential adults such as teachers gamble during childhood, witnessing gambling being part of family routines and events, and being directly involve by being given scratch tickets. A further key risk factor is witnessing gambling wins.

In later adolescence at risk young gamblers tend to extend their gambling to riskier activities such as sports and race betting and EGM gambling, in some instances to demonstrate their skills through 'winning'. This is often supported through part time employment.

Although some young people indicate they understand gambling and its potential for harm, they tend to not acknowledge their gambling s being harmful, reporting confidence in being able to self-regulate their gaming into the future.

### Socio-economic profile and status

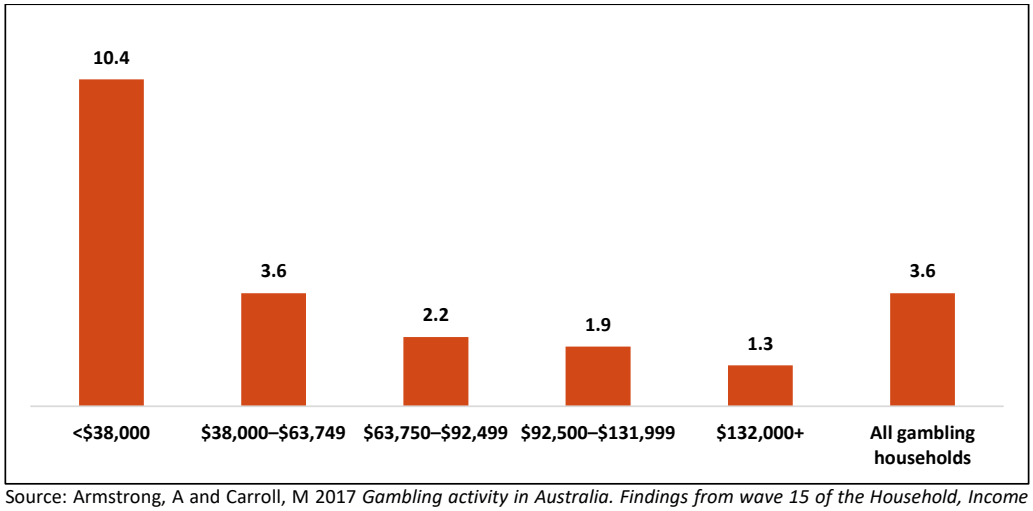
While some people are at risk of harm from gambling, the following socio-economic factors increase the vulnerability of gambling-related harm among some groups:

- High level of socio-economic disadvantage
- Low income households (earning less than $800 per week)
- Households with rental stress
- Households with mortgage stress
- Unemployment rate
- Personal annual income $20,800 to $41,599
- Rent social housing
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Low proficiency in English
- Below Year 11 Schooling
- Speak a language other than English at home.

Research[60] has found the lower a household's income, the greater proportion of their household disposable income is spent on gambling (refer to Figure 10). Among households in the lowest income quintile, 'problem gamblers' spent on average 27 per cent of their household's disposable income on gambling. This compares with households in the highest income quintile where expenditure on gambling by 'problem gamblers' was 4 per cent of household income.

[57] McCarthy, S., Thomas, S.L., Randle, M. *et al.* Women's gambling behaviour, product preferences, and perceptions of product harm: differences by age and gambling risk status. *Harm Reduct J* 15, 22 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0227-9
[58] McCarthy, S., Thomas, S.L., Randle, M. *et al.* Women's gambling behaviour, product preferences, and perceptions of product harm: differences by age and gambling risk status. *Harm Reduct J* 15, 22 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0227-9
[59] McCarthy, S., Thomas, S.L., Randle, M. *et al.* Women's gambling behaviour, product preferences, and perceptions of product harm: differences by age and gambling risk status. *Harm Reduct J* **15**, 22 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0227-9
[60] Source: Armstrong, A and Carroll, M 2017 *Gambling activity in Australia. Findings from wave 15 of the Household, Income and labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey* Australian Institute of Family Studies

**Figure 10 – Proportion of gambling households' disposable income spent on gambling, by income quintile**




Source: Armstrong, A and Carroll, M 2017 *Gambling activity in Australia. Findings from wave 15 of the Household, Income and labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey* Australian Institute of Family Studies

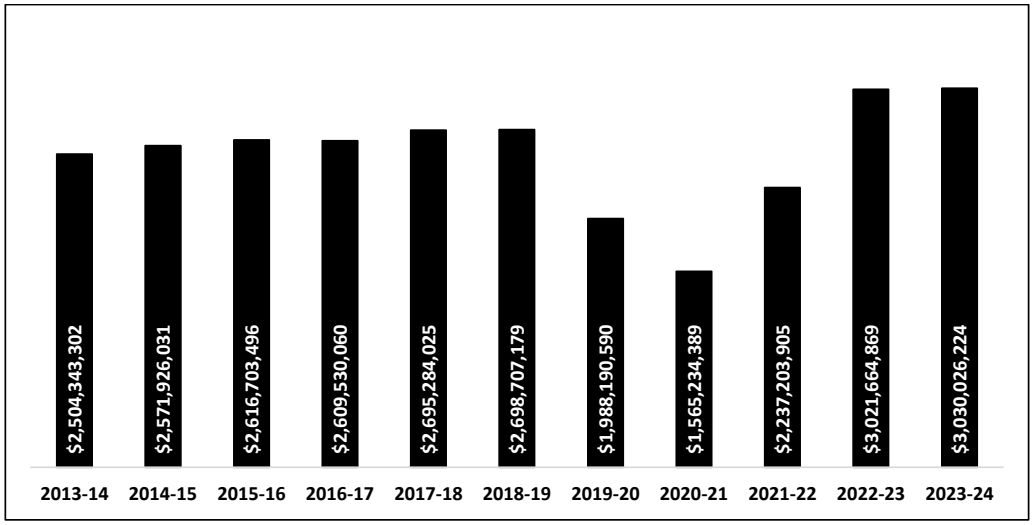
### 5.3.3 Technological and environmental determinants of harm

#### Electronic gaming machines

In the 2023-24 Financial Year, EGM player loss in Victoria was $3.03 billion, up from $3.02 billion in the previous financial year.[61] This is the highest it has been since EGMs were introduced in 1994.[62]

Refer to Figure 11.

**Figure 11 – EGM player losses in Victoria, 2013-14 to 2023-24**



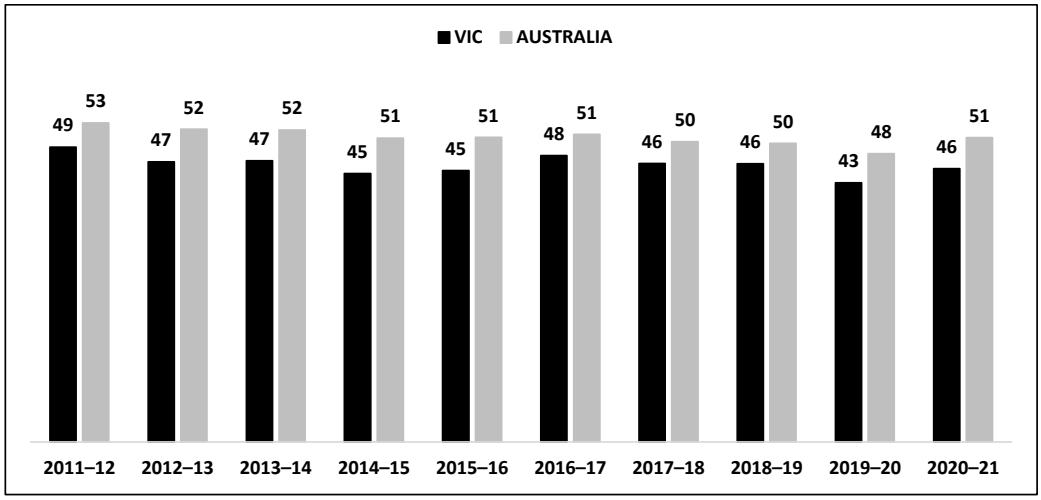

Source: VGCCC

[61] VGCCC
[62] VGCCC

Key features of EGM participation and player loss in 2020-21 in Victoria are:

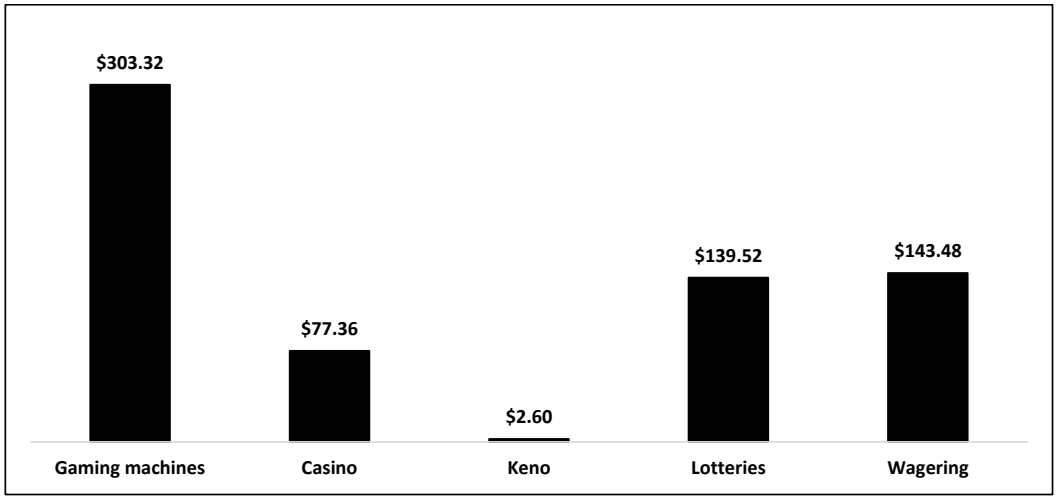
- Victoria had 16 per cent of all EGMs in Australia. This is the highest proportion since EGMs began operating in the State.[63]
- There was an increase in EGM player loss as a proportion of total gambling player loss between 2019-20 and 2020-21. [64] Refer to Figure 12.
- Per capita EGM player loss on EGMs in Victoria was the highest of all forms of legal forms of gaming (casino games, lotteries, keno) and wagering (sports betting and racing).[65] Refer to Figure 13.

**Figure 12 – EGM player loss as a percentage of total gambling player loss, 2011-12 to 2020-21**




Source: Australian Gambling Statistics, 38th Edition

**Figure 13 – Per capita gaming and wagering losses in Victoria, 2020-21**




Source: Australian Gambling Statistics, 38th Edition

[63] Australian Gambling Statistics 38th Edition
[64] Australian Gambling Statistics 38th Edition
[65] Australian Gambling Statistics 38th Edition

Trends in participation in EGMs among specific population cohorts are:[66]

- Older people, people speaking English at home, and people living in regional Victoria were more likely to use EGMs in pubs, clubs or hotels.
- Those most likely to use EGMs were young people aged 18 to 24 years (over a third, 35.5 per cent) and people aged 75 years and older (nearly a quarter, 24.4 per cent).
- Gamblers speaking English at home were more likely to use EGMs compared with gamblers who spoke a language other than English at home (21.2 per cent and 16.5 per cent respectively).
- Gamblers living in regional Victoria were more likely to use EGMs compared with Melbourne-based gamblers (25.4 per cent and 18.8 per cent respectively).
- People of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent were more likely to use EGMs than non-Indigenous gamblers (30.4 per cent and 20.3 per cent respectively).
- People on lower incomes are more likely to use EGMs than high income gamblers with almost a quarter (23.9 per cent) of all gamblers with incomes of $1 to $20,799 and a further 23.8 per cent of gamblers with incomes of $20,800-$42,599 using EGMs.

'Problem gamblers' (69.3 per cent), moderate-risk gamblers (52.3 per cent) and low risk gamblers (40.0 per cent) were more likely to have played the pokies compared with non-problem gamblers (16.3per cent).

Other research estimates 36 per cent of expenditure on EGM gambling is sourced from people classified as 'problem gamblers' with a further 23.6 per cent coming from people classified as 'moderate risk gamblers'.[67]

It is widely recognised that wherever accessibility to EGMs is increased, there is always a risk of an increase in gambling-related harms.[68] Due to their high prevalence, EGMs have the highest population impact, accounting for more than a third (37.7 per cent) of gambling-related harm. The Productivity Commission (2010 p5.1) estimated people affected by gambling-related harms account for between 22 per cent and 60 per cent (averaged at 41 per cent) of total EGM spending.[69]

EGMs are recognised as posing the greatest risks to existing and potential problem gamblers[70] for the following reasons:

- EGMs are individually one of the four riskiest gambling activities and among the three gambling activities that have the greatest population impact.[71]
- Inbuilt harm minimisation measures in EGMs are of most assistance in preventing gambling-related harms amongst those gambling with least risk. For these groups, these harm minimisation measures can be effective in preventing the development of riskier gambling behaviours i.e. more intense gambling. However, the evidence indicates they are ineffective amongst those at risk, especially higher risk.[72]

[66] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[67] Browne, M, Greer, N, Armstrong, T, Doran, C, Kinchin, I, Langham, E & Rockloff, M 2017, *The social cost of gambling to Victoria*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[68] Commission Decision, Croydon Hotel, paragraph 90; Commission Decision, Dromana Hotel, paragraph 59, Commission Decision, Mornington on Tanti, paragraph 94, Commission Decision, Zagame's Berwick, paragraph 53
[69] Productivity Commission (2010)
[70] Australian Government Productivity Commission (2010) *Productivity Community Inquiry Report, Gambling* p5.22
[71] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[72] Andrew Harris & Mark D. Griffiths, 2017, A Critical Review of the Harm-Minimisation Tools Available for Electronic Gambling, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, March Vol.33 Issue 1 pp.187-221

- Around 80 per cent of presentations to counselling agencies relate to problems associated with EGMs.[73]
- For each additional EGM introduced into an area, there will be an increase of between 0.6 and 1 'problem gamblers', with an average of 0.8 problem gamblers per EGM[74].
- Each person with gambling problems has 5 to 10 people in their lives who are affected by their gambling.[75]
- Postcodes with no EGMs are associated with 20 per cent few family incidents per 10,000 and 30 per cent few domestic violence assaults per 10,000 compared with postcodes with 75 electronic EGMs per 10,000. [76]

It is becoming increasingly recognised gambling-related harms have direct impacts on the person who gambles and indirect impacts on others including their families, friends and the wider community. Research found a person experiencing 'problem gambling' can affect up to six other people around them, moderate-risk gambling up to three others and low-risk gambling up to one other.[77] Close family members including partners and children were most often identified as the people most impacted by others' gambling.[78]

Table 7 summarises the protective and risk factors specific to gaming venues and EGMs.

**Table 7 – Protective and risk factors for EGMs**

| Protective factor | Risk factor |
|---|---|
| **Proposal type** | |
| Closure of a gaming venue.<br>Availability of non-gambling sport, leisure, social and entertainment activities.[79] [80] | New gaming venue as opposed to a top up of EGMs in an existing gaming venue.<br>Increase in the size of the gaming room or space allocated to gambling.<br>Medium to large venue (above 60 EGMs)[81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86] |

[73] Australian Government Productivity Commission (2010) *Productivity Community Inquiry Report, Gambling* p5.26
[74] Storer, J, Abbot, M and Stubbs, J (2009)'Access or adaptation? A meta-analysis of surveys of problem gambling prevalence in Australian and New Zealand with respect to concentration of electronic gaming machines' *International Gambling Studies* Volume. 9, No. 3, December 2009, p238
[75] Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (2013) *The Responsible Gambling Guide*
[76] Markham, F, Doran, B & Young, M 2016, 'The relationship between electronic gaming machine accessibility and police-recorded domestic violence: a spatio-temporal analysis of 654 postcodes in Victoria, Australia, 2005–2014', Social Science & Medicine, vol. 162, pp. 106–14.
[77] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021 *Gambling in Australia*
[78] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021 *Gambling in Australia*
[79] Leino, T. et al (2017) 'Gambling behavior in alcohol-serving and non-alcohol-serving-venues: a study of electronic gaming machine players using account records' *Addiction Research & Theory* 25.:3, 201-297
[80] Hing, N. and Haw, J (2010) *The Influence of Venue Characteristics on a Player's Decision to Attend a Gambling Venue* Centre for Gambling Education and Research
[81] Hing, N. and Haw, J (2010) *The Influence of Venue Characteristics on a Player's Decision to Attend a Gambling Venue* Centre for Gambling Education and Research
[82] Rockloff, M (2010) *The impact of an audience and venue size on poker machine gambling* Central Queensland University Institute of Health and Social Science Research,
[83] McMillen, J and Pitt, S (2005) *Review of the ACT Government's Harm Minimisation Measures* Centre for Gambling Research, ANU
[84] Blaszczynski, A et al (2001) *The Assessment of the Impact of the Reconfiguration on Electronic Gaming Machines as Harm Minimisation Strategies for Problem gambling* University of Sydney Gambling Research Unit p17
[85] Rockloff, M; Greer, N and Evans, L (2012) "The Effect of Mere Presence on Electronic Gaming Machine Gambling" *Journal of Gambling Studies,* October 2012, Issue 27
[86] Leino, T. et al (2017) 'Gambling behavior in alcohol-serving and non-alcohol-serving-venues: a study of electronic gaming machine players using account records' *Addiction Research & Theory* 25.:3, 201-297 https://www.academia.edu/32303619/Leino_T._Sagoe_D._Griffiths_M.D._Mentzoni_R.A._Pallesen_S._and_Molde_H._2017_._Gambling_behavior_in_alcohol-serving_and_non-alcohol-serving_venues_A_study_of_electronic_gaming_machine_players_using_account_records._Addiction_Research_and_Theory_25_201-207

| Protective factor | Risk factor |
|---|---|
| **Proposal type** | |
| | Hotel (rather than a club).[87] |
| **Venue design** | |
| Design requiring patrons to pass through non-gambling activities.<br>Screening of gaming room from inside and outside the venue.<br>Facilities which encourage a break of play. | Entrances to gaming room which reduce surveillance. |
| **Venue operations and harm minimisation** | |
| Presence of highly trained staff. | Operating hours (trade after 2am, less than 6 hours continuous closure). |
| **Locational features** | |
| Availability of non-gambling activities in the surrounding area operating at the same time as the gaming room. | Functional and visual integration with services and facilities associated with people's day to day activities.<br>Proximity to services used by people affected by gambling-related harm. |
| **Health and community profile** | |
| Not applicable | Proximity to groups at an elevated risk of gambling-related harm (refer to Section 4.4.1)<br>High rates of crime and violence (assaults, criminal offences, family violence)*<br>High proportions of people receiving welfare payments*<br>High rates of homelessness*<br>High rates of risky alcohol consumption and smoking*<br>High rates of psychological distress* |

Source: Selected scientific research

The risk factors marked with an asterisk may also be effects of gambling-related harm.

People using EGMs are significantly more likely to experience harm than people participating in other forms of gambling (69.3 per cent compared with 20.4 per cent of all gamblers).

EGMs are therefore recognised as posing the greatest risks to gamblers[88] for the following reasons:

- EGMs are individually one of the four riskiest gambling activities and among the three gambling activities with the greatest population impact.[89]
- Inbuilt harm minimisation measures in EGMs are of most assistance in preventing gambling-related harms amongst those gambling with least risk. For these groups, these harm minimisation measures can be effective in preventing the development of riskier

[87] Hing, N. and Haw, J. (2010) *The Influence of Venue Characteristics on a Player's Decision to Attend a Gambling Venue* Gambling Research Australia
[88] Australian Government Productivity Commission (2010) *Productivity Community Inquiry Report, Gambling* p5.22
[89] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.

gambling behaviours i.e. more intense gambling. However, the evidence indicates they are ineffective amongst those at risk, especially higher risk.[90]

- Around 80 per cent of presentations to counselling agencies relate to problems associated with EGMs.[91]
- For each additional EGM introduced into an area, there will be an increase of between 0.6 and 1 'problem gamblers', with an average of 0.8 problem gamblers per EGM[92].
- Each person with gambling problems has 5 to 10 people in their lives who are affected by their gambling.[93]
- Postcodes with no EGMs are associated with 20 per cent few family incidents per 10,000 and 30 per cent few domestic violence assaults per 10,000 compared with postcodes with 75 electronic EGMs per 10,000. [94]
- People are more likely to withdraw cash to continue using the EGMs.[95]

**Online gambling and sports betting**

The proportion of people using EGMs online has increased from 0.3 per cent in 2008, to 1.3 per cent in 2018-19.

The increase in internet access and prevalence of mobile internet devices in the last ten years, such as smartphones, has resulted in an emergence of 'technology-based' forms of gambling.

This form of gambling is available and accessible with a mobile device, heavily promoted and covers a wide range of sports, making it difficult to regulate. As a result, it results in this form of gambling particularly appealing for young people.

Sports betting has been the big beneficiary of handheld device-based gambling, increasing from 12.6 per cent of all those wagering[96] in 2020-11 to almost 31 per cent in 2019.[97]

Esports, or competitive video gaming is another growing sector in the gambling market, particularly among younger men. Nearly two thirds - or 62 per cent - of participation in this form of gambling is among people aged between 18 and 34 years. [98]

The lengthy periods of lockdown caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic[99] significantly increased the proportion of sports bettors who gamble online.

In 2018 21.9 per cent of Victorians aged 18–24 years who gambled also participated in sports betting. [100] Gambling is illegal for people under the age of 18 years yet gambling marketing is particularly

[90] Andrew Harris & Mark D. Griffiths, 2017, A Critical Review of the Harm-Minimisation Tools Available for Electronic Gambling, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, March Vol.33 Issue 1 pp.187-221
[91] Australian Government Productivity Commission (2010) *Productivity Community Inquiry Report, Gambling* p5.26
[92] Storer, J, Abbot, M and Stubbs, J (2009)'Access or adaptation? A meta-analysis of surveys of problem gambling prevalence in Australian and New Zealand with respect to concentration of electronic gaming machines' *International Gambling Studies* Volume. 9, No. 3, December 2009, p238
[93] Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (2013) *The Responsible Gambling Guide*
[94] Markham, F, Doran, B & Young, M 2016, 'The relationship between electronic gaming machine accessibility and police-recorded domestic violence: a spatio-temporal analysis of 654 postcodes in Victoria, Australia, 2005–2014', Social Science & Medicine, vol. 162, pp. 106–14.
[95] Browne, M., Langham, E., Rawat, V., Greer, N., Li, E., Rose, J., … Best, T. (2016). Assessing gambling- related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective. Victoria Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[96] Betting on races, sports or novelty outcomes like who will win a realit TV sho.
[97] Brett Hetherington and Tony Phillips 2023, *Discussion paper: Gambling harm and the online gambling environment*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne
[98] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[99] Brett Hetherington and Tony Phillips 2023, *Discussion paper: Gambling harm and the online gambling environment*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne
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pervasive and aligned with major cultural activities such as sport.[101] This normalisation of gambling, particularly through advertising of online gambling, influences children and young people's gambling attitudes and consumption behaviours.

These new forms of gambling have the potential to cause harm, resulting in an increase in the demand for treatment for people gambling online. [102]

## 5.4 Vulnerability to gambling-related harm

### 5.4.1 Intersectionality of risks and impacts

The intersectionality of a person's socio-economic profile may increase their risk of vulnerability to gambling-related harm. Research has found that gambling harm appears to be dependent on the interplay between specific social, demographic and environmental conditions.[103] For example, a young culturally diverse male who has low educational attainment and low proficiency in English is likely to experience socio-economic disadvantage and unemployment. These factors may lead to disengagement and decreased opportunities to seek help, suggesting there is a health inequality in gambling-related harm.[104]

Research has identified an association between some factors which present as both risk factors and impacts. For example, 30 per cent of those seeking treatment for primary care, alcohol and other drug, and/or mental health issues are experiencing gambling problems. Gambling is also associated with an approximately four times higher risk of suicide with almost one in five people presenting with suicidality also experiencing harm from gambling. Welfare and support agencies report that 80 percent of specialist gambling financial counsellors had clients presenting talking about suicide, and 48 percent had clients who had attempted to take their lives.[105]

Similarly impacts such as financial hardship, unemployment, family experiences of family violence, depression and anxiety may in turn increase a person's desire to turn to gambling for escape and relief.

### 5.4.2 Vulnerability in Knox

Appendix 3 provides a detailed analysis of the individual determinants of gambling-harms for each district in the municipality.

On the whole, relative to the Eastern Metropolitan Region, Knox displays a mix of indicators of vulnerability to harm from gambling. However, the increase in family incidents is of concern given the association between gambling harm and family violence.

The suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia and Ferntree Gully are the most vulnerable to gambling-related harm. Ferntree Gully has four of the municipality's 11 gaming venues and accounted for just over a fifth (22 per cent) of the municipality's EGM player losses in the 2023-24 Financial Year.

[101] Thomas, S et al (2023) *Health Promotion International* 'Protecting children and young people form contemporary marketing for gambling' Volume 38 pp1-14
[102] Rockloff, M, Browne, M, Hing, N, Thorne, H, Russell, A, Greer, N, Tran, K, Brook, K & Sproston, K 2020, *Victorian population gambling and health study 2018–2019*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
[103] Raybould, J.N., Larkin, M. & Tunney, R.J. Is there a health inequality in gambling related harms? A systematic review. *BMC Public Health* **21**, 305 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10337-3
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# 6 Towards reviewing the *Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020*

The analysis and discussions in this Section will guide the review of the *Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020.*

The benchmarking section provides a review of several social policies to provide insight into the scope of these social policies, Council's policy positions, and the scope of the strategies and actions reflecting local government's roles in protecting the community from gambling-related harm.

## 6.1 Benchmarking

Appendix 4 provides a summary of key components of gaming and gambling policies reviewed as part of the benchmarking process.

### 6.1.1 Titles of the social policy

Some policies have a simple 'gambling or electronic gaming policy' title. Others include 'harm prevention and reduction' in the title.

The newest policies are moving away from 'harm minimisation and reduction' and include 'harm prevention' in their titles.

### 6.1.2 Role of the social policy

The social policies' roles are to:

- Provide a 'whole-of-organisation' approach to addressing gambling-related harm in their community and upholding the community's health and wellbeing.
- Transparently articulate Council's roles and responsibilities, and position on gambling.
- Demonstrate councils' commitments to addressing gambling harm. This ranges from harm prevention to harm minimisation.

Some policies include 'demonstrating leadership' in specific areas such as managing gambling on council owned and managed land, with one draft policy[106] discussing the implications of gambling on Council owned land in community sport and recreational clubs. Other policies indicate their intention to demonstrate leadership in all actions included in the policy, particularly in relation to mitigating the negative impacts of gambling and EGMs on local communities.

### 6.1.3 Scope

The scope of most policies reviewed covers gambling in general, with three[107] focussing specifically on EGMs. The rationale underpinning policies focussing on EGMs is that this is the form of gambling over which Council has greatest control under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Other reasons are that, based on scientific research[108], EGMs are the form of gambling associated with the greatest harm to individuals, their families and the broader community.

The rationale underpinning policies covering all forms of gambling is councils statutory responsibility to protect and enhance the community's health and wellbeing under two additional statutory instruments, namely the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.*

The scope of both gambling and EGM specific social policies covered all council's statutory roles, including those relating specifically to land use planning and the assessment of applications for planning permits.

[106] Manningham Gambling Policy 2024
[107] Casey Electronic Gaming Machines Strategy 2015-2020
City of Melbourne EGM Decision-Making Framework (2017) and Darebin EGM Policy 2018-2022.
[108] Refer to Section 4.4.3

### 6.1.4 Framework

The framework of most policies is the public health approach to preventing and minimising harm. This approach is based on the principles of equity, prevention, collaboration, evidence base and the social determinants of health.

Two of the most contemporary policies describe the outcomes of a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) which is a statutory requirement.

### 6.1.5 Council's policy positions

The policy positions typically include the following statements and commitments:

- Acknowledgement gambling is a legal form of entertainment.
- Acknowledgement gambling is associated with some benefits.
- Statement of concern with harms caused by gambling to the individual, their families and the community.
- Statement identifying council's statutory responsibility for and commitment to preventing and minimising harm from gambling within the framework of a public health approach. Some policies describe their various roles which are broadly advocacy, collaboration and partnerships, and planning and regulation.

Some councils include a position on how they intend to manage gambling on land it owns or manages, and their intent to remain independent of the gambling industry.

### 6.1.6 Principles for a strong and defensible policy and action plan

The following principles may assist in formulating a strong and defensible policy and action plan:

1. Ensure the strategies and actions fall within the scope of Council's statutory roles and responsibilities.
2. Ensure the actions align with Council's resource capabilities.
3. Align the strategies and actions with the public health approach to protecting the community from gambling-related harm.
4. Ensure the strategies and actions are supported by a strong evidence base.
5. Protect those most at risk of gambling-related harm by focusing on the socio-economic and environmental determinants.
6. Apply a gender lens to the development, implementation and monitoring of the policy and action plan by:
    - Ensuring language is gender neutral and inclusive.
    - Engaging with diverse groups during the development and review of the policy and action plan.
    - Applying a strong evidence base to understand the specific behaviours, determinants and impacts of gambling.
    - Ensuring policies and strategies apply a gender lens, particularly when it comes to capacity building and increasing access to services.
7. Maximise opportunities for the community, gambling industry and stakeholders to inform the decision-making process.

### 6.1.7 Framing key components of the policy

**Framing Council's policy position**

The framing of council's policy position on gambling is challenging as it needs to address inherent tensions between its statutory roles to manage gambling and EGMs in the municipality, and protect the community from gambling-related harm.

One of the objectives of the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* is to minimise (as opposed to prevent) harm. The VGCCC's new harm minimisation statement acknowledges the need to act upon the residual risk of harm associated with any gambling and prevent harm by acting immediately and decisively whenever there is evidence of harm.[109]

The VGCCC's harm minimisation position statement makes the following observations:

- A possibility of harm remains whenever someone is gambling.
- Disregarding the possibility of harm is equivalent to disregarding harm.
- Preventing harm means acting immediately and decisively whenever there are signs of harm or possible harm.

This suggests the principle underpinning the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* is the community is expected to accept some level of harm but also efforts should be made to prevent harm where possible.

The principle underpinning the local government decision-making and statutory framework is local government is mandated to uphold and secure optimal public health and wellbeing, with net community benefit being one of the purposes of integrated decision-making.[110] This is supported by a shift away from making decisions that just seek to minimise harm from gambling towards those that prevent harm from occurring in the first place.[111]

A tension arises in the planning scheme between the principle to minimise the opportunity for convenience gambling underpinning Clause 52.28 Gaming and the policy imperative to locate gaming venues in activity centres. This policy tension can be addressed in the schedule to Clause 52.28 Gaming which provides Council with the opportunity to identify appropriate locations and appropriate venues for EGMs, both of which facilitate discretionary decision-making.

In order for Council's policy position to underpin a strong and defensible policy and action plan, it needs to acknowledge its responsibility to manage gambling activity in the municipality while at the same time being clear its ultimate responsibility and objective is to protect and uphold the community's wellbeing. This can be achieved by:

- Expressing concern with the harmful impacts of gambling on the community
- Acknowledging gambling is a legal activity that has some recognised social and economic benefits.
- Expressing Council's intention to protect those most vulnerable to the harmful impacts of gambling.
- Seeking to both minimise potential harm and maximise any potential benefits.

The policy position also needs to be balanced and transparent to support a robust and consistent decision-making process. It must also be flexible enough to support discretionary decision-making and represent the views of all sectors of its community, including the gambling industry.

[109] Our position on harm minimisation | Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (vgccc.vic.gov.au)
[110] Clause 71.02-3 Knox Planning Scheme
[111] Presentation by Professor Samantha Thomas and Dr Jonathan Hallet to the Local Government Working Group on Gambling, April 2023

### Framing the strategies and actions

Two different approaches are taken in the strategies and actions plans, one being the enabling or incentive approach and the other being the prohibitive or disincentive approach.

The enabling approach is typically given greater weight by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (the Tribunal) and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (the Commission). This is because it aligns with gambling being a legal and legitimate form of entertainment and recreation under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*. It also aligns with the principles underpinning the objectives in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* which are to encourage positive actions by responsible authorities and planning authorities by facilitating development which balances the interests of all Victorians and achieves the fair development of land.

Most policies therefore adopt the enabling or incentive approach while some incorporate a mixture of both approaches in order to strengthen their capacity to protect those most at risk of gambling harm.

Examples of statements and strategies for both models are as follows (refer to Table 8):

**Table 8 – Approaches to framing the strategies and action plans**

| Enabling and incentive approach | Prohibitive or disincentive approach | Balanced approach |
|---|---|---|
| **Policy position and intent** | | |
| Support public health and wellbeing.<br><br>Protect and grow the prosperity of the municipality.<br><br>Support entities wishing to divest themselves of EGMs and reduce reliance on the revenue received from EGMs. | Limit the prominence of gaming as a form of entertainment.<br><br>Make the municipality free of the harm associated with EGMs.<br><br>Not permit gambling advertising or activities (with some exceptions) on council owned or managed land and facilities.<br><br>Not provide or reduce financial or other support for entities who receive financial or in-kind support from venues.<br><br>Not promote community grants or initiatives offered by gambling venues.<br><br>Not accept financial contributions from gambling venues. | Balance right to undertake legal revenue-generating activity with the overarching need to promote community health and wellbeing. Recognised gambling harm can be experienced by individuals, their loved ones and the wider community.<br><br>Gambling is considered within the context of public health and consumer protection.<br><br>Protect those most at risk of harm by reducing or limiting density and number of EGMs. |

| Enabling and incentive approach | Prohibitive or disincentive approach | Balanced approach |
|---|---|---|
| **Language and tone** | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| facilitate, support, promote, encourage/discourage. | Prohibit, reduce, limit, remove, oppose, object. | Oppose or object where there is evidence the social and economic impact will be detrimental. |
| **Focus** | | |
| Maximising benefits. | Minimising harms. | Protect those most at risk of harm. |

### 6.1.8 Structure of the strategies and actions

The strategies and actions are broadly structured around four key council roles defined by the statutory instruments (refer to Table 9). The fifth category of strategies and actions describes how Council may wish to manage its relationship with the gambling industry.

**Table 9 – Scope of strategies and actions**

| Council's roles and responsibilities | Scope of strategies and actions |
|---|---|
| **Advocacy** | Changes to the regulatory framework to create a safe gambling environment.<br>Fair and transparent distribution of the Community Support Fund.<br>Greater access to support for those directly and indirectly affected by gambling harm. |
| **Collaboration and partnerships** | Work in partnership with relevant agencies and stakeholders (research, service provision).<br>Collaborate with adjoining municipalities on applications for gaming licences and planning permits.<br>Collaborate with the gaming industry to identify benefits and harms and implement effective harm minimisation measures.<br>Participate in networks such as Local Government Working Group on Gambling and the Alliance for Gambling Reform. |
| **Capacity building** | Inform the community about applications for gaming licences and planning permits.<br>Undertake research to provide a strong, defensible and robust evidence base.<br>Raise awareness of the determinants of gambling-related harm.<br>Raise awareness of and promote services available to those directly and indirectly affected by harm.<br>Provide a mechanism to gather feedback from stakeholders and the community.<br>Plan for, deliver and maintain services that promote healthy lifestyle behaviours.<br>Maximise access to non-gambling activities in the venue and in the surrounding area. |

| Council's roles and responsibilities | Scope of strategies and actions |
|---|---|
| | Support gambling venues to reduce their reliance on revenue from gambling activities.<br>Incorporate questions on gambling in stakeholder engagement and community consultation activities.<br>Protect council employees and visitors from gambling activities. |
| **Planning and regulation** | Identify opportunities to address gambling harm in all strategic and statutory documents.<br>Represent community's views by making preparing social and economic impact assessments and making submissions to the VGCCC.<br>Provide guidance in the planning scheme on appropriate locations and venues for EGMs.<br>Enforce planning permit conditions.<br>Prohibit and/or discourage gambling activities and advertising on council owned and/or managed land through leasing arrangements.<br>Not promote community grants or initiatives offered by venues. |
| **Council's relationship with the gambling industry** | Prohibit advertising on council owned and/or managed land.<br>Prohibit gambling on council owned and/or managed land.<br>Prohibit gambling using Council owned assets.<br>Maintain independence from the gambling industry (in relation to grants, sponsorships, money received). |

### 6.1.9 Collaboration with stakeholders

The preparation and implementation of the revised gambling policy will require collaboration with a range of stakeholders from peak bodies, government, industry, community and service providers. These include the following (refer to Table 10):

**Table 10 - Stakeholders**

| Stakeholder | Details | Involvement |
|---|---|---|
| **Council** | Relevant staff on the internal harm prevention working group | Input into draft policy and action plan.<br>Referral of applications for gaming licences and/or planning permits. |
| **Peak bodies** | Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), which auspices the Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGOG)<br>Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) | Participation on working groups.<br>Feedback on draft policy and action plan. |

| Stakeholder | Details | Involvement |
|---|---|---|
| | Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF) | |
| **Government** | Adjoining municipalities (City of Casey, Yarra Ranges, Greater Dandenong, Monash, Whitehorse and Maroondah)<br>Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission | Collaborate on joint research activities and advocacy submissions.<br>referral of applications for gaming licences and/or planning permits. |
| **Industry** | Community Clubs Victoria (CCV) | Feedback on draft policy and action plan.<br>Opportunities to reduce reliance on revenue from gambling.<br>Opportunities to increase non-gambling activities. |
| **Community** | People who live, work, study and visit Knox | Notification of applications for gaming licences and/or planning permits.<br>Feedback on draft policy and action plan. |
| **Community organisations and educational institutions** | Sporting clubs<br>Social and leisure groups such as U3A, Probus<br>Universities and research organisations | Opportunities to increase non-gambling activities.<br>Organisation of social outings at non-gambling venues. |
| **Service providers** | Community Safety Health & Wellbeing Advisory Committee.<br>Gamblers Help East<br>NGWALA Willumbong Aboriginal Corp – alcohol & drug treatment – includes gambling harm. | Collaborate on joint research activities and advocacy submissions.<br>Feedback on draft policy and action plan.<br>Partnerships in information and awareness campaigns. |

## 6.2 Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020-2023 peer review

The peer review of the *Knox Electronic Gaming Policy 2020-2023* in Table 11 draws on the benchmarking exercise in Section 5.1 and Appendix 4.

**Table 11 – Peer review of *Knox Electronic Gaming Machine Policy 2020-2023***

| Discussion | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| **Structure** | |
| Structure reflects contemporary social policies. | Retain existing structure. |
| **Title, purpose and scope of the policy** | |
| The scope of the current policy covers EGMs which is the form of gambling over which Council has the most control through making decisions on planning permits under the planning scheme and by making submissions to the VGCCC on gaming applications.<br><br>The more recent social policies have a broader scope, covering all forms of gambling, only one of which is EGMs. This broader scope aligns with all the roles Council plays in protecting the community from gambling harm which incorporate advocacy, collaboration and capacity building, in addition to planning and regulation. | Council broadens the scope of the social policy to cover all forms of gambling, not just EGMs.<br><br>Ensure title, purpose, context, role and functions of local government, scope, references, definitions, policy statement, goal, objections and actions cover all forms of gambling, not just EGMs. |
| **Title and terminology** | |
| Two of the seven core statements in the VGCCC's position statement acknowledge harm is preventable and gambling regulation seeks to prevent harm. This indicates a shift from seeking to minimise harm once it has manifest to preventing the harm from occurring in the first instance.<br><br>The policy's title does not include the words 'minimisation' or 'prevention'.<br><br>Some of the policies reviewed include reference to Council's intention which is to 'prevent or minimise harm' (with the newer policies focusing on prevention rather than minimisation). | Consider aligning the title and intention of the revised policy with the VGCCC's core principles underpinning its position statement which is to focus on harm prevention rather than minimisation.<br><br>This would require reviewing the use of the term 'minimisation' throughout the policy, where appropriate. |
| **Context** | |
| The data in this policy are collated from 2018-19 EGM data.<br><br>There is no discussion of other forms of gambling.<br><br>There is no discussion of the regulatory or strategic framework. This excludes any discussion of recent harm minimisation measures implemented at the federal or state level. | The EGM data require updating.<br><br>If the policy's scope is to broaden to include other forms of gambling, this should be reflected throughout the entire discussion in the Context, including the data, roles and functions of local government. |
| **References** | |

| Discussion | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Scope limited to legislation and policies related to EGMs. | Include legislation and policies covering all forms of gambling and the statutory requirement to undertake a Gender Impact Assessment. |
| **Definitions** | |
| Definitions limited to legislation and policies related to EGMs. | Include definitions covering all forms of gambling Gender Impact Assessment. |
| **Council policy** | |
| The structure and tone of the policy statement, goal, policy objectives and actions reflect contemporary social policies.<br><br>However, these components focus on EGMs as opposed to all forms of gambling and have the intent of minimising rather than preventing. | Retain the structure and tone of this section but broaden the scope to cover all forms of gambling and consider focusing on harm prevention rather than harm minimisation. |

# 7 Conclusion and next steps

## 7.1 Conclusion

The research found existing and emerging gambling behaviours, including online gambling and the use of EGMs, have the potential to result in gambling-related harms, particularly among groups at an elevated risk of gambling-related harms. These groups include young people aged 18-25 years, males and people experiencing social and economic vulnerability.

On the whole, relative to the Eastern Metropolitan Region, Knox is considered to display a mix of indicators of vulnerability to harm from gambling. However, the increase in family incidents is of concern given the association between gambling harm and family violence.

The suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia and Ferntree Gully are the most vulnerable to gambling-related harm. Ferntree Gully has four of the municipality's 11 gaming venues and accounted for just over a fifth (22 per cent) of the municipality's EGM player losses in the 2023-24 Financial Year.

Council has statutory responsibilities to protect the community from harm caused by gambling. While Council's key influence on gambling within the municipality is on managing the location and operation of EGMs through its planning and regulatory roles, it has the capacity to protect the community from harm from other forms of gambling through other roles including advocating to the government to reduce the risks associated with gambling, collaborating with stakeholders to increase access to support services and provision of alternative forms of recreation to build the community's capacity to engage in healthy lifestyle choices.

A strong, evidence-based gambling policy and action plan is underpinned by a balanced and robust policy position, and comprehensive suite of objectives, strategies and actions can guide Council in fulfilling these statutory roles. This policy and action plan can also guide Council's relationship with the gambling industry, and how it manages gambling activities and advertising on land it owns and/or manages.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The evidence in this Background Report has led to the following recommendations:

- Council commences drafting a new social policy, the scope of which will cover all forms of gambling, only one of which is gambling using EGMs. This involves engaging with the community and stakeholders prior to developing the draft to inform the evidence base underpinning the new policy and prior to adoption, to ensure the new social policy considers all interests and is consistent with contemporary decision-making and research.
- Council assesses the need to update relevant components of its plans and policies, and Knox Planning Scheme to reflect the scope and intent of the new gambling policy.

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## Appendix 2– Key gaming indicators

**Table 12 – Player loss 2023-24**

| LGA Name | Number of EGMs | Number of venues | Player Loss | Player loss per attached EGM | Rank player loss per attached EGM Metro | Player loss per venue | Rank layer loss per venue Metro |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **City of Knox** | **771** | **11** | **$76,623,268.16** | **$99,381.67** | **22** | **$6,965,751.65** | **18** |
| City of Casey | 906 | 13 | $158,435,289.13 | $174,873.39 | 3 | $12,187,329.93 | 3 |
| City of Greater Dandenong | 928 | 14 | $137,923,170.53 | $148,624.11 | 6 | $9,851,655.04 | 7 |
| City of Monash | 955 | 15 | $121,417,688.02 | $127,138.94 | 10 | $8,094,512.53 | 11 |
| City of Maroondah | 640 | 8 | $63,968,642.40 | $99,951.00 | 20 | $7,996,080.30 | 12 |
| City of Whitehorse | 431 | 6 | $59,662,331.37 | $138,427.68 | 9 | $9,943,721.90 | 5 |
| Shire of Yarra Ranges | 452 | 9 | $30,596,818.29 | $67,692.08 | 30 | $3,399,646.48 | 29 |
| **Average adjoining municipalities** | **719** | **11** | **$95,333,989.96** | **$126,117.87** | **N/A** | **$8,578,824.36** | **N/A** |
| **Metro average** | **615** | **10** | **$77,913,403.32** | **$121,042.00** | **N/A** | **$7,559,351.94** | **N/A** |
| **Victoria average** | **460** | **8** | **$53,158,354.81** | **$102,676.55** | **N/A** | **$5,572,768.08** | **N/A** |

Source: VGCCC

Compares favourably to metropolitan municipalities
Similar to metropolitan municipalities
Compares unfavourably to metropolitan municipalities

**Table 13 – Adults per venue, density EGMs per 1,000 adults, player loss 2023-24**

| LGA | Adults per venue | Density EGMs per 1,000 Adults | Player loss per adult 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **City of Knox** | **11,809.83** | **5.9** | $589.83 |
| City of Casey | 24,126 | 3.0 | $412.15 |
| City of Greater Dandenong | 11,678 | 6.9 | $684.72 |
| City of Maroondah | 10,950 | 5.8 | $739.20 |
| City of Monash | 9,341 | 7.1 | $1,054.67 |
| City of Whitehorse | 22,931 | 3.0 | $531.47 |
| Shire of Yarra Ranges | 13,968 | 3.6 | $243.39 |
| **Average benchmarked municipalities** | 14,972 | 5.0 | $607.92 |
| **Average Metropolitan municipalities** | 13,777 | 4.5 | $569.34 |
| **Average Victoria** | 11,380 | 4.8 | $553.56 |

Compares favourably to metropolitan municipalities
Similar to metropolitan municipalities
Compares unfavourably to metropolitan municipalities

Source: VGCCC

## Appendix 3 – Socio-economic profile

| Area | People 18-24 years (%) | SEIFA score | One parent families with children % | Lone person households % | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander % | Speaks a language other than English % | Recent arrivals % | People not fluent in English % | Population born in China (%) | Personal annual income $20,800 to $41,599 | Low income households % | Unemployment rate % | Disengaged young people aged 15-24 years | Rent social housing | Households with mortgage stress % (> 30% of income) | Households with rental stress % (>30 % income) | People with a long term health condition % | People with a mental health condition (including depression | People with below Year 11 schooling % | People with no qualifications % | Number of venues |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bayswater | 7.6 | 1002.5 | 12.7 | 27.6 | 1 | 30.9 | 15.8 | 5.5 | 5.4 | 25.9 | 21.8 | 4.4 | 9.0 | 3.9 | 17.8 | 32.1 | 34.9 | 10.3 | 25.0 | 36.7 | 1 |
| Boronia | 7.3 | 1015.6 | 12.2 | 27.3 | 0.9 | 20.8 | 13.9 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 26.8 | 21.6 | 4.3 | 9.2 | 2.8 | 16.8 | 33.1 | 36.4 | 11.0 | 25.0 | 36.6 | 1 |
| Ferntree Gully | 7.9 | 1028.4 | 12.6 | 23.3 | 0.9 | 18.7 | 9.9 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 26 | 20.4 | 4.5 | 7.7 | 2.8 | 14.5 | 33.7 | 35.6 | 10.3 | 26.0 | 38.0 | 4 |
| Knoxfield | 8.3 | 1044.8 | 11.3 | 20.5 | 0.4 | 32.9 | 12.3 | 4.8 | 6.9 | 25.4 | 19.4 | 4.5 | 7.6 | 1.1 | 16.3 | 28.9 | 32.7 | 8.1 | 23.2 | 37.0 | |
| Lysterfield | 11.6 | 1097.2 | 8.5 | 10.3 | 0.5 | 18.4 | 5.1 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 19.6 | 10.2 | 3.5 | 4.1 | 0.9 | 13.8 | 29.0 | 28.8 | 6.6 | 20.5 | 39.0 | |
| Rowville (Central) | 8.9 | 1053.6 | 10.8 | 16.8 | 0.6 | 33.4 | 10 | 5.2 | 5.8 | 22.6 | 15.7 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 1.0 | 16.9 | 25.6 | 31.9 | 7.6 | 21.3 | 37.9 | 1 |
| Rowville (North) | 9.9 | 1080.6 | 9.2 | 14.4 | 0.4 | 27.7 | 8.1 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 22.1 | 15.0 | 4.2 | 5.3 | 1.8 | 13.3 | 26.8 | 30.6 | 6.5 | 22.2 | 38.1 | |
| Rowville (South) | 10.6 | 1074.8 | 8.9 | 12 | 0.3 | 31.8 | 8.1 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 21.8 | 14.4 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 14.8 | 21.7 | 30.3 | 6.1 | 20.5 | 38.7 | |
| Scoresby | 9.2 | 1038.6 | 12.1 | 17.1 | 0.7 | 37.8 | 11.1 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 24 | 17.7 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 1.3 | 15.9 | 26.5 | 29.8 | 6.9 | 23.0 | 37.0 | |
| The Basin | 7.2 | 1054.9 | 10.8 | 18.6 | 1 | 8.3 | 7.2 | 1.1 | 0.8 | 26 | 17.3 | 3.9 | 6.2 | 1.6 | 11.5 | 30.2 | 35.2 | 11.3 | 26.2 | 35.7 | |
| Upper Ferntree Gully | 8.3 | 1038.3 | 10.3 | 23.1 | 0.4 | 8.2 | 6.3 | 1.1 | 0.5 | 28.4 | 17.8 | 2.5 | 5.2 | 0.5 | 11.1 | 38.2 | 37.1 | 12.0 | 26.5 | 34.5 | |
| Wantirna | 7.4 | 1045.2 | 10.6 | 16.7 | 0.4 | 39.3 | 12.3 | 6.9 | 9.5 | 23.9 | 19.1 | 4.6 | 6.1 | 1.7 | 20.2 | 26.3 | 32.8 | 6.9 | 21.4 | 35.0 | 2 |
| Wantirna South | 8.7 | 1053.3 | 10 | 19.6 | 0.3 | 43.9 | 11.2 | 6.6 | 10.7 | 23.7 | 20.4 | 4.9 | 5.0 | 1.5 | 21.6 | 29.2 | 31.9 | 7.2 | 19.6 | 34.8 | 2 |
| City of Knox | 8.4 | 1042.2 | 11.2 | 20.7 | 0.6 | 28.7 | 11.1 | 4.3 | 5.3 | 24.3 | 19.0 | 4.4 | 6.5 | 2.0 | 16.5 | 30.5 | 33.4 | 8.7 | 23.1 | 36.9 | |
| Eastern Metropolitan Region | 9.2 | 1051 | 10.1 | 22.2 | 0.5 | 32.7 | 18 | 5.4 | 7.9 | 23.1 | 19.4 | 4.7 | 5.1 | 1.6 | 18.1 | 31.6 | 31.0 | 7.8 | 19.1 | 33.1 | |

Higher relative to Knox

Higher relative to the Eastern Metropolitan Region

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021, compiled by .id consulting

## Appendix 4 – Benchmarking Council social policies

| Policy | Broad gambling policy |
|---|---|
| **Banyule Gambling Harm Prevention Policy 2024-2028** | Categorises gambling as an activity that can cause harm to individuals, families and communities alongside smoking and consuming alcohol.<br><br>Policy formulated within the public health approach framework.<br><br>Has strong Gender Impact Assessment and Social Impact Assessment components.<br><br>Based on five principles:<br><br>• A public interest approach<br>• Evidence-based policy and initiatives<br>• Uplifting safe and health community<br>• Social justice<br>• A collaborative approach<br><br>Priorities include direct interventions, advocacy, planning and community wellbeing |
| **Geelong Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2022** | Council will focus on preventing and reducing harm by promoting alternatives to gambling, evidence-based planning and community connection. The policy is underpinned by a harm minimisation framework. |
| **Greater Dandenong Gambling Policy 2022** | It is Council's intention to mitigate the harm caused by gambling. The policy strives to accomplish the most beneficial outcomes for the municipal community and alleviate the harmful economic and social impacts of gambling.<br><br>There is a focus on protecting those most at risk of gambling harm. |
| **Glen Eira draft Gambling Policy 2024** | Policy has a defined scope:<br>• Forms of gambling covered are EGMs, casino games, online gambling, lotteries, race betting, sports betting and similar activities.<br>• Council recognises that some forms of gambling such as bingo, raffles, card games and sports tipping competitions can be conducted for the benefit of the community and charitable organisations, to create social environments and fundraise for local causes. The policy therefore does not cover these forms of gambling.<br>• Caulfield Racecourse is a regionally significant major events and recreation open space in the municipality and is therefore exempt from policy statements relating to promotion and advertising and Council's involvement in areas in the Racecourse other than the gaming lounge. |

| Policy | Broad gambling policy |
|---|---|
| | • Approved RSL clubs are exempt from the prohibition of Council involvement in ANZAC Day commemorative services |
| **Kingston Gambling Policy 2020-2024** | Council recognises t~~h~~at at harmful levels, gambling can have significant health, social and economic impacts to individuals, families and communities. Council will therefore work with and support any community groups/organisations to transition away from gambling |
| **Macedon Ranges Gambling Harm Prevention Policy 2024** | Includes 'harm prevention' in the title. Indicates a shift away from minimisation to harm prevention.<br>Objective is to prevent the negative social and economic impacts of gambling on the community.<br>Four key roles are leadership, regulation, advocacy and partnership and informing.<br>Strong position on Council's relationship with the gambling industry by prohibiting gambling on Council owned or managed land by prohibiting new or additional EGMs, not providing financial support for or accepting contributions from gambling industry, on Council owned or managed land, renegotiating lease arrangements to reduce gambling.<br>Informed by a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA). |
| **Manningham Gambling Policy 2024** | Purpose is to guide Council and key stakeholders to collaborate and work towards creating a healthy, safe and resilient community.<br>Founded on the public health approach which recognises gambling has the potential to result in significant health, social and economic impacts to individuals, families and communities.<br>Takes note of the increasing accessibility of gambling associated with online, mobile and other forms of gambling.<br>Considers how to address determinants of gambling harm to limit or prevent harm before it occurs.<br>Themes are Education and capacity building, programs and services, advocacy and planning and regulation.<br>Discusses the implications of gambling on Council owned land in community sport and recreational clubs.<br>Policy subject to a gender impact assessment (GIA). |
| **Wangaratta Gambling Policy 2024** | Adopts a public health approach.<br>Committed to reframing gambling harm and working with clubs to reduce their dependency on revenue from high risk gambling activities.<br>Objectives are: |

| Policy | Broad gambling policy |
|---|---|
| | • Protect those most vulnerable to the social and economic harms caused by gambling.<br>• Maximise opportunities for gambling activities to deliver social and economic benefits.<br>• Strengthen partnerships with organisations that provide services to people directly and indirectly affected by gambling-related harm.<br>• Strengthen the community's capacity to understand the risks and impacts of gambling-related harm.<br>Four pillars:<br>1. Managed and support (council owned land, healthy lifestyles and reduced reliance on gambling revenue)<br>2. Partner and advocate (access to support, advocacy for effective harm minimisation)<br>3. Plan and regulate (land use planning and regulation of gambling activities)<br>4. Informa and engage (increased awareness of risks and impacts of gambling-related harm). |
| **Whittlesea Gambling Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2024** | Council aims to reduce the detrimental impacts of gambling acknowledging the use of EGMs is a legal recreational activity that forms part of a range of entertainment options available to the community. |
| **Wodonga Gambling Harm Preventative Policy 2023** | Includes 'harm prevention' in the title.<br>Founded in a public health approach to harm prevention which incorporates the principles of equity, prevention, collaboration, evidence base and the social determinants of health.<br>Covers all forms of gambling but focuses on EGMs as they are the most harmful form of gambling.<br>Four areas of focus are planning and regulation, advocacy, collaboration and partnerships, capacity building. |
| **Monash – Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy 2022** | Council is committed to reducing harm from gambling.<br>Gambling is a public health issue which impacts individuals, families and communities.<br>Public health approach recognises there is a complex interplay of social, economic and environmental factors that contribute to health and potential harm. |

| Policy | Broad gambling policy |
|---|---|
| | Public health lens allows for coordinated, comprehensive approach which seeks to prevent harm from the whole population, not just individuals.<br><br>Gambling is categorised as a legal form of recreation, however, as the closest level of government to the community, council sees the significant harm gambling causes within the community. Council's concern wis particularly for those most vulnerable.<br><br>Council is concerned with the significant health, social and economic impacts harmful levels of gambling can have to individuals, families and communities.<br><br>Acknowledge organisations receiving funds need time to transition – ensure groups and clubs will have a limited transition period to ensure alignment with policy |
| **Maribyrnong Reducing Harm from Gambling Policy 2016-2020 – includes action plan** | As a leader, partner, advocate, decision maker, service provider, and planner Council identifies that community health and wellbeing is a long-term investment. Council therefore has a key role in creating and improving the physical, social, natural, cultural and economic environments that keep people and communities well now and into the future.<br><br>Council recognises that whilst gambling is a legal activity, problem gambling causes social and economic harms to individuals, families and communities making it a significant public health issue. The Council is therefore committed to prevent and reduce the harm and minimise the negative impacts of gambling to the City of Maribyrnong community. |
| **Maroondah Gambling Policy 2018** | Gambling is a legal form of entertainment associated with benefits to the individual, gambling industry and public sector.<br><br>Council is concerned with the social, economic and health impacts affecting the individual, their families and the community.<br><br>Council adopts a public health approach by addressing all the determinants of harm. |
| **Nillumbik Shire Council Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2016-2021** | Council recognises that EGM gaming is a legal activity, but the long-term social and economic impacts of EGMs is an important public health issue.<br><br>Council encourages a responsible approach to the provision of gambling to minimise the risk of harms. |
| | **Specific Electronic Gaming Machine Policy** |
| **Casey Electronic Gaming Machines Strategy 2015-2020** | Council acknowledges the economic and recreational functions of all forms of gambling in the local community but also recognises that a comparatively small but significant number of people gamble excessively and as a result experience personal, family and financial problems. |

| Policy | Broad gambling policy |
|---|---|
| **City of Melbourne EGM Decision-Making Framework (2017)** | Gaming is a legitimate form of recreation and there can bring benefits to the community.<br>Councils have important functions relating to health and wellbeing which give them the foundation on which to make informed decisions about eh economic and social impact of EGMs on the wellbeing of local communities. |
| **Darebin EGM Policy 2018-2022** | Gambling through EGMs has a negative effect on individuals, families and communities.<br>Council takes a whole of organisation approach to minimising harm that addresses harm from a health prevention perspective which encompasses a range of harm prevention and minimisation measures that focus on the social economic and environmental determinants of harm. |

## Appendix 5 – Gender Impact Assessment Framework

### Purpose of a Gender Impact Assessment

A Gambling-Harm Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) provides a gender focused lens during the development, implementation and review of policies and actions intended to protect the community from gambling-related harm.[112] A gendered approach to gambling harm prevention provides the opportunity to focus onto the unique factors that make specific groups in the community such as women and LGBTQI+ people more at risk of, and vulnerable to, the impacts of gambling-related harm. This aligns with the public health approach to protecting the community from gambling-related harm by recognising the intersectionality between multiple determinants of harm.

GIAs provide the framework to assess the risks of, and vulnerability to gambling-related harm, experienced by individual gambler and their family, friends, colleagues and the broader community. GIAs also provide the specific opportunity to pay attention to the association between people experiencing gambling-related harm and their propensity to be perpetrators and/or victims of intimate partner and family violence.

Please refer to the gender specific discussion in Section 5.3.2 for the evidence base used to inform the preparation of a GIA.

### Gender impact considerations of a gambling policy

Gambling-related harm can affect any individual and their significant others, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Specific risk factors for all cohorts of the population that increase a person's risk of gambling-related harm, and their resilience to the impact of gambling-related harm are social isolation and loneliness, boredom and trauma expressed as anxiety and depression.

However, research has found that women, particularly younger women aged 18-24 years and older women aged 60 years and over, are experiencing increased incidence of gambling-related harm because they are:

- participating in a broader range of gambling products and activities,
- more at risk of being victims of family and domestic violence than men, and
- attracted to gaming venues open when other non-gambling alternatives are available as they are perceived as being safe.

While research indicates people who socialised in LGBTQI+ venues are less likely to gamble (as these venues typically do not provide gambling activities), this cohort experiences the same risks of gambling-related harms as women for similar reasons.

### Gender Impact Assessment Framework

The GIA Framework provided in Table 14 is derived from the following sources:

- Section 9 Gender Equality Act 2020
- Resources provided in the *Gender impact assessment toolkit and templates* Gender impact assessment toolkit and templates | Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au)

[112] McCarthy, S, Thomas, S, Bellringer, M and Cassidy, R (2019) *Harm Reduction Journal* Women and gambling-related harm: a narrative literature review and implications for research, policy, and practice 16.18

**Table 14 – Gender Impact Assessment Framework**

| Gender impact consideration | Source |
|---|---|
| Name of the policy. | [Name of new policy] |
| Which specific gender cohorts are at an elevated risk of gambling-related harm? | Sections 5.3 and 5.4 |
| What factors need to be considered when assessing the intersectionality between gender inequality and other forms of discrimination and disadvantage? These may include Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity race, religion and sexual orientation. | Data sources for conducting a gender impact assessment \| Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au)<br>Stakeholder engagement process |
| What impacts will the [new policy] have on persons of different genders? | [Vision, priorities, position statement and outcomes in new policy] |
| How was the [new policy] developed to meet the needs of persons of different genders, address gender inequality and promote gender equality? | Section 6<br>[Relevant priorities, strategies and actions in the new policy]<br>[Methodology and process to be included in the background to the new policy] |
| How will the [new policy] be monitored and reviewed to meet the needs of persons of different genders, address gender inequality and promote gender equality? | [Specific criteria to be included in the implementation, monitoring and review sections of the new policy] |

## 8.12 Biannual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

| | |
|---|---|
| **Final Report Destination:** | Council |
| **Paper Type:** | For Decision |
| **Author:** | Governance Officer, Damian Watson |
| **Manager:** | Manager Governance & Risk, Andrew Dowling |
| **Executive:** | Acting Director Customer & Performance, Scott Coleman |

**SUMMARY**
This report presents to Council, the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report – August 2025 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council resolve to receive and note the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report - August 2025, as set out in Attachment 1 to the report.

**1. DISCUSSION**
The Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) is a Committee established in accordance with section 53 of the Local Government Act 2020 (LGA 2020).

Under the LGA 2020 and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter (the Charter), the Committee is required to formally report on its activities twice annually to Council. The Committee's Biannual Report to March 2025 is set out in Attachment 1 and provides Council with a summary of the matters the Committee has addressed in discharging its responsibilities under its Charter.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**
The Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report is prepared in consultation with the Audit and Risk Committee. The Biannual Report was presented to the Committee at its August 2025 meeting.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
Nil.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**
Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**
Nil.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
Nil.

**7. RISKS**

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is established to strengthen Council's governance, risk management, financial management; and to drive continuous improvement. Presentation of the ARC's biannual report provides assurance to Council that the Committee is effectively overseeing these areas and ensuring that robust controls and risk management practices are in place.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Leading, listening and governing responsibly**

Strategy 4.1 - Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.

Strategy 4.5 - Council is financially sustainable through long-term strategic, financial and asset planning, and the responsible prioritisation, allocation and use of resources.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Biannual ARC Report August 2025 [**8.12.1** - 9 pages]




Knox City Council

# Audit and Risk Committee

## Biannual Report
## August 2025

## 1. Background and Purpose of this Report

The Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) is a committee established in accordance with section 53 and 54 of the Local Government Act 2020 (LGA). Under the Charter, the Committee is to formally report on its operations to the Council twice annually.

This report meets the reporting requirements to Council as mandated by section 54(5) of the Local Government Act 2020 and importantly provides Council with a summary of the matters that the Committee has addressed in the reporting period in discharging its responsibilities under its Charter.

The Committee's Charter is set by the Council and a review of the Charter is currently underway in line with the Committee's Annual Work Plan. Once finalised a revised Charter will be endorsed by the Committee for consideration by Council.

## 2. Period of Reporting

This report covers the Audit and Risk Committee Meetings on 12 June 2025 and 28 August 2025.

## 3. Committee Membership and Meetings

The composition of the Committee in accordance with its Charter is three independent members and two Council representatives. Councillor members are appointed by Council annually, for a 12-month term, which may be renewed subject to Council resolution. Independent members are appointed by Council for a three-year term following an external selection process.

The Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management representatives attended meetings of the Committee, by invitation, to assist in meeting discussions and procedures. Representatives from the internal and external auditors also attend to present on matters related to internal and external audit activities.

The Mayor, Councillor Lisa Cooper, and Councillor Susan Pearce were appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee at the Council Meeting on 21 November 2024.

The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee, Geoff Harry, was re-elected as Chair for 2025 at the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 12 December 2024.

Following a recruitment process, Suzie Thoraval was selected as a new Independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee to replace the outgoing Independent member Homi Burjorjee.

The following table provides details of the Committee members and meeting attendance during the reporting period.

| Attendee | Role | 12/06/2025 Meeting | 28/08/2025 Meeting |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mr. Geoff Harry | Independent Chair (March 2023-Present) | Yes | Yes |
| Mr. Homi Burjorjee | Independent Member | Yes | [redacted] |
| Mr. Mick Jaensch | Independent Member | Yes | Yes |
| Ms Suzie Thoraval | Independent Member | [redacted] | Yes |
| Cr Lisa Cooper (Mayor) | Councillor Member | Yes | Yes |
| Cr Susan Pearce | Councillor Member | Yes | Yes |

## 4. Committee Responsibilities

The Committee's Charter is used to develop an Annual Work Plan which guides the agenda and activities at each meeting during the year and on Behalf of the Committee.

Relevant obligations under the Charter were addressed during the reporting period.

### 4.1 Chief Executive Officer Report

The Committee received quarterly updates from the Chief Executive Officer Bruce Dobson on matters including:

- Asbestos Claim (Russell Keith McIntosh v CITY OF KNOX & Ors)
- General Election 2024 Update
- New Audit and Risk Committee Member
- Reportable Conduct Scheme Case – National Redress Scheme
- Update on Council Wellbeing Plan
- Essential Services Volunteer Fund
- Satisfaction Survey
- Engagement Survey
- Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- VAGO Audit Forum
- Recruitment Process – Alleged Privacy Breach
- Inquiry into fraud and corruption control in local government - Hearings

### 4.2 Internal Audit

The Interim Strategic Internal Audit Plan (SIAP) was reviewed and endorsed at the 6 March 2025 Committee meeting. Progress against the adopted SIAP is monitored at each meeting. Council's internal audit service provider (HLB) continued the practice of

preparing and completing internal audit reports which provides recommended actions for the organisation.

The following Internal Audit reports have been presented to the Committee:

| June 2025 | August 2025 |
|---|---|
| • Cyber Security | • Customer Service Complaints Management<br>• Review of HR Management |

Recommendations contained within all reports were accepted by Management for implementation.

Actions from Completed Internal Audits

Addressing outstanding Internal Audit Actions from previous Internal Audit Reviews remains a prime focus of the Committee, with a revised reporting format providing the Committee with greater oversight on the progress of these actions.

The summary below reflects the half year to the August 2025 Audit and Risk Committee Meetings. At the March 2025 meeting, there were 56 open Internal Audit actions with 6 of those actions classified as overdue. As at the August 2025 meeting, there are 47 open Internal Audit actions with 9 of those actions classified as overdue.

**Table One: Summary of Movements Since August 2024**

| | Priority | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **High** | **Medium** | **Low** | **Total** |
| **Open Actions at 6 March 2025** | **1** | **39** | **16** | **56** |
| Add New Agreed Actions Reported in the Period | 3 | 21 | 7 | 31 |
| **Sub Total** | 4 | 60 | 23 | 87 |
| Less Actions Closed in the Period | 1 | 25 | 14 | 40 |
| Less Rejected Actions | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **Open Actions at 28 August 2025** | **3** | **35** | **9** | **47** |

### 4.3 External Audit

The External Audit Management Letter for the 2024-2025 external audit was presented to the August 2025 Audit and Risk Committee Meeting.

### 4.4 Risk Management

The Committee received Quarterly Risk Management updates, inclusive of a report summarising significant operational risks (residual rating of high or above), and the Strategic and Operational Risk profile. The committee also received detailed reports into selected Strategic Risks. Updates were also provided in relation to management of Council's insurance portfolio and claims management.

### 4.5 Governance and Compliance Reports

Informing areas of focus by the Committee were various reports including:

- Quarterly Compliance Report detailing management of council's register of delegations and ongoing compliance with relevant legislation detailing any compliance breaches and engagement with various oversight bodies including the Office of the Victorian Information Commissions, Ombudsman, Local Government Inspectorate and IBAC
- Councillor Expenses Reports as required by the Local Government Act 2020
- Audit and Risk Committee Self-Assessment Report
- Review of Audit and Risk Committee Charter

The Committee also received reporting which monitors reports released by State based integrity agencies (VAGO, IBAC, Ombudsman Victoria) that may be relevant to Council via HLB's Recent Reports and Publications circular .

### 4.6 Financial and ICT Reporting

During the period, the Committee received and considered:

- Quarterly Financial Report Statements
- Transformation Governance Committee Updates
- Cyber Security Updates
- Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement 2024/25

### 4.7 Fraud Prevention systems and controls

There were no material matters of fraud and corruption reported to the Committee during the reporting period.

### 4.8 Reporting to Council

Minutes of Committee meetings are provided to all Councillors as soon as practical after each meeting via Council's online portal and via email.

The Committee reports formally to the Council at least twice per annum. The Committee Chairperson is invited to present to the Council annually.

The Committee's March 2025 Report was presented to the Council Meeting held on 24 March 2025 and this report is scheduled to be presented to the 29 September 2025 Council Meeting.

### 4.9 Summary of Reports Presented

| Date | Report Title & Description | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| **June Meeting** | | |
| 12/6/2025 | Actions from Previous Audit and Risk Committee Meetings<br>• Provides comments against the status of all actions arising from previous meeting | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Annual Work Plan 2024<br>• Tracks delivery of the Committee's Annual Work Plan | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Chief Executive Officer Report<br>• A quarterly presentation of issues of note | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Strategic Risk Review – Deep Dive into Disharmony Between Councillors or between Councillors and the Administration<br>• Regular "deep dives" provide an opportunity for in-depth analysis of Council's key strategic risks | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Strategic Risk Review – Deep Dive into the Inability of the Organisation to successfully manage change<br>• Regular "deep dives" provide an opportunity for in-depth analysis of Council's key strategic risks | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Transformation Report<br>• The Transformation Report shows the Customer and Performance (C&P) portfolio's capital and operational projects being delivered to the organisation and customers as of 20 April 2025 month end. The aim of this report is to provide the monthly status, insights, key notable achievements, and risks and issues for defined capital and operational projects that will contribute greatly to the core Council Plan theme of Civic Engagement and Integrity. | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Quarterly Risk Management Update<br>• An overview of Council's risk registers and summary of key risk management activities | Noted |

| Date | Report Title & Description | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| 12/6/2025 | Cyber Report<br>• Report on the Customer and Performance portfolio's capital and operational projects currently being delivered, and an overview of cyber security issues. | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Internal Audit Status Report | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Actions from Internal Audits<br>• A progress report on outstanding actions from Internal Audits previously presented to the Committee. | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Cyber Security Internal Audit<br>• Presentation of the Internal Audit report | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Local Government – Recent Reports and Publications<br>• A summary of recent reports and publications regarding audits throughout the Local Government sector. | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | External Audit Report – Interim Management Letter<br><br>This document is provided by Council's External auditors, RSM Australia. | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Councillor Expenses – Q3 2024/25<br>• A quarterly report in line with the Councillor Expenses and Support Policy & Procedure | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Quarterly Compliance Report- June 2025<br>• A report summarising activities in key compliance area including areas such as privacy and human rights, Freedom of Information, and Ombudsman enquiries | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Quarterly Performance Report- June 2025<br>• Presentation of the most recent Quarterly Performance Report as presented to Council | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Draft Budget including 10 Year Financial Plan<br>• All councils are required to prepare a Financial Plan covering a minimum 10-year period, aligned with the principles of sound financial management and strategic planning. | Noted |
| 12/6/2025 | Review of Changes to Accounting Policies<br>• The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Risk Committee with an overview of Knox City Council's accounting policies, estimates, judgements and assumptions that will be utilised in preparing the financial statements for the financial year ending 30 June 2025. | Noted |

| Date | Report Title & Description | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| **August Meeting** | | |
| 28/8/2025 | Actions from Previous Audit and Risk Committee Meetings<br>• Provides comments against the status of all actions arising from previous meetings | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Annual Work Plan Update<br>• Tracks delivery of the Committee's Annual Work Plan | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Chief Executive Officer Report<br>• A quarterly presentation of issues of note | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Risk Management Update – August 2025<br>• An overview of Council's risk registers and summary of key risk management activities, including an update on Council's insurance renewal and claims experience over the previous year | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report<br>• An update of Council's status regarding safety and wellbeing issues. | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Internal Audit Status Report<br>• An update from Council's contracted internal auditor on the status of internal audits. | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Actions from Internal Audits<br>• A progress report on outstanding actions from Internal Audits previously presented to the Committee. | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Local Government – Recent Reports and Publications<br>• A summary of recent reports and publications regarding audits throughout the Local Government sector | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Customer Service Complaints Management<br>• Presentation of the Internal Audit report | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Review of HR Management<br>• Presentation of the Internal Audit report | Noted |

| Date | Report Title & Description | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| 28/8/2025 | Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement – August 2025<br>• The 2024-25 Statements are presented to the Audit and Risk Committee for consideration and, subject to that review, to recommend them to Council for in-principle adoption. | Noted the report and recommended Council approve 'in-principle' the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement |
| 28/8/2025 | Councillor Expenses – Q4 2024/25<br>• A quarterly report in line with the Councillor Expenses and Support Policy & Procedure | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Quarterly Compliance Report – August 2025<br>• A report summarising activities in key compliance area including areas such as privacy and human rights, Freedom of Information, and Ombudsman enquiries | Noted |
| 28/8/2025 | Biannual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee – August 2025<br>• To consider and endorse the Committee's biannual audit and risk report in line with its Charter and the Local Government Act 2020 | Endorsed |

## 5. Conclusion

The Committee benefits from the combined knowledge of Councillor and independent members during meetings. The Committee acknowledges the contribution of all members who perform their responsibilities with diligence and professionalism. The Committee also acknowledges the contribution of audit representatives from Council's internal and external auditors, and Council staff supporting the Committee.

## 8.13 Climate Response Plan Annual Report 2024/2025

| | |
|---|---|
| **Final Report Destination:** | Council |
| **Paper Type:** | For Noting |
| **Author:** | Senior Project Manager - Climate Response, Julie Kirkwood |
| **Manager:** | Manager City Futures, Shiranthi Widan |
| **Executive:** | Director City Liveability, Matt Kelleher |

**SUMMARY**
Local Government is identified as having a role and responsibility to respond to climate change and its impacts on our community through the following State Government legislation:

- *Local Government Act 2020*: Councils are required to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks
- *Climate Change Act 2017*: local government must consider climate change when preparing a municipal public health and wellbeing plan, including the potential impacts of climate change and potential contribution to Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*: to provide explicit consideration of the policies and obligations of the State relating to climate change when decisions are made about the use and development of land.

In response to a community campaign in 2019 and an associated Notice of Motion, work on the latest Climate Response Plan began in 2020. A 10 year plan (Climate Response Plan 2021-2031) was subsequently adopted by Council on 27 September 2021. The Plan supports Council's effective planning, management and implementation of climate response actions over the 10 year period.

This report responds to a prior Council resolution to provide an Annual Report on Council's progress in implementing the Climate Response Plan 2021 – 2031 (CRP) actions. This report provides the fourth Annual Report.

Key updates from progress in implementing the CRP actions include:

- steady progress has been made in implementing the CRP actions, with 43 of the 55 actions completed or underway;
- progress is being made in Council meeting its emissions mitigation and net zero by 2030 target;
- based on the latest available data for the Knox community (2022/23) it shows a 12.6% reduction in community emissions since 2018/19; and
- there have been improvements in Council's adaptive capacity, with identified strengths in climate adaptation knowledge, governance, and decision making, as well as strategic response and organisational culture.

It should be noted that the mid-term Review of the Climate Response Plan is currently underway, and the outcome of the review will be presented to Council for consideration in early 2026 prior to the commencement of related community and stakeholder consultation.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council receive and note the Knox Climate Response Plan (CRP) 2021-31 Annual Report (Attachment 1) which provides an update on the implementation of CRP actions during the 2024/2025 financial year.

**1. DISCUSSION**
The Knox Climate Response Plan 2021 – 2031 (CRP) was adopted by Council on 27 September 2021 and sets out a pathway to net zero emissions for Knox City Council by 2030 and actions to help our community reach net zero emissions by 2040. The CRP also identifies the actions required for climate change adaptation and resilience building. The CRP identified 55 actions for implementation over a ten-year period. This report provides an update on CRP implementation over the 2024/2025 financial year and is the fourth annual report. Note also that the mid-term review is currently underway to consider improvements to the CRP, and is due for completion by mid-2026, with a revised draft plan expected to be presented to Council in early 2026.

The CRP addresses seven key areas of focus:
- community advocacy
- community health and resilience;
- our environment;
- transportation;
- efficient buildings and infrastructure;
- renewable energy; and
- business and industry.

The CRP was developed to outline Council's and the community's roles in responding to climate change. The actions that Council can enact more immediately are those within direct control of Council, such as internal process actions, beginning work on vehicle fleet transition, and powering Council operations with renewable energy. Over time, the CRP also seeks to build capacity to support community focused actions that will have longer timeframes such as increasing the provision of public electric vehicle chargers, providing informative education sessions that lead to behaviour change, supporting our businesses to reduce their energy use and increasing our urban tree canopy. These activities will be increasingly reflected in future annual reports and demonstrate progress towards achieving community net zero targets and climate adaptation.

In the past 12 months, steady progress has been made with the CRP implementation, with 43 of the 55 actions either on schedule or completed. Table 1 below summarises the status of all 55 CRP actions. Attachment 1 includes a more detailed breakdown of the CRP actions and their status.

| **CRP Action Status** | **Number of CRP Actions (as at July 2025)** |
|---|---|
| Completed this financial year | 6 |
| Completed in previous reporting years | 16 |
| On Schedule | 21 |
| Deferred | 4 |

| CRP Action Status | Number of CRP Actions (as at July 2025) |
|---|---|
| Behind Schedule | 3 |
| Not Started – start date in future years or action not scheduled to commence in departmental work program | 4 |
| Closed | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | **55** |

**Table 1:** Climate Response Plan (CRP) action status (July 2025)

Highlights for 2024-25 include the following:

- All remaining major road lights that are the full responsibility of Council (1,685 lights) have been replaced with more energy efficient LED lights, leading to the conversion of 90% of all streetlights across Knox to LED lights.
- Council has added a total of 50kW of solar power across four Council owned buildings and 47kWh of batteries across three Council buildings in 2024/25.
- Electrification of several Council facilities including installation of heat pump hot water systems (at Knox Infolink, Windemere Tennis Pavilion), lighting upgrades (Knox Civic Centre, Netball Centre, Rowville Community Centre) and electrification feasibility studies (for Rowville Community Centre and the Knox Civic Centre).
- Continuation of the annual program to inform senior and vulnerable residents on the best measures to be prepared during heatwaves in Summer. Officers also do a phone check-in on their wellbeing following heat health alert days.
- Council hosted the Energy Savers program which promotes electrification and energy efficiency opportunities with local businesses. This included working with a number of councils to promote the Business Renewables Buying Group - a Renewable Energy Power Purchase agreement for businesses.
- Identification of flood hazards impacting on roads is complete and the data has been shared with the Emergency Management team and the State Emergency Service.

There were 7 actions scheduled for implementation during the 2024-25 year which are either deferred or behind schedule. Some delays in actions are due to the following:

- In relation to transitioning the Council fleet to electric vehicles (EVs) by 2025, more recent considerations have led to an adjustment of the steps required to implement this action. This includes fleet rationalisation of pool vehicles and expanding charging capability at the Operations Centre. This adjustment in the action will be reflected in the revised CRP.
- Changes to the planning controls and the National Construction Code have impacted the relevance of the action to encourage phasing in requirements for all commercial buildings to achieve net zero goals, and this will also be adjusted as part of the CRP review.
- Continuing to await a Ministerial decision regarding the introduction of new Elevating ESD targets within the Knox Planning Scheme. This action is also being reviewed as part of the CRP mid-term review.

Additionally, one of the actions has been closed, due to recent planning reforms codifying ESD requirements. As a result of this, the ESD referrals officer service has now ceased. Council continues to be part of the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) which advocates for improved ESD requirements in the Victorian planning system.

Progress on Council's Emissions Mitigation and Net Zero by 2030 target

The actions of the CRP assist Council's progress towards the corporate Net Zero by 2030 target by addressing "Scope 1" and "Scope 2" emissions in our carbon accounting. Scope 1 emissions for Knox encompass direct emissions produced within our operational boundaries, such as emissions from fleet vehicles and gas used in Council buildings. As Council does not have an active (and open) landfill in the municipality, waste emissions from landfills are not included in our carbon accounting.

Scope 2 emissions involve indirect emissions from the consumption of purchased electricity used by Council for its operations. This methodology is consistent with the National Greenhouse Emissions Reporting framework.

Scope 3 emissions extend beyond our direct operations to account for a broader range of emissions generated indirectly - such as transportation of goods, waste generated by council sites, emissions from services delivered by contractors, staff commute, business flights, electricity used by streetlights and energy used by facilities not in operational control of Council (e.g. sports pavilions). Currently, only the energy used by streetlights and business flights are included in Council's Scope 3 emissions calculations. Scope 3 emissions do not form part of Council's net zero emissions target.

Figure 1 below outlines the progress towards Council's corporate Net Zero by 2030 target. It highlights that energy efficiency projects as well as electrification of Council buildings continue to lower emissions from Council operations, with a 49% decrease in Council emissions since 2015/16. The steep (30%) decrease in Council's emissions seen between 2015 and 2018 was due to the 10,500 streetlights replaced across Knox. There was also a 10% drop in emissions between 2020 and 2022 largely due to the impact of the pandemic. Council's emissions have fallen nearly 20% in the last four years of the Climate Response Plan.

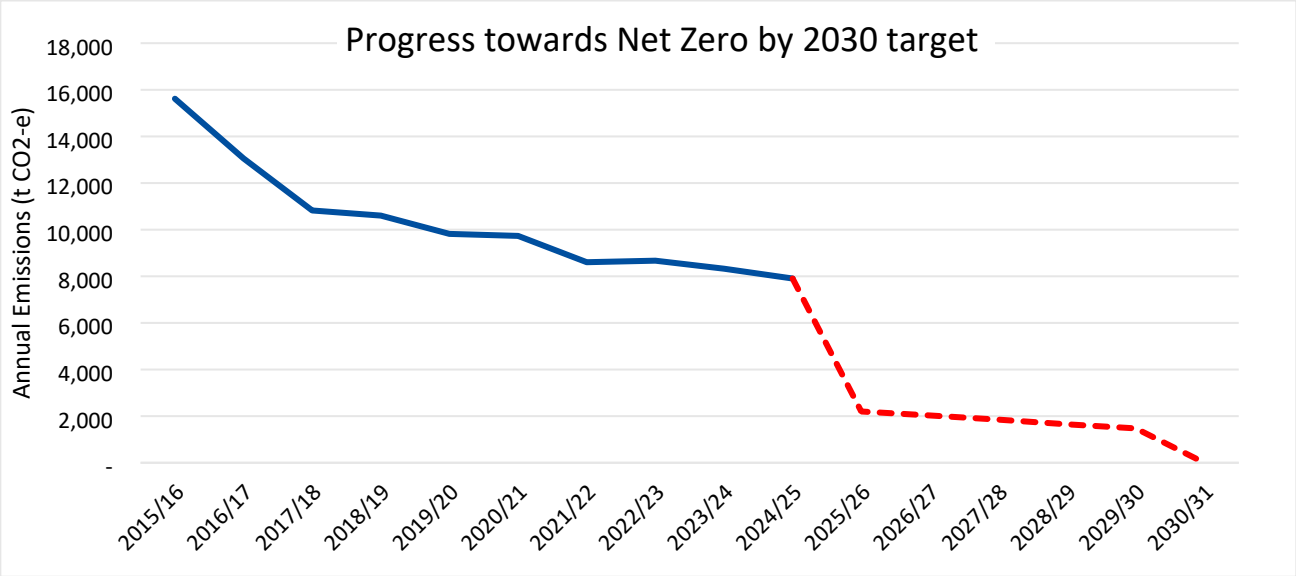
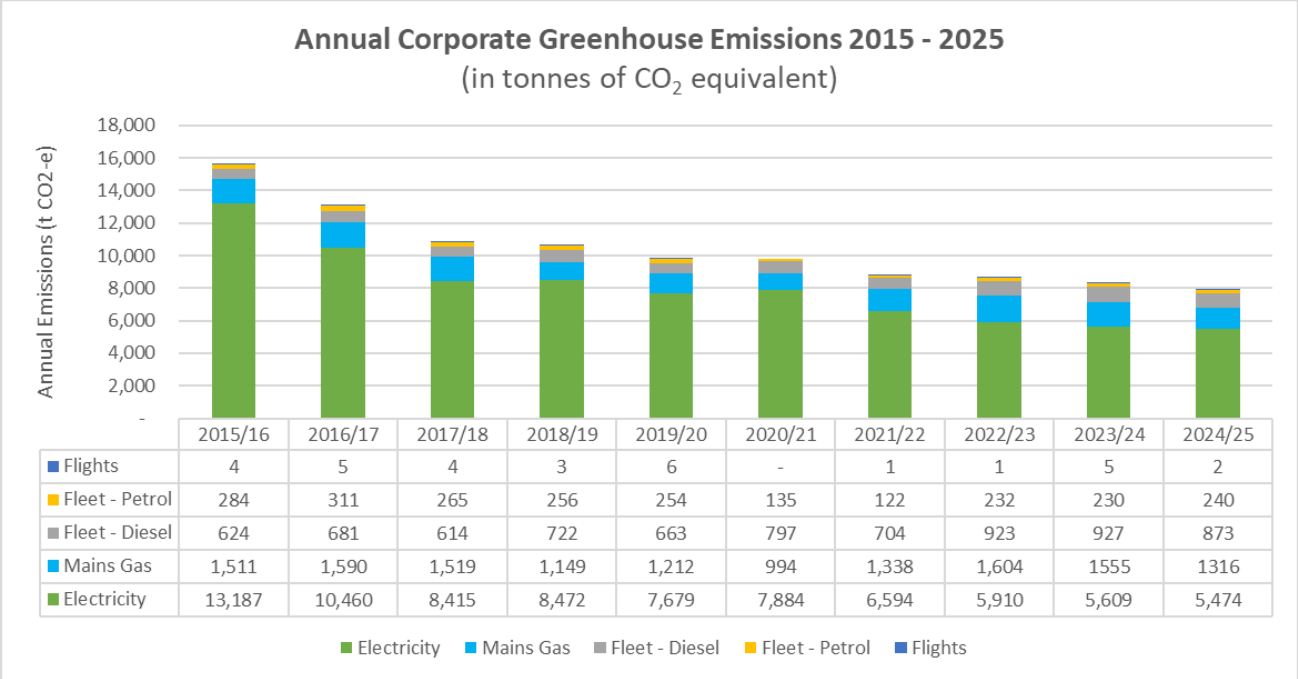



**Figure 1:** Progress towards Council's Net Zero Target. Source: Knox Energy and Fuel Data

With 35% of Council's carbon emissions attributable to electricity use from buildings, Council will need to purchase renewable electricity (with voluntary Large-scale Generation Certificates) to meet Council's Net Zero by 2030 target.

In response to this requirement, on 30 June 2025, Council formally ceased purchasing electricity from non-renewable sources for all of Council's buildings. The next annual reporting period on the CRP will include electricity purchased through the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO). VECO is a renewable energy Power Purchase Agreement that will provide electricity to all of Council's buildings from 100% renewable wind energy from 1 July 2025 through to 30 December 2030. By meeting all of Council's electricity needs for its buildings, this will help Knox to reduce its total emissions by an expected 35%, from mid-2025, as indicated by the steep drop in emissions for 2025/26 shown in Figure 1 above.

Figure 2 below shows that Council's overall corporate Greenhouse emissions has decreased by 5% compared to the previous year with the largest reduction experienced in the emissions from the use of gas (15% reduction from the previous year).




| | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Flights | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 6 | - | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| Fleet - Petrol | 284 | 311 | 265 | 256 | 254 | 135 | 122 | 232 | 230 | 240 |
| Fleet - Diesel | 624 | 681 | 614 | 722 | 663 | 797 | 704 | 923 | 927 | 873 |
| Mains Gas | 1,511 | 1,590 | 1,519 | 1,149 | 1,212 | 994 | 1,338 | 1,604 | 1555 | 1316 |
| Electricity | 13,187 | 10,460 | 8,415 | 8,472 | 7,679 | 7,884 | 6,594 | 5,910 | 5,609 | 5,474 |

**Figure 2:** Annual Corporate Greenhouse Emissions. Source: Knox Billing data

Community Emissions

Council uses a third-party reporting tool for tracking community emissions called Snapshot (See: https://snapshotclimate.com.au/). This remains the only Local Government Area (LGA) level emissions reporting tool across Australia that has been updated over several years. The latest available data for the Knox community is from 2022/23 and shows a 12.6% reduction in community emissions since 2018/19.

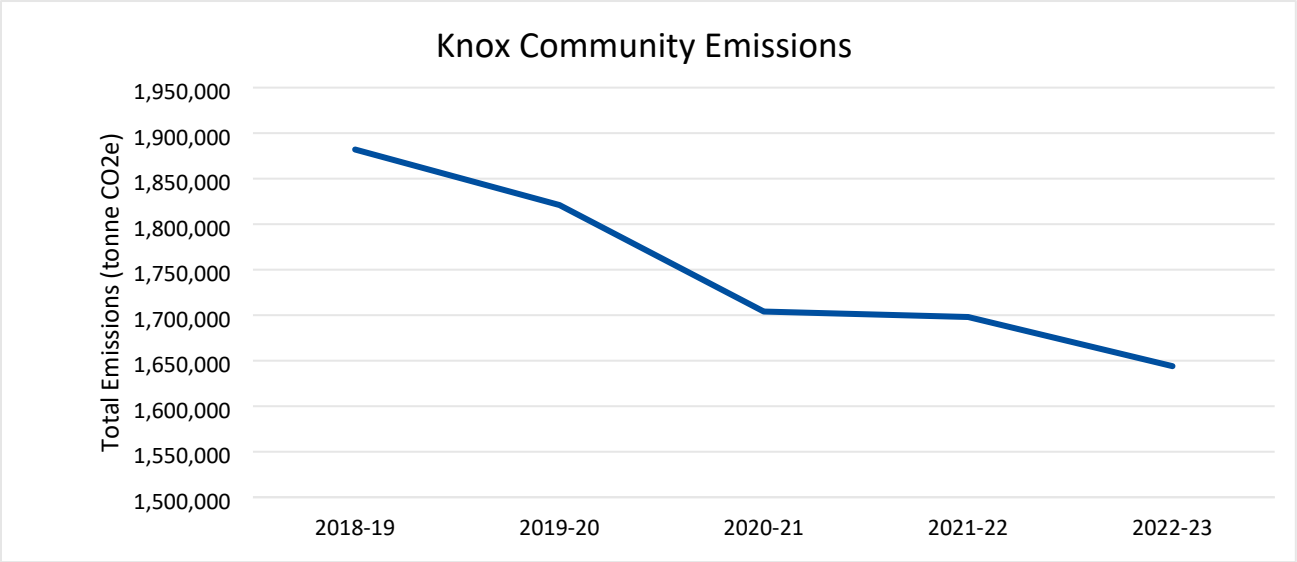



**Figure 3:** Annual Community Greenhouse Emissions. (Source: Snapshot Climate)

Emissions from electricity have reduced 24% in that period and emissions from gas use decreased by 10%.

The Knox community continues to install rooftop solar power systems in high numbers, with nearly 20,000 residential installations and nearly 700 commercial installations completed. Rowville remains Knox's highest solar suburb with almost 40% of properties installing rooftop solar systems, followed by Scoresby with 35%. The installed capacity of solar systems increased by 12% last year with 1,630 new solar installations recorded across the Knox Community. (Source: Australian PV institute).

Progress on Council's Climate Adaptive Capacity

The Victorian Climate Resilient Councils (VCRC) Adaptive Capacity Assessment Tool (source: vcrc.org.au ) is used each year to assess Council's adaptive capacity for climate Change. This tool was designed to assess Council's strengths, opportunities and priorities for climate adaptation.

The VCRC assessment tool has been used each year to monitor and review Council's response to climate adaptation actions relevant to the CRP. The mid-term review of the CRP, currently underway, was also utilised to inform this assessment and involved interviews with all teams responsible for actions in the CRP as well as additional teams involved in projects affecting direct Council emissions, such as Sport and Leisure.

The results are being monitored each year for progress and will also help inform potential updates to the CRP.

The assessment showed the organisation achieved an overall score of 73% in adaptive capacity. The review of Council's climate response across the organisation identifies notable strengths in climate adaptation knowledge, governance, and decision making, as well as strategic response and organisational culture. Council's commitment to addressing recognised risk through climate adaptation actions underlines some of these strengths, as well as the engagement of several managers in climate risk training over the past 12 months, as supported through the CRP Steering Group.

## 2. ENGAGEMENT

The 2024/2025 CRP Annual Report (Attachment 1) has been developed in consultation with relevant officers across the organisation and the CRP Steering Group comprising relevant managers responsible for delivery of CRP actions. The Environment Advisory Committee (EAC) is scheduled to receive a report on the Year 4 actions and achievements from the CRP at its September 2025 meeting.

A summary report will be released to the public highlighting the key achievements in 2024/25. This will be circulated via Council's communication channels in October 2025.

## 3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The CRP highlights many issues that have a direct impact on the community's health and wellbeing, and resilience. Engagement with council teams through the progress reporting process as well as the CRP review process has identified the importance of CRP adaptation actions for community health and wellbeing and has also highlighted important gaps in this area that will be addressed through the mid-term review.

Climate actions are primarily designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, but they often bring other benefits to the public such as health, air quality, employment, and equity. The CRP has been designed with this in mind and is aimed at achieving the fair and equitable distribution of benefits with vulnerable communities (particularly older residents and people with disabilities) identified in the climate risk assessment. This section of the revised CRP is proposed to be revisited through the mid-term review process, in order to update the list of priority populations, thereby ensuring the CRP is consistent with the Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29.

In addition to the specific CRP actions which impact on the community's health and resilience, there are several other community wellbeing initiatives progressed out of the Council Plan - incorporating the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan; of which climate change is one of the six key health and wellbeing priorities.

Council cannot implement the CRP alone. It requires the community to play a role both in understanding the issues and taking action as individuals, households and a community. Council is in a position to provide leadership, advocacy, information, support, and opportunities for all members of the community to understand and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## 4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

This report provides a status update on the implementation of the CRP, of which all actions aim to positively impact on Council's net zero 2030 target, the community net zero 2040 target, Council's exposure to climate risks and to create opportunities for climate change adaptation. The report demonstrates that electricity and gas emissions have reduced since the previous year, contributing to an overall reduction in corporate emissions, partly due to solar panel installations and building efficiency measures. Commencing the VECO Power Purchase Agreement from July 2025 is expected to significantly reduce corporate electricity emissions - by up to 35%, and this will be further outlined through the CRP review, which includes a revised pathway to net zero by 2030.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The CRP provides the pathway for a net zero emissions Knox City Council by 2030 and actions to help our community reach net zero emissions by 2040. This pathway includes actions which focus on natural environments; transportation; buildings and infrastructure; and renewable energy.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Initiatives carried out in 2024/25 such as rooftop solar and battery installations are resulting in significant savings to user groups and community facilities. The Solar and Battery system installed at Knox Infolink is projected to save the community organisation over $2,500 per annum on electricity costs. Similarly, annual savings of approximately $3,500 per annum are projected for the Solar and Battery on Outer Eastern Foodshare facility in Wantirna.

The streetlight replacement project, which saw the replacement of nearly 1,700 streetlights across Knox will see an annual saving to Council's streetlight bill of approximately $100,000 per annum.

With a review of the Climate Response Plan actions underway, it is likely that a number of initiatives will be re-scoped and more accurate costing will be included as part of this review and presented to Council in 2026.

**7. RISKS**

The inability to adapt appropriately to the threats of climate change is identified as an Extreme Strategic Risk for Knox City Council and implementation of the Climate Response Plan directly addresses this risk.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources**

Strategy 1.1 - A variety of transport options is available through the effective planning, advocacy and management of efficient, active, sustainable and accessible transport modes, particularly in growth locations.
Strategy 1.4 - Access to affordable and nutritious food is enhanced through advocacy and working in partnership with relevant organisations to raise awareness and promote available community programs.
Strategy 1.5 - Our community's health and wellbeing is improved through proactive planning, delivery, partnerships and advocacy that enable access to services, education and programs.

**Caring for and enhancing our environment**

Strategy 3.1 - Our environment is healthy and sustainable by considering environmental factors when planning for and making decisions.
Strategy 3.2 - Green spaces and waterways are protected, enhanced and enjoyed through planning, promotion and maintenance of our built and natural environment.
Strategy 3.4 - Energy consumption and the use of renewable energy resources are positively impacted through investment in assets, education, planning and advocacy.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure in accordance with their obligations under Section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020 and Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 - Annual Report - Climate Response Plan 2024/25 Update [**8.13.1** - 23 pages]



# Climate Response Plan

# Annual Report

# 2024-2025 Financial Year

knox

Knox City Council


Knox City Council

# Introduction

In September 2021, Council formally adopted the Knox Climate Response Plan 2021-2031 (Climate Response Plan). Knox City Council is committed to managing our greenhouse gas emissions and response to climate change and recognises that we are in a state of climate emergency. As a community, we need to take action to reduce our impact on the environment and to prepare for the effects of a changing climate.

### Net Zero Emissions

The Climate Response Plan sets out a pathway to a net zero emissions Knox City Council by 2030 and actions to help our community reach net zero emissions by 2040.







### Our Key Areas of Focus

There are seven areas that we are going to focus our efforts on and that will best address climate mitigation and adaptation within our municipality.

**Renewable energy**
Solar for rentals
Switching to renewable energy

**Transportation**
Expanding the electric vehicle charging network
Changing the future of transport
Expansion of Council's electric vehicle fleet

**Efficient buildings and infrastructure**
Low emissions buildings through design
Increasing energy efficiency in council buildings
Changing public lighting to LED
Sustainable roads
Adapting and projecting our buildings
Climate resilient infrastructure

**Advocacy**
Changes need to occur at various levels of government, within the community and by major business and industry

**Business and industry**
Transitioning to a zero-carbon economy

**Community health and resilience**
Protecting community health and resilience
Internal and community education programs

**Natural Environment**
Adapting and preserving our natural environment

# Annual Progress Report – September 2025

This report provides an overview of the progress against the Climate Response Plan actions under each Key Focus Area and how we're making a difference.

## Actions

The actions reported are those that were scheduled to commence, continue or conclude within the given reporting year with the commentary detailing a progress status of the work completed to date. Many of these actions run over multiple years and have been categorised into the relevant Key Area of Focus. Actions that have been completed in previous reporting periods are also not included. Each action includes information on:

- whether it is contributing to climate mitigation (i.e. reducing carbon emissions), climate adaptation (i.e. changes in response to and in preparation of climatic conditions) or both;
- whether it is targeting outcomes for Council operations or the Knox community;
- the Council department which is leading the action;
- anticipated start and completion dates; and
- progress made to date (including % complete, status and commentary).

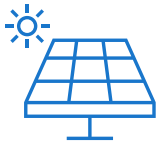
Progress status is reported based on the following colour coding:

| Complete | On schedule | Behind schedule | Not started | Deferred | Closed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✔ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |

## Key Highlights for 2024-25



1,685 streetlights upgraded to LED. Saving electricity and maintenance costs and one-off rebates and 265 tonnes of $CO_2e$



50kW of Solar and 47 kWh of Batteries across four buildings. Estimated to save $6,000 annually in electricity costs to user groups



Full electrification of Knox Infolink and Windermere Tennis Pavilion and lighting upgrades



Heat alert campaign for vulnerable members of the community to be better prepared for heat waves

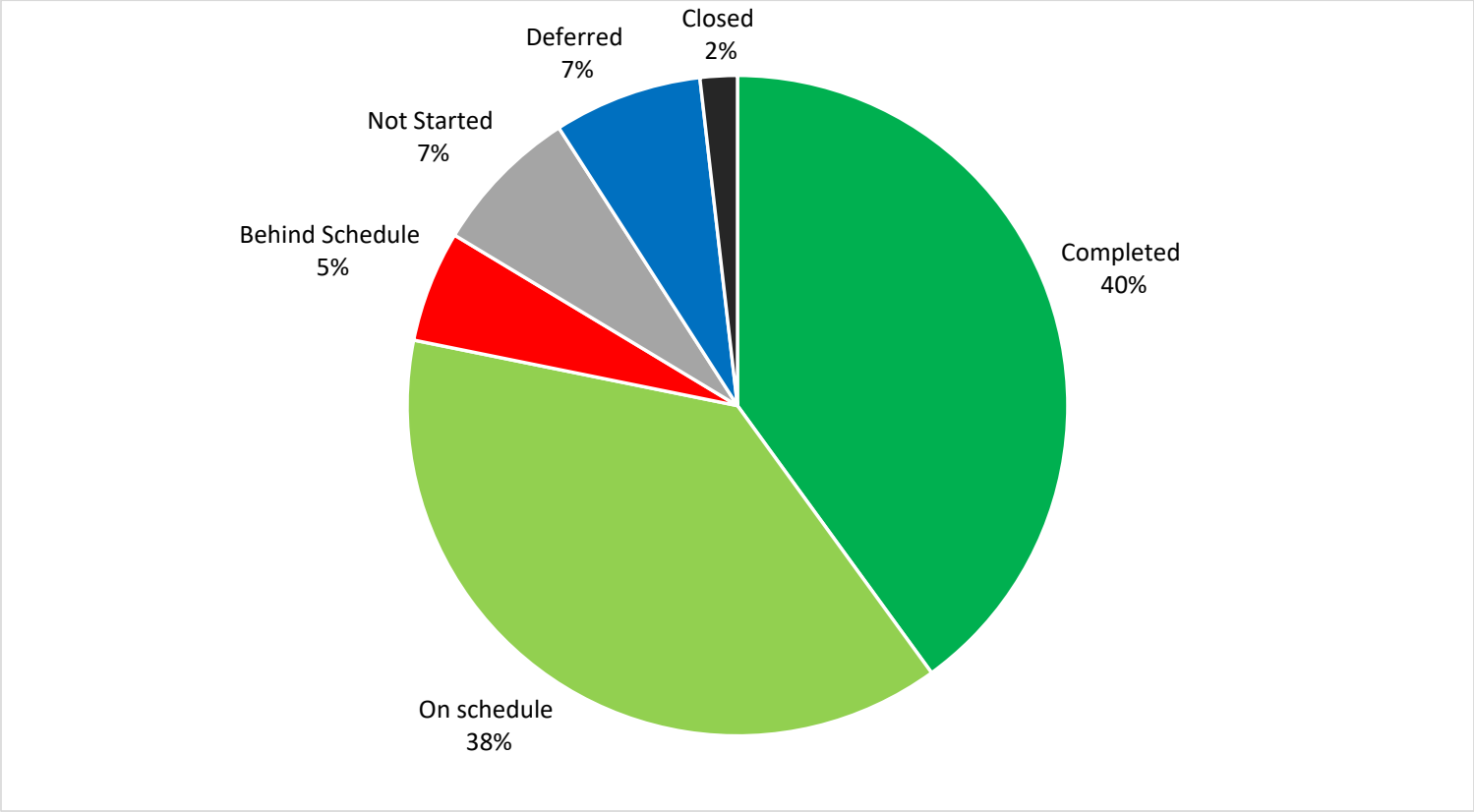


Engaging with 150 local businesses to promote energy efficiency, solar and electrification opportunities.



Identification of flood hazards impacting roads is complete. Data shared with Emergency Management teams for coordination.

## Progress Summary to 2024/25



## Community health and resilience

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community health and resilience<br><br>(City Futures) | CRP 1.6 | Undertaking a prioritisation process for investment in urban cooling measures | Adaptation | Community | 1/06/2023 | 1/12/2031 | 60% | Heat vulnerability map is completed for the municipality. Discussions within Council teams to consider urban heat issues through projects such as tree planting priorities. | |
| Community health and resilience<br><br>(Community Access & Support) | CRP 1.7 | Deliver an annual campaign to help vulnerable populations prepare for heat health alert days and periods | Adaptation | Community | 1/06/2023 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | An annual program to inform senior and vulnerable residents on the best measures to be prepared for heat. Officers also do a phone check in on their wellbeing following heat health alert days. Client engagement has suggested this is a valuable annual campaign to raise awareness for those most at risk, as well as Knox senior residents in general. | |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community health and resilience<br><br>(City Futures) | CRP 1.8 | Develop and deliver community education programs on climate change adaptation | Adaptation | Community | 1/01/2022 | 1/12/2031 | 55% | In addition to ongoing promotion of climate related information on the Gardens for Harvest Newsletter, Council also hosted Solar Saver information sessions as well as hosting a home energy efficiency expert to talk to the community at the 2025 Knox Festival. |  |

## Natural Environment

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Natural Environment<br><br>(Green Spaces & Environment) | CRP 1.10 | Implementing the Living Melbourne Metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy, which includes setting canopy tree targets and a mechanism to regularly track progress towards these targets | Adaptation | Council | 1/07/2022 | 1/06/2031 | 40% | Investigations continued into a Spatial planning mapping tool to measure extent of canopy across Knox.<br><br>Council has a tree canopy target of 30% by 2050, as noted in its Biodiversity Resilience Strategy 2024-2034 and the CRP. Plan for Victoria has also more recently established such a target. |  |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Natural Environment<br><br>(Green Spaces & Environment) | CRP 1.12 | Advocating to power authorities for lower impact vegetation management near power lines to minimise damage to canopy trees | Adaptation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/06/2031 | 65% | Advocacy continues with the State Government through the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and other bodies at local government, industry and electrical provider level. Indications from the state are vegetation thresholds on power lines will increase in time. A primary review of the regulations was completed and released as 'Interim' regulations in June 2025. The introduction of interim regulations ensures continuity in safety practices while allowing time for the development and implementation of more comprehensive, long-term regulations. | |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Natural Environment (Strategic Infrastructure) | CRP 1.13 | Reviewing and revising the Liveable Streets Plan and the Green Streets Policy to promote 'tree-friendly' streetscapes that promote healthy canopy tree growth and reduce the harmful effects of urban heat islands. | Adaptation | Community | 1/07/2022 | 1/06/2024 | 0% | Council is currently reviewing the Green Streets Policy and planning to progress both an Open Space Asset Management Plan and Transport Asset Management Plan over the next two years. The alignment of documents (such as Liveable Streets Plan and the Green Streets Policy) will be considered through these strategic initiatives and the policies will cascade from these strategic documents. | |
| Natural Environment (City Futures) | CRP 1.14 | Investigating incentives, enforcement and planning options that help retain tree canopy cover on private land as well as mechanisms that increase additional tree canopy cover | Adaptation | Community | 1/07/2022 | 1/06/2031 | 70% | Commenced review of Vegetation Protection Overlay 2.<br>Provided Submission to the Planning Reform outlining consequences of housing targets vs vegetation protection. | |

## Transportation

| Key Area of Focus | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation (Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.20 | Reviewing Council's Fleet policy to ensure that sustainable technologies are embedded | Mitigation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/06/2022 | 80% | Council's Fleet Policy is currently under review and will embed sustainability and climate goals into the revised policy. | |
| Transportation (Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.21 | Providing staff driver training which includes sustainable/efficient driving techniques and practices | Mitigation | Council | 1/07/2022 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | Educational resources have been made available for Council staff on ways to reduce fuel consumption whilst operating Council fleet.<br>EV inductions for Council staff are also provided to utilise the expanding fleet of electric vehicles. | |

| Key Area of Focus | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation<br><br>(Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.22 | Investigating and phasing in the use of electric cars for Council's Pool Fleet. All Council's passenger pool vehicles to be EVs by 2025 where viable | Mitigation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2025 | 60% | Whilst Council's original target of converting all passenger pool cars to EVs by 2025 is behind schedule, Council has already converted one additional pool vehicle to EV in July 2025 with another one to follow in 2025/26. Further conversions and consolidation of pool vehicles to EV will be undertaken progressively in accordance with Council's annual fleet renewal plan.<br><br>A revised target will need to be considered as part of the mid-term review of the Climate Response Plan. |  |
| Transportation<br><br>(City Futures) | CRP 1.23 | Installing EV charging stations to meet Council's operational needs as demand increases | Mitigation | Council | 1/07/2022 | 1/12/2031 | 100% | The Basin EV charger went live in May 2025. Installation of charging stations to cater for fleet use has also been completed. |  |

| Key Area of Focus | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation (Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.24 | Ensuring utility vehicles used for operational activities are modern with the latest fuel-efficient technologies | Mitigation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | There are limited options (existing tech and costs) for a fully electric utility vehicle that suits the operational needs of Council. Council will continue to monitor progress and opportunity to add fuel efficient utility vehicles to the fleet. | |
| Transportation (Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.25 | Investigating and implementing the use of Telematics as appropriate | Mitigation | Council | 31/12/2021 | 31/12/2031 | 50% | Investigating opportunities to introduce telematics to improve fleet management. A trial is scheduled to commence with a telematics provider in 2025/26. | |
| Transportation (Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.26 | Exploring and trialling alternative fuel systems, improved fuel efficiency or electric vehicles for heavy plant vehicles with a view to incorporating and converting the heavy fleet when viable (based upon market options that are fit for purpose and cost effective) | Mitigation | Council | 31/12/2021 | 31/12/2031 | 50% | There are limited options (existing tech and costs) for fully electric heavy plant fleet that suits the operational needs of Council. Council will continue to monitor progress and opportunity to add fuel efficient heavy vehicles to the fleet. | |

| Key Area of Focus | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation<br><br>(Engineering Services & Operations) | CRP 1.27 | Ensuring that small plant is regularly serviced and changed over to battery to ensure that the most efficient equipment is used across Council's operations technology where this is fit for purpose. | Mitigation | Council | 31/12/2021 | 31/12/2031 | 50% | Council is currently converting small tools and equipment to battery-powered alternatives as they approach end of life and where viable and meeting operational needs. |  |

## Efficient buildings and infrastructure

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.28 | Working within approvals process for new buildings to establish a collective understanding of what constitutes acceptable Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) and encourage all new buildings to achieve net-zero energy or net-zero energy-ready rating | Mitigation | Community | 1/07/2021 | 1/12/2026 | 95% | Three years since lodging the Planning Scheme Amendment, Council is still awaiting the Minister's decision on elevating ESD targets for new development in the Knox Planning Scheme. The approval and incorporation of these new targets will support new developments to achieve net zero energy ratings. As the action can only be complete when the Minister acts, it is therefore marked as significantly progressed % by Council. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.29 | Encouraging phasing in requirements for all existing commercial buildings to achieve net-zero energy or net-zero energy-ready ratings | Mitigation | Community | 1/12/2024 | 1/12/2031 | 0% | Due to changes to Planning regulations and the National Construction Code since 2020, it is proposed that this action be reviewed for relevance as part of the Climate Response Plan mid-term review. | |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.30 | Working with developers to pioneer zero net emission buildings and zero-net emission housing | Mitigation | Community | 1/12/2025 | 1/12/2026 | 0% | Due to changes to Planning regulations and the National Construction Code since 2020, it is proposed that this action be reviewed for relevance as part of the Climate Response Plan mid-term review. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.31 | Investigating planning scheme and rates incentives for positive outcomes such as faster processing of planning permits that meet specific requirements, or discounted rates | Mitigation | Community | 1/12/2023 | 1/12/2024 | 0% | Council is still awaiting the Minister's decision regarding the introduction of new Elevating ESD targets within the Knox Planning Scheme. It is proposed that this action be reviewed for relevance as part of the Climate Response Plan mid-term review. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.32 | Building on existing public reporting requirements to implement a communications program that will actively apply pressure to developers to raise the energy efficiency performance through greater public awareness of the emissions footprint of new buildings | Both | Community | 1/12/2026 | 1/12/2031 | 0% | Not due to start until December 2026. | |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(City Planning & Building) | CRP 1.33 | Deploying resources to increase the enforcement of National Construction Code (NCC) and planning requirements. This may take the form of increased capacity of an ESD officer working in conjunction with Planning Enforcement Officers | Mitigation | Community | 1/12/2023 | 1/12/2031 | 90% | State policy changes have resulted in codifying ESD requirements to make them simple to achieve and assess. As a consequence the ESD referrals officer service has now ceased as part of Service Planning in the City Planning and Building department. The action has been marked as 'Closed'. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Major Projects & Facilities) | CRP 1.34 | Implementation of the Sustainable Design and Infrastructure Policy | Both | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 40% | All projects delivered within the Major Projects teams are delivered in consideration of this Policy. | |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.36 | Undertaking energy efficiency opportunities for Council buildings | Mitigation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | Projects included electrification of Council facilities and installation of heat pump hot water systems (at Knox Infolink, Windemere Tennis Pavilion), lighting upgrades (Civic Centre, Netball Centre, Rowville Community Centre) and electrification feasibility studies (for Rowville Community Centre, Civic Centre). | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.37 | Installing solar PV across remaining viable sites | Mitigation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2026 | 60% | Council has added a total of 50kW of Solar across four buildings and 47kWh of batteries across three buildings in 2024/25 | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure (City Futures) | CRP 1.38 | Replacing approximately 3,300 lights to LED on major roads and intersections | Mitigation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/06/2023 | 100% | All remaining Major Road Streetlights that are the full responsibility of Council has been replaced with LED. The remaining lights are cost shared with Department of Transport and Planning (VicRoads) and will be changed to LED through a bulk replacement program undertaken by Ausnet. | ✔ |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Major Projects & Facilities) | CRP 1.40 | Engaging with the facility operators (Council and third party) to establish safe operating levels for facilities that are at risk of being impacted by climate stressors | Adaptation | Community | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | Climate vulnerability is considered as part of any building refurbishment works in accordance with the Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure Policy. It is proposed that this action be reviewed for relevance and clarity as part of the mid-term review of the Climate Response Plan. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Strategic Infrastructure) | CRP 1.42 | Developing site-specific strategies for water harvesting of open space including sporting facilities to improve resilience | Adaptation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | Works have commenced on designing and implementing improvements to existing stormwater harvesting sites including at Dobson, Fairpark, Marie Wallace and Wally Tew reserves. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Strategic Infrastructure) | CRP 1.43 | Embedding future planning and design criteria that ensure critical facilities and emergency services are in accessible and resilient locations | Adaptation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | Implemented in accordance with the Community Facilities Planning Policy and the Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure Policy. | |

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Strategic Infrastructure) | CRP 1.44 | Reviewing and updating climate hazard mapping to ensure that planning decisions account for areas of future and current risk | Adaptation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 70% | Identification of flood hazards impacting on roads is complete and the data has been shared with Emergency Management team and the State Emergency Service. Implementation of Building and Planning controls in relation to flooding is on-going. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Strategic Infrastructure) | CRP 1.48 | Identifying infrastructure that may require long-term adaptation measures due to flood or fire risk, such as retreat or relocation | Adaptation | Council | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2031 | 60% | The baseline data required to undertake the flood study has been compiled with the next step being to progress flood study, where flood data is to be overlaid across the Council area. Fire risk is reviewed by CFA. | |
| Efficient buildings and infrastructure<br><br>(Strategic Infrastructure) | CRP 1.50 | Undertaking a feasibility study of the avoided costs of future-proofing the stormwater system via the renewals process rather than large-scale stormwater upgrades | Adaptation | Council | 1/12/2024 | 1/12/2025 | 0% | Not yet commenced. Action may need to be reviewed for relevance and timeframe as part of the mid-term review of the Climate Response Plan. | |

## Renewable energy

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Renewable energy<br><br>(City Futures) | CRP 1.53 | Investigating enterprise models and detailed business cases for the funding, construction, and operation of a solar farm. If not feasible, Council will investigate other methods of rapidly getting to zero emissions for energy through measures such as Power Purchase Agreements | Mitigation | Corporate | 1/12/2021 | 1/12/2023 | 0% | While the Solar Farm project has been deferred for consideration closer to 2030, Council has signed a Renewable Energy Power Purchase Agreement for all of Council's electricity use until December 2030. |  |

## Business and industry

| Key Area of Focus (& Department) | Code | Action Name | Mitigation/ Adaptation/ Both | Focus of Action | Start Date | Due Date | Progress | Comments | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business and industry (City Futures) | CRP 1.54 | Implementing working groups to focus on a specific set of interventions including alternative technologies, Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), energy efficiency and degasification | Mitigation | Community | 1/07/2022 | 1/12/2031 | 50% | Council hosted the Energy Savers program which promotes electrification and energy efficiency with local businesses. In addition, Council also worked with a number of councils to promote the Business Renewables Buying Group - a Renewable Energy Power Purchase agreement for businesses. | |
| Business and industry (City Futures) | CRP 1.55 | Delivering workshops on renewable energy Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) for industrial organisations with large electricity demand | Mitigation | Community | 1/07/2022 | 1/12/2025 | 100% | Council has continued to promote the Business Renewables Buying Group including inviting the highest energy using businesses in Knox with the help of Ausnet and United Energy to participate in the buying group. | ✔ |

## 8.14 School Focused Youth Service Advocacy

| | |
|---|---|
| **Final Report Destination:** | Council |
| **Paper Type:** | For Decision |
| **Author:** | Coordinator Youth Services, Katie Scott |
| **Manager:** | Acting Manager Community Access and Support, Lana Harris |
| **Executive:** | Director Connected Communities, Judy Chalkley |

**SUMMARY**
On Friday, 5 September 2025, Council received notification from the Department of Education (DE), notifying Council that the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) contract would not be renewed at the conclusion of the current contract period (31 January 2026). DE has provided the SFYS grant program for more than 25 years. Officers are seeking Council support to draft a letter to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll, seeking an immediate review and reversal of this decision. The SFYS funding provides essential support and targeted interventions to young people in Grades 5 to Year 12 who are at risk of disengaging from education. These vulnerable young people often fall through the gaps of other service provisions, with the SFYS program providing a unique opportunity to support schools to target and provide services to this cohort.

**RECOMMENDATION**
That Council resolve to authorise officers to draft a letter to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll, of behalf of Council, requesting a review and reversal of the decision by the State Government to cease funding the School Focused Youth Service program.

**1. DISCUSSION**
On Friday, 5 September 2025, Council received notification from the Department of Education (DE), notifying Council that the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) contract would not be renewed at the conclusion of the current contract period (31 January 2026). DE has provided the SFYS grant program for more than 25 years. Approximately $12M is allocated across Victoria to the current grant program (covering the 2024 and 2025 calendar years), of this Knox received $413,848. These funds support vulnerable young people who attend local schools across Knox.

SFYS funding is used to provide targeted interventions to students in Grade 5 to Year 12 who are vulnerable to, or showing signs of, disengagement from school. DE specifies the schools within Knox for focus each calendar year. The SFYS Coordinator supports these identified schools to tailor the needs and interventions to their vulnerable students. Providing these programs helps to address current and emerging areas of need for young people before they become entrenched.

In the current two-year funding period, 16 schools within Knox City Council will have been supported (eight Primary, seven Secondary and one K-12 College); delivering 20 separate interventions that address barriers to educational engagement for 418 students; as well as building the capacity of 135 school staff, parents or carers to support young people.

This program is having a profound impact on vulnerable young people within Knox and across the state. Without such a program, vulnerable young people are unlikely to receive the support to prevent disengagement from education. The rising incidence of youth crime may be further

exacerbated without tailored support aiding educational engagement for young people most in need.

SFYS program objectives help mitigate the root causes of disengagement from school through programs that provide targeted and individualised support to individuals and small groups of young people, as well as building the capacity of teachers and parents to provide a wholistic model of support to keep young people engaged in education.

This program is unique, in that it links schools to external local agencies and providers to address current or emerging areas of concern within local communities. Other DE funding, such as the Mental Health Fund, provides funding directly to schools, resulting in it often being absorbed into more generalised whole school programs.

Vulnerable students supported by SFYS are often missed by other supports – they are too disengaged to benefit from whole school programs, but they are not disengaged sufficiently to require solely individual case work or 1:1 support and funding.

The SFYS program provides for students in this gap. The SFYS Coordinator can work directly with school staff to develop bespoke and tailored interventions that will target the specific needs of this group.

Not re-funding SFYS past January 2026 will have a direct impact on all LGA's across Victoria with 12 LGA's directly receiving funding for the program and all LGA's being covered by the provision of the service via Community Health or other NGO providers.

Ceasing funding for the SFYS program will have a detrimental impact on the educational engagement of vulnerable young people in Knox, and across the whole of the state.

**2. ENGAGEMENT**

The SFYS program is designed and administered by DE, there was no public consultation involved in the delivery of this grant funding.

**3. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The SFYS program supports vulnerable young people in Grade 5 to Year 12, who are at risk of disengaging from education. Vulnerable young people supported by SFYS are often missed by other supports – they are too disengaged to benefit from whole school programs, but they are not disengaged sufficiently to require solely individual case work or 1:1 support and funding. The SFYS program provides for young people in this gap.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS**

Implementation of the recommendation is considered to have no direct implications or has no direct impacts upon Council's Net Zero 2030 target, the Community Net Zero 2040, exposure to climate risks or climate change adaptation.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications directly associated with this report.

**6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The direct costs for the current SFYS contract term (2024 and 2025 calendar years) are $413,848. Of this funding $102,702 must be allocated to brokerage funding to support the delivery of targeted interventions in schools. The remaining funding is allocated to operational costs and management costs. There is a 1 FTE position allocated to the delivery of the SFYS program. This program is funded through grant funding from DE and is a cost neutral program to Council.

**7. RISKS**

The major risks associated with the SFYS program ceasing are:

- Reputational risk – potential for significant community concern from local schools. While DE is responsible for communicating the ending of the program to all schools across Victoria, Knox will need to carefully consider and manage the communication to schools. At the time of writing this report, schools have not yet received any formal communication from DE regarding the cessation of the program.
- Financial risk – loss of $413,848 over two years.
- Service delivery implications – the SFYS position is responsible for building and establishing significant networks and relationships with schools and service providers across the municipality. With the cessation of this program, this will have significant impact on Council's relationship with local schools and service providers, consideration will need to be given on how Council's Youth Services team will manage this within existing resources, resulting in potential service delivery implications for the service.

**8. COUNCIL AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029**

**Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity**

Strategy 2.3 - Our community is supported to thrive during all stages of life through the promotion and provision of services, advocacy and partnerships with local service providers.

**9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The officers contributing to and responsible for this report have no conflicts of interest requiring disclosure under Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council.

**10. STATEMENT OF COMPATIBILITY**

There are no legislative obligations under the Human Rights Charter, Child Safe Standards or the Gender Equity Act that are incompatible with the recommendation in this report.

**11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is no content in this report that meets the definition of confidential information from the Local Government Act 2020.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Nil

## 9 Supplementary Items

## 10 Notices Of Motion

## 11 Urgent Business

## 12 Questions Through the Chair

## 13 Confidential Items