

Community Directorate Integrated Annual Report

2023-2024

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

Disability Action Plan

Participate - Positive Ageing Plan

Create - Municipal Early Years Plan

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Acknowledgement of Country

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

About this report

This annual report provides an overview of the Council's progress in delivering Plans overseen by the Community Directorate, including:

- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025**
 - This Plan delivers on Council's relevant obligations under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)
 - The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 was endorsed by Council on the 27 October 2021
 - This plan is in its fourth and final year of implementation.
- **Disability Action Plan 2021-2025**
 - This Plan delivers on Council's relevant obligations under the Disability Act 2006 (Vic)
 - The Disability Action Plan was endorsed by Council on the 27 October 2021
 - This plan is in its fourth and final year of implementation.
- **Participate - Positive Ageing Plan 2020-2025**
 - The Positive Ageing Plan was endorsed by Council on the 16 September 2020
 - This Plan is in its fifth and final year of implementation.
- **Create – Municipal Early Years Plan 2021-2025**
 - The Municipal Early Years Plan was endorsed by Council on the 22 September 2021
 - This plan is in its fourth and final year of implementation.

These Plans support the delivery of the Council's Community Vision and Council Plan, through the lens of wellbeing, addressing the needs of people with disabilities, and supporting children, their families and older people in our community.

Status of actions

The four action plans included in this report feature a total of 186 actions, as of 30 June 2024:

- 117 (63%) are completed,
- 59 (32%) are on track for completion by 30 June 2025 and;
- 10 (5%) will be prioritised in the plan's final year of implementation.

How to read this report

For each Plan, two sections of reporting are included.

Summary of achievements

Key program and/or activity highlights are presented in further detail.

Progress report

A table outlines progress against each of the actions outlined in the Plan, including the following information:

- **Actions** – outlines what we said we would do.
- **Status** – colour coding that identifies whether the action has been completed or if it will continue for a further year, using a traffic light system.

Green	Completed, or it is a duplicated action closed off and will be reported in only one plan in the following year.
Orange	High level of confidence action will be completed by 30 June 2025
Red	Low level of confidence action will be completed by 30 June 2025

- **Progress reporting** – provides an update on the activities delivered to progress the action.

Where to from here

This final section of the report outlines key learnings, considerations and opportunities to inform 2024-2025 action implementation.

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

2021-2025

Introduction

What the plan does

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) outlines the role that the Council will play in improving the health and wellbeing of Macedon Ranges Shire residents. [The MPHWP is available on Council's website.](#)

How we developed the plan

To develop our MPHWP, we considered:

- the views of external stakeholders, primarily health agencies, community groups and education providers
- input from Council's Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- population data from many sources
- Commonwealth and Victorian Government priorities
- evidence about what works
- our current actions and resources available in each goal area.

The goals of the plan

Our health and wellbeing goals for 2021–25 are:

Our community is inclusive and celebrates diversity

- A community where people are understood, respected and supported, and people are confident that they can contribute to community life

Our community is safe and healthy

- An environment that supports people to eat well and be physically active
- A community that is safe and free from violence
- A community that strives to reduce harm resulting from gambling, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs
- An environment that reduces potential public health risk to our people

Our community is adaptable and resilient

- A community that is committed to tackling the climate emergency and its impacts on health
- A community that effectively prepares for, responds to and recovers from emergency events (including COVID-19).

Summary of achievements

Overview

The 2023-2024 Action Plan includes 55 actions.

As of 30 June 2024:

- 34 (62%) are completed and
- 21 (38%) are on track for completion by 30 June 2025.

Highlights

Prioritising social and affordable housing:

- Council has engaged a Regional Housing Coordinator to assist with the implementation of the Loddon Mallee Regional Housing Action Plan.
- Council is working with Wintringham to partner in the building of 12 new social housing units.

Funding inclusive programs:

- Of 24 grants allocated for the 23-24 Community Funding Scheme, 46 per cent had elements that focused on building community inclusivity.
- Six \$500 vouchers have been allocated to sporting clubs to support facility improvements that make their clubs more accessible for people with disabilities.

Enabling everyone to be active:

- Council's Fair Access Policy was adopted at the June 2024 Council Meeting.
- As part of the Healthy Loddon Campaspe Early Childhood Bike Schools Project, balance bikes, helmets and safety crossing educational signs were provided to 9 kindergartens and 6 early learning centres. Additionally, 4 services received bike skills training, and 13 services have received bike racks to further promote active travel.
- This Girl Can Campaign was delivered on 13th October 2023, including a successful and well-attended "Go Soccer Mums" come and try day at the Kyneton Showgrounds in September.

Supporting young people's wellbeing:

- 475 young people participated in Teen Mental Health First Aid training, and 45 adults participated in Youth Mental Health First Aid offered by Council.
- Council maintained its partnership with Sunbury Cobaw Community Health and supported the implementation of the youth mental health outreach service, enhancing mental health support accessibility in the community.

Climate change and its impacts on health:

- Council's Cool Changes program successfully delivered seven community climate action plans that cover the shire's nine main townships.

Progress report

Action	Status	Commentary
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Connecting Communities		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Continue to deliver improved outcomes for and recognition of our First Nations People		
Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians ¹		National Reconciliation Week was marked by a Keynote presentation from the Yoo-rook Justice Commission and three yarning circles on three Countries. Moving forward reporting on National Reconciliation Week will be done through Council's Reconciliation Plan.
In consultation with Traditional Owner groups, organise at least one internal and external NAIDOC Week event per year ¹		Council's NAIDOC week event held in July 2023 celebrated indigenous food culture and provided the opportunity to have a guided tour of Wil-im-ee Moor-ring with Traditional Owners. Moving forward reporting on NAIDOC Week will be done through Council's Reconciliation Plan.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Explore opportunities for affordable and social housing in the shire.		
Work in partnership with Community Housing Organisation, Wintringham, to support the delivery of a Big Housing Build project at Lancefield		Council is working with Wintringham to partner in the building of 12 new social housing units in Lancefield. Units are expected to be completed in 2025.
Work in partnership with service providers to raise awareness of homelessness in the shire and together advocate for change		Council participates in the Macedon Ranges housing and homelessness alliance to identify ways to work on meeting the needs of older people that may be at risk of or are homeless.

¹ This action is also featured in Council's Reconciliation Action Plan.

Actively support the implementation of the Loddon Mallee Regional Housing Action Plan		Council has engaged a Regional Housing Coordinator to assist with the implementation of the Loddon Mallee Regional Housing Action Plan.
Work with the Victorian Government to increase supply of affordable housing, including social housing, in the shire ²		<p>Council continues to advocate to the State Government via Housing Victoria to identify suitable locations for building of affordable housing. This has included active participation in the Inter-Council Affordable Housing Forum and advocating to local Ministers.</p> <p>Council continues to engage with relevant bodies, developers and private residents interested in making land available for affordable housing, as well as liaising with housing providers to address identified gaps in the shire. Several potential projects and funding opportunities have been identified and will continue to be explored.</p>
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Promote a more inclusive community by supporting community groups and vulnerable groups.		
Continue to implement a three-year Village Hubs model to give older people the opportunity to connect for social activities and mutual support. Village Hubs aim to improve mental health through the benefits of increased social and community connections ³		<p>A total of 251 Community members attended Village Connect events including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 coffee catch-ups across Riddells Creek, Kyneton, Malmsbury, Gisborne, Romsey, Newham and Lancefield. • A high tea event in Riddells Creek • Dementia training event held in collaboration with Woodend Central Goldfields Library & Dementia Australia at Woodend • Reminiscing event in collaboration with Woodend Central Goldfields Library in Woodend. <p>The Village Connect Program (Village Hubs Model) has now concluded.</p>
Continue to advocate for carers and implement carer friendly training across Council ⁴		<p>Carer-friendly training has been rolled out as an 'opt-in' for all Council employees, this e-course is available for staff to complete on demand.</p> <p>Activities targeted to carers needs were delivered, including:</p>

² This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

³ A similar action is included in the Positive Ageing Plan.

⁴ A similar action is included in the Disability Action Plan.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carer event, and morning tea held in October 2023 during National Carers Week • 10 Pathway for carers (P4C) walks held in Kyneton with 69 carers in attendance • First Aid Training provided to six carers to assist with P4C walks sustainability.
<p>Continue to support targeted initiatives for people of diverse backgrounds that enable them to express their identities, such as raising the Rainbow Flag on International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)</p>		<p>Sunbury Cobaw Community Health facilitated inclusive practice training in May, and eight Council employees participated.</p> <p>Council has included LBGTQIA+ tailored supports in a recovery quick contact brochure.</p> <p>The dedication to promoting inclusivity is evident through sustained support for targeted initiatives. In the reporting period, Council actively facilitated activities in support of LBGTQIA+ communities for young people, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town hall was illuminated in the colours of the trans flag as a gesture of support for the National Transgender Day of Remembrance. • Pride Projection Project Night was hosted by Council on August 25, 2023, showcasing support and solidarity with the LBGTQIA+ community. • Wear it Purple Day was hosted by Council on August 25, 2023, Kyneton Town Hall was illuminated purple to celebrate the day demonstrating Council's commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for LBGTQIA+ youth. • On October 11, 2023, a projection display was organised at Kyneton Mechanic's Institute to mark Coming Out Day, celebrating the courage and diversity of the LBGTQIA+ community. • Council financially contributed \$1500 to Sunbury Cobaw Community Health's Pride Camp, held from October 4-6, 2023, supporting the camp's efforts to provide a safe and supportive environment for LBGTQIA+ youth. • Pride Formal: On March 2, 2024, Council provided transport for young people to attend the Pride Formal in Hepburn Shire, ensuring accessibility and participation for all.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranges Rainbow Trivia Night: Council organised the Ranges Rainbow Trivia Night on May 11, 2024, fostering community engagement and awareness. • IDAHOBIT Tie-Dye Workshop: On May 14, 2024, Council hosted a tie-dye workshop in celebration of IDAHOBIT, promoting creativity and inclusivity. • IDAHOBIT Flag Raising Ceremony: On May 17, 2024, Council held a flag-raising ceremony to mark IDAHOBIT, symbolising solidarity and support for the LGBTIQ+ community
Continue to recognise International Day of Persons with Disability (IDPWD) ⁵		The Showcasing Inclusion Photo Competition was held in December 2023, with an exhibition of all entries displayed across Council offices from April 2024 until June 2024. Moving forward this action will be reported on through Council's Disability Action Plan.
Develop a consultation framework to guide consultation with children, youth and people with a disability ⁶		A project plan has been established for the development of a consultation framework to guide consultation with children, youth and people with a disability, the next stage of the project, co-design of the framework, will be implemented in the following year. Further reporting will be provided through the Municipal Early Years Plan.
Direct some Council community grant funding to initiatives that emphasise inclusiveness ⁷		Of 24 grants allocated for the 23-24 Community Funding Scheme, 46 per cent had elements that focused on building community inclusivity.
Implement the Child Safe Standards to promote the safety of children, prevent child abuse and ensure processes are in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse		All Council staff and volunteers complete a mandatory child safe standards module on commencement of employment. A review has been undertaken of all mandatory online training, including Child Safe Module, recommendations for strengthening compliance will be progressed in the following year.
Through Healthy Loddon Campaspe, implement the early child skills project		As part of the Healthy Loddon Campaspe Early Childhood Bike Schools Project, balance bikes, helmets and safety crossing educational signs were provided to 9

⁵ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

⁶ This action is also featured in the Municipal Early Years Plan.

⁷ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan, and Positive Ageing Plan.

		kindergartens and 6 early learning centres. Additionally, 4 services received bike skills training, and 13 services have received bike racks to further promote active travel.
Continue Council's involvement in the United Nations 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign		Council led the Walk Against Family Violence in Woodend with guest Dr Nikki Vincent (Gender Equity Commissioner) and provided screenings of "The Fort" and "Equal the contest" with partners Zonta and Sunbury Cobaw Community Health.
Support targeted initiatives for young people of diverse backgrounds that enable them to express their identities fully, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning young people (LGBTIQ+), culturally and linguistically diverse young people, and young people with a disability		Council promotes accessibility through several activities: supporting neuro-divergent young people in Council youth programs through co-designing activities; making recreation centres more welcoming for young women and girls with disabilities through the delivery of Sports Focus Inclusive Clubs Workshops, and through recognition of dates of significance.
Raise awareness of gambling-related harms		As part of Council's messaging to the community at time of the release of draft Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy for public comment, gambling related harms were cited as a rationale for the policy.
Work with partners to deliver community education on gambling, gaming and screen harm		Council intends to collaborate with Sunbury Cobaw Community Health to deliver community education on gambling harms during Gambling Harm Awareness Week in October 2024.
Commit to participation in the Local Government Working Group on Gambling to be convened by the Victorian Local Governance Association		Council is a regular attendee of the Local Government Working Group on Gambling which is a convened by the Victorian Local Governance Association.
Progress Council's Preventing Harm from Gambling Policy		The Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy was approved by Council to progress to community consultation in June 2024.

<p>Explore opportunities to better regulate the advertising or promotion of gambling on Council land and roads in future reviews of Council's Local Laws</p>		<p>Through the development of the draft Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy Council explored opportunities to regulate advertising and/or the promotion of gambling of any form at Council owned or managed facilities. Council will support clubs to exit existing sponsorship arrangements involving gambling advertising or promotion.</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Improve connectivity and movement, and provide transport choices to the community, including walking trails and bike paths.</p>		
<p>Continue delivery of the Macedon Ranges Shared Trails project that will see the development of a 24-km-long shared trail linking rural landscapes, towns and heritage places from Woodend to Riddells Creek</p>		<p>The Macedon Ranges Shared Trail Project is in progress under a Design and Construction Contract.</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Objective: Healthy Environment, Healthy People</p>		
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Assist to improve mental wellbeing within the community.</p>		
<p>Support and promote mental health by continued delivery of youth and older peoples' Mental Health First Aid training</p>		<p>475 young people participated in Teen Mental Health First Aid training, and 45 adults participated in Youth Mental Health First Aid offered by Council. Subsidised rates supported the program's accessibility.</p> <p>One Mental Health First Aid session was delivered for older people, with 12 people in attendance.</p>
<p>Continue to play an active role in the Macedon Ranges Suicide Prevention Action Group, and the Macedon Ranges Suicide and Sudden Death Committee</p>		<p>Council actively participated in the Macedon Ranges Suicide Prevention Action Group, and the Macedon Ranges Suicide and Sudden Death Committee. Council also hosted a MRSPAG staff member, providing necessary resources to enhance the group's effectiveness in addressing mental health and suicide prevention within the community.</p>
<p>Continue delivery of Live4Life in secondary schools and the wider community across the Shire</p>		<p>Four secondary schools participated in the Live4Life program, working with young people to co-design innovative and exciting programs to improve the mental wellbeing of young people.</p>

Continue to deliver a primary school-based mental health and wellbeing model for grade 5 and 6 students across the shire		The Branch-Out program (a primary school-based mental health and wellbeing model) was piloted with grades 2, 3, and 4 at Woodend Primary, with 196 students participating. Two 'Tuning in to Kids' sessions were delivered as part of the program, with 41 parents and 20 teachers participating.
Work with state and commonwealth governments to advocate for the establishment of a youth mental health service in the Macedon Ranges Shire		Council provided a letter of support to headspace Bendigo for a funding application to increase mental health supports, including outreach to the Macedon Ranges.
Support the implementation of the youth mental health outreach service in partnership with Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health		Council maintained its partnership with Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health and supported the implementation of the youth mental health outreach service, enhancing mental health support accessibility in the community.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Encourage active and healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities.		
Continue to deliver the Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct project and continue advocacy for funding towards future stage delivery		Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct Stage 1 was practically completed on 7 June 2024, with the ministerial opening event occurring on 28 June 2024.
Through Healthy Loddon Campaspe, undertake the MRSC Food Coalition project, Healthy Schools project and Verge Gardens projects		<p>Through the Healthy Loddon Campaspe Healthy Schools Project, three schools have received financial resources to increase the school's capacity to embed their kitchen garden into their curriculum and promote healthy changes in the school's food environment. A fourth school has received resources to support the development of a walking and running track through the school grounds, enabling the school to provide non-traditional and non-competitive physical activity for the students.</p> <p>Healthy Loddon Campaspe facilitated a local Food Forum, bringing together local food relief agencies, community gardens, businesses, schools, community organisations, and growers to explore how we can work together to build a resilient, healthy and fair food system in the Macedon Ranges. The Forum involved two workshops, 16 people attended the Romsey workshop, and 26 at Woodend.</p>

		<p>Eleven households participated in the Veg on the Verge Project which aims to support households to grow food on their verges. The project has provided funding to purchase equipment and materials for the participants, and support from gardening experts through the delivery of three professionally delivered workshops and peer-to-peer learning.</p>
<p>Through the Victorian Local Government Partnership, increase local sport options and improve capacity to create a welcoming environment for woman and girls</p>		<p>Council promotes accessibility through several activities: including neuro-divergent young people in Council youth programs through co-designing activities with young people; making recreation centres more welcoming for young women and girls with disabilities through the delivery of Sports Focus Inclusive Clubs Workshop with attendees from Woodend Gold Club, New Gisborne Tennis Club, Hanging Rock Pétanque Club and Macedon Bowling Club.</p> <p>This Girl Can Campaign was delivered on 13th October 2023 date, including a successful and well attended “Go Soccer Mums” come and try day at the Kyneton Showgrounds in September, which was attended by Macedon Ranges MP, Mary-Ann Thomas and Mayor, Annette Death.</p> <p>Council’s Fair Access Policy was adopted at the June 2024 Council Meeting.</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Engage families to promote the importance of early childhood education and health</p>		
<p>Continue to strengthen the small talk supported playgroup, and Enhanced Maternal and Child Health program to support eligible families and children</p>		<p>The MCH service supported our most vulnerable families with the Supported Playgroup and Enhanced MCH service.</p>
<p>Continue to support families with support and referral to early intervention and paediatric specialist services via the Maternal and Child Health Service</p>		<p>The MCH service provided appropriate and timely referrals to all early intervention support and specialist services.</p>
<p>Promote the Victorian Government’s healthy eating guidelines for infants and children</p>		<p>The Maternal and Child Health service and council-managed kindergartens actively promote the Victorian Government’s healthy eating guidelines, instilling good nutritional habits in infants and children across the Shire.</p>

through the Maternal and Child Health service and Council-managed kindergartens		MCH nurses provide ongoing education and advice regarding the introduction of solids, and the prevention of childhood obesity.
Develop an educational campaign to improve breastfeeding awareness, rates and duration in the shire ⁸		The Breastfeeding Support Service operates one day per week to provide support and education for successful breastfeeding. Further activity against this action will be reported on in the Municipal Early Years Plan.
Improve food literacy and provide health and hygiene education in Council-managed kindergartens		All staff at Council's eight kindergartens participated in the Smile for Miles training program at Sunbury Cobaw Community Health, focusing on dental health and healthy eating, supporting them to implement the program at all council kindergartens.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Maintain systems and capacity to manage and respond to emergency events.		
Work with stakeholders to provide community education sessions about how to keep safe during emergencies, noting that emergencies can contribute to mental health and wellbeing vulnerabilities		Note below reporting.
Work with stakeholders to provide community education sessions to raise awareness about how to keep safe during emergencies		<p>Through the funded 'Village Connect' program Council delivered four Digital Education for Emergency Preparedness sessions and two Scam Awareness Information sessions for vulnerable older people in the community, addressing the anxieties and related stresses.</p> <p>Arc Justice delivered two presentations on understanding insurance on 6 and 18 of June 2024.</p> <p>A presentation was delivered by David Younger to Kyneton residents on the long-term effects of trauma after disasters and staying well on 16 May 2024.</p> <p>On 25 June 2024, Michelle Roberts delivered a presentation on caring for children's well-being before, during, and after an emergency.</p>

⁸ This action is also featured in the Municipal Early Years Plan.

		<p>Council staff actively participated in a number of capacity building opportunities aimed at supporting their work to be inclusive and accessible to the whole community, this included participation in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and Disaster Training • Annual Traditional Owners Forum.
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Support our community to ensure better access and connection for facilities and services.</p>		
<p>Continue to monitor the impact of Australian Government aged care reform on Council's role in supporting older people, and advocate in the interests of our community⁹</p>		<p>Council actively participated in the following sector network meetings facilitated by MAV to monitor the impact of the aged care reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Ageing Network meeting • Commonwealth Home Support Program-Transition Support Group • Regional Assessment Service-Transition Support Group • Community Care Network Update • Aged Care Reform Updates. <p>Council receives feedback from the community regarding the reforms and, where appropriate, provides this feedback via regular meetings with the Department of Health. This action will continue to be reported under the Positive Ageing Plan.</p>
<p>Support sporting clubs to be accessible and inclusive for people with disability¹⁰</p>		<p>Six \$500 vouchers have been allocated to sporting clubs, including Woodend Walking Football and Lerderderg Scouts, Woodend Bowling Club, Kyneton Small Bore Club, Woodend Cricket Club and Gisborne South Tennis Club, to support facility improvements that make their clubs more accessible for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The This Girl Can Youth Sports Survey was open to the public between 17 April and 13 May 2023. The survey received 17 responses, with young people requesting a variety of sports including basketball, netball and dance. Feedback is being considered for the delivery of 2024-2025 actions. Future reporting on this action will be done through Council's Disability Action Plan.</p>

⁹ This action is also featured in the Positive Ageing Plan.

¹⁰ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

Strengthen participation in local playgroups ¹¹		<p>Council delivered two small talk-supported playgroups in Woodend and Romsey to up to ten families each term and delivered 1:1 in-home support to up to three families per term.</p> <p>Council provided in-kind venue hire to Sunbury Cobaw Community Health to deliver the Mother Goose supported playgroup at Manna Gum Children and Family Centre during school terms.</p> <p>Further work will be reported through the Municipal Early Years Plan.</p> <p>Council promotes all supported and community-run playgroups and toy libraries across the shire. A number of these are tailored to diverse needs, including the Rainbow Playgroup, the R.A.D Dads Macedon Ranges Playgroup, and the SPICE Intergenerational Playgroup.</p>
Embed use of communication support tools in kindergartens, including Auslan or Key Word Sign ¹²		Key Word Sign was embedded at kindergartens and Council will continue to identify opportunities to embed Key Word Sign and Auslan in kindergartens across the shire, and report on these through Council's Disability Action Plan.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Improve the management of water, including flooding risk, water quality of creeks and waterways, and the efficient use of water.		
Implement the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy 2021–2026		The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy 2021-2026 is 84 per cent completed, with 26 out of 31 concluded. Future reporting on this Strategy will be done directly.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Improve the quality of recycling, minimise the generation of waste and establish alternatives to landfill disposal.		
Continue to facilitate the development of community climate change action plans through Council's Cool Changes program		Council's Cool Changes program successfully delivered seven community climate action plans that cover the shire's nine main townships.

¹¹ A similar action is featured in the Municipal Early Years Plan.

¹² This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Lessen the severity of climate change, through actions that enable Council and the community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions</p>		
<p>Support identification and implementation of whole-of-shire climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives through development of a Community Climate Emergency Action Plan or similar</p>		<p>Council adopted the Climate Emergency Plan in December 2023 and includes 56 actions across six themes.</p> <p>Council commenced implementing priority year one actions of the Plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing Climate Emergency Working Group (w/ community and council reps) • Developing Community Climate Action Grants guidelines • Secured ongoing Resilience and Recovery staff resources • Cont. Involvement in regional carbon offsets project • Investigated Council-owned land for possible carbon planting sites • Rolled-out staff climate change training • Introduced Climate Impact Assessments in all Council reports • Participating in EV mapping study to assist EV transition. <p>Ongoing implementation of this Strategy will be reported directly</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Provide opportunities to experience open space and bushland reserves.</p>		
<p>Progress the development of a new Open Space Strategy and consider implementation into the Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme</p>		<p>The draft Open Space Strategy is expected to be released for public consultation in early 2025 following the late 2024 Council election.</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Improve the management of water, including flooding risk, water quality of creeks and waterways, and the efficient use of water.</p>		
<p>Continue to implement the Domestic Waste Water Management Plan 2019. This plan aims to reduce environmental, public health and economic risks associated with management of all domestic waste water in the shire</p>		<p>The Domestic Waste Water Management Plan will be reviewed and refreshed in the following year.</p>

Council Plan Strategic Objective: Business and Tourism		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Encourage economic vitality (including tourism, agribusiness and local employment options).		
Promote resources from the Australian Government Employ their Ability campaign to local businesses		The Employ their Ability campaign was promoted through E-News to local businesses, promoting organisations such as Windarring, Autocopy and Connecting Staff.
Profile the diverse experience of people with disability in the workforce in Council's Economic Development e-news and other communication channels		Council profiled several people with disabilities in the local workforce on Council's website. The value of employing people with disabilities and the availability of local service providers who can support the process, were promoted via Council's Business E-News.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Support local industry sectors that align with our vision and strategies.		
Deliver requirements, and promote opportunities, as regional members of the Bendigo UNESCO Creative City and Region of Gastronomy		Council remains a contributor to the activities and opportunities created via the UNESCO Creative City and Region of Gastronomy Many of our region's niche and artisanal producers were promoted via the Region of Gastronomy website and officers continued to advocate for the expansion of the Gastronomy Guide.
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Deliver Strong and Reliable Government		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Enhance strategy, policy and plan development, and identify alignment to allow for prioritisation of services that are efficient, well planned, accessible and meet community needs.		
Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training strategy that is integrated into Council's Learning and Development Strategy		Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training options, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training, have been included in the 2024/25 internal training calendar. The calendar offers a mix of online self-paced short modules, online webinars, and face-to-face training sessions. Moving forward cultural awareness training will be reported through Council's Reconciliation Action Plan.

Commit to reviewing our workplace Equal Opportunity Policy ¹³		Council's workplace Equal Opportunity Policy will be rescinded in 2024, to be replaced by the Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy which is currently being developed.
Review disability access and inclusion learning needs within our organisation		Council have implemented a new Learning Management System for employees, which features improved accessibility functionality.
Develop and implement a disability awareness training strategy that is integrated in Council's Learning and Development Strategy ¹⁴		Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training options, including disability awareness training, have been included in the 2024/25 internal training calendar. The calendar offers a mix of online self-paced short modules, online webinars, and face-to-face training sessions.
Continue to demonstrate leadership in advancing gender equality through the implementation of Council's Gender Equality Action Plan		Council's internal GE Working group (I-Gen) is now established and has oversight over implementation of Council's Gender Equality Action Plan.
Deliver annual requirements of membership to the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age Friendly Communities and the Age Friendly Victoria Declaration ¹⁵		Council remains a signatory to the World Health Organization's Global Network Age Friendly Communities and the Age Friendly Victoria Declaration, moving forward this action will be reported through Council's Positive Ageing Plan.

¹³ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

¹⁴ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

¹⁵ This action is also featured in the Positive Ageing Plan.

Disability Action Plan 2021-2025

Introduction

What the plan does

The Disability Action Plan (DAP) recognises the right of all people with disabilities to live an included and respected life in our community and acknowledges the important roles played by carers, families, volunteers and service-providers. [The DAP is available on Council's website.](#)

How we developed the plan

We developed this DAP with input from people with disabilities, disability support organisations, families, carers and supporters of people with disabilities.

To develop our DAP, we considered:

- the views of external stakeholders
- population data from many sources
- Commonwealth and Victorian Government priorities
- evidence about what works
- our current actions, resources and other relevant council plans, strategies and priorities.

The goals of the plan

The DAP will guide Council decision-making and aims to promote:

- a whole-of-council approach to disability inclusion
- accessible and inclusive Council services, programs and events
- partnership approaches
- positive community attitudes and disability-inclusive community activities.

The DAP addresses the four key areas of action legislated in the Victorian Disability Act 2006, these are:

- reducing barriers to people with a disability in accessing goods, services and facilities
- reducing barriers to people with a disability in obtaining and maintaining employment
- promoting inclusion and participation of people with a disability in the community
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against people with a disability.

Summary of achievements

Overview

The 2023-2024 Action Plan includes 37 actions.

As of 30 June 2024:

- 19 (51%) are completed;
- 11 (30%) are on track for completion by 30 June 2025 and;
- 7 (19%) will be prioritised in the plan's final year of implementation.

Highlights

Enabling people with disabilities to engage with Council:

- Community engagement platform Social Pinpoint (Your Say) has been launched by Council, unlocking cutting-edge digital engagement to enhance accessibility elements.
- Council has identified improvements for our Customer Service which are currently being implemented, such as accessibility improvements to Council's website and online services.
- Insights from the Woodend Youth Space accessibility and inclusion review have been applied to other programs, such as the Kyneton Youth Space – Dungeons and Dragons Program.

Prioritising accessibility across the shire:

- In partnership with EnAccess, four locations in Gisborne and one location in Woodend have been mapped for accessibility. These accessibility maps are available to be utilised by the public on the EnAccess Maps website.
- Council delivered a Sports Focus Inclusive workshop with attendees from Woodend Gold Club, New Gisborne Tennis Club, Hanging Rock Petanque Club and Macedon Bowling Club.
- Key Word Sign was embedded at Council's kindergartens.
- The adopted Kyneton Movement Network Plan includes a commitment for Council to undertake an accessible parking audit in 2027.

Supporting the employment of people with disabilities:

- Council implemented a pilot Supported Employment program for two young local people living with disability. Both were employed on a casual basis for 6 months.
- Council profiled a number of people with disabilities in the local workforce on Council's website.
- The value of employing people with disabilities and the availability of local service providers who can support the process, were promoted via Council's Business E-News.

Progress report

Action	Status	Commentary
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Connecting Communities		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Improve connectivity and movement, and provide transport choices to the community, including walking trails and bike paths.		
Continue to deliver improvements in car parking accessibility, based on community input, information about current situation, and future needs		<p>The Kyneton Movement Network Plan was endorsed by Council in June SCM and includes a commitment for Council to undertake an accessible parking audit in 2027.</p> <p>Council continues to receive and respond to community enquiries about accessible parking and identify suitable responses.</p>
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Provide well-designed, fit-for-purpose, multi-use open spaces and infrastructure for the community to connect, engage and participate in a financially sustainable way		
Continue to improve continuous accessible paths of travel to key destinations, such as recreation and community facilities, through the funding of the Footpath Construction Program ¹⁶		All footpath projects have been completed on time, including Howey St, Bolinda-Darraweit Road, Hamilton Road and Station Road.
Implement a program of DDA compliance assessment across all Council owned/operated facilities – to raise awareness and guide a future work plan (pending funding allocation) of building upgrade		Budget is yet to be allocated to this initiative; Council continues to seek funding to conduct this assessment.

¹⁶ This action is also featured in the Positive Ageing Plan.

Council Plan Strategic Priority: Explore opportunities for affordable and social housing in the shire.		
<p>Work with the Victorian Government to increase supply of affordable housing, including social housing, in the shire¹⁷</p>		<p>Council continues to advocate to the State Government via Housing Victoria to identify suitable locations for building of affordable housing. This has included active participation in the Inter-Council Affordable Housing Forum and advocating to local Ministers.</p> <p>Council continues to engage with relevant bodies, developers and private residents interested in making land available for affordable housing, as well as liaising with housing providers to address identified gaps in the shire. Several potential projects and funding opportunities have been identified and will continue to be explored.</p> <p>Council is working with Wintringham to partner in the building of 12 new social housing units.</p> <p>This action will continue to be reported on in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.</p>
<p>Advocate for specialist disability housing in the region</p>		<p>While Council has undertaken a broad range of housing advocacy/ exploration has occurred, such as for housing opportunities for older women at risk of homelessness and youth housing, specific disability housing advocacy in the region has not been undertaken over this timeframe and will be a focus for the following year.</p>
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Promote a more inclusive community by supporting community groups and vulnerable groups.		
<p>Direct some Council community grant funding to initiatives that emphasise inclusiveness¹⁸</p>		<p>Selection criteria for all grants reward inclusiveness. In the current round, three grants were approved with disability access as a feature.</p>

¹⁷ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

¹⁸ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and Positive Ageing Plan.

Seek funding to provide customised accessibility guides (Access Key) for large Council-managed venues		Funding for access key continued to be investigated as a priority to support the accessibility of Council managed venues.
Initiate development of accessibility maps for MRSC towns and key locations		In partnership with EnAccess, four locations in Gisborne and one location in Woodend have been mapped for accessibility. These accessibility maps are available to be utilised by the public on the EnAccess Maps website .
Continue to recognise International Day of Persons with Disability (IDPwD) ¹⁹		The Showcasing Inclusion Photo Competition was held in December 2023, with an exhibition of all entries displayed across Council offices from April 2024 until June 2024.
Research the most effective ways for council, working within our agreed role and resourced capacity, to support carers in our community ²⁰		Carer-friendly training has been rolled out as an 'opt-in' for all Council employees. This e-course is available for staff to complete on demand.
Continue to review programs and work with young people to identify and implement options for increasing social connections among children and families who are at risk of experiencing social isolation, and who may not engage in traditional community programs		Council programs continue to be reviewed and developed to ensure inclusivity for all, including people with disabilities. Insights from the Woodend Youth Space review have been applied to other programs, such as the Kyneton Youth Space – Dungeons and Dragons Program. This program intentionally engages young people who might not participate in traditional community programs. As a result, program participation has increased over the reporting period.
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Healthy Environment, Healthy People		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Encourage active and healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities.		

¹⁹ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

²⁰ A similar action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

Work with partner agencies to encourage people with disability to increase physical activity levels		Council delivered a Sports Focus Inclusive workshop with attendees from Woodend Gold Club, New Gisborne Tennis Club, Hanging Rock Petanque Club and Macedon Bowling Club.
Help sporting groups and clubs to be accessible and inclusive for people with disability ²¹		Council's Fair Access Policy was adopted at the June 2024 Council Meeting. Six \$500 vouchers have been allocated to sporting clubs, including Woodend Walking Football and Lerderberg Scouts, Woodend Bowling Club, Kyneton Small Bore Club, Woodend Cricket Club and Gisborne South Tennis Club, to support facility improvements that make their clubs more accessible for people with disabilities.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Engage families to promote the importance of early childhood education and health		
Access School Readiness Funding to assist children with communication, wellbeing, access and inclusion outcomes prior to attending school		Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Early Years unit has worked with the Early Childhood Improvement Branch to develop a School Readiness Funding Plan for each of their services, accessing School Readiness Funding on a needs-basis. In addition, Council continues to fund the Kindergarten Inclusion and Support Officer on a permanent basis.
Embed use of communication support tools in kindergartens, including Auslan or Key Word Sign ²²		Key Word Sign was embedded at kindergartens and Council will continue to identify opportunities to embed Key Word Sign and Auslan in kindergartens across the shire.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Maintain systems and capacity to manage and respond to emergency events.		
Work with stakeholders to provide community education sessions for people with disability about how to keep safe during emergencies		Education sessions to be investigated and delivered in the following year.

²¹ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

²² This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Advocate for funding for specific recovery activities for people with disability who may experience emergencies differently		Council continues to promote Neighbours Connect Cards and the Recovery Phone Guide that provide emergency planning and support for people with disabilities.
Promote person-centred emergency preparation		Person-centred Emergency Planning for people with disabilities is currently being investigated for delivery in the following year.
Ensure inclusion of people with disability in Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) actions including household emergency preparation, building capacity for community led recovery and extreme weather support actions		An Easy Read version of the Macedon Ranges Municipal Emergency Management Plan is currently under development.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Support our community to ensure better access and connection for facilities and services.		
Prepare for and take advantage of funding opportunities for provision and renewal of accessible public toilets, including Changing Places		An application was submitted for the changing places funding program but was unfortunately unsuccessful.
Review disability access and inclusion learning needs within our organisation		New Learning Management System with improved accessibility functionality was implemented May 2024.
Develop and implement a disability awareness training strategy that is integrated in Council's Learning and Development Strategy ²³		Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training options, including disability awareness training, have been included in the 2024/25 internal training calendar. The calendar offers a mix of online self-paced short modules, online webinars, and face-to-face training sessions.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Provide opportunities to experience open space and bushland reserves.		

²³ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Ensure that inclusion and needs of people with disability are reflected in the development of a new Open Space Strategy		The draft Open Space Strategy is expected to be released for public consultation in early 2025 following the late 2024 Council election.
Maintain open spaces and parks that can be used by all members of the community		The Macedon Ranges Shared Trail Project is in progress under a Design and Construction Contract. This Project will continue to be reported on in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Business and Tourism		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Encourage economic vitality (including tourism, agribusiness and local employment options).		
Promote diverse and flexible opportunities for volunteering with Council		Council adopted the Volunteer Policy which promotes diverse and flexible volunteering opportunities within Council.
Plan ways for MRSC to offer employment opportunities to people with disability		Council implemented a pilot Supported Employment program for two young local people living with disability. Both were employed on a casual basis for 6 months and positive outcomes were reported by all parties.
Complete the review of our workplace Equal Opportunity Policy ²⁴		Council's workplace Equal Opportunity Policy will be rescinded in 2024, to be replaced by the Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy which is currently being developed.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Support local industry sectors that align with our vision and strategies.		
Support external organisations to increase diverse volunteering opportunities		Council's December E-News featured an article outlining the value of and potential to attract people with disabilities as volunteers or workers.

²⁴ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

<p>Profile the diverse experience and contribution of people with disability in the workforce in Council's Economic Development e-news and other communication channels²⁵</p>		<p>Council profiled several people with disabilities in the local workforce on Council's website.</p> <p>The value of employing people with disabilities and the availability of local service providers who can support the process, were promoted via Council's Business E-News.</p>
<p>Promote Australian Government grant opportunities to assist businesses to modify physical work environments</p>		<p>No grant opportunities for promotion have been identified to date.</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Objective: Deliver Strong and Reliable Government</p>		
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Enhance strategy, policy and plan development, and identify alignment to allow for prioritisation of services that are efficient, well planned, accessible and meet community needs.</p>		
<p>Establish internal disability inclusion champions group from across council, to strengthen focus on an inclusive approach by council</p>		<p>Internal inclusion champions were identified and engaged, and a terms of reference was drafted; however this project is currently on hold for review and re-engagement in the following year.</p>
<p>Build effective networks of people with disability, carers, service-providers and government agencies – to enable two-way information exchange</p>		<p>Council actively participates in the Victorian Local Government Disability Planners Network and has initiated contact with a range disability support organisations to build relationships for collaborative opportunities moving forward.</p>
<p>Establish ongoing inclusive consultation/engagement mechanisms - to hear the views and ideas of people with disability of all ages in MRS, to inform council policy, planning and service-provision</p>		<p>Community engagement platform Social Pinpoint (Your Say) has been launched by Council, unlocking cutting-edge digital engagement to enhance accessibility elements.</p> <p>An Image Audit was undertaken in June 2024 which makes a range of recommendations around inclusivity and diversity in imagery to better engage and represent our diverse community.</p>

²⁵ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

<p>Liaise with NDIS Local area coordinators regarding NDIS reform, in particular the community capacity-building plans being developed</p>		<p>Regular meetings are conducted with Local Area Coordinator for updates on the NDIS.</p>
<p>Investigate strategies to confirm that the commitments in the Customer Service Charter are met for people with disability</p>		<p>Council has identified improvements which are currently being identified, such as accessibility improvements to Council's website and online services.</p>
<p>Council Plan Strategic Priority: Enhance customer experience through the transformation of our services, to ensure they are easy to access, and provide seamless transactional and interational experiences.</p>		
<p>Develop policy and guides to achieve optimum readability and accessibility of all council plans and strategies</p>		<p>Council's Graphic Designer undertook training this financial year, specifically in relation to improving the accessibility of documents developed in-house by Council. A tangible example of this was the Annual Report 22-23, for which Council's Graphic Designer sought an external review from an industry expert and received a fully compliant PDF accessibility report via Acrobat Pro.</p>
<p>Investigate strategies to confirm that the commitments in the Customer Service Charter are met for people with disability</p>		<p>Council has identified improvements for our Customer Service which are currently being implemented, such as accessibility improvements to Council's website and online services.</p>

Participate - Positive Ageing Plan 2020-2025

Introduction

What the plan does

Participate, our positive ageing plan (PAP) supports Council's aim to be an age-friendly community and promotes a collaborative approach across Council and the community. [The PAP is available on Council's website.](#)

How we developed the plan

Almost 1,000 community members provided feedback and input into developing this five-year plan that strongly focuses on social connections, being active, living well, advocating for their needs, and valuing and respecting older people.

The goals of the plan

Staying socially connected and active

- Deliver accessible and inclusive programs, activities and events.
- Support the community to deliver a diverse range of activities inclusive of older people that support social connections.
- Support the contribution of older people, as workers and volunteers, to the Macedon Ranges' economy.

Living well in the community

- Support people to live safely and independently in the community
- Enable and empower people to make informed decisions about their needs and interests
- Support and advocate for the interests of the community in a changing aged care sector

Needs are recognised in infrastructure, housing and the built environment

- Improve accessibility of Council facilities and buildings
- Deliver improvements that support older people to move around safely and easily
- Collaborate with community to identify and respond to transport needs
- Actively seek and respond to the needs of people of all ages and abilities in planning processes.

Being respected and valued by the community.

- Deliver opportunities for older people to contribute to community decision-making processes
- Inform older people about Council decisions that affect them
- Promote older people's rights and reduce risks to their safety
- Recognise and celebrate age-friendly aspects of the local community
- Deliver initiatives to address ageism and promote age-friendly practices.

Summary of achievements

The 2023-2024 Action Plan includes 40 actions.

As of 30 June 2024:

- 30 (75%) are completed;
- 8 (20%) are on track for completion by 30 June 2025 and;
- 2 (5%) will be prioritised in the plan's final year of implementation.

Highlights

Finalised implementation of previously funded initiatives:

- Village Connect delivered 76 events covering carer support, health & wellbeing, reducing social isolation, scams awareness, emergency awareness and games with 680 community members.
- Delivered the final year of the Regional Assessment Service that provided referrals on behalf of older people to support them to continue to live independently.

Established new programs to support local older people:

- Successful grant application to the Australian Government to deliver the Aged Care Volunteer Visiting Scheme project from 2023-2026.
- Back by popular demand, Council's Community Directory for older people has been updated, now with over 100 stakeholders registered and over 500 views since January 2024.
- Established a "Seniors Network Forum" with the Senior Citizens Groups. The groups gather quarterly and have been highly productive, fostering lively discussions that led to establishing valuable connections and generated lots of valuable engagement.

Celebrated and recognised older people:

- Celebrated Seniors Festival, with celebration boxes offered to local seniors who are local champions supporting positive ageing. A 57-seater coach was booked out and transported community members to the Johnny Cash & June Carter Show.
- Council held a recognition celebration of the contributions of older people to the community during Seniors Festival in October 2023, with 50 people in attendance.
- Council delivered the Tiny Homes Project to recognise World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Progress report

Action	Status	Commentary
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Connecting Communities		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Improve connectivity and movement, and provide transport choices to the community, including walking trails and bike paths.		
Deliver improvements to footpaths, including footpath connectivity, to meet local needs ²⁶		All footpath projects have been completed on time, including Howey St, Bolinda-Darraweit Road, Hamilton Road and Station Road.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Explore opportunities for affordable and social housing in the shire.		
Ensure structure plans consider diverse housing options to reflect demographic change, including smaller dwellings for older people in well serviced locations		All Council structure plans, and urban design plans provide for diverse housing options in line with Council's Affordable Housing Policy, for example the adopted Romsey Structure Plan supports medium density housing and diverse housing options around the town centre.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Provide well-designed, fit-for-purpose, multi-use open spaces and infrastructure for the community to connect, engage and participate in a financially sustainable way.		
Improve accessible parking in key locations ²⁷		The Kyneton Movement Network Plan was endorsed by Council in June SCM and includes a commitment for Council to undertake an accessible parking audit in 2027. Council continues to receive and respond to community enquiries about accessible parking and identify suitable responses.
Ensure that planning for all aspects of the built environment addresses accessibility issues for		Council continues to consider accessibility in infrastructure projects delivered within the municipality, to date this has included expanding door widths at

²⁶ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

²⁷ This action is also featured in the Disability Action Plan.

people of all abilities and includes seating and public toilets		Buffalo Stadium Changeroom Project and completion of a Disability Discrimination Act audit for the KMI Public Toilet Renewal Design Project.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Promote a more inclusive community by supporting community groups and vulnerable groups.		
Coordinate and promote accessible and inclusive programs, activities and events		<p>Concluded the Village Connect program with focused on social inclusion and connection for older people, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music March for 32 people in attendance • High Tea Celebration with 52 people in attendance • Pathway for carers with 30 people participating. <p>Council delivers coffee catchups to support social connection for older people in our community, with 247 people participating.</p> <p>Council recognised annual days of celebration, including the annual senior's festival, which featured a celebration box event recognising older volunteers, and the Johnny Cash and June Carter Show, and delivered the Tiny Homes Project to recognise World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.</p>
Direct Council community grant funding to initiatives that emphasise inclusiveness ²⁸		Of 24 grants allocated for the 23-24 Community Funding Scheme, 46 per cent had elements that focused on building community inclusivity. Reporting in the following year will be completed under the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.
Promote, partner with and share age-friendly local projects and support them to be sustainable		Council has partnered with local neighbourhood houses to establish ongoing programs such as Bingo at Macedon Ranges Further Education Centre, and Pathway for Carers with Kyneton Community House.
Facilitate diverse and meaningful volunteer and work opportunities for older people (within and outside Council)		Completed the first year of the Aged Care Volunteer Visiting Scheme, including a Morning Tea to retain local volunteers, and an education session at GemLife promoting local volunteer opportunities.

²⁸ A similar action is featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan.

		<p>Partnered with Bendigo Volunteer Resources Centre to build the capacity of Council and local organisations to support volunteers.</p> <p>Council offered volunteer development training sessions for our volunteers, including Dementia Awareness Training and Older People's Mental Health First Aid.</p>
Improve access to volunteer and work opportunities for older people		Launched a centralised volunteer information resource on Council's website that promotes internal and external opportunities within the shire.
Continue to support and encourage older people to live independently and enable them to participate and contribute to their community		Delivered the final year of the Regional Assessment Service that provided referrals on behalf of older people to support them to continue to live independently.
In partnership with local public and community health agencies, support networks and community groups, raise awareness about dementia and support people living with dementia and their carers		Collaborated with Dementia Australia and Woodend Library Central Goldfields to deliver an 'Eddie Information' sessions with 10 participants in attendance.
Identify gaps in services for older people and advocate for local needs in relation to diversity and disadvantage		Council participated in Housing and Homelessness Alliance to identify ways to respond to the needs of older people that may be at risk of homelessness.
Continue to invest in older people by actively sourcing appropriate funding opportunities in partnership with the community		<p>Council maintains a database of community groups and circulates relevant grant opportunities as they arise.</p> <p>Senior Citizens Clubs have transitioned to a sustainable model and each have a future plan with objectives and opportunities identified.</p>
Collaborate with the community to increase the number of programs and activities available to older people		Through the delivery of the Village Connect Program and its coffee catchups Council engaged with older community members and identified and delivered programs that they identified as a need.

<p>Inform, enable and encourage older residents to 'Have Your Say' on Council-related activities</p>		<p>In addition to more standard Council channels like social media and our website, public consultations continue to be promoted through networks known to be used by older people, including advertising in the local weekly paper and flagging consultations through monthly town-specific community newsletters.</p> <p>Whilst consultations are largely driven online in terms of providing information and requesting information, there always remains the option for people to provide responses in other ways – such as in-person.</p>
<p>Communicate and share information in a range of ways/methods to cater to the diverse needs of the community e.g. newsletters, information and education sessions</p>		<p>Council has a tailored database supporting older residents to stay informed and receive appropriate resources to support their connection to local groups, organisations and services.</p>
<p>Reduce elder abuse by raising awareness of older people's rights and how risks of abuse can be addressed</p>		<p>Council delivered the Tiny Homes Project to recognise World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.</p> <p>Council staff received a presentation on elder abuse, building capacity of the organisation to recognise signs of elder abuse.</p>
<p>Promote personal safeguards against fraud/scams</p>		<p>Through the funded 'Village Connect' program Council delivered two Scam Awareness Information sessions for 29 vulnerable older people in the community, addressing the anxieties and related stresses.</p>
<p>Explore initiatives to recognise local businesses, groups, organisations and services that celebrate ageing and/or adopted positive ageing practices and strategies to support older people</p>		<p>Council encouraged nominations for the Victorian Government Age-Friendly Victoria Award.</p>
<p>Support and promote age-friendly community initiatives, to address inclusion and promote respect of older people</p>		<p>Council encouraged nominations for the Victorian Government Age-Friendly Victoria Award.</p>

Ensure that the contributions of older people to the community are appropriately recognised		Council held a recognition celebration of the contributions of older people to the community during Seniors Festival in October 2023, with 50 people in attendance.
Ensure that the diversity of older people is accurately portrayed and reflected in Council publications and materials		An Image Audit was undertaken in June 2024 which makes a range of recommendations around inclusivity and diversity in imagery to better engage and represent our diverse community.
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Healthy Environment, Healthy People		
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Assist to improve mental wellbeing within the community.		
Raise awareness of mental health issues, and educate the community to enable them to support older people who are experiencing mental health problems		One Mental Health First Aid session was delivered for older people, with 12 people in attendance.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Maintain systems and capacity to manage and respond to emergency events.		
Support the community to be well informed about how to keep safe during emergencies		Through the funded 'Village Connect' program Council delivered four Digital Education for Emergency Preparedness sessions for vulnerable older people in the community, with 67 attendees.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Lessen the severity of climate change, through actions that enable Council and the community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.		
Disseminate information that enables older residents to improve environmental sustainability in their homes and reduce utilities costs		Council delivered the Weaving and Waste workshop in Romsey with eight people in attendance.
Council Plan Strategic Priority: Support our community to ensure better access and connection for facilities and services.		
Explore opportunities to improve access to local programs, activities and events		Council created and disseminated a transport brochure and delivered education sessions on travellers' aid and accessibility within the shire and surrounds.

		In partnership with EnAccess, four locations in Gisborne and one location in Woodend have been mapped for accessibility. The public can use these accessibility maps on the EnAccess Maps website .
Support and encourage greater diversity in community organisations/groups and encourage and promote new initiatives for inclusion of older people in groups, teams, clubs		Village Connect facilitated programs in partnership with local community organisations and groups, including boardgames with 45 people participating and digital education with 32 participants.
Support local groups and organisations to increase opportunities for social connections and participation		Council developed the Community Directory, which features a range of resources and support provided by local organisations and groups.
Provide information to the community about local services and supports and evolving aged care sector reform		Council communicated to Regional Assessment Service clients the emerging changes in the aged care sector reform to support their ongoing service access.
Identify organisational and service implications of the changing landscape of aged care		Council continues to support community enquiries regarding aged care services and maintains a register of all enquiries.
Work in partnership with local public and community health agencies, networks and community groups to investigate new ways to support community members to access and use technology		Though the Village Connect Program four 'Technology Information' sessions and one 'Demystifying QR Codes' session were delivered with 76 people in attendance.
Investigate reported gaps in health and medical services and advocate to increase availability where need is evidenced		Council monitors community enquiries and maintains a register of issues utilising information to inform advocacy.
Maintain an active watch on aged care reform changes impacting the shire ²⁹		Council actively participated in the following sector network meetings facilitated by MAV to monitor the impact of the aged care reform:

²⁹ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Ageing Network meeting • Commonwealth Home Support Program-Transition Support Group • Regional Assessment Service-Transition Support Group • Community Care Network Update • Aged Care Reform Updates. <p>Council receives feedback from the community regarding the reforms and, where appropriate, provides this feedback via regular meetings with the Department of Health.</p>
Continue to advocate to Australian and Victorian governments for fair and equitable access to service and support needs of the community		Council met with the Department of Transport to raise awareness of gaps in the shire and identify funding opportunities.
Develop and implement a plan for Council's future role in supporting older residents to live safely and independently		Council will identify and develop a suitable plan which will continue supporting older residents in the final year of the Positive Ageing Plan.
Plan for inclusion of people of all ages and abilities in design and development of the new Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct		Council has implemented fair and equitable access to support the needs of diverse community members whilst constructing the Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct.
Review assets by auditing compliance with accessibility requirements (including age and dementia friendliness) and seek to address gaps identified in audit		Budget is yet to be allocated to this initiative, Council continues to seek funding to conduct this assessment.
Use accessible design standards for new/upgraded signage in Council owned and managed facilities and at Council sponsored events		As opportunities arise Council will continue to embed accessibility within Council Policy.
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Deliver Strong and Reliable Government.		

Council Plan Strategic Priority: Enhance strategy, policy and plan development, and identify alignment to allow for prioritisation of services that are efficient, well planned, accessible and meet community needs.

Council continues to lead in promoting and demonstrating age-friendly practice in Macedon Ranges

Council continues to commit to the implementation of this Plan, '*Participate Positive Ageing Plan*'.

Deliver annual requirements of membership to the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age Friendly Communities and the Age Friendly Victoria Declaration³⁰

Council remains a signatory to the World Health Organization's Global Network Age Friendly Communities and the Age Friendly Victoria Declaration.

³⁰ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Create – Municipal Early Years Plan 2021-2025

Introduction

What the plan does

Council's Municipal Early years Plan (CREATE) outlines the role that the Council will play in responding to the needs, priorities and aspirations of children, as identified by the community. [CREATE is available on Council's website.](#)

How we developed the plan

To develop CREATE we considered:

- what mattered most to children and their families
- the views of external stakeholders, primarily health agencies, community groups and other community members
- Commonwealth and Victorian Government priorities
- evidence about what works
- population data from many sources
- our current actions and resources available in each goal area.

The goals of the plan

CREATE outlines the following goals:

- Children are socially connected and active
- Children thrive in their community
- Children's needs are recognised in infrastructure and the built environment
- Children are respected and valued in their community

Summary of achievements

Overview

The 2023-2024 Action Plan includes 54 actions.

As of 30 June 2024:

- 34 (63%) are completed;
- 19 (35%) are on track for completion by 30 June 2025 and;
- 1 (2%) will be prioritised in the plan's final year of implementation.

Highlights

Listening to children and their families:

- Council delivered tailored engagement activities to ensure that children's voices were informed of the Playground Strategy (in draft), and a number of improvements were actioned as a result of their insights.
- Council endorsed new Community Engagement Guidelines, identifying children and young people as important stakeholders.
- The development of Child and Youth engagement guidelines is underway to inform future engagement practice across Council.

Investing in children and their families:

- Learn to Swim student benefits changes so that active students receive free access to indoor aquatic sites. Parents/carers of children five and under also receive free access.
- Kyneton and Swinburne kindergartens had new Indigenous artwork installed on the wall of their kindergartens.
- Council invested in ongoing roles to support children and their families in the shire including the Kindergarten Inclusion and Support Officer and the Early Years Service Planner.

Advocating for children and their families:

- Council has received funding for six "safe system pedestrian infrastructure" upgrades across Kyneton, Gisborne, Woodend and Riddells Creek (completion by June 2025).
- Council has received funding for upgrades to two school crossings in Kyneton and Gisborne (completion by Feb 2026).
- Council received funding to deliver a workforce plan for the local early years sector
- Council met with the Minister for Health to lobby for additional funding in the early intervention space and followed up with letters to the Minister for Children and Minister for Health.

Progress report

Action	Status	Commentary
Strategic Objective: Connecting Communities		
Strategic priority: Improve connectivity and movement, and provide transport choices to the community including walking trails and bike paths		
In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including parking for parents with prams at shopping areas, five minute drop off zones near primary schools and increasing disability parking bays ³¹		The Kyneton Movement Network Plan was endorsed by Council in June SCM and includes a commitment for Council to undertake an accessible parking audit in 2027. Council continues to receive and respond to community enquiries about accessible parking and identify suitable responses.
In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including footpath improvements and better connectivity to meet community expectations, child/family needs and address safety concerns ³²		All footpath projects budgeted for FY23/24 have been completed on time including Howey St, Bolinda-Darraweit Road, Hamilton Road and Station Road.
In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including more interconnected bike paths that benefit the whole community		The Macedon Ranges Shared Trail Project is in progress under a Design and Construction Contract.
In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for		Council provides school crossing supervision at 21 school crossings across the shire.

³¹ A similar action is featured within the Disability Action Plan and Positive Ageing Plan.

³² A similar action is featured within the Disability Action Plan and Positive Ageing Plan.

<p>projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including a review of pedestrian crossings and school crossings in each township to identify possible improvements that ensure child and family safety</p>		<p>Council has received funding for upgrades to two school crossings in Kyneton and Gisborne (completion by Feb 2026).</p> <p>Council has received funding for six "safe system pedestrian infrastructure" upgrades across Kyneton, Gisborne, Woodend and Riddells Creek (completion by June 2025).</p>
<p>Advocate for the expansion of bus services and on-demand services including taxis, ride sharing, car sharing and volunteer transport³³</p>		<p>Council met with the Department of Transport to raise awareness of gaps in the shire and identify funding opportunities.</p> <p>A local business start-up (KimCo) began offering ride share, private driving services during 2023-2024. As a result of high levels of demand, the business expanded rapidly and continues to operate.</p>
<p>Strategic priority: Provide well-designed, fit for purpose, multi-use open spaces and infrastructure for the community to connect, engage and participate in a financially sustainable way</p>		
<p>Review accessibility of Council managed pools on an annual basis, and where possible explore options to increase access for young children and their families</p>		<p>Learn to Swin student benefits changes so that active students receive free access to indoor aquatic sites. Parents/carers of children five and under also receive free access.</p>
<p>Explore partnerships with local schools around children's use of school grounds outside of school hours and during school holidays</p>		<p>Further exploration will occur with schools around current state of play regarding community access to school grounds.</p>
<p>In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all ability access to Council outdoor and community open spaces including seating, shade, BBQ facilities and toilets with baby change facilities and breast feeding amenities • improvements to parks and public spaces to make them more 		<p>189 children aged 4-10 contributed to the in-development Playground Strategy consultation.</p> <p>The following improvements were made during 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of Gisborne Fields park Stage 5 landscape design which includes a set of football goals and large open grass space for passive play; increased

³³ A similar action is featured within the Positive Ageing Plan.

<p>child and family friendly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fencing of playgrounds as appropriate to increase safety of children 		<p>tree planting for shade; extension and widening of existing footpaths; addition of barrier fencing to protect children from roads.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The external fences at Woodend Outdoor Pool were upgraded ahead of the 2023/24 swimming season to improve safety and amenity for pool patrons. • Improvements at Jacksons Creek include a BBQ and shelter included an all accessible BBQ and footpath. • Council also supported local sporting clubs to become more accessible, e.g. Macedon Tennis Club refurbished to enable all accessibility into and around the tennis facilities; Expanding door widths at Buffalo Stadium changeroom project to be DDA compliant. • Designing for inclusivity has been a focus for future open spaces, including Dixon Field where designs encompass all accessible pathways and car-park formalisation. • The Facility Projects unit routinely undertake design and construction projects, whereby DDA accessibility requirements are addressed. Whether a project has emerged out of need for DDA compliance at a park or facility, or not, DDA compliancy will be assessed at the project's scoping stage.
<p>Undertake a review of baby change facilities within each township</p>		<p>Change tables installed in all public toilets within township central business districts. Broken and damaged tables reported and replaced in a timely manner.</p> <p>Public consultation completed during development of the Public Toilet and Barbecue Strategy.</p>
<p>Support budget bids and grants that allow for upgrade of facilities with baby change facilities as needed</p>		<p>New installs and replacements are completed utilising operational funds.</p>

Strategic priority: Continue to deliver improved outcomes for and recognition of our First Nations People		
Provide cultural competency training to Council staff in early childhood and Maternal and Child Health settings		Training is scheduled to be delivered to MCH and Early Years Staff in the 2024-2025 year.
Continue to work towards goals as identified in the Reconciliation Action Plan		Acknowledgement of Country developed and implemented at all Council kindergartens.
Encourage other Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) providers in the shire to participate in cultural competency training		Session to be delivered in 24/25 that all ECEC services will be invited to attend
Continue to explore ways to celebrate Indigenous cultures in public spaces in planning, design and activation of the space		Kyneton and Swinburne kindergartens had new Indigenous artwork installed on the wall of their kindergartens. Future progress against this action will be reported through Council's Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2027.
Strategic priority: Promote a more inclusive community by supporting community groups and vulnerable groups		
Review Council's role in supporting playgroups and toy libraries and develop opportunities to strengthen the connections between user groups ³⁴		Council delivered two small talk supported playgroups in Woodend and Romsey to up to ten families each term and delivers 1:1 in-home support to up to three families per term. Council developed a report, reviewing its involvement with toy libraries and playgroups in January 2023. Council supported the Kyneton Toy Library to move venues. Council provided in-kind venue hire to Sunbury Cobaw Community Health to deliver the Mother Goose supported playgroup at Manna Gum Children and Family Centre during school terms.
Use existing Council relationships to connect local community groups and services to support initiatives encouraging connection/participation of families with young children, including		Community Playgroups, libraries and Toy Libraries are invited to speak First Time Parent Groups. Council promotes all supported and community run playgroups and toy libraries across the shire. A number of

³⁴ A similar action is featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

opportunities for intergenerational relationships		<p>these are tailored to diverse needs, including the Rainbow Playgroup, the R.A.D Dads Macedon Ranges Playgroup, and the SPICE Intergenerational Playgroup.</p> <p>Enhanced MCH service works collaboratively with local family support services and social support groups.</p>
Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture in Macedon Ranges Shire Council ³⁵		<p>Early Years and MCH held a training session on child information sharing, mandatory reporting, and child safety.</p> <p>Website updated to reflect child protection contact/process</p> <p>All Council staff and volunteers complete a mandatory child safe standards module on commencement of employment. A review has been undertaken of all mandatory online training, including Child Safe Module, recommendations for strengthening compliance will be progressed in the following year.</p>
Continue to strengthen the smalltalk supported playgroup program ³⁶		Council delivered 2 smalltalk supported playgroups in Woodend and Romsey each term, and 1:1 in-home supported playgroup stream.
Continue to strengthen Enhanced Maternal and Child Health programming to support eligible families and children		The Enhanced MCH program supported the shire's most vulnerable families and continues to meet all targets.
Support, enable and deliver innovative programs and activities targeting diverse parents of young children, eg young parents, parents who are socially isolated, new dads		MCH collaborating with The Sisterhood Project to deliver First Aid/CPR educations sessions to vulnerable families.
Strategic Objective Healthy Environment, Healthy People		
Strategic priority: Improve the quality of recycling, minimise the generation of waste and establish alternatives to landfill disposal		

³⁵ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

³⁶ A similar action is featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Support, educate about and promote use of reusable cloth nappies		<p>Reusable nappies on display in MCH centres and discussed at First Time Parent groups.</p> <p>Five cloth nappy workshops ran with a total of 15 people and 41 cloth nappy rebates were processed.</p>
Strategic priority: Provide opportunities to experience open space and bushland reserves		
Explore feasibility of bush kinder programs being run across the shire		Environment team delivered several incursions to Council and non-Council ECEC services to increase knowledge of biodiversity.
Strategic priority: Maintain systems and capacity to manage and respond to emergency events		
Implement learnings of COVID-19, to explore innovative ways for MCH Nurses to connect with new parents and to enable new parents to connect with one another		<p>MCH facilitate First Time Parent groups at centres but are able to deliver online where required.</p> <p>MCH have telehealth guidelines in place.</p>
Kindergarten and MCH staff build a collection of strategies, resources and activities that can be utilised to support with the intention of strengthening children's and families' engagement with services during periods of restrictions due to COVID-19		<p>MCH facilitate First Time Parent groups at centres but can deliver online where required.</p> <p>MCH have telehealth guidelines in place.</p> <p>Kindergarten staff developed several practices, processes and resources to support child and family engagement with kindergarten during COVID, in line with Department of Health and Department of Education guidelines. These approaches could be reintroduced in future if needed.</p>
Strategic priority: Encourage active and healthy lifestyles for people of all ages		
Introduce bike safety initiatives at Council managed kindergartens ³⁷		<p>Six Council kindergartens received bike racks and the new Lancefield kinder will receive one during construction.</p> <p>Two Council kindergartens participated in bike skills training.</p>

³⁷ A similar action is featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

		<p>All Council kindergartens received children's bike helmets and safety crossing sign kits.</p> <p>Seven of eight Council kindergartens received balance bikes.</p>
Encourage not for profit and private kindergarten providers, and local primary schools, to participate in bike safety initiatives ³⁷		<p>Two members of Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group have completed the Bike Ed Training course. Five non-Council ECEC services had bike racks installed. Two non-Council ECEC services participated in bike skills training. Seven non-Council ECEC services received children's bike helmets and safety crossing sign kits. Six non-Council ECEC services received balance bikes.</p>
Strategic priority: Engage with families to promote the importance of early childhood education and health		
Develop an education campaign to improve breastfeeding awareness, rates and duration in the shire ³⁸		<p>The Breastfeeding Support Service operates one day per week to provide support and education for successful breastfeeding.</p> <p>A Lactation Consultant provides professional development/shares new information to the MCH team.</p>
Implement the State Government funded sleep settling initiative		<p>The sleep and settling program has been implemented and targets met.</p>
Continue to provide an immunisation service to families and children in the shire as per the national immunisation schedule		<p>Public Immunisation sessions operated in Kyneton, Woodend, Gisborne, Riddells Creek and Romsey once per month. Council immunisation nurses speak at First Time Parent groups and MCH promote Council Immunisation sessions.</p>
Explore opportunities to support hard to reach families to have their babies and children immunised		<p>Home visit Immunisation program offered to families identified as part of the MCH Enhanced Program. Immunisation nurses make regular contact with families when due for immunisation.</p>

³⁸ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Strategic priority: Support our community to ensure better access and connection for facilities and services		
In Council's role as early years planner, work with all kindergarten providers to ensure there are sufficient places for every three and four year old child to attend kindergarten within the shire		Council is working with the Department of Education, and local ECEC service providers, to understand provision of kindergarten places across the shire through updating the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP).
Implement funded three year old kindergarten in Council managed kindergartens from 2022		Seven and a half hours of funded three-year-old kindergarten offered at two Council-managed kindergartens and fifteen hours of funded three-year-old kindergarten offered at six Council kindergartens in 2024. Report to be presented to a Scheduled Council Meeting in 2024/25, seeking endorsement of a strategic direction for the delivery of three- and four-year-old kindergarten in the shire.
Continue to access School Readiness Funding (SRF) to assist children with communication, wellbeing, access and inclusion outcomes prior to attending school ³⁹		Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Early Years unit has worked with the Early Childhood Improvement Branch to develop a School Readiness Funding Plan for each of their services, accessing School Readiness Funding on a needs-basis. Kindergarten Inclusion and Support Officer now an ongoing role at Council.
Explore options and funding for allied health professionals including speech therapists, dietician, autism specialists to identify developmental issues and maximise school readiness		Sunbury Cobaw Community Health Centre run drop-in information sessions for families each term, which are promoted through local ECEC services
Investigate the need for a shire-wide transition strategy		Annual transition network program established with Department of Education including term based meetings and a delivery of a prep enrolment booklet.
Facilitate the development of a Child and Family Services Network to strengthen interagency partnerships with early childhood services in the shire		Will be explored through development of a Central Registration Scheme working group in 24/25.

³⁹ A similar action is featured in the Disability Action Plan.

Contribute to the annual planning and promotion of Council-led arts, culture and sporting activities and events for children of all abilities and backgrounds		Council delivered a diverse range of shows and activities directed at children of all abilities and backgrounds, including kids comedy shows, Creative Kids School Holiday Program workshops, and opportunities to engage with local artists and perform in Creative Venues.
Explore and promote activities, events and programs for children organised by external stakeholders		Council continue to promote external dance concerts and school concerts, which engage children from four years old and upwards in the performing and creative arts.
Partner with Goldfields Library Corporation to explore opportunities, including events and activities, to enhance social connection, participation, wellbeing, fun, literacy and introduction of lifelong learning for children		Goldfields Library Corporation and Council stakeholders meet regularly to explore opportunities. New TV content is uploaded monthly promoting events and activities which is shared at Council's Customer Service Centres, libraries and aquatic centres.
Identify the feasibility of a substantive Early Years Planner to address social planning priorities, and to support and lead collaboration and development of the early years sector across the shire		Early Years Service Planner role now an ongoing role at Council.
In Council's role as Early Years' Planner, review the provision of childcare in the Macedon Ranges and investigate opportunities to increase the access		Will be investigated within scope of future Community Infrastructure Planning process.
Identify processes and criteria involved in recognising the Macedon Ranges as a child-friendly community		Will be further explored during 24/25.
Establish a partnership with UNICEF and obtain UNICEF recognition if recognition criteria are met		Will be further explored during 24/25.
Strategic Objective Business and Tourism		
Strategic priority: Support local industry sectors that align with our vision and strategies		
Develop a shire wide workforce recruitment and retention strategy for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services		Macedon Ranges ECEC Workforce Plan developed with a grant from Department of Education.

Strategic priority: Engage with emerging technology solutions and initiatives to increase the liveability of the shire		
Explore the use of video tours of Maternal and Child Health centres, toy libraries and playgroups, as per video tours of kindergartens, allowing greater access for families		Communications to work with MCH to create relevant video content for the website during 24/25.
Explore other innovative ideas to showcase early childhood services and add elements of creativity to programs		Children at Council kindergarten services engage with a range of contemporary technologies to support regulation, interests and learning, including interactive whiteboards, apps, digital cameras, digital microscopes, and digital drawing devices. Children are taught how to safely engage with technologies.
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Deliver Strong and Reliable Government		
Strategic priority: Enhance strategy, policy and plan development, and identify alignment to allow for prioritisation of services that are efficient, well planned, accessible and meet community needs		
Work with stakeholders on a process that considers early years expertise in the provision of public play spaces and early years infrastructure in the shire, and broader infrastructure and development projects including new planning applications		<p>Early Years Service Planner working with Statutory Planning to develop processes re supporting planning permit applications for new ECEC services in the shire.</p> <p>Created an early years services layer in IntraMaps that has been added to the Customer Service, Infrastructure Assets, Emergency Management and Strategic Planning layers to support relevant planning across Council.</p>
Develop engagement strategies to ensure children and families are included in the planning and development of local activities, services, programs and projects ⁴⁰		<p>Council endorsed new Community Engagement Guidelines, identifying children and young people as an important stakeholder group.</p> <p>A project plan has been established and implemented for the development of Child and Youth engagement guidelines. The guidelines will be finalised and sent for endorsement in 24/25.</p>

⁴⁰ This action is also featured in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

<p>Communicate with children and families in child-friendly ways about changes to programs and services that impact them</p>		<p>Council primarily relies on reaching parents with targeted communications on many initiatives, and as a connector to young children.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to strengthen the types of engagement activities being delivered to children through Council-managed services so that strategic, relevant and engaging information may be better targeted to children specifically.</p>
<p>Strategic priority: Lead advocacy engagement and enhance relationships with all tiers of government and key stakeholders</p>		
<p>Explore and advocate for additional funding with State Government to increase social connections amongst children and families who are at risk of experiencing social isolation and who may not engage in traditional community programs, eg young parents, families with child protection involvement, families from low socio-economic-status background, families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities</p>		<p>Council will undertake a project around understanding barriers and enablers to social inclusion for children and young people with additional needs and their families.</p>
<p>Advocate for increased funding and resource investment by the State Government to co-locate new facilities with relevant early childhood services, eg schools and Maternal and Child Health</p>		<p>The in-development Lancefield kindergarten will house MCH and community playgroup and is located next to the local primary school.</p>
<p>Explore new partnership opportunities with not-for-profit and private sector agencies</p>		<p>Council facilitates several activities for Council and non-Council ECEC services in the shire, eg the ECEC online network meeting, the Emerging Leaders Hub, and the Kindergarten to Prep Transition network.</p>
<p>Advocate for funding and service opportunities that facilitate connections for families and children who are hard to reach/overlooked, eg young parents</p>		<p>Appropriate advocacy still being defined and will continue to be investigated through the development of Council's advocacy priorities.</p>
<p>Advocate for funding and service opportunities with the State and Federal Government to increase holistic access to local family support and educational services such as new parent groups, allied health care providers, paediatricians and child psychologists</p>		<p>Council attended a meeting with the Minister for Health to lobby for additional funding in the early intervention space and followed up with letters to the Minister for Children and Minister for Health on 7 June 2024.</p>

Conclusion

What's working well

Council has made significant progress against the priorities and goals outlined in each of the respective plans and established and maintained successful quality programs in doing so.

As demonstrated by collating and presenting this reporting together within one annual report, there are several natural synergies across these separate plans, that demonstrate an intersectional and collaborative focus in their implementation.

Moving into the final year of implementation this reporting period has enabled Council to reflect on community needs and identify the priority actions for the final year of implementation.

Challenges

Sourcing additional funding to deliver on the goals identified by each of the community groups outlined in this plan continues to be a challenge, specifically in relation to improving the accessibility of physical infrastructure. A number of the actions marked with the 'red' status relate to unsuccessful funding attempts both internally and externally.

Streamlining internal resources for developing, implementing, and reporting on actions within these plans is integral. While each Plan represents a unique set of priorities for a diverse range of groups, there does appear to be significant overlap, and it's important to be able to maintain alignment, realise collaborative opportunities, and minimise duplication where possible moving forward.

Where to from here

Council will continue to advocate and proactively seek additional resources for the implementation of outstanding actions, including:

- Funding to implement a program of accessibility compliance assessment across all Council owned/operated facilities (including age and dementia friendliness) – to raise awareness and guide a future work planning.
- Funding or innovative approaches to provide customised accessibility guides for large Council-managed venues.

It is further proposed that the 2024-2025 action plans for each of the respective plans, be brought together into a shared action plan, this will enable:

- Streamlined reporting processes for staff and clear and digestible annual plans and reports for the community.
- Clear identification and removal of duplicative actions across the respective Plans.
- Identification of collaborative opportunities across the Plans, where resources can be pooled to achieve greater outcomes for each group.