

Municipal Lifelong Learning

Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2016

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1. Introduction

This Municipal Lifelong Learning Strategy and Action Plan aims to guide Council in the development of a strong and positive learning culture within the City of Whittlesea and improve learning outcomes for its community members.

The focus on lifelong learning has come from evidence that indicates that learning is a driver of positive change and that by improving the individual and collective learning opportunities in our community we can improve community connections, skills for life and work, employment outcomes, confidence, wellbeing and health.

Lifelong learning is also a community priority and is articulated across many future directions within the Community Plan – Shaping Our Future 2030, which was developed principally from community input.

Future Direction¹	Strategic Outcomes linked to learning
Inclusive and engaged community	We encourage the development of community spirit
	People are involved in issues that affect them
	Community decision making is inclusive
	Participation and Decision making
	We provide support to new and emerging communities
Accessibility	We can access expanded library services
	We can access broadband
	We can access online services
Growing our economy	There is a diverse range of local employment opportunities
	Local businesses are supported
	There are opportunities for lifelong learning
	Families are supported through all of life's stages
Places and spaces to connect people	We have areas that bring people together around services and entertainment experiences
Health and Wellbeing	We take a prevention approach to health issues and health policy
Living Sustainably	We have environmental education and conservation programs
	We are an environmentally sustainable City

Council's commitment to learning and its ability to positively impact people's lives is well founded in research. Research² shows that individuals who engage in lifelong learning are more likely to have better employment opportunities, higher incomes, better health and greater ability to manage their money. Learning has been shown to have a measurable impact on wellbeing, through all the stages of life by helping people develop capabilities and resources that influence their wellbeing and it can have a cumulative effect, by influencing the social and economic environment in which people spend their lives.

¹ City of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013 – 2017 Shaping our future

² Field 2009

In developing this strategy the City of Whittlesea recognises that:

- Having the aspiration to learn is as important as having opportunities to learn
- Educational inequalities accumulate over the life course
- Early learning experiences need to provide a foundation for lifelong learning
- Transition points between learning environments are crucial periods and are often times of high risk
- Parent engagement in children/young people's learning is important throughout all formal and informal learning environments and benefits both children and their parents/carers
- There needs to be ongoing and diverse learning opportunities for people of all backgrounds, abilities and locations
- There are increasingly diverse transitions into and from employment
- Connection to work is a powerful factor in lifelong learning success
- Physical and cognitive disabilities can be a major barrier to learning
- Buildings, technologies and services need to be appropriate for learning and well integrated
- Libraries are important to participation and learning outcomes in all communities
- Finding a way through the system is complex and de-motivating for many so access to advice and guidance to help decision making is important, particularly at key transition points

2. An Overview

The Lifelong Learning Strategy and Action Plan is designed to add value to existing Council policy directions and to guide the development of a stronger learning focus within those areas. This document presents lifelong learning as a cross cutting theme not a stand-alone policy area. Lifelong learning is a broad concept and an extensive area of policy and activity that intersects with both strategic and operational activities of Council as well as learning providers and other levels of government.

POPULATION BASED OBJECTIVES

To be effective, a strategy and action plan must be designed around the population-based objectives Council would like to contribute to. The long-term objectives identified for lifelong learning in the City of Whittlesea include:

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE** - Increase participation in kindergarten and other early childhood education and care activities known to support early learning.
- **COMPULSORY EDUCATION** - Improve Year 12 attainment and increase engagement of young people in education and training.
- **POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND INFORMAL, NON-FORMAL LEARNING** - Improve participation in non-formal, informal and self-directed learning, and improve attainment in post compulsory qualifications.
- **SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT** Increase in the percentage of residents in employment, increase in the percentage of employed residents working locally, and a reduction in local skills shortages.
- **COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND COHESION** - Increase in awareness and response to cultural diversity and heritage and increase in social cohesion.

Important work is already underway in Council's Family and Youth sectors to improve education outcomes for early childhood, young people and families and measure success through indicators. As an example, the types of indicators that might be relevant for increasing participation in early childhood education and care are provided below.

Outcome	Objective	Indicative Indicator
Children and young people have optimal opportunity for cognitive, physical, social and emotional development	Increase participation in kindergarten and other early childhood education and care activities known to support early learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in % of eligible children participating in high quality early childhood education and care (incorporating kindergarten/long day care/family day care) • Increase % of CALD children participating in high quality early childhood education and care • Increase % of Aboriginal children participating in high quality early childhood education and care • Decrease in % of children developmentally vulnerable at school entry on the Australian Early Development Index • Increase in the number of playgroups offered in the municipality • Number and quality of supports provided to children with

Outcome	Objective	Indicative Indicator
		additional needs and disability.

Council reporting, such as the anticipated State of Whittlesea’s Children, Young people and Families report will lead the development of specific indicators for these population outcomes that will inform future priorities and actions and enable future actions to be linked to the indicators. Complementary indicators can be developed across all age groups and target population groups.

DEFINITIONS

Lifelong learning is the concept that refers to the activities a person performs throughout their life to improve their knowledge, skills and competence in a particular field, given some personal, societal or employment related motives³. Lifelong learning encompasses all learning endeavours over an individual’s lifespan⁴.

In the City of Whittlesea the definition of Lifelong learning is expanded to be explicit that lifelong learning:

- Is reciprocal and includes learning from each other.
- Embraces different ways of learning and teaching – includes intergenerational and intercultural exchange, learning within families and groups, sharing cultural traditions, oral storytelling, experiential and action learning.
- Incorporates different settings for learning – home, community and cultural places, institutions, workplaces and online environments.
- Encompasses individual, collective and organisational learning.

Lifelong learning success generally requires individuals to determine their personal learning needs, plan their own learning, find appropriate institutions and programs, provide self-motivation, evaluate their own learning progress and learn in informal as well as formal settings.

³ Aspin & Chapman, 2000; Field, 2001; Griffin, 1999

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Definitions of lifelong learning⁵ generally stress the inclusion of all forms of learning including:

- Formal (e.g. secondary school education leading to VCE or VET award, accredited training at Community Learning centre, DEECD alternative school settings like The Pavilion located at Edge Youth Services),
- Non-formal (e.g. English discussion groups at Neighbourhood House),
- Self directed (e.g. using the internet to learn about hobbies) and
- Informal learning (e.g. Parent teaching child basic grammar/language at home)⁶.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The development of the Municipal Lifelong Learning Strategy and Action Plan involved consultation and workshops with internal and external stakeholders⁷ between July and November 2012. The vision and principles outlined in Section 5 of the Strategy were developed through several workshops with Council staff across relevant areas while the Steering Group guided the overall process and the format and content of this document.

As this is the first formal Council document specifically related to lifelong learning it incorporates actions that are required to establish lifelong learning as a priority within Council as well as actions that relate to Council's interaction and communication with the community.

⁵ UNESCO, 2012

⁶ Adapted from Mocker & Spear, 1982

⁷ For a complete list of stakeholders and consultation please refer to background document

3. The Broader Context

ACROSS THE WORLD

Internationally there are significant agendas progressing the concept, frameworks and activities relating to lifelong learning. The concept of lifelong learning as an educational strategy was developed over thirty years ago, through efforts of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the European Commission, as a response for the need of education opportunities throughout all phases of life and not simply just the early years spent in formal education.

Forces like globalisation, migration, employability, transferability of skills and need for knowledge based workers are shaping the lifelong learning agenda. However, one of the most significant transformative forces is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) networks enabling the development of new ways of organising learning opportunities and facilities that goes beyond course and program-centric models and envisions a learner centred, learner-controlled model of distributed lifelong learning.

There are also emerging trends such as the rise in the popularity of informal learning, the influence of the place of residence on participation in learning, the difference between age groups and the likelihood of those with education being more likely to engage with further education including informal learning.

IN AUSTRALIA

Lifelong learning intersects with a number of significant policy areas across all levels of government in Australia. It has no specific national policy and no clear responsibility at any particular government level. Elements of lifelong learning are covered by policies relating to:

- Early Childhood education and care
- Youth services, support at school and transitions
- Compulsory schooling
- Vocational education, training and skills
- Higher education
- Adult, Community and Further Education
- Positive Ageing
- Social inclusion and Community development

In Australia our largely state-led learning models across the different education, training and qualification systems have been injected with a growing emphasis on market led mechanisms. A market-led model conceives of the learning society as a demand-led mass of new opportunities, networks and partnerships, facilitated by new technologies and driven by the market. The individual takes primary responsibility for his or her own learning and governments limit their roles largely to advocacy and 'steering'.

In contrast the state-led model gives the key role to the government(s) as the organiser and principal funder of lifelong learning, believing the market approach leads to under-investment and inequality. Instead of leaving the market to make the key decisions about how much should be invested in what, it accords public authorities with key roles in planning and regulation in the interests of the overall public good. Examples include the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education, the Gonski education reforms and the Closing the Gap Indigenous Reform Agenda.

Balancing the system requires recognising the limitations of the market and the importance of regulation and at the same time focussing on social partnership, the importance of individual responsibility, advocating a multiple agency approach and maximising use of new learning technologies⁸.

In Australia the educational life course is changing with an ageing population, changing patterns of paid and unpaid activity, older people working longer and a growing number of self-employed people and home based, micro and small businesses. The distribution of learning resources should reflect our changing social and economic context.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There is an increasing trend towards local authorities leading the development of local strategies, learning and employer networks and learning exchanges that connect people as socially networked learners and provide spaces for local groups to engage in learning. Emphasis is then on higher education institutions to join in local strategies. Lifelong learning strategies and initiatives are also being formally linked to local economic development strategies led by Councils.

Local governments across Australia have been actively engaged in progressing the lifelong learning agenda through thought leadership, on the ground action and piloting new initiatives. While reflecting their unique and local circumstances most⁹ have focussed on partnerships and networks, support for providers and provision of learning related infrastructure.

⁸ Green, 2003

⁹ See background analysis for case study examples.

4. The Local Context

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Our community is relatively young compared to Greater Melbourne

The City of Whittlesea's age profile (2011) is characterised by a relatively younger population when compared to that of Victoria. 27.35% of people are under 20 years compared to 25.1% in Victoria and 10.7% are 65+, compared to 14.2% in Victoria.

Age	Whittlesea (c) %	Victoria %
People		
0-4 years	11,524 7.4	334,733 6.4
5-9 years	10,696 6.9	326,121 6.1
10-14 years	9,989 6.4	327,939 6.1
15-19 years	10,243 6.6	345,339 6.5
20-24 years	11,174 7.2	375,108 7.0
25-29 years	12,805 8.3	388,669 7.3
30-34 years	12,363 8.0	372,214 7.0
35-39 years	12,051 7.8	383,415 7.2
40-44 years	11,608 7.5	391,197 7.3
45-49 years	10,505 6.8	372,367 7.0
50-54 years	9,535 6.2	354,110 6.6
55-59 years	8,406 5.4	317,438 5.9
60-64 years	7,451 4.8	293,812 5.5
65-69 years	5,339 3.4	224,911 4.2
70-74 years	4,185 2.7	117,316 3.3
75-79 years	3,309 2.1	140,338 2.6
80-84 years	2,149 1.4	114,020 2.1
85 years and over	1,548 1.0	104,995 2.0
Median age	34 --	37 --

Our community is growing rapidly

The City of Whittlesea had a population of 154,880 people (43,036 families) in 2011¹⁰ and an estimated current population (2013) of 178,632. It is expected that population will grow to 237,528 by 2021 and 295,438 by 2031¹¹.

The largest percentage increase in population between 2011-2021 is forecast to be in the 5-14 years old group and the largest percentage decrease will be in the 20-29 year old age group.

¹⁰ ABS Census 2011 – Community Profiles, Whittlesea LGA, accessed February 13, 2013

¹¹ ID consulting, City of Whittlesea population and household forecasts, accessed February 13, 2013

Population growth is already reportedly having an impact on early years services and school systems and growth areas like Mernda-Doreen and Epping North are forecast to experience significant growth in 0-4 year olds from 2011 to 2021¹².

The relatively high percentage of young people (under 20) in the emerging growth areas, is forecast to lead to disproportionately large growth in demand for tertiary places by 2025, calculated by the Growth Areas Authority (GAA 2010) as an additional 13,000 Vocational Education and Training (VET) and 16,000 Higher Education (HE) places in the northern growth corridor alone.

We are culturally diverse

The City of Whittlesea in 2011, when compared to the Greater Melbourne, had a larger proportion of people born overseas (33.6% compared to 31.4%)¹³ and larger proportion of people from a non-English speaking background (30.2% compared to 24.2%). Of the overseas born population living within the City of Whittlesea in 2011, 18.1% had arrived since 2006. The City of Whittlesea is also characterised by an older migrant population, with 27.5% having arrived before 1971.

In 2011, the City of Whittlesea experienced the tenth highest number of migrant settlements out of the 31 Metropolitan Local Government Areas in Victoria, with 915 settlements¹⁴. It was eighth highest in terms of humanitarian settlements - accounting for 165 settlements (18% of all settlements in the City of Whittlesea) that year.

Within the City of Whittlesea in 2011, 35.0% of people spoke “another language and English well or very well”¹⁵, whilst 7.5% of the population spoke “another language and English not well or not at all”. This is a larger proportion than for the population of Greater Melbourne (which was 24.0% and 5.0% respectively). There was considerable variation in English proficiency between the suburbs of the City of Whittlesea.

We are socially-economically diverse, with areas of significant disadvantage

Within the City of Whittlesea, there is significant socio-economic disadvantage, with many low income families and people with little skills or training. The City of Whittlesea in 2011 had a SEIFA index score of 988.6¹⁶ - the fifth lowest out of Melbourne’s 31 Local Government Areas. There was, however diversity across suburbs, with the most disadvantaged being the south western established area of Thomastown (877.8), and the least disadvantaged the growth area of Mernda-Doreen (1081.7).

The City of Whittlesea, when compared to Greater Melbourne in 2011, was characterised by a smaller proportion of population in both the highest income quartile (those earning \$2,149

¹² Growing from 2,625 to 5,271 and 740 to 3,587 persons aged 0-4 years old respectively

¹³ ABS Census, 2011.

¹⁴ DIAC (2012). ‘Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s Settlement Database (Settlement Reports).’

¹⁵ ABS Census, 2011.

¹⁶ ABS Census, 2011.

per week or more) 22.5% compared to 28.4%, and in the lowest income quartile group (\$0 to \$624 per week) at 21.7% compared to 22.5%. However, the household income profile varied considerably across the municipality, with the established suburb of Thomastown having 35.6% of its population in the lowest income quartile, compared to 9.5% for the growth area of Mernda-Doreen. Conversely, Blossom Park had the largest percentage of residents in the highest income quartile (36.5%), followed by Mernda-Doreen (33.4%), and compared to Thomastown (12.4%).

Our education and qualifications profile is changing

Across most formal education measures (2011) the City of Whittlesea is well below Greater Melbourne.

	City of Whittlesea	Greater Melbourne
Completed Year 12 or equivalent	47.5	54.6
Not completed secondary school beyond Year 9	15.8	11.9
*No tertiary qualification	51.4	42.4

*The proportion of Whittlesea residents with tertiary qualifications (including Bachelor or higher degrees, diplomas and vocational qualifications) has increased since 2006. This is in part from the purchasers of new housing in the northern growth corridor¹⁷ being professionals (41%), managers (22%) and tradespeople (21%). This will shift the level of qualifications recorded in the overall population and may influence the local job market.

Educational outcomes for the local Aboriginal population are lower than the overall population outcomes for the City of Whittlesea and many refugee young people have reported additional barriers relating to language and racism in both their experience at school, and accessing local part time employment.

Our employment and economic profile is changing

Manufacturing is traditionally a large employer in the City of Whittlesea and while this overall trend continues, the employment profile within this sector is changing quickly with both demand for more skills and qualifications and also a shift from automotive to engineering and food related manufacturing. Given the population growth there will inevitably be an increase in demand for health, allied and specialist health qualifications and experience.

The largest changes in the occupations held by the resident population in the City of Whittlesea between 2006 and 2011¹⁸ were: Professionals (+3,931 persons); Clerical and

¹⁷ Data from Stockland presented at Growth Areas Authority forum, 'Education for the Northern region' at the City of Whittlesea, 23 November 2012

¹⁸ ABS Census 2006 and 2011

Administrative Workers (+2,102 persons); Technicians and Trades Workers (+2,102 persons), and Community and Personal Service Workers (+2,079 persons).

The City of Whittlesea had 71,491 employed residents in 2011, of these only 25.8% (18,457 persons) reported to work within the municipality¹⁹. Outside of the City of Whittlesea, the Local Government Areas of Darebin, Hume and Melbourne accounted for the most employment of residents from the City of Whittlesea.

WHAT LIFELONG LEARNING RESOURCES DO WE CURRENTLY HAVE?²⁰

Physical Resources and Assets

The City of Whittlesea currently has one Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Bubup Wilam for Early Learning, 29 kindergartens, 27 long day care centres, 25 Family Day care educators/homes, 30 primary schools, 14 secondary schools, five special/alternate setting schools, two tertiary campuses, one trade training centre, one regional cultural centre, seven community centres, five neighbourhood house/learning centres, three libraries (fourth Library opening in 2014) and three mobile library sites, 25 other small halls and venues, and a number of sports pavilions and clubrooms.

These Council owned buildings have a diverse range of governance, use and access arrangements which continue to be streamlined by Council through new agreements and shared use policies.

Any refurbishment or redevelopment of existing facilities can incorporate features that would improve their use as learning environments through increased flexibility, technology or access.

The planning of new facilities, like Community Activity Centres in growth areas, can be guided by principles of good learning environments and can incorporate technology that enables and supports learning. Increasing the flexibility of these facilities can enable them to respond to a diversity of learning activities and changing needs.

Programs and Pathways

Council currently invests in a range of lifelong learning programs throughout the Municipality, and across many of its teams. These programs include:

- Maternal Child Health Scholarships
- Aboriginal Employment Pathways Project

¹⁹ ABS Census 2011

²⁰ A brief summary is included here – for a more comprehensive summary of learning providers and related infrastructure and programs in the City please refer to the Situation Analysis background document.

- Parent and early years professional focused Training Calendar
- Whittlesea Disability Network for professional development and advocacy
- Community Leadership Network
- Let Everyone Actively Participate (LEAP) Program
- Seniors Computer Club
- Sports Club training
- Sustainability community learning initiatives (group education and referral, grants program, Sustainable Living Awards, Environews)
- Community Planting Days
- Waste Management community education
- Business development workshops and seminars
- Internal staff development programs

In addition Council provides significant funding for the Yarra Plenty Regional Library service to operate the City of Whittlesea's three Library branches. These branches provide numerous programs pre-literacy, youth, adult, older adults, multicultural and computer focus.

LINKS TO OTHER COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Lifelong learning intersects with a number of significant policies across different areas within the City of Whittlesea. The table below highlights where elements of lifelong learning are covered by current Council policies, plans and strategies.

City of Whittlesea Policies, Plans & Strategies	Relevance and connection to Lifelong Learning
City of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013-2017 (integrated Health and Wellbeing Plan)	Relevant goals include: Council will work to build a stronger sense of community within neighbourhoods and across the municipality, and create new opportunities for social networks and civic engagement Council will plan to provide expanded library services Council will assist children in the early years to access high quality early childhood education and care, especially in growth area new facilities Council will facilitate the delivery of more local jobs for all with a focus on groups who experience social and health inequalities, together with an organisational commitment to employing locally Council will work with partners to facilitate more learning opportunities
Disability Action Plan, 2009 – 2012	Objective 5.1 calls for Council to provide leadership in accessible arts, cultural and leisure opportunities to external organisers.

City of Whittlesea Policies, Plans & Strategies	Relevance and connection to Lifelong Learning
	<p>Actions include upgrading facilities to be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and Council operated or funded activities demonstrating best-practice accessibility.</p> <p>Objective 10.3 calls for advocacy to address urgent need for enhanced education services for children and young people with disabilities. Actions include working with service providers to advocate for additional early intervention places and services, and facilitating links between schools, education authorities and service providers to enhance the nature and responsiveness of education services.</p>
<p>Connect: A Municipal Plan for Children, Young People and their Families 2013 to 2018</p>	<p>Provides a unified policy and service delivery framework for children, young people and families from the age's birth to 25 years old. It establishes the developmental and learning needs of children at different ages, and outlines strategies and actions around the themes of partnerships, family strengthening, resilience, inclusive infrastructure, and opportunities to connect. Key actions associated with learning concern: play for health and development, Kindergarten enrolments, policy and program gap in relation to the Middle Years 6-8 to 10-12, youth disengagement, vulnerabilities in Aboriginal young people, newly arrived young people, young people with disabilities and international students.</p>
<p>Best Start – Whittlesea Early Years Partnership – Strategic Action Plan 2011 – 2014</p>	<p>Aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of children in the City of Whittlesea from pregnancy through to nine years of age. Identifies strategies and actions relating to: Schools as community hubs, Early intervention: literacy, waiting lists, and Supported Playgroup and Parent Group Initiative (SPPI) and Parent participation.</p>
<p>Yarra Plenty Regional Library Strategic Plan 2013-2017, Creating out future: reading, learning, meeting</p>	<p>Includes the following key outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We provide free public access to popular, timely and desirable content that is easy to find in order to make available information, knowledge and culture We offer programs, activities and learning opportunities that make a difference to people's lives in order to improve their wellbeing We provide infrastructure that is robust and fit for purpose in order to provide access to digital services and gain efficiencies, better customer experience and better processes We provide attractive, functional physical and virtual library spaces that meet standards including size and location in order to provide people with spaces that are welcoming, accessible, encourage learning and enable connection
<p>Intelligent Community Strategy, May 2012</p>	<p>Aims to strengthen local businesses and local communities by using broadband to lower costs, increase business competitiveness, reduce travel time for residents and provide greater access to online services.</p>
<p>Whittlesea</p>	<p>Identifies the gap between demand and supply of human service</p>

City of Whittlesea Policies, Plans & Strategies	Relevance and connection to Lifelong Learning
Community Futures Strategic Plan 2011-2016 and Human Services Needs Analysis	delivery and infrastructure needs. Identifies actions in relation to Positive Aging, CALD, Families and Children, and Youth. Priorities include transport to community facilities, supports services for positive ageing, skills and employment for CALD communities, and early years education and development.
Multicultural Plan 2007-2011	Focuses on ensuring services are accessible and equitable for the multicultural community. It includes an education action for Council to lobby the State Government to establish an English Language School. Also includes actions to support community participation and access to programs and services, including learning.
Recreation Strategy 2012-2017	The Strategy emphasises the importance of the relationship between Council and clubs and groups to foster community governance, mentoring arrangements between new and established clubs, facilitating local management of facilities, learning from clubs what works in terms of volunteers, innovative use of facilities, resource sharing and opportunities to bring clubs together to improve planning, cooperation, coordination and mentoring.
Integrated Cultural plan <i>Plan under review</i>	The Integrated Cultural Plan details objectives for the Arts, Heritage and Events Program and articulates a mission to 'identify, reflect, strengthen, utilise and support our community's cultural values, creative capacity and potential.' The plan focuses on community participation, local cultural identity and heritage values with an emphasis on diverse cultures and using the arts to realise social outcomes.
Reconciliation Action Plan 2012-2015	<p>The Reconciliation Action Plan aims to increase the capacity and ability of the City of Whittlesea to partner with Aboriginal communities to achieve the best possible opportunities and outcomes. It includes focus areas and actions that strongly relate to lifelong learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening connections and networks with local Aboriginal groups and organisations. • Exploring the feasibility of establishing a Gathering Place. • Providing opportunities for inter-cultural exchange. • Exploring opportunities to preserve, promote and teach local Aboriginal language(s). • Increasing access and awareness of local Aboriginal cultural heritage and histories, and local stories. • Delivery of Aboriginal Cross Cultural Training to City of Whittlesea staff and Councillors. • Implementation of the Aboriginal Employment Pathways Strategy and Action Plan (AEPS).
Epping Central Structure Plan	The Action Plan includes the action of: Plan for the delivery of an Information and Learning Hub in a location that facilitates a strong relationship with complementary educational facilities, allows flexibility for future uses, is within walking distance of public transport, displays a prominent street frontage and includes the following facilities:

City of Whittlesea Policies, Plans & Strategies	Relevance and connection to Lifelong Learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong learning opportunities, which may include education/ classes offering Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Continuous Vocational Education (CVE), Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), University of the Third Age (U3A) and community based education • An innovative approach to library services in order to support broader community and learning functions • Information / content / IT access. • Temporary digital art exhibitions showcasing local artists and guest artists' works • Childcare/ Early Years facilities including an occasional child care facility, kindergarten and parenting/ family support space • Retail and hospitality uses • Public and informational gathering and social interaction spaces

5. The Focus for the City of Whittlesea

VISION

The vision for the City of Whittlesea, “Creating vibrant self-sustaining communities together” provides a strong mandate to focus on lifelong learning as a key development platform. The lifelong learning specific vision is:

“In the City of Whittlesea I can learn throughout my life, I have access to local opportunities to learn for life and for work, I can share my knowledge with others and I can participate in collective learning and community governance.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following are guiding principles to focus the pursuit of positive learning outcomes in the City of Whittlesea.

Principle	Why it is important
1. We recognise that our community has strengths, relationships and assets	The City has a diverse and changing population with unique strengths and it has a range of existing links, groups and community places that encourage learning. This provides a strong foundation to increase the focus on lifelong learning and also respects the investment and success already made in this area. These strengths can be developed to advance learning opportunities and outcomes.
2. Our community is diverse	The community requires learning models, delivery, environments and opportunities that reflect and address this diversity and can adapt to local or unique circumstances. A mixture of strategies, providers and activities is needed to meet the diverse and changing needs of residents, groups and employers.
3. We acknowledge that learning is a driver for positive change across all areas and ages	Learning is recognised as a key driver of positive change - improving access and equity and reducing differential access and outcomes is a priority. It is important to encourage and support participation of all community members particularly those who face barriers. Learning is already a lifetime pursuit. We recognise the importance of all types of learning at all stages of life, rather than prioritising formal education or education and training related to work, although these in themselves are

Principle	Why it is important
	<p>important.</p> <p>To engage effectively with learners we cannot afford to generalise about who wants to learn what and how.</p>
<p>4. We recognise the importance of the early years and that transition points and pathways are critical for children and young people</p>	<p>The early years provide a window of opportunity that is never repeated in supporting optimal brain development. Gaps in educational outcomes open early and once children are on developmental trajectories, it is difficult and more costly to alter these trajectories. We appreciate the cost effectiveness of front-loading learning and development in the early years.</p> <p>The importance of pathways and transitions as children and young people move through different stages is well recognised and is a focus for support and intervention.</p> <p>We value and support the engagement of young people in education, through transitions, their attainment of year 12, their access to tertiary education, vocational training and training for acquiring the trades.</p> <p>Educational outcomes are important for social participation and outcomes in the longer term. Information provision, capacity to understand choices, support in decision making are all important to strengthen transition points. It is important to recognise vulnerability may occur at different times or stages for different people.</p>
<p>5. We understand the importance of learning opportunities and outcomes for all throughout the life course</p>	<p>There is growing evidence of the effectiveness of family learning and collective learning. The benefits include empowering individuals with new options and opportunities, changing the aspirations and circumstances within families, enabling people to renew learning journeys, gain skills, knowledge and experience to move into employment, to contribute to the wider community and to strengthen the culture of learning in families and groups.</p> <p>There is also evidence that participation in community governance can encourage participation and also create pathways to learning and employment.</p>
<p>6. Planning for the future is critical</p>	<p>This involves strategic thinking and working effectively across boundaries (sectors, LGAs, social and economic policy areas) and advocating for learning as a priority.</p> <p>Planning for a rapidly growing population with limited</p>

Principle	Why it is important
	capacity to provide community infrastructure inclusive, thoughtful planning is critical to ensure opportunities provided continue to be relevant and the infrastructure is flexible enough to deal with change as communities evolve and grow.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

It is recognised that Council's role in the lifelong learning arena will change and develop over time. In the first instance Council's role can be to build from areas of current activity recognising resource and expertise constraints within Council.

Council can be a provider and directly undertake work to support a strategic objective. Council can support the work of others in the role of facilitator. Council can advocate for works on behalf of its community. Council however, is only one player in the community and cannot do everything. There are many individuals, groups and organisations that can work together to embed lifelong learning in the City of Whittlesea.

Over time, it is anticipated that it may be more effective for Council's limited resources to be directed toward the roles of facilitator and advocate and away from direct provider of physical and social infrastructure.

1. Council as a **PROVIDER**

Physical Infrastructure (Facilities)

- Provide, maintain and upgrade appropriate facilities to enable Council to engage with, and support residents (for example Maternal Child Health centres, Kindergartens and Long Day care centres, community activity centres, halls and meeting spaces).
- Provide, maintain and upgrade appropriate facilities to enable other agencies to engage with, and support residents (for example libraries, learning centres, community centres and specific initiatives like the DEECD alternative school located at EDGE where possible).
- Scope opportunities for the early provision of infrastructure that supports lifelong learning in the development of our growth areas (e.g. Selandra Rise model).

Funding

- Provide multi year operational funding to non profit agencies and organisations to deliver learning related services and provide learning opportunities to residents (for

example Plenty Valley Regional Library Service, Neighbourhood houses, University of Third Age) – funding models and agreements need to be negotiated and finalised before funding is offered.

- Provide grant based funding to community groups and networks to deliver learning related events and activities to residents (for example Community Development Grants program).

Social Infrastructure (Information, Services and Programs)

- Provide human resources and programs that target specific population groups or issues as identified in Council's strategies and plans (for example Early Childhood Education and Care, youth workers and programs aimed at young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement, programs to support parents in the educational development of their children and young people and coordinators and resources for older adults to encourage social connection and learning).
- Provide relevant and current community information related to learning needs, learning opportunities and providers to residents, community groups and employers within City of Whittlesea.

2. Council as a **FACILITATOR**

- Facilitate professional development for learning and community based providers in relation to parenting and the early years, youth sector and specific programs like the Community Leadership program for the community sector.
- Facilitate and support agencies and community groups to apply to others (State/Federal government, Philanthropic sector) for funding, resources, equipment or learning projects that will provide learning opportunities and services for residents and businesses in the municipality.
- Facilitate partnerships with, and networks of, learning related service providers to ensure more streamlined service planning, delivery and support across age groups, specific population groups and geographical areas. (Examples Whittlesea Community Futures, Whittlesea Youth Commitment, University of the Third Age).
- Facilitate the inclusion of lifelong learning priorities in planning for new communities - Proactively engage with strategic planning, Precinct Structure Planning processes and engagement with developers and providers about learning and improving social and economic outcomes for residents and growing local jobs.

3. Council as an **ADVOCATE**

- Advocate for increased early investment and partnerships to deliver new physical infrastructure for community learning – Undertake rigorous needs assessments and develop preferred models to plan and advocate for new infrastructure.
- Advocate for increased investment in social infrastructure from other levels of government - Proactively identify, test and evaluate new scalable/replicable learning related ideas and projects and current initiatives like the Seniors Virtual village, Co-working hubs, Peter Lalor Community Learning precinct and the Community Leadership program. This includes projects like the Social infrastructure Planning Tool project, which demonstrates the City of Whittlesea’s leadership capacity.
- Advocate for funding and support with/on behalf of learning providers and agencies servicing established, emerging and new communities. (For example Cultural Bridges Community Action group, Neighbourhood Houses and Learning centres)
- Advocate for high quality service/education provision within the City of Whittlesea by highlighting and disseminating evidence-informed practice examples, relevant literature and community needs assessments.

Council can strengthen advocacy efforts by leading by example through building a visible learning culture within Council, and through incorporation of good practice into Council policies and practice.

6. Action Plan (2013-2016)

The Action Plan focuses on establishment and transition activities that will provide a strong foundation for Council to build from over the next decade. It is focussed on the ongoing commitment of lifelong learning as a priority for Council. The development of preferred models, guidelines and population based measures include below will provide a strong evidence base for Council to consistently incorporate learning needs across urban and social planning and advocacy. The lack of dedicated ‘learning’ resources within Council will mean implementation will need careful planning and involve prioritising some existing staff time.

Once the objectives and following Action Plan has been approved by Council, indicative measures of success and identification of the lead department for each action will be needed, in order to implement the plan.

Objectives	Council role ²¹	Actions	Timeframe
1. Establish a clear baseline and sustainable processes	Provider	a. Develop a method to capture Council’s learning related activities that are not articulated in policies and plans, to make clear the nature and extent of existing Council investment.	2013
		b. Produce a regular learning and wellbeing report with indicators across all age groups, using as a starting point the “State of Whittlesea’s Children, Young People and Families Report” as outlined in “Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families”.	2013 - 2014
		c. Identify the learning needs of the community and industry to inform Council’s planning for economic development. Share this information with Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres and other stakeholders.	2013 - 2014

²¹ The Community Plan describes three roles for Council: Provider – do what is needed, Advocate – work on behalf of communities, Facilitator – support the action of others

Objectives	Council role ²¹	Actions	Timeframe
		d. Identify and promote effective channels for residents and employers in the City of Whittlesea to access information about the learning opportunities, benefits and learning support available across the municipality. For example, this may take the form of an online Whittlesea learning portal.	2013 - 2014
2. Incorporate learning into Council's leadership and profile	Provider	a. Develop a strong and visible culture of learning within Council through providing professional development opportunities for Council staff and raising awareness within Council's business units of the importance and benefits of lifelong learning.	2013 - 2016
	Facilitator	b. Encourage the incorporation of learning opportunities into public and community events. For example, invite the library to run learning activities such as story time at existing community festivals. Encourage existing learning providers to run special learning events in association with nationally designated weeks, such as National Science Week or NAIDOC Week.	2014 - 2016
	Facilitator	c. Provide avenues for collaboration between local tertiary education providers (e.g. RMIT, NMIT) and local industry for a better match between local needs and provision	2013 - 2016
	Facilitator	d. Strengthen relationships with the education sector (DEECD, Higher Education, Catholic sector) through using partnerships on existing projects and activities as an entry point – e.g. DEECD through the Peter Lalor Vocational College. Identify opportunities to broaden and expand relationships to meet lifelong learning needs and objectives.	2013 - 2016
3. Strengthen relationships with community based non-profit education and training	Provider Facilitator	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between Council and Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (NH+LCs) that outlines each party's roles, responsibilities and the opportunities for improved partnership. This process should include consideration of Council's current and ongoing financial and tenure arrangements with NH+LCs, including the relationship to/ governance of CACs.	2013 - 2015

Objectives	Council role²¹	Actions	Timeframe
providers, agencies and networks operating in Whittlesea.	Facilitator	Identify opportunities for increased library outreach (e.g. targeting pre-literacy), facilitating connections between community groups/organisations and library services where needed	2013 - 2016
4. Learn from current and planned projects by applying Lifelong Learning project template	Facilitator Advocate	a. Seniors Virtual village - Examine the concept and determine applicability for extension or replication	2013-2014
		b. Community Learning Hub at Peter Lalor - Support investigation of the feasibility and any subsequent implementation. Evaluate for further development and/or replication. Develop community learning measures related to the hub.	2014-2015
		c. Support the implementation of Community Leadership programs (Multicultural Unit program underway and another proposed as part of the Municipal Children, Young People and Family Plan). Evaluate for further development and/or replication.	2013-2014+
		d. Co-working hubs - Explore the opportunity for enhanced community learning opportunities in the concept development of co-working hubs as a shared work environment for work-at-home professionals and independent contractors in the municipality.	2014-2015
		e. Industry sector engagement – Work with growing industry sectors (e.g. food, allied health, sheet metal) to facilitate the establishment of skills development and employment initiatives that benefit local people. For example, initiatives could include workplace placements, training, skills gap analysis, local people-local jobs advocacy, industry promotion and events for industry connection.	2014-2015

Objectives	Council role ²¹	Actions	Timeframe
		<p>f. Develop the Schools as Community Learning Hubs concept in partnership with Whittlesea Youth Commitment/ Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network, Council's Family and Youth Department, Community Infrastructure Planning Unit and Strategic Planning.</p> <p>Work with the State Government and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to incorporate the Schools as Community Learning Hubs concept into infrastructure and precinct planning processes.</p> <p>g. Develop a business case for the Epping Central Information and Learning Hub.</p> <p>h. Promote Council's successfully implemented Work Ready model, for newly arrived adults from migrant and refugee backgrounds, to other organisations and businesses in the municipality.</p> <p>i. Co-location of Thomastown Neighbourhood House with Thomastown Library – Evaluate for further replication</p>	<p>2013-2014</p> <p>2014</p> <p>2013-2016</p> <p>2014</p>
<p>5. Improve lifelong learning outcomes through better understanding and integration of services, programs and pathways</p>	<p>Provider Facilitator</p>	<p>Identify effective integrated models (of programs, partnerships, governance, funding, and infrastructure) to achieve improvement in lifelong learning indicators for target outcomes for each of the four key areas: Children and Families, Middle Years, Adults, Community Groups and Networks²².</p> <p>The models will cover both physical and programmatic requirements, entry points, pathways and connections between participants, partners, providers, funders but will also indicate links to and from the other models.</p> <p>a. Children (and families) (e.g. Maternal Child Health, kindergarten, playgroups,</p>	<p>2014-2015</p>

²² The four areas identified are not separate or independent areas but part of an integrated learning continuum. They are identified to assist Council clearly articulate its role and relationships in this complex area of lifelong learning. Once the models are developed the links between areas and interdependencies will be clearer and may facilitate the development of an integrated model.

Objectives	Council role ²¹	Actions	Timeframe
		<p>libraries, primary school, supported learning, transition programs, parenting support and family learning initiatives, early intervention, Out of school hours care, homework clubs, language support)</p> <p>b. Middle years and Young People (e.g. late Primary school, Secondary schools, alternative school settings, community groups (sports, recreation, arts etc), applied learning, languages, leadership, libraries, youth services, work experience, casual employment, career advice, intergenerational learning opportunities, further education)</p> <p>c. Adults (e.g. further education and training, Adult, Community and Further Education, workplaces, industry networks, skilled migration support, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL and overseas qualifications, social enterprise, business incubators/hubs, learning hubs in shopping centres, libraries as community information portals, volunteering, social connection, retraining, health and wellbeing, intergenerational learning, libraries, seniors)</p> <p>d. Community groups and networks (e.g. Governance, decision making, participation, volunteers, training, leadership)</p> <p><i>This action is an opportunity to strengthen knowledge and relationships with existing providers and agencies. It can also involve looking at models and programs from other local governments to begin to formulate future focussed strategies and initiatives. For example the provision of higher education and training opportunities in the northern growth corridor is an identified need that requires collaborative thinking and partnership across levels of government and across municipal borders.</i></p>	
6. Establish clear guidelines for Council owned or run facilities to	Provider	<p>a. Develop 'good practice' guidelines to inform design and planning of new facilities. Guidelines might cover: Types of learning environments suitable for different learning models, methods, styles</p>	2014-2015

Objectives	Council role ²¹	Actions	Timeframe
maximise potential for learning outcomes(based on preferred models identified in Objective 5. above)		Options for governance and shared use of facilities, Provision and use of technology Engagement strategies that facilitate learning Priority of access in Council’s facilities that promote learning such as playgroups, secondary and tertiary support services to address barriers to learning (e.g. disability/family support agencies), Impact of integrated service models on design Interaction of facilities with the universal service system - MCH, early education and care services, schools, libraries etc Case for education precincts including locating services on school sites (including early years, and family strengthening services) Intergenerational learning opportunities of co-located activities and shared spaces	
	Provider Advocate	Advocate and plan for the inclusion of library facilities in community infrastructure provision for growth areas	2013-2016
7. Develop and execute an implementation plan for LLL strategy	Facilitator	a. Communicate Council’s role in lifelong learning (outlined in this strategy) both within Council and to the residents, businesses and agencies operating within the City	2013 - 2016
	Facilitator	b. Establish an internal working group to build knowledge of, and support the implementation of the LLL Strategy and Action Plan. This should enable all areas within Council to recognise how a focus on learning strengthens each portfolio (consider a rotating lead and professional development for focal points).	2013 - 2014
	Facilitator	c. Establish expert group of Council and external stakeholders to provide critical and expert input into the implementation of the LLL Strategy and share good practice guidelines, models, potential projects	2014 - 2015 (4 half day sessions)