

# Agenda

Scheduled Council Meeting  
Monday 18 July 2022 at 6:30 pm

You are advised that a Meeting of Council has been called by the Chief Executive Officer on Monday 18 July 2022 at 6:30 pm for the transaction of the following business.

In accordance with section 394 of the Local Government Act 2020 this meeting will be held remotely by electronic means and will be livestreamed via Council's website.

**C Lloyd**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# Administrators

Lydia Wilson                      Chair of Council

Peita Duncan                     Administrator

Chris Eddy                        Administrator

On 19 June 2020 the Acting Minister for Local Government appointed the Panel of Administrators for the City of Whittlesea and appointed Ms Lydia Wilson as Chair of the Panel. The Panel of Administrators comprises of Ms Lydia Wilson, Ms Peita Duncan and Mr Chris Eddy who will undertake the duties of the Council of the City of Whittlesea until the October 2024 Local Government Election.

# Senior Officers

Craig Lloyd                        Chief Executive Officer

Kate McCaughey                Director Community Wellbeing

Justin O'Meara                 Director Planning & Development

Sarah Renner                     Director Customer & Corporate Services

Debbie Wood                     Director Infrastructure & Environment

Frank Joyce                        Executive Manager Governance & Strategy



## Order of Business

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**Note:**

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

**Question Time:**

During the meeting, the Chief Executive Officer will answer questions from residents and ratepayers. Questions are required to be submitted in writing prior to the advertised commencement time of a Scheduled Council Meeting. It is preferred to receive any questions by 3.30pm unless this unreasonably prevents or hinders you from participating. A Question Time form can be downloaded from Council's website and copies of the form are available at the meeting. Refer: <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow members of the public to present the questions they have submitted to Council. When Council Meetings are held remotely by electronic means in accordance with Section 394 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, members of the public will be unable to present their questions, however the Chief Executive Officer will read out and answer questions from residents and ratepayers.

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council's democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone the Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on (03) 9217 2294.

## **1 Opening**

### **1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will open the meeting and introduce the Administrators and Chief Executive Officer:

Administrator, Ms Peita Duncan;  
Administrator, Mr Chris Eddy; and  
Chief Executive Officer, Mr Craig Lloyd.

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

Director Community Wellbeing, Ms Kate McCaughey;  
Director Planning and Development, Mr Justin O'Meara;  
Director Customer & Corporate Services, Ms Sarah Renner;  
Director Infrastructure and Environment, Ms Debbie Wood; and  
Executive Manager Governance and Strategy, Mr Frank Joyce.

Following the Introductions, the Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will then read the following prayer:

*Almighty God, we ask for your blessing upon this council to make informed and good decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea.*

*Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.*

*Amen*

### **1.2 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

“On behalf of the City of Whittlesea I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional Owners of this place.

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

### **1.3 Attendance**

**2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

**3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s**

**Recommendation**

**THAT the following Minutes of the preceding meeting as circulated, be confirmed:**

**Scheduled Meeting of Council held 27 June 2022**

**4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters**

**4.1 Public Question Time**

**4.2 Petitions**

Nil Petitions

**4.3 Joint Letters**

Nil Joint Letters



## 5 Officers' Reports

### 5.1 Connected Communities

#### 5.1.1 Aboriginal Gathering Place Business Case

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Community Wellbeing
<b>Author</b>	Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal & Cultural Diversity Agata Chmielewski, Manager Strategic Projects Stephanie Ristevska, Integrated Policy and Strategy Officer
<b>In Attendance</b>	Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal & Cultural Diversity

#### Attachments

1. Attachment 1 - Final Business Case - Aboriginal Gathering Place [5.1.1.1 - 31 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - Summary of Strategic Planning and Council resolutions [5.1.1.2 - 1 page]
3. Attachment 3 - Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan [5.1.1.3 - 10 pages]

#### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the final business case (**Attachment One**) for the development of an Aboriginal Gathering Place in Quarry Hills Regional Parkland in Mernda. The final business case builds on extensive previous work presented at the 5 July 2021 Council meeting and has been developed in close collaboration with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group. It details capital costs informed by detailed site assessments and outlines an operation and governance plan.

This report seeks Council's endorsement of the final business case, including Council's role and associated resourcing to support the Aboriginal Gathering Place in its establishment period. Consistent with the endorsed (5 July 2021) Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) Terms of Reference, the final business case presents phased transition plan for governance and operation of the facility. With Council's support, the transition proposes an evolution from a Council managed and funded facility to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation leading decision making and operation of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.

Endorsement of the business case commits financial and human resources to the project.

## Brief Overview

On 5 July 2021, Council resolved to support the establishment of a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place at Quarry Hills Park in Mernda, noting that a final business case would be brought to Council in 2022.

This report presents the final business case for Council endorsement, comprising:

- Recommended Business Case Option 2 for the Aboriginal Gathering Place facility (Option Two is described as the 'Foundational Facility model'), comprising the scope described in Table 1 of this report and an estimated capital cost of \$10.8 million (design and construction).
- A phased governance and operation transition plan through which Council supports the establishment of the Aboriginal Gathering Place including a new community-controlled entity to operate the facility. The cost to Council over a six-year period would be \$821,125 (operating), which includes \$200,000 towards community grants specifically for Aboriginal programs and partnerships at the Aboriginal Gathering Place and the wider municipality.
- Construction commencement in 2023/24 financial year dependent on a State and/or Federal Government cash contribution of \$5 million.

An Aboriginal Gathering Place has been an aspiration of community members for the past 20 years and includes a community vision for a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space where all Aboriginal people have a sense of belonging and have access to activities, programs and services which strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing. The Gathering Place business case has been developed for both the Aboriginal and broader community to:

- Improve social, physical, cultural, and emotional health and wellness
- Strengthen identity and wellbeing through reflection, recognition and (re)connection to culture
- Empower Aboriginal people to thrive through self-determination
- Create opportunities to educate, learn about, and celebrate Aboriginal culture through storytelling, knowledge sharing, cultural events and structured programming.



## Key Information

### Background

Aboriginal Gathering Places are community hubs that promote the importance of culture in supporting positive health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people. Activities at Gathering Places may include sharing food, performing ceremony, exchanging knowledge, and creating supportive networks to ensure continuity of culture and traditional practices that create culturally safe places. Aboriginal Gathering Place programs and activities are developed to suit the need identified by local Aboriginal community members. Therefore, Aboriginal Gathering Place facilities, programs and activities are not exactly the same in each location.

A draft business case for the establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea was presented at the 5 July 2021 Council meeting. Council resolved to support the establishment of a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place at Quarry Hills Park and consider a final business case in 2022.

This final business case has been informed by detailed site investigations, costing analysis and consultation with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) about operation and governance arrangements; as well as discussion with the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Council has undertaken considerable planning and engagement around this project with a summary of strategic planning and Council resolutions for the project to-date summarised in **Attachment Two**.

### Whittlesea's Aboriginal Gathering Place and self-determination

The right to self-determination is preserved within the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and Australia is a signatory. Self-determination has particular application to Aboriginal peoples as Australia's first peoples, with the Australian Human Rights Commission identifying:

- *"...Self-determination is an 'ongoing process of choice' to ensure that Indigenous communities are able to meet their social, cultural and economic needs...*
- *The right to self-determination is based on the simple acknowledgment that Indigenous peoples are Australia's first people, as was recognised by law in the historic Mabo judgement.*
- *The loss of this right to live according to a set of common values and beliefs, and to have that right respected by others, is at the heart of the current disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.*
- *Without self-determination it is not possible for Indigenous Australians to fully overcome the legacy of colonisation and dispossession..."* (Source: [Right to self-determination | Australian Human Rights Commission](#))

Hence *how* Council works in partnership with community is vital to the success of the Aboriginal Gathering Place – and a partnership model which supports self-determination informs both the process as well as outcomes for the project.

Aboriginal self-determination principles are being applied with progressive governments across the world from Canada to New Zealand; and this is also reflected in the State Government’s Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework. The City of Whittlesea has an Aboriginal Inclusion Charter that recognises Aboriginal people as legitimate stakeholders that have rights to representation in Council decision making processes, that achieves the best outcomes for the whole community.

The City of Whittlesea will continue to support self-determination and work collaboratively with the Council endorsed Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group to co-design a purpose-built facility and programming of the Aboriginal Gathering Place. Furthermore, Council will support the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place to become an incorporated Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and assume operations of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.

The local Aboriginal community has placed trust with the City of Whittlesea to work together to build an Aboriginal Gathering Place and provide governance and operational support of the facility initially and then continue to work in partnership with the newly created Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that provides local Aboriginal access to a culturally safe and welcoming facility; as well as encouraging non-Aboriginal people to respectfully engage in Aboriginal Cultural Awareness programs.

### **Project benefits**

The community vision for the Aboriginal Gathering Place (developed as part of the *Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Feasibility, 2018*) is for “a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space where all Aboriginal people have a sense of belonging and have access to activities, programs and services which strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing”.

This project is a tangible way in which Council can provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal and broader community to:

- **Strengthen identity and wellbeing** through reflection, recognition and (re)connection to culture.
- Empower Aboriginal people to **thrive through self-determination** at the facility.
- Educate, learn about, and **celebrate Aboriginal culture** through storytelling, knowledge sharing, cultural events and structured programming.

In addition, this project seeks to:

- Improve overall Aboriginal **social, physical, cultural, and emotional health and wellness** needs. Social and emotional wellbeing is recognised as an important determinant of health for Aboriginal people and is interrelated with other social, cultural and political factors such as connection to country, spirituality, culture, community, family and mental and physical health.
- **Reduce inequity and access barriers** to essential health services for Aboriginal people.
- **Fill a service provision gap** in the broader Northern Metropolitan region, which has a combined Aboriginal population of 10,030 but only one Gathering Place (in Banyule City Council).
- Address local needs for a local Aboriginal cultural facility and **respond to community advocacy efforts** which commenced over 20 years ago and are at their strongest today.
- Embrace change through **innovation, resilience, and community leadership**; particularly on the codesign of the facility; proposed to take place with the Aboriginal community.
- Continue Council's commitment to reconciliation, which commenced in 2001 with the establishment of the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group (WRG) and has resulted in the celebration of significant Aboriginal events and advocacy efforts to **build reconciliation across the community**, on the foundation of truth telling.
- Contribute toward the Whittlesea 2040 Community Vision of '**A place for all**', **particularly for Aboriginal people** who currently experience feelings of isolation, loss, and low levels of cultural safety.

### Capital delivery

Four options for the Aboriginal Gathering Place facility were assessed as part of this business case, as detailed in Table 1:

- **Option 1: Do Nothing** - No Aboriginal Gathering Place constructed, and programs and services are expanded in Council's existing community centres.
- **Option 2: Foundational Facility** – This option enables a range of community activities and programming opportunities as well as income generation.
- **Option 3: Intermediate Facility** – This option makes additional area allowances on Option 2 to increase programming capacity.
- **Option 4: Enhanced Facility** – Small area enhancements on Option 3 to increase programming spaces.



**Table 1. Capital delivery options assessed for the business case**

Option	Scope	Capital cost
Option 1 – Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No dedicated facility</li> <li>• Programs and activities delivered in existing community centres</li> </ul>	\$0
Option 2 – Foundational Facility	<p>Approx. 650sqm facility comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large multi-purpose space for 100 people</li> <li>• Multi-purpose/meeting room for 15 people</li> <li>• Healing/quiet room</li> <li>• Consultation rooms</li> <li>• Staff admin and storage areas</li> <li>• Kitchen</li> <li>• Foyer and circulation space</li> <li>• Amenities</li> <li>• Terrace</li> <li>• 30-48 car spaces</li> <li>• Essential landscaping and external gathering spaces</li> <li>• 4-5-star green star equivalent building</li> </ul>	<p>\$10,000,000</p> <p>(Based on November 2021 Quantity Surveyor report – reviewed and confirmed as accurate in June 2022. Excludes design.)</p>
Option 3 – Intermediate Facility	<p>Approx. 1022 sq facility comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large multi-purpose space for 100 people</li> <li>• Multi-purpose/meeting room for 30 people</li> <li>• Multiple consultation rooms</li> <li>• Healing/Quiet Room</li> <li>• Media lounge</li> <li>• Multipurpose space</li> <li>• Staff admin and storage areas</li> </ul>	<p>\$13,500,000</p> <p>(Based on November 2021 Quantity Surveyor report with the addition of 10% escalation. Excludes trunk works and design.)</p>

Option	Scope	Capital cost
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced kitchen</li> <li>• Foyer and circulation space</li> <li>• Amenities</li> <li>• Terrace and Balcony</li> <li>• 80-90 car spaces</li> <li>• Enhanced landscaping and external gathering spaces</li> <li>• 4-5-star green star equivalent building</li> </ul>	
<p>Option 4 – Enhanced Facility</p>	<p>Approx. 1190 sq facility comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large multi-purpose space for 120 people</li> <li>• Healing Space</li> <li>• Multipurpose space</li> <li>• Multiple consultation rooms</li> <li>• Large communal dining space</li> <li>• Media lounge</li> <li>• Staff admin and storage areas</li> <li>• Enhanced kitchen</li> <li>• Foyer and circulation space</li> <li>• Amenities</li> <li>• Terrace and Balcony</li> <li>• 110-120 car spaces</li> <li>• Enhanced landscaping and external gathering space</li> <li>• 4-5-star green star equivalent building</li> </ul>	<p>\$15,000,000</p> <p>(Based on November 2021 Quantity Surveyor report with the addition of 10% escalation. Excludes trunk works and design.)</p>

**Governance and operating model**

The proposed governance transition for the Aboriginal Gathering Place described in this section is consistent with the Terms of Reference developed between Council and the WAGPAG (endorsed in July 2021). Council will continue to support self-determination and work collaboratively with the WAGPAG to co-design a purpose-built facility and associated programming of the Aboriginal Gathering Place. Furthermore, Council will support the WAGPAG to become an incorporated Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and assume operations of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.

The local Aboriginal community has placed trust with the City of Whittlesea to work together to build an Aboriginal Gathering Place and provide governance and operational support of the facility initially and then continue to work in partnership with the newly created Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

If the transition to a new entity takes longer than outlined in the Business Case, then Council will work with WAGPAG to explore other interim options such as establishing a Community Asset Committee under section 65 of the Local Government Act 2020. However, the energy, focus and resources required to establish successful Community Asset Committees are also considerable. The business plan focus will therefore be to support WAGPAG establish as new community-controlled entity.

Tables 2 to 4 outline a three-phased transition approach with indicative timelines and roles and responsibilities and Figure 2 provides summary.

**Table 2. Phase 1 governance and operations roles and responsibilities**

<p><b>Phase 1</b> <b>FY 2021/22 to 2023/24 (already commenced)</b></p>
<p>Phase 1 primarily focusses on the establishment of the formal governance structure of the WAGPAG. During this time the Aboriginal Gathering Place will be designed, and construction will commence. The operational model will be established in preparation for the facility opening. There will also be a focus on building community capacity to operate the facility and securing additional partners, external funding, and income streams.</p>

WAGPAG role	Council role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design the facility with Council</li> <li>• Build community capacity to operate the facility</li> <li>• Work with Council to secure and external funding and income streams</li> <li>• Initiate the process to become an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the WAGPAG and provide Secretariat support. The WAGPAG terms of reference will be reviewed in 2023 to include governance arrangements for the period when the facility is completed but the new entity has yet to be established (estimated to be for the years 2024/25 and part of 2025/26)</li> <li>• Coordination and project management with advice and input from WAGPAG and advisory community for the Aboriginal Gathering Place design</li> <li>• Undertake site investigations and procure design for the facility</li> <li>• Procure contractor and commence construction</li> <li>• Advocate for Federal and/or State Government funding towards construction</li> <li>• Develop and deliver Council programs in existing Council facilities to pilot for the Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> </ul>

Programming with existing Council community centres in Phase 1 provides an opportunity to test interest, uptake, and participation of various programs and services with the Aboriginal community for the future Aboriginal Gathering Place. Examples of potential programs include:

- The Elders PAG, or Elders Motivated and Deadly (EMAD) has been historically provided by Council.
- The Youth Program, or Koori Krew, was a program previously delivered by Council which could transfer to a place-based model.
- Health promotion programs or events in partnership with local service providers as well and State and Commonwealth funding programs.
- The previously trialled MCHN Playgroup presents opportunities to partner with other service providers.

**Table 3. Phase 2 governance and operations roles and responsibilities**

Phase 2	
FY 2024/25 and 2025/26	
<p>The Aboriginal Gathering Place will be constructed and operational in this phase. The WAGPAG will move towards greater independence in Phase 2 (in line with a revised Terms of Reference developed with Council in 2023). Discussions with WAGPAG at this stage will determine the timing for WAGPAG to become an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (other interim arrangements may be explored at this stage such as an option for the group to become a Community Asset Committee if required). The WAGPAG and Council will deliver programs and services from the Aboriginal Gathering Place and will build capacity to become independent and secure additional partnerships and funding.</p>	
WAGPAG role	Council role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAGPAG to finalise the process to become a new entity being either an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) (or a Community Asset Committee) – in the 2024/25 financial year</li> <li>• New entity manages the facility on behalf of Council (from financial year 2025/26 onwards)</li> <li>• Deliver programs and services from facility (in partnership with Council and others)</li> <li>• Continue to build community/organisational capacity</li> <li>• Secure additional partners and external funding and build income streams</li> <li>• Income from facility hire and operations is received by building operator (i.e. Council in the 2024/25 financial year and then a new ACCO in 2025/26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> <li>• Deliver Council programs from Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> <li>• Maintain property and utilities</li> <li>• Facilitate and foster partnership opportunities.</li> <li>• Income from facility hire and operations is received by building operator (i.e. Council in 2024/25 and then new ACCO in 25/26)</li> <li>• Develop a new contractual arrangement between the new entity and Council (formal agreement from financial year 2025/26 onwards)</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Phase 3 governance and operations roles and responsibilities**

Phase 3 FY 2026/27 onwards	
<p>A new entity will be operating the facility during Phase 3. A new contractual arrangement between the new entity and Council (developed during Phase 2) will be activated with the formal agreement commencing from financial year 2025/26 onwards.</p>	
WAGPAG or new entity/ACCO role	Council role
<p>New entity/ ACCO responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver programs</li> <li>• Receive income from the facility hire etc</li> <li>• Work in partnership with Council and other partners</li> <li>• Source other external funding sources</li> <li>• Operating asset and minor maintenance</li> <li>• Facility outgoings</li> <li>• Enter into formal agreement with Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EFT until FY 2026/27 for Aboriginal Gathering Place including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fulltime Aboriginal Gathering Place Coordinator</li> <li>○ 0.6 EFT Business Support Officer</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Responsible for major property maintenance</li> <li>• Community Grants Program (\$50K pa for an “Aboriginal Partnerships and Gathering Place stream”) continues – as a municipal wide resource run by Council</li> <li>• Enter into formal agreement with new entity</li> </ul>



**Figure 2. Indicative phased governance and operation plan**

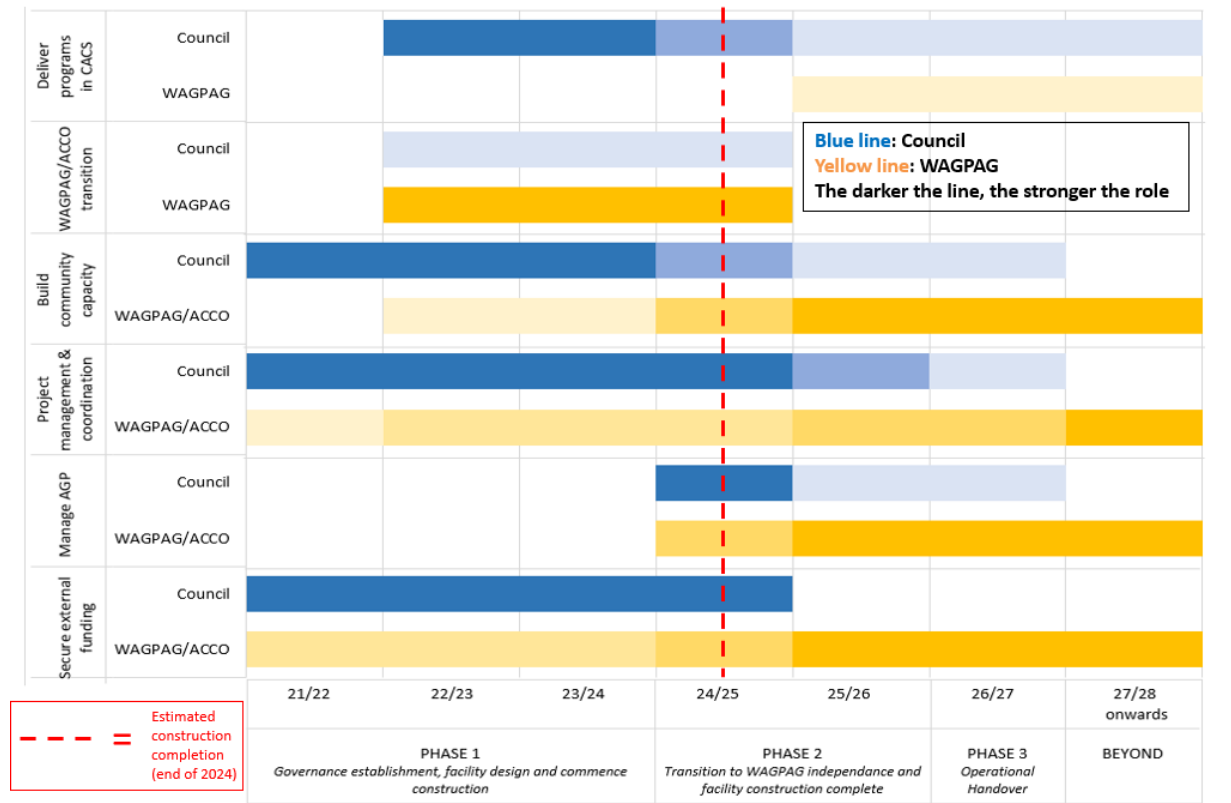


Figure 3 provides indicative operational costs to Council through implementation of the proposed phased governance and operation plan.

The total cost to Council between the 2022/23 and 2027/28 financial years would be \$821,125. This figure includes \$200,000 (\$50,000 per annum) from the 2024/25 financial year for community grants for the Aboriginal Gathering Place and other Aboriginal programs and partnerships across the municipality.

**Figure 3. Indicative Council operational costs for Aboriginal Gathering Place**

	PHASE 1 <i>Governance establishment, facility design and commence construction</i>			PHASE 2 <i>Transition to WAGPAG independence and facility construction complete</i>		PHASE 3 <i>Operational Handover</i>	BEYOND	Total cost to Council		
	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28 onwards	22/23 - 27/28		
Governance	WAGPAG sitting fee	\$3,000						\$3,000	\$23,000	
	Support for ACCO establishment & business planning				\$20,000			\$20,000		
Staffing	Aboriginal Gathering Place Full-time Coordinator	\$45,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000		\$405,000	\$513,750	
	Aboriginal Gathering Place part-time admin			\$21,750	\$43,500	\$43,500		\$108,750		
Programming Support	Program establishment (Council programs)	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000			\$70,000	\$120,000	
	Community grants program for Aboriginal Gathering Place*		\$50,000					\$50,000		
	Community grants program for Aboriginal Partnerships*				\$50,000 per annum - New Community Grants Stream					Community grants program
Facility Maintenance	Minor equipment			\$5,000	\$10,000			\$15,000	\$164,375	
	Utilities			\$8,125	\$16,250			\$24,375		
	Maintenance				\$25,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$125,000		
Total cost to Council 2021/22 - 2027/28		Existing resources	\$58,000	\$160,000	\$144,875	\$224,750	\$183,500	\$50,000 per annum	\$821,125	\$821,125

NB: Construction is scheduled to be completed within the 2024/25 FY. As such facility operational costs have been halved for the 2024/25 FY as the facility will only be open for a maximum of six months. Maintenance costs have been reduced across Phase 2 to account for the construction defects liability period.

\* The operating budget for the grants program may be incorporated into Council’s broader grant program budget, therefore reducing the Aboriginal Gathering Place operating cost to \$821,125 between the 2022/23 and 2027/28 financial years.

**Land and asset ownership**

At a workshop held 16 June 2022, the WAGPAG expressed a desire for the Aboriginal Gathering Place land and asset to be transferred to an Aboriginal entity. At this stage, Council is not in a position to transfer land and assets, as:

- The WAGPAG is currently a volunteer group and not a legal entity
- Further discussion would also need to occur with Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- The process would ideally align with the state-wide Victorian Treaty currently underway which is likely to inform how handing back of land is managed
- Council’s response to requests of this nature would benefit from being consistent with the State framework being developed through the Victorian Treaty process.






Further discussions and investigation will need to be undertaken once the matters described above are further developed.

### Potential programming

During Phase 1, Council will pilot and test Aboriginal programs from Council’s existing community centres. Programs will be resourced by existing staff within the Aboriginal Communities Department and will be co-designed with the WAGPAG. This will assist the WAGPAG to further determine ongoing programming from the Aboriginal Gathering Place and also engage local Aboriginal community members to access programs, some of which will be new and/or re-visioned during the pilot.

An example of potential programs that may be delivered in Phase 1 and at the Aboriginal Gathering Place in future is presented in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4. Potential programs that may be delivered from the Aboriginal Gathering Place and existing community centres**

 <p>Cultural</p>	 <p>Community</p>	 <p>Creative</p>	 <p>Wellbeing</p>	 <p>Education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story telling programs –Elders telling stories for younger people</li> <li>• ‘Welcome Baby to Country’ ceremonies</li> <li>• Aboriginal community events (Bubup Wilam events, NAIDOC and days of cultural significance celebrations)</li> <li>• Traditional Games</li> <li>• ‘Caring for Country’ environmental programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community development and leadership programs</li> <li>• Social events (community lunches, grandparent and family days, private functions)</li> <li>• Community events (NAIDOC Day events, Community markets and festivals)</li> <li>• Meeting spaces (Elders, Community groups, Consults)</li> <li>• Men’s Shed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art exhibitions</li> <li>• Arts programs (basket weaving, quilt making, painting)</li> <li>• Music lessons and sound recording programs</li> <li>• Dance (cultural, hip hop, ballroom)</li> <li>• Community radio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maternal and Child Health Services</li> <li>• Healing programs (Massage, Reiki, yoga)</li> <li>• Family violence support</li> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Immunisation</li> </ul>	<p>Early Years and Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play Group</li> <li>• Homework club</li> <li>• After school programs</li> </ul> <p>Skills Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural awareness training for mainstream organisations</li> <li>• Short courses (first aid, computer training)</li> <li>• Language school</li> <li>• Life Skills (home maintenance, cooking)</li> </ul> <p>Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment networking groups</li> <li>• Mother’s groups</li> <li>• Mentoring programs</li> </ul>

### Income generating opportunities

There will be potential income generating opportunities once the Aboriginal Gathering Place is operational. The first is the potential for facility hire at the Aboriginal Gathering Place during non-programming time, as detailed in Table 5. Room hire charges are based on Council’s schedule of rates for its community centres.

**Table 5. Potential annual income generation through facility hire**

Space	Potential hire frequency	Total income per annum
Large multipurpose space for 100 people	16 hours weekly	Casual / Business \$48,339.20 Regular \$36,732.80 Community \$25,084.80 Seniors \$4,700.80 Playgroups \$18,720.00
Multipurpose meeting room for 15 people	16 hours weekly	Casual / Business \$25,958.40 Regular \$19,718.40 Community \$13,436.80 Seniors \$4,700.80 Playgroups \$18,720.00
Community Hall Package 10 hour hire (weekends)	20 hours weekly	Flat rate \$555, 880
Healing / Quiet Room	16 hours weekly	Casual / Business \$14,768 Regular \$11,648 Community \$7,820.80 Seniors \$4,700.80 Playgroups \$18,720.00
Consultation Rooms x 2		Casual / Business \$15,184per room (\$30,368) Regular \$11,648 per room (\$23,296)  Community \$8,028.80 per room (\$16,057.60) Seniors \$4,700.80 per room (\$9,401.60)

Space	Potential hire frequency	Total income per annum
<b>Cultural Awareness Training</b>		
Space	Potential frequency	Annual income
Large multipurpose space for 100 people	8 sessions monthly	\$275,600

The income generating opportunities described above are indicative only and will need to be explored further with the WAGPAG and community. As described in Table 5, income from facility hire and operations will be received by the building operator (i.e. Council in the 2024/25 financial year, then the new ACCO in the 2025/26 financial year onwards).

### Community Consultation and Engagement

This project has been informed by a thorough engagement process which includes:

- Development of a feasibility study in 2018, which included input from 67 community members of the City of Whittlesea.
- Three workshops between Council officers and the WAGPAG (formally known as the Aboriginal Gathering Place Governance Group) to complete an Investment Logic Map (ILM) and establish the high-level problems, benefits, solutions and responses which needed to be explored in the final business case.
- Twelve meetings with the WAGPAG since August 2021 to discuss project needs and refine the community vision, operating model and governance model presented at the July 2021 Council meeting and in the final business case.
- Several site visits to other Gathering Places across Melbourne with the WAGPAG to learn about different approaches currently being used and key learnings from other similar projects.
- Preliminary discussions with subject matter experts (SME) from the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Aboriginal Victoria and WRG to establish relationships and seek advice on partnership and funding opportunities and planning requirements.

- Preliminary discussions with Aboriginal Victoria, Traditional Owners from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri), and State Government representatives to ensure this project aligns with the Victorian Government's policy commitment to Gathering Places and self-determination including the Korin Korin Balit-Djak policy, Treaty process and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Aboriginal Australians. Three initial meetings with Traditional Owners from Wurundjeri have been held to commence these discussions and SME partners will join future meetings to maximise joint outcomes and collaboration.

Ongoing engagement with the WAGPAG, Subject Matter Experts and broader community will continue in line with the two-phase Community Engagement Plan presented in Attachment 3. A high-level summary of this plan is outlined in the Implementation Strategy section of this report.

### Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### **Connected communities**

We work to foster an inclusive, healthy, safe, and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported

The Aboriginal Gathering Place is a major initiative for delivery in the City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2021-2025, with the purpose of increased connections to culture, heritage, land, and healing for Aboriginal people.

Establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place seeks to promote the importance of culture in supporting positive health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people in the City of Whittlesea. It aims to increase access to local services and programs and provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal community and broader community to reflect, celebrate and (re)connect to Aboriginal culture. Furthermore, it will enable self-determination through a transition of the WAGPAG to an incorporated Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, assuming operations of the facility and celebrating culture to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people.



This project also aligns to the following broader plans, policies, and strategies:

- **City of Whittlesea Aboriginal Inclusion Charter:** Acknowledgment of the rights of local aboriginal communities can expect to have put into practice across Council work.
- **City of Whittlesea Reconciliation Policy:** A Council policy that encourages building better relationships between Aboriginal people and the wider Australian community and for the benefit of all Australians.
- **Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021:** A State Government Strategy that aims to progress Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation through mutual control, shared power and decision-making, fairness, respect, and trust.
- **National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020:** An Australian Government initiative which aims to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal people and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.
- **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031:** An Australian Government plan that guides the development of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policies, programs, and initiatives over the next 10 years.
- **United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007:** An international and universal framework that outlines the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the indigenous people.
- **City of Whittlesea Reconciliation Action Plan:** A Council plan that outlines targeted actions that enhance opportunities and outcomes for local Aboriginal communities.

## Considerations

### Environmental

The Aboriginal Gathering Place will be designed in accordance with Council's Environmental and Sustainable Design Guidelines. The performance of this building shall exceed Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) performance equivalent to a 4 Star Green Star rating as an absolute minimum, with the expectation that the result will be closer to 5-star. In addition, the predicted energy performance of the building must meet a minimum equivalent 4.5+ Star NABERS Energy rating and will comply with all items listed within in the Council's Environmental and Sustainable Design Guidelines Checklist.

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is underway to identify and protect any local Aboriginal cultural heritage at the Quarry Hills site throughout the duration of project delivery and the project is anticipated to have ongoing positive environmental impacts as many Aboriginal Cultural practices relate to sustainable land management practices and connection to nature.

### **Social, Cultural and Health**

A 2016 Melbourne University study for the Department of Health and Human Services which evaluated the health and wellbeing outcomes of the Aboriginal Gathering Place Model in Victoria found that gathering places have direct impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and community as they provide a safe and inclusive space to connect, support the sharing of knowledge and empower people through social, cultural, and healing activities. They are also a critical conduit to other services and link community members to specific health services.

Initial analysis of the most recent 2021 census data, identifies a 25% increase in people identifying as Aboriginal at a national level. By comparison, the number of people identifying as Aboriginal in the City of Whittlesea increased by 38.9% (well above the national average) and summarised as follows:

- 2016 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people: 1,634
- 2021 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people: 2,270

Therefore, this project could contribute to the following social, cultural and health benefits for the growing local Aboriginal community:

- Improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Increased education and employment outcomes.
- A greater sense of historical knowledge, connections to culture and pride and strength within communities and families.
- Increased trust between government, local service providers and community.

The effect of gathering places on the wider non-Aboriginal community and government services is also pronounced as Gathering places provide opportunities for non-Aboriginal communities to engage respectfully in a cultural exchange of information to increase their cultural awareness and enhance their education on local history and build strong partnerships and networks with Aboriginal programs/providers.

### **Economic**

It is estimated that up to 70 jobs (FTE) will be created throughout construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place, and up to eight new Aboriginal jobs (FTE) as part of the long-term operation of the facility.

This project will also increase the number of local appropriate spaces for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide services, which subsequently increases opportunities for additional local services and economic contributions. These opportunities will continue to be explored in collaboration with the WAGPAG as part of facility governance and operational planning.

### **Financial Implications**

Proposed operational costs presented in this report include allowances for staff salaries, building maintenance, program establishment and support, utilities and minor equipment and consumables that will be required for facility operations. The total operational cost over the first six-year period is estimated at \$821,125. Ongoing annual costs for building maintenance following this period are estimated at \$50,000 per annum (with this amount scheduled to progressively increase as the building ages over its 30-year lifecycle).

The design and construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place facility is estimated at \$10.8 million (\$800,000 for design and \$10 million for construction). A total of \$6.25 million of capital expenditure is allocated in Council's Long-Term Financial Plan (\$5.75 million for construction and \$500K for design and site investigations). The \$6.25 million includes \$500,000 endorsed by Council across the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years for site investigations and detailed design.

Council received \$300,000 from DELWP in the 2021/22 financial year, to support multiple projects being coordinated within the Granite Hills precinct of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland, Granite Hills Playground and walking trails.

Given how closely the project aligns to the strategic directions outlined in existing federal and state government policies (such as the Victorian Government's Treaty and Truth and Reconciliation Commission processes; and the Australian Government's Closing the Gap targets and outcomes), a partnership with the State and/or Federal Government is proposed to be a pre-requisite for the Aboriginal Gathering Place and construction will be dependent on a \$5 million contribution towards the construction of the facility. This funding has been assumed for the construction of the facility in 2023/24.

When accounting for Council's existing budget allocation (\$6.25 million) as well as \$5.3 million of external funding (\$5 million in State and/or Federal grant funding and \$300,000 already received from DELWP), the total capital funding would be \$750,000 more than current project estimates. It is proposed that this \$750,000 provides an interim contingency to account for any site complexities, conditions or management requirements that may be identified through the Cultural Heritage Management Plan or further site investigations. Relevant updates will be presented to Council as part of the 2022/23 financial year mid-year budget review.

Market conditions will need to be closely monitored as they have changed dramatically. The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for the construction industry, which have been further exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and major flooding events which occurred on Australia's eastern seaboard earlier this year. Construction costs have been escalating at a rate that far exceeds annual inflation projections and material and labour shortages are prevalent across the country, as the local construction industry relies heavily on foreign market supplies for key building materials.

Market conditions and project costs will be reviewed throughout the project lifecycle and have been considered in the project risk assessment, as detailed in Section 4.5 of the final business case (**Attachment One**).

**Table 6: Aboriginal Gathering Place financial implications summary**

Year:	Project Status	Total capital cost	Capital Budget		Proposed Operational Budget	Potential income
			Existing LTFP allocation	External funding		
2021/22	Governance establishment and initial site investigations	\$550,000	\$250,000*	\$300,000** (from DELWP for associated parkland works)	\$0	N/A
2022/23	WAGPAG incorporation, Interim program delivery in Community centres, establishment of a community grant stream and facility design	\$250,000	\$250,000*	N/A	\$58,000	N/A
2023/24	Continued delivery of programming, construction commencement	\$5,250,000	\$1,000,000	State Government funding - estimated at \$5,000,000	\$160,000	N/A
2024/25	Construction completion and facility opening	\$4,750,000	\$4,750,000		\$144,875	N/A

Year:	Project Status	Total capital cost	Capital Budget		Proposed Operational Budget	Potential income
			Existing LTFP allocation	External funding		
2025/26	Governance transition to new entity operating facility commences with some shared functions with Council	N/A	N/A	N/A but possible future grant opportunities	\$224,750	< \$10,000 per annum
2026/27	Governance transition to new entity operating facility finalised	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$183,500	< \$10,000 per annum
2027/28 onwards	Governance transition completed – new entity operate facility	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$50,000 per annum	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$10,800,000</b>	<b>\$6,250,000</b>	<b>\$5,300,000</b>	<b>\$821,125</b>	<b>&lt;\$20,000</b>

\* Council endorsed \$250,000 in both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years for site investigations and detailed design.

\*\* Council received \$300,000 from DELWP in the 2021/22 financial year to support multiple projects within the Granite Hills precinct of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland; Granite Hills Playground, Aboriginal Gathering Place and walking trails.

Once the Aboriginal Gathering Place opens, there will be income generating opportunities that the WAGPAG can explore. As further strategic planning around income and opportunities with or by the WAGPAG are still required, income estimates cannot yet be confidently quantified.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing**

**Strategic Risk Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction**

The final business case is an integral part of the project planning and due diligence processes. It has been informed by detailed site investigations, costing analysis and consultation with the WAGPAG.

A risk assessment is provided in Section 4.5 of the final business case (**Attachment One**).

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

A two-phase Community Engagement Plan (**Attachment Three**) has been developed to guide ongoing communications for the project. A summary is provided in Table 7:

**Table 7: Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan Summary**

Phase Description	Key Tasks	Desired Outcomes
<i>Phase 1: Inform Broad City of Whittlesea engagement to inform and raise awareness about the Aboriginal Gathering Place</i>	a) Inform residents that the Aboriginal Gathering Place is proposed to be built within the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland b) Explain the purpose of an Aboriginal Gathering Place, who it is for and what activities may take place there c) Seek feedback and identify emerging wider community issues, opportunities, risks etc to inform design process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the project to the broader community.</li> <li>• Obtain input to complete the facility detailed design.</li> </ul>
<i>Phase 2: Involve Community engagement for the purpose of the Planning Scheme Amendment application</i>	a) Communicate and engage with key stakeholders that Council is seeking State Government rezoning to use the site as a ‘place of assembly’ b) Seek feedback on design principles for proposed ‘place of assembly’ use such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minimise environmental impact</li> <li>○ Address site landscape &amp; conservation requirements</li> </ul> c) Provide drawings of proposed facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform impacted stakeholders of rezoning proposal.</li> <li>• Compliance to planning scheme requirements to complete rezoning.</li> <li>• Obtain approval of the facility detailed design.</li> </ul>
<i>Phase 3: Inform Ongoing communication until project completion</i>	a) Provide ongoing communication until project complete using traditional and digital communication channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community is informed about the project</li> </ul>

## Critical Dates

**Table 8: Aboriginal Gathering Place key dates**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Item</b>
<b>March 2022</b>	Architect tender review and award complete
<b>April to early July 2022</b>	Traditional Owners representatives invited to WAGPAG and facility functional brief re-approved. Design consultants proceed with external, environmental and service design
<b>July 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Business Case presented to Council for endorsement.</li> <li>• Commence Phase 1 Community Engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>July to September 2022</b>	(once functional brief re-approved) Plans/elevations completed by Architects for community engagement
<b>October 2022</b>	Council approval of design for community engagement
<b>November 2022</b>	Commence Phase 2 Community engagement
<b>December 2022</b>	Feedback review and update of documentation
<b>2023</b>	WAGPAG terms of reference reviewed in preparation for building opening
<b>2023/24</b>	New 'Aboriginal Partnerships and Gathering Place Community Grants' introduced as a sub-stream of Council's Community Grants program
<b>2024/25</b>	Construction completion and facility opening – governance / facility coordinated by Council in partnership with WAGPAG
<b>2025/26</b>	Governance transition to new entity operating facility commences with some shared functions with Council. Council and new entity enter into formal agreement for management of the Gathering Place outlining roles and responsibilities of each party.
<b>2026/27</b>	Governance transition to new entity operating facility finalised
<b>2027/28 onward</b>	Governance transition completed –new entity operate facility

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the *Governance Rules*

2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

### Conclusion

The establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will increase access to local services and programs and provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal community and broader community to reflect, celebrate and (re)connect to Aboriginal culture – for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members.

This business case proposes that Council continues to support self-determination and work with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group to co-design and construct a purpose-built facility and associated programming. With Council's support, a phased transition will ultimately see an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation leading decision making and operation of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.





## Business Case

<b>Investment ID:</b>	CW – 10471
<b>Project Name:</b>	Aboriginal Gathering Place
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Kate McCaughey, Director Community Wellbeing
<b>W2040 Alignment</b>	Connected Community – A healthy and safe community
<b>Document Author:</b>	Stephanie Ristevska, Unit Manager – Community Precincts Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal Communities Department Agata Chmielewski, Manager Strategic Projects
<b>Document Version:</b>	0.2

For the purposes of this business case, the term ‘Aboriginal’ is taken to include people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.

### 1. Executive summary

Aboriginal Gathering Places are community hubs that promote the importance of culture in supporting positive health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people. Activities at Gathering Places may include sharing food, performing ceremony, exchanging knowledge, and creating supportive networks to ensure continuity of culture and traditional practices that create culturally safe places.

A draft business case for the establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea was presented at the 5 July 2021 Council meeting. Council resolved to support the establishment of a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place at Quarry Hills Park and consider a final business case in 2022.

This final business case has been informed by detailed site investigations, costing analysis and consultation with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) about operation and governance arrangements. A short summary is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. Final Aboriginal Gathering Place Business Case summary**

<b>Problem or opportunity:</b>	This project responds to the following problems, identified through an ILM process undertaken collaboratively with the WAGPAG in 2019: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aboriginal Land has been stolen and the community lives with a great sense of loss</li> <li>2. Aboriginal people’s rights to make decisions are being denied and they can’t thrive</li> <li>3. Aboriginal culture is not valued, and this impacts their sense of belonging</li> </ol>
<b>Benefits of resolving problem:</b>	This project is a tangible way in which Council can provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal and broader community to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strengthen identity and wellbeing</b> through reflection, recognition and (re)connection to culture.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower Aboriginal people to <b>thrive through self-determination</b> at the facility.</li> <li>• Educate, learn about, and <b>celebrate Aboriginal culture</b> through storytelling, knowledge sharing, cultural events, and structured programming.</li> <li>• <b>Reduce inequity and access barriers</b> to essential health services for Aboriginal people.</li> <li>• <b>Fill a service provision gap</b> in the broader Northern Metropolitan region, which has a combined Aboriginal population of 10,030 but only one Gathering Place (in Banyule City Council).</li> <li>• <b>Respond to community advocacy efforts</b> which commenced over 20 years ago and are at their strongest today.</li> <li>• Embrace change through <b>innovation, resilience, and community leadership</b>; particularly on the codesign of the facility; proposed to take place with the Aboriginal community.</li> <li>• Continue Council’s commitment to reconciliation, and <b>build reconciliation across the community</b>, on the foundation of truth telling.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy alignment:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Whittlesea 2040: A place for all:</b> Council’s long term community vision which sets the organisation’s strategic direction and outlines the importance of a Connected Community (Goal 2).</li> <li>• <b>City of Whittlesea Aboriginal Inclusion Charter:</b> Acknowledgment of the rights of local Aboriginal communities can expect to have put into practice across Council work.</li> <li>• <b>City of Whittlesea Reconciliation Policy:</b> A Council policy that encourages building better relationships between Aboriginal people and the wider Australian community and for the benefit of all Australians.</li> <li>• <b>Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021:</b> State Government Strategy that aims to progress Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation through mutual control, shared power and decision-making, fairness, respect, and trust.</li> <li>• <b>City of Whittlesea Reconciliation Action Plan:</b> A Council plan that outlines targeted actions that enhance opportunities and outcomes for local Aboriginal communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary of options assessed<sup>^</sup>:</b></p>	<p>Four options were assessed as part of this business case:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Option 1: Do Nothing</b> - No Aboriginal Gathering Place constructed, and programs only delivered in Council’s existing community centres.</li> <li>• <b>Option 2: Foundational Facility</b> – This option enables a range of community activities and programs and opportunities for income generation. Facility size of 650sqm.</li> <li>• <b>Option 3: Intermediate Facility</b> – This option makes additional area allowances on Option 2 to increase programming capacity. Facility size of 1,022sqm.</li> <li>• <b>Option 4: Enhanced Facility</b> – Small area enhancements on Option 3 to increase programming spaces. Facility size of 1,090sqm.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preferred option:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 2: Foundational Facility</li> </ul>



<b>Recommendation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Option 2 - Foundational Facility is approved for design</li> <li>Option 2 is approved for construction in 2023/24 subject to State Government funding</li> <li>Option 1 (Do nothing) is implemented as an interim solution to commence immediate service intervention</li> </ul>
<b>Risk profile of the solution:</b>	Several project risks have been identified that may impact project costs and project delivery schedule. Increased volatility in the construction market (such as increased demand, cost of materials and material shortages) will require additional risk management and may trigger scope review.
<b>Project timeframe:</b>	<p>2021/22: Site investigation and broader trunk infrastructure works</p> <p>2022/23: Facility design works commenced</p> <p>2023/24: Facility design works completed, construction commences</p> <p>2024/25: Construction completed, and facility opens</p> <p>2025 onwards: Aboriginal Gathering Place Facility operational</p>
<b>Project cost:</b>	<p>Total construction cost (including site investigation and design): \$10,800,000</p> <p>Total operational cost prior to construction of Aboriginal Gathering Place: \$273,000</p> <p>Total operational cost following construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place: \$548,125</p> <p>Ongoing operational following governance transition: \$50,000 per annum</p>

^All facility sizes provided are indicative, based on completed concept designs for each option. Areas will be further refined during project design and documentation stages.

## 2. Purpose of document

This final business case presents the justification for the construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place within the City of Whittlesea (responding to the question why this and why now).

Aboriginal Gathering Places are community hubs that promote the importance of culture in supporting positive health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people. The types of activities at Gathering Places may include sharing food, performing ceremony, exchanging knowledge, and creating supportive networks to ensure continuity of culture and traditional practices that create culturally safe places. Aboriginal Gathering Place programs and activities are developed to suit the need identified by local Aboriginal community members. Therefore, Aboriginal Gathering Place facilities, programs and activities are not the same in each location.

Once this document is accepted, this commits financial and human resources to the project. It also completes the project baseline to proceed to the Deliver and Manage phase in Council's Project Management Framework.

## 3. Problem

### 3.1 Problem statement

An Investment Logic Mapping Process (ILM) was undertaken in 2019 in consultation with members of the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) and Council Staff. The ILM identified the following problems:



- Aboriginal Land has been stolen and the community lives with a great sense of loss.
- Aboriginal people's rights to make decisions are being denied and they can't thrive.
- Aboriginal culture is not valued, and this impacts their sense of belonging.

A copy of the Aboriginal Gathering Place ILM can be found in Appendix 1.

### *3.2 Evidence of problem*

The impacts of colonisation and past Australian government policies, particularly the forced removals and separation of families, have resulted in trauma, grief, and loss to Aboriginal people. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 10 families were impacted by forced removals between 1910 and into the 1970s and this trauma has and continues to be experienced across generations, impacting future generations as much as those who were directly removed.

Colonisation has had a significant impact on Aboriginal people, fracturing community structures, relationships and connection to land and culture. Imposed western models of health care, community structures and engagement have not respected or recognised Aboriginal norms of holistic health, social and emotional wellbeing and has denied Aboriginal people their rights to make decisions. The right to self-determination is preserved within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Australia is a signatory. Self-determination is also central to the State Government's Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework and is further supported by the City of Whittlesea's Aboriginal Inclusion Charter.

Colonisation has also negatively impacted perceptions of Aboriginal culture and contributed to high levels of racism which have reduced Aboriginal people's sense of belonging in the Australian community.

Many reports have indicated that Aboriginal people have daily experiences of racism across many services systems. A survey lead by VicHealth, Lowitja Institute, University of Melbourne and Beyond Blue in 2012<sup>1</sup>, highlighted that Aboriginal people experienced extraordinarily high rates of racism in the 12 months prior to taking the survey including verbal and physical abuse and targeted discriminatory behaviour. The common response to racism was to ignore it, followed by talking to someone about it and/or putting up with it. Participants in the survey also reported that they experienced racism in a variety of settings and service systems, public spaces, shopping centres, education settings, sport settings, place of employment, council offices, banks, and health organisations. Aboriginal people experiencing racism reported higher psychological distress, compared to survey participants who did not experience racism.

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand, A., Paradies, Y. & Kelaher, M. 2012, Mental Health Impacts of Racial Discrimination in Victorian Aboriginal Communities: The Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) Experiences of Racism Survey, The Lowitja Institute, Melbourne.



These experiences, especially when coupled with generational trauma, reduced self-determination and the loss of belonging, lead to poorer overall health status and outcomes.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare published the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework* summary report in 2020<sup>2</sup>, which noted the following:

- 67% of Aboriginal people had low/moderate levels of psychological distress and 31% had very high/very high levels in 2018-19.
- 5.5% of deaths among Aboriginal people were due to suicide and 3.7% were due to mental health-related conditions in 2015-19.
- In 2018-19, Aboriginal people who were removed or whose relatives were removed from their family were more likely to have high levels of psychological distress 38%. than those who had not been removed or had a family member removed from their family 26%.
- Cancer and other neoplasms were the leading broad cause of death for Aboriginal people in 2015-19 (23%).
- 13% of Aboriginal adults self-reported having diabetes or high sugar in 2018-19. This was 2.8 times the rate of non-Aboriginal people.
- 7.3% of deaths of Aboriginal people were due to diabetes, which is 4.7 times that of non-Aboriginal people.
- In 2015-2017, the life expectancy at birth was 71.6 years for Aboriginal males and 75.6 years for Aboriginal females, compared to 80.2 years for non-Aboriginal males and 83.4 years for non-Aboriginal females in Australia.

There are currently limited opportunities in the City of Whittlesea LGA for Aboriginal people to access culturally appropriate health and wellbeing assistance in response to the health indicators outlined above. Mainstream community service and community hub models are not necessarily appropriate for Aboriginal people as they reflect western models of operations and service provision. Whilst there are five Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations operating within the City of Whittlesea, these organisations provide tailored services, that only respond to specific health and wellbeing issues, that is not accessible for all Aboriginal people. For example, Dardi Munwurro is a specialist Aboriginal family violence prevention service and therefore services a niche target group.

In addition, there are 11 Aboriginal Gathering Places across Victoria (Appendix 2), however none are within 15kms of the proposed Quarry Hills site, which means:

- Aboriginal people within the City of Whittlesea and broader northern metropolitan region do not have access to a local culturally appropriate facility to link them to services or respond to their broader holistic health and wellbeing needs.

<sup>2</sup> ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2019a. [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2018–19](#). cat. no. 4715.0. Canberra: ABS.



- Large service provision gaps exist across the City of Whittlesea and broader northern metropolitan region as there are not enough appropriate spaces for individual Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide all required services.

A purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will be a conduit for local Aboriginal people to access services and programs. It will provide a solution to the problems outlined above by developing programs and partnerships that respond to local Aboriginal needs and are complimentary to existing services offered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the area.

### 3.3 The Opportunity

#### **Aboriginal self determination**

The right to self-determination is preserved within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Australia is a signatory. Self-determination has particular application to Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples, with the Australian Human Rights Commission identifying:

- *"...Self-determination is an 'ongoing process of choice' to ensure that Indigenous communities are able to meet their social, cultural and economic needs..."*
- *The right to self-determination is based on the simple acknowledgment that Indigenous peoples are Australia's first people, as was recognised by law in the historic Mabo judgement.*
- *The loss of this right to live according to a set of common values and beliefs, and to have that right respected by others, is at the heart of the current disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.*
- *Without self-determination it is not possible for Indigenous Australians to fully overcome the legacy of colonisation and dispossession..."<sup>3</sup>*

First Peoples' self-determination principles are being applied by progressive governments across the world from Canada to New Zealand; and this is also reflected in the State Government's Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework. The City of Whittlesea has an Aboriginal Inclusion Charter that recognises Aboriginal people as legitimate stakeholders that have rights to representation in Council decision making processes, that achieves the best outcomes for the whole community.

#### **Community vision for the Aboriginal Gathering Place**

The community vision for the Aboriginal Gathering Place (developed as part of the *Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Feasibility, 2018*) is for "a welcoming, inclusive and

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/right-self-determination>. Accessed 29 June 2022



culturally safe space where all Aboriginal people have a sense of belonging and have access to activities, programs and services which strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing”.

This project is a tangible way in which Council can provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal and broader community to:

- **Strengthen identity and wellbeing** through reflection, recognition and (re)connection to culture.
- Empower Aboriginal people to **thrive through self-determination** at the facility.
- Educate, learn about, and **celebrate Aboriginal culture** through storytelling, knowledge sharing, cultural events, and structured programming.

In addition, this project seeks to:

- Improve overall Aboriginal **social, physical, cultural, and emotional health and wellness** needs. Social and emotional wellbeing is recognised as an important determinant of health for Aboriginal people and is interrelated with other social, cultural, and political factors such as connection to country, spirituality, culture, community, family, and mental and physical health.
- **Reduce inequity and access barriers** to essential health services for Aboriginal people.
- **Fill a service provision gap** in service provision in the broader Northern Metropolitan region, which has a combined Aboriginal population of 10,030 but only one Gathering Place (in Banyule City Council).
- Address local needs for a local Aboriginal cultural facility and **respond to community advocacy efforts** which commenced over 20 years ago and are at their strongest today.
- Embrace change through **innovation, resilience, and community leadership**; particularly on the codesign of the facility; proposed to take place with the Aboriginal community.
- Continue Council’s commitment to reconciliation, which commenced in 2001 with the establishment of the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group (WRG) and has resulted in the celebration of significant Aboriginal events and advocacy efforts to **build reconciliation across the community**, on the foundation of truth telling.
- Contribute toward the Whittlesea 2040 Community Vision of **‘A place for all’, particularly for Aboriginal people** who currently experience feelings of isolation, loss, and low levels of cultural safety.

*How* Council works in partnership with community is vital to the success of the Aboriginal Gathering Place – a partnership model which supports self-determination that informs the process and the outcomes for the project.

#### 3.4 Who will benefit?

##### **Local Aboriginal Community**

The City of Whittlesea has a growing population of Aboriginal residents in Metropolitan Melbourne with 2,270 residents (Census of Population and Housing, 2021). The Aboriginal population in the City of Whittlesea has more than doubled in the last ten years.





A 2016 Melbourne University study for the Department of Health and Human Services which evaluated the health and wellbeing outcomes of the Aboriginal Gathering Place Model in Victoria<sup>4</sup> found that gathering places have direct impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and community as they provide a safe and inclusive space to connect, support the sharing of knowledge and empower people through social, cultural, and healing activities. They are also a critical conduit to other services and link community members to specific health services.

Therefore, this project could contribute to the following social, health and wellbeing benefits for the local Aboriginal community:

- Improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Increased education and employment outcomes.
- A greater sense of historical knowledge, connections to culture and pride and strength within communities and families.
- Increased trust between government, local service providers and community.

When these health and wellbeing benefits are translated into monetary benefits, previous research commissioned by Council demonstrates that Gathering Places consistently produce a cost benefit greater than 1, and an average of 4.4 (Urban Enterprise Preliminary Economic & Financial Analysis Report, 2019).

#### **Young Aboriginal People**

Gathering Places are pivotal to the cultural connection and continuance of positive pathways for Aboriginal children and young people. Having a non-judgmental and safe space to engage with culture and other Aboriginal people is important for combatting generational trauma and developing resilience and belonging.

#### **Local Economy**

The Aboriginal Gathering Place is predicted to generate up to 70 jobs (FTE) during construction, and up to 8 Aboriginal jobs (FTE) for the ongoing operation of the facility in the long-term (Urban Enterprise Preliminary Economic & Financial Analysis Report, 2019)

#### **Local Non-Aboriginal Community**

The effect of Gathering Places on the wider non-Aboriginal community and mainstream community and government services is also pronounced. Gathering places provide opportunities for non-Aboriginal communities to engage respectfully in a cultural exchange of information to increase their cultural awareness, enhance their education on local history and build strong partnerships and networks with Aboriginal programs/providers.

#### **Broader Northern Metropolitan Aboriginal Community**

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<sup>4</sup> The University of Melbourne, 2016. *Health and wellbeing outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gathering place model in Victoria: A place for inclusion, connection, and empowerment Final report.*





Although there are 11 Gathering Places across Victoria, none are within 15kms of the proposed Quarry Hills site. Establishing an Aboriginal Gathering Place within the City of Whittlesea assists to fill existing facility and service gaps across the broader region, improve geographical equity of services and reduce access barriers for neighbouring Aboriginal populations (outlined in Table 2) in addition to City of Whittlesea residents.

**Table 2. Aboriginal population of adjacent municipalities to the City of Whittlesea**

Local Government Area	Aboriginal Population (2021)
Hume City Council	4,000
Darebin Council	1,441
Mitchell Shire Council	1,073
Nillumbik Shire Council	380
Banyule City Council	866

#### **Broader Victorian Community**

This project aligns to the State Government strategic priorities outlined in the *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy, 2021*, which aims to progress Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation through local government action. It plays an important role in providing a meaningful government led response and another step toward Aboriginal Treaty and will benefit the whole community in efforts towards achieving reconciliation.

#### **4. Options considered**

##### *4.1 Governance and operations*

The proposed governance transition for the Aboriginal Gathering Place described in this section is consistent with the Terms of Reference endorsed by Council and the WAGPAG in 2021. Council will continue to support self-determination and work collaboratively with the WAGPAG to co-design a purpose-built facility and associated programming of the Aboriginal Gathering Place. Furthermore, Council will support the WAGPAG to become an incorporated Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and assume operations of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.

The local Aboriginal community has placed trust with the City of Whittlesea to work together to build an Aboriginal Gathering Place and provide governance and operational support of the facility initially and then continue to work in partnership with the newly created Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

If the transition to a new entity takes longer than outlined in the Business Case, then Council will work with WAGPAG to explore other interim options such as establishing a Community Asset Committee under section 65 of the Local Government Act 2020. However, the energy, focus and resources required to establish successful Community Asset Committees are also considerable, the business plan focus will therefore be to support WAGPAG establish as new community controlled entity.



Tables 3 to 5 outline a three-phased transition approach with indicative timelines and roles and responsibilities.

**Table 3. Phase 1 governance and operations**

<b>Phase 1 FY 2021/22 to 2023/24 (already commenced)</b>	
<p>Phase 1 primarily focusses on the establishment of the formal governance structure of the WAGPAG. During this time the Aboriginal Gathering Place will be designed, and construction will commence. The operational model will be established in preparation for the facility opening. There will also be a focus on building community capacity to operate the facility and securing additional partners, external funding, and income streams.</p>	
<b>WAGPAG role</b>	<b>Council role</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design the facility with Council</li> <li>• Build community capacity to operate the facility</li> <li>• Work with Council to secure and external funding and income streams</li> <li>• Initiate the process to become an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the WAGPAG and provide Secretariat support. The WAGPAG terms of reference will be reviewed in 2023 to include governance arrangements for the period when the facility is completed but the new entity has yet to be established (estimated to be for the years 2024/25 and part of 2025/26)</li> <li>• Coordination and project management with advice and input from WAGPAG and advisory community for the Aboriginal Gathering Place design</li> <li>• Undertake site investigations and procure design for the facility</li> <li>• Procure contractor and commence construction</li> <li>• Advocate for Federal and/or State Government funding towards construction</li> <li>• Develop and deliver Council programs in existing Council facilities to pilot for the Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Phase 2 governance and operations**

<b>Phase 2 FY 2024/25 and 2025/26</b>
<p>The Aboriginal Gathering Place will be constructed and operational in this phase. The WAGPAG will move towards greater independence in Phase 2 (in line with a revised Terms of Reference developed with Council in 2023). Discussions with WAGPAG at this stage will determine the timing for WAGPAG to become an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (other interim arrangements may be explored at this stage such as an option for the group to become a Community Asset Committee if required). The WAGPAG and Council will deliver programs and services from the Aboriginal Gathering Place and will build capacity to become independent and secure additional partnerships and funding.</p>



WAGPAG role	Council role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WAGPAG to finalise the process to become a new entity being either an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) or a Community Asset Committee – in the 2024/25 financial year</li> <li>New entity manages the facility on behalf of Council (from financial year 2025/26 onwards)</li> <li>Deliver programs and services from facility (in partnership with Council and others)</li> <li>Continue to build community/ organisational capacity</li> <li>Secure additional partners and external funding and build income streams</li> <li>Income from facility hire and operations is received by building operator (i.e. Council in the 2024/25 financial year and then a new ACCO in 2025/26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> <li>Deliver Council programs from Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> <li>Maintain property and utilities</li> <li>Facilitate and foster partnership opportunities</li> <li>Income from facility hire and operations is received by building operator (i.e. Council in 2024/25 and then new ACCO in 25/26)</li> <li>Develop a new contractual arrangement between the new entity and Council (formal agreement from financial year 2025/26 onwards)</li> </ul>

**Table 5. Phase 3 governance and operations**

<b>Phase 3 FY 2026/27 onwards</b>	
<p>A new entity will be operating the facility during Phase 3. A new contractual arrangement between the new entity and Council (developed during Phase 2) will be activated with the formal agreement commencing from financial year 2025/26 onwards.</p>	
WAGPAG or new entity/ACCO role	Council role
<p>New entity/ ACCO responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver programs</li> <li>Receive income from the facility hire etc</li> <li>Work in partnership with Council and other partners</li> <li>Source other external funding sources</li> <li>Operating asset and minor maintenance</li> <li>Facility outgoings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EFT until FY 2026/27 for Aboriginal Gathering Place including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fulltime Aboriginal Gathering Place Coordinator</li> <li>0.6 EFT Business Support Officer</li> </ul> </li> <li>Responsible for major property maintenance</li> <li>Community Grants Program (\$50K pa for an “Aboriginal Partnerships and Gathering Place stream”) continues – as a municipal wide resource run by Council</li> </ul>

**Potential programming**

During Phase 1, Council will pilot and test Aboriginal programs from Council’s existing community centres. Programs will be resourced by existing staff within the Aboriginal



Communities Department and will be co-designed with the WAGPAG. This will assist the WAGPAG to further determine ongoing programming from the Aboriginal Gathering Place and also engage local Aboriginal community members to access programs, some of which will be new and/or re-visioned during the pilot.

An example of how Aboriginal programs may be delivered over a monthly period is presented in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 1. Potential Aboriginal programs to be delivered from existing community centres within Phase 1 (FY 22/23 – FY 23/24)**

		MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
WEEK 1	MORNING	Elders PAG				
	LUNCHTIME	Elders PAG				
	AFTERNOON		Youth Program		Youth Program	
	EVENING		Youth Program		Youth Program	
WEEK 2	MORNING	*Cultural Awareness Training		Health Promotion Program		
	LUNCHTIME	*Cultural Awareness Training		Health Promotion Program		
	AFTERNOON		Youth Program		Youth Program	
	EVENING		Youth Program		Youth Program	
WEEK 3	MORNING	Elders PAG				
	LUNCHTIME	Elders PAG		MCHN Playgroup		
	AFTERNOON		Youth Program	MCHN Playgroup	Youth Program	
	EVENING		Youth Program		Youth Program	
WEEK 4	MORNING	*Cultural Awareness Training				
	LUNCHTIME	*Cultural Awareness Training				
	AFTERNOON		Youth Program		Youth Program	
	EVENING		Youth Program		Youth Program	

\* Program can commence once successful recruitment of Council owned and funded position

**Income generating opportunities**

There will be potential income generating opportunities once the Aboriginal Gathering Place is operational.



The first is the potential for facility hire at the Aboriginal Gathering Place during non-programming time, as detailed in Table 6. Room hire charges are based on Council's schedule of rates for its community centres.

As detailed in Table 4 and 5, income from facility hire will be received by the building operator (i.e. Council in the 2024/25 financial year, then the new ACCO in the 2025/26 financial year).

**Table 6. Potential annual income generation through facility hire**

Space	Potential hire frequency	Total income per annum
Large multipurpose space for 100 people	16 hours weekly	Casual / Business \$48,339.20 Regular \$36,732.80 Community \$25,084.80 Seniors \$4,700.80 Playgroups \$18,720.00
Multipurpose meeting room for 15 people	16 hours weekly	Casual / Business \$25,958.40 Regular \$19,718.40 Community \$13,436.80 Seniors \$4,700.80 Playgroups \$18,720.00
Community Hall Package 10 hour hire (weekends)	20 hours weekly	Flat rate \$555, 880
Healing / Quiet Room	16 hours weekly	Casual / Business \$14,768 Regular \$11,648 Community \$7,820.80 Seniors \$4,700.80 Playgroups \$18,720.00
Consultation Rooms x 2		Casual / Business \$15,184 (\$30,368) Regular \$11,648 (\$23,296) Community \$8,028.80 (\$16,057.60) Seniors \$4,700.80



		(\$9,401.60)
<b>Cultural Awareness Training</b>		
<b>Space</b>	<b>Potential frequency</b>	<b>Annual income</b>
Large multipurpose space for 100 people	8 sessions monthly	\$275,600

The income generating opportunities described above are indicative only and will need to be explored further with the WAGPAG.

#### 4.2 Capital delivery

Four options for the Aboriginal Gathering Place facility were assessed as part of this business case:

1. **Option 1: Do Nothing** - No Aboriginal Gathering Place constructed, and programs and services are expanded in Council's existing community centres.
2. **Option 2: Foundational Facility** – This option enables a range of activities and programs and opportunities for income generation.
3. **Option 3: Intermediate Facility** – This option makes additional area allowances on Option 2 to increase programming capacity.
4. **Option 4: Enhanced Facility** – Small area enhancements on Option 3 to increase programming spaces.

Sections 4.3 to 4.6 provide an assessment of costs, benefits, risk and overall evaluation of the options.

#### 4.3 Cost estimate

**Table 7. Options cost estimates**

Option	Scope*	Capital cost**	Total operating costs (2022/23 – 2027/28)
Option 1 – Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No dedicated facility</li> <li>• Programs and activities delivered in existing community centres</li> </ul>	\$0	\$0
Option 2 – Foundational Facility	Approx. 650sqm facility comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large multi-purpose space for 100 people</li> <li>• Multi-purpose/meeting room for 15 people</li> <li>• Healing/quiet room</li> <li>• Consultation rooms</li> <li>• Staff admin and storage areas</li> <li>• Kitchen</li> <li>• Foyer and circulation space</li> <li>• Amenities</li> </ul>	\$10,000,000.00  (Based on November 2021 Quantity Surveyor report – reviewed and confirmed as accurate in June)	\$821,125



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrace</li> <li>• 30-48 car spaces</li> <li>• Essential landscaping and external gathering spaces</li> <li>• 4-5-star green star equivalent building</li> </ul>	2022. Excludes design.)	
Option 3 – Intermediate Facility	<p>Approx. 1022 sq facility comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large multi-purpose space for 100 people</li> <li>• Multi-purpose/meeting room for 30 people</li> <li>• Multiple consultation rooms</li> <li>• Healing/Quiet Room</li> <li>• Media lounge</li> <li>• Multipurpose space</li> <li>• Staff admin and storage areas</li> <li>• Enhanced kitchen</li> <li>• Foyer and circulation space</li> <li>• Amenities</li> <li>• Terrace and Balcony</li> <li>• 80-90 car spaces</li> <li>• Enhanced landscaping and external gathering spaces</li> <li>• 4-5-star green star equivalent building</li> </ul>	<p>\$13,500,000</p> <p>(Based on November 2021 Quantity Surveyor report with the addition of 10% escalation. Excludes trunk works and design)</p>	\$821,125
Option 4 – Enhanced Facility	<p>Approx. 1190 sq facility comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large multi-purpose space for 120 people</li> <li>• Healing Space</li> <li>• Multipurpose space</li> <li>• Multiple consultation rooms</li> <li>• Large communal dining space</li> <li>• Media lounge</li> <li>• Staff admin and storage areas</li> <li>• Enhanced kitchen</li> <li>• Foyer and circulation space</li> <li>• Amenities</li> <li>• Terrace and Balcony</li> <li>• 110-120 car spaces</li> <li>• Enhanced landscaping and external gathering space</li> <li>• 4-5-star green star equivalent building</li> </ul>	<p>\$15,000,000</p> <p>(Based on November 2021 Quantity Surveyor report with the addition of 10% escalation. Excludes trunk works and design)</p>	\$821,125

\*Facility sizes are indicative, based on completed concept designs for each option. The area schedule will be further refined during project design and documentation stages.

\*\*Total capital costs provided are rounded up to the nearest \$0.5 million. These costs do not include allowance for trunk infrastructure works (utility service and civic infrastructure) required at the broader Quarry Hills site as these works will be required to deliver other



Council commitments at the site (i.e. Granite Hills Major Community Park), as well as servicing the Aboriginal Gathering Place. These separate works were previously approved as part of the Business Case titled ‘Quarry Hills Regional Parkland – Granite Hills Implementation and future connections’, at the 6 December 2021 Council meeting. Utility services and civil infrastructure works surrounding the immediate Gathering Place site will still be required, however they have not been included in the costs in the options above as they are subject to the findings of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (currently underway), further site investigations and project design. Further information is included in Section 5.4 of this business case.

4.4 Benefits/outcomes (operation and benefits)

**Table 8. Benefits and outcomes summary**

Outcome	Benefit	Indicator	Measure	Data Source	Baseline	Target	Target Date	Options
Our Aboriginal Community is healthy and safe	Aboriginal people have access to culturally appropriate health and wellbeing services delivered by Council	Increased access to culturally appropriate health and wellbeing services delivered by Council	Hours of use per week	Booking data	0	20 hours per week	6 months after facility open date	2,3,4
	Aboriginal people have access to culturally appropriate services delivered by community-controlled organisations	Increased access to services delivered by community-controlled organisations	Total number of programs run from the centre by community-controlled organisations	Booking data	0	8 hours per week	12 months after facility open date	2,3,4
Our Aboriginal community is self-determining	Our Aboriginal Community makes decisions about issues affecting them	Increased opportunities for Aboriginal decision making	Total number of engagement opportunities for decision making	Records of meetings	0	12 per year	12 months after facility open date	2,3,4
	Our Aboriginal community supports each other	Increased leadership and	Total number of participants	Booking data and program	0	10 per year	12 months after facility	2,3,4





Outcome	Benefit	Indicator	Measure	Data Source	Baseline	Target	Target Date	Options
		mentorship opportunities	in leadership programs	evaluation reports			open date	
The Aboriginal community has a sense of belonging	Aboriginal culture is valued and visible	Increased Aboriginal sense of belonging in the City of Whittlesea	Total number of cultural events and ceremonies held	Booking data	0	5 events per year	12 months after facility open date	2,3,4
		Increased mainstream awareness and valuing of Aboriginal culture	Total number of participants in cultural awareness programs	Booking data and program evaluation reports	0	75 per year	12 months after facility open date	2,3,4
Aboriginal people actively participate in the economy through employment and business ventures	Our Aboriginal community has improved and equitable economic opportunities	Increase in local jobs for Aboriginal people	Number of jobs created	City of Whittlesea Workforce Plan monitoring data	0	2 jobs (in Phase 1)	12 months after facility open date	2,3,4
The Aboriginal community sees action in response to their needs and advocacy efforts	Trust is rebuilt between the Aboriginal community and government	Increase in trust between the Aboriginal community and government	% increase in level of trust toward government as a result of project	Baseline survey and program evaluation surveys	No local data	25% increase in trust	18 months after facility open date	All



4.5 Risk assessment

Table 9. Risk assessment

Option Specific Risks			
Option	Risk	Risk (low, medium, high or extreme)	Mitigation
Option 1 – Do nothing	<i>Council Reputation</i> – Council is seen not to be responding to local needs and extensive Aboriginal advocacy which has taken place over the last 20 years.	High	Communications plan to be developed and transparent explanations provided to stakeholders and the broader community to explain Council’s decision.
	<i>Lack of available space in existing community centres</i> – Multipurpose and consulting rooms in community centres are booked out and there is no space to run Aboriginal programming.	Medium	Existing bookings and facility capacity to be reviewed prior to stakeholder engagement and program development. Where possible, available space to be reserved ahead of time even if program details are still being developed.

Common Risks (Applicable to Option 2: Foundational Facility, Option 3: Intermediate Facility and Option 4: Enhanced Facility)			
Option	Risk	Risk (low, medium, high or extreme)	Mitigation
Commercial and Procurement	<i>Construction demand</i> - Increased volatility in the construction market drives prices up and/or impacts delivery timeframes for project due to construction market capacity and supply chain constraints.	High	Further market sounding to be completed by Council prior to going to market to test cost estimates and delivery timeline. Council understands the issues and constraints of the current market that cause risk pricing. Council will consider strategies to mitigate issues, such as indexation of costs and benchmarking costs for later phases to help minimise risk pricing in bidders’ fixed price.



Risk Category	Risk	Risk (low, medium, high, or extreme)	Mitigation
Commercial and Procurement	<i>Contractor insolvency</i> - Preferred contractor or subcontractor becomes insolvent prior to practical completion/rectification of defects, causing delays to completion.	Medium	Council to undertake financial due diligence on prospective construction firms and key contractors and subcontractors during the procurement process (for example, insolvency checks will be undertaken). Council will ensure appropriate bank guarantee and securities agreements are in place.
Management	<i>Ongoing governance and management capability</i> – Aboriginal Gathering Place governance and operating structure does not deliver the benefits identified in the business case.	Medium	Council to provide initial assistance in supporting the WAGPAG to become incorporated as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and ongoing support and facilitation through Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the governance transition to ensure governance terms of reference are upheld.
	<i>Staffing</i> - Due to the specialised nature of Gathering Places there is a lack of suitably qualified and experienced people available in the employment market to manage the centre.	Medium	Attracting staff to an exciting new centre is not expected to be an issue. Longer term, training programs can be established with elders and educational partners who will also use the centre to ensure appropriate understanding of cultural norms and their impact on the centre operations.
	<i>Public transport</i> Distance from Public Transport. Lack of accessibility for community members without access to private vehicles.	High	Bus stop is walking distance from site entrance (though further walk to the AGP). Additional methods such as community bus for programming can be explored. Ensure adequate carpark and drop-off zones. Expensive long term operational measure.
	<i>Accessibility/Safety (varying levels)</i> Issues of safety and accessibility caused by facility located within varying levels/landforms.	Medium	Barriers, balustrades, ramping, graded, or stepped levels. Design key activities/facilities on single level. Drop-off zones. Engagement of accessibility consultant early.



Risk Category	Risk	Risk (low, medium, high, or extreme)	Mitigation
Management	<p><i>Conflicting priorities for facility design –</i> Failure to reach mutual agreement on facility design with the Aboriginal community and the broader community.</p>	Medium	<p>A functional brief has been developed to document minimum standard in provision required for a fit for purpose use facility. WAGPAG will establish agreement with Traditional Owners, resolve any concerns and re-confirm functional brief prior to detailed design. Ongoing opportunities for design input to be provided throughout detailed design stage to ensure open communication, negotiation, and a mutual agreement to be reached. Community Engagement Plan to be developed to manage broader community expectations.</p>
	<p><i>Security/After Hours Access</i> The facility will be isolated during both business and after hours. Unlawful gathering/activity occurring within AGP/parkland if vehicle access is open (for after-hours AGP use).</p>	High	<p>Security Consultant to provide report on measures to consider. Options considering vehicles access/gates systems, on-going ranger, CCTV, programming of activities and one way access barriers.</p>
Financial	<p><i>Cost over-runs -</i> Cost over-runs arise during construction adversely impacting the project budget.</p>	High	<p>Preliminary site testing (Cultural Heritage Management Plan, soil testing to determine anticipated amount of earth works/rock excavation required etc.) are underway. Council will Continue discussions with the WAGPAG on prioritisation of design components throughout the life of the project. Market testing construction costs through RFQ procurement process will also take place.</p> <p>Contingencies in the capital costs will be in line with industry benchmarks, and detailed design will refine cost projections to inform budgeting. Suitable procurement and project management processes will be established to manage costs throughout the delivery and Council will undertake regular cost estimates to ensure currency and contingency management.</p>



Risk Category	Risk	Risk (low, medium, high, or extreme)	Mitigation
Financial	<i>Partnership attraction</i> - Council does not receive State or Federal government funding for the Aboriginal Gathering Place significantly impacting on project viability.	High	Council is progressing with an advocacy campaign, which includes senior Council officers meeting with political parties. Should partnership funding be unable to be obtained, options for value management and/or a staged construction of the facility will be explored.
Planning environment, heritage, and culture	<i>Planning scheme amendment</i> – The planning scheme amendment to change land use permission is rejected or delayed.	High	Amendment preparation to be prioritised and commenced early in the project to allow for adequate processing and any objections received. Due diligence throughout amendment preparation to be undertaken to reduce likelihood of any rejections.
	<i>Climate change</i> – Climate change risk impacting on the complexity of the design and adversely impacting project budget and scope.	Medium	Council will ensure the design includes sustainability features and requirements, such as offsetting materials, to ensure compliance with current and foreseeable future sustainability requirements. Further, Council will consider the re-usage and flexibility of the facility in the design stage.
Project schedule	<i>Project timeframe overrun</i> – The construction contractor does not deliver the project within the agreed timeline.	High	All timing risks will be identified when producing work plans and realistic timeframes will be negotiated with preferred contractors once procured. Construction contract to include timing/completion clauses.
	<i>Stakeholder frustration regarding timeline</i> - Stakeholders frustrated that the facility will not open until 2025 at the earliest.	High	Transparent information sharing with community to keep them informed and to establish realistic expectations from outset. Planning for interim and pilot programming in existing Council community centres has commenced.



#### 4.6 Options evaluation

**Table 10. Options evaluation**

Option	Evaluation summary	Social	Financial	Environment	Rank	Recommendation
Option 1 – Do nothing	This option provides the cheapest intervention and the lowest benefits. It does not adequately resolve the identified problems and would only be suitable for implementation as an interim or short-term solution.	1	5	3	4	Interim solution – Recommended until partnership funding is obtained to deliver preferred option
Option 2 – Foundational Facility	This option provides significant community and economic benefits. It addresses the problems identified in this business case and is a suitable option for implementation.	4	4	5	1	Preferred option - Most viable for implementation
Option 3 – Intermediate Facility	This option provides significant community and economic benefits. It addresses the problems identified in this business case. Project costs are higher than Options 1 and 2.	5	3	4	2	Do not consider further – Cost prohibitive
Option 4 – Enhanced Facility	This option provides significant community and economic benefits. It addresses the problems identified in this business case. Project costs are highest of all options explored.	5	1	4	3	Do not consider further – Cost prohibitive

### 5. Recommended option

#### 5.1 Scope

The recommended option for this business case is Option 2 - Foundational Facility. The project deliverables are outlined further in section 5.1.1 of this business case.

Option 2 is recommended as it provides opportunities to strengthen identity and wellbeing, empower Aboriginal people to thrive through self-determination at the facility, celebrate Aboriginal culture and raise broader cultural awareness to achieve greater reconciliation outcomes. It provides a viable and equitable solution to existing infrastructure and service provision gaps that currently exist in the City of Whittlesea, by improving access to local programs and services and meets the minimal provision required to achieve meaningful project outcomes and operational viability.

There is significant strategic alignment between this project and broader State Government strategic priorities for Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation as outlined in the Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Strategy 2021. As such, opportunities for partnership/s and co-funding with State Government should be prioritised to:



- Ensure broader reconciliation objectives are addressed/achieved through project delivery.
- Rebuild trust between all levels of government and the Aboriginal community.
- Minimise project risks related to cost and operational viability (i.e. scope reduction).
- Ensure that Council has the resources to adequately invest in other essential community infrastructure across the municipality.

As construction timelines may be influenced by advocacy and construction industry volatility, it is recommended that Council proceeds with planning, design, and advocacy to deliver Option 2 (recommended option) but also implements Option 1 in the interim. This multifaceted approach enables:

- Planning, design and due diligence to continue for Option 2 so that construction can start upon the completion of designs and confirmation of State Government funding.
- Addressing existing service gaps sooner by expanding Aboriginal programs and services in existing community centres through Option 1.
- Council and the WAGPAG to commence building relationships with local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.
- Pilot programming to take place to test local demand and inform the continued development of the Aboriginal Gathering Place Operational Plan, which will outline programming.
- Place based delivery of programming through a 'hub and spoke' model, whereby the Aboriginal Gathering Place provides centralised provision for people to come together, and community centres are 'spokes' that provide locally responsive and accessible programs.

#### *5.1.1 Deliverables*

This project will deliver a purpose built, dedicated Aboriginal Gathering Place. The facility will be approximately 650sqm in size and comprise:

- Large multi-purpose space for 100 people
- Multi-purpose/ meeting room for 20 people
- Healing/Quiet room for 15 people
- Consultation rooms
- Staff admin and storage areas
- Kitchen
- Foyer and circulation space
- Amenities
- Terrace
- 30-48 car spaces
- Landscaping and external gathering spaces
- 4-5-star green star equivalent building

Utility services and civil infrastructure works within the immediate Aboriginal Gathering Place site will be required; however, they have not been included above as they are subject to the findings of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (currently underway), further site



investigations and project design. Further information is included in Section 5.4 of this business case.

The sizes of individual areas will be reviewed and refined through project design and documentation stages.

#### *5.1.2 Exclusions*

The ILM process (Appendix 1) proposed a series of complementary service and asset solutions to the problems identified. Some of these will be explored by Council in partnership with the Aboriginal community but will not be part of this project. These include:

- Recognition that First Nations land was not ceded (to be considered through the state-wide Treaty process).
- The return of land to the Aboriginal community (this has also been subsequently raised by the WAGPAG and will be informed by the state-wide Treaty process).
- Aboriginal community-controlled services, sports and recreation to the municipality, or the development of programs outside of the Aboriginal Gathering Place (to be considered separately through Council's service planning).
- Site trunk infrastructure upgrade (including service utility and civic infrastructure) to the broader Quarry Hills site as these will be required independent of the Aboriginal Gathering Place to service other Council commitments. Trunk infrastructure works for the Aboriginal Gathering Place site are discussed in Section 5.1.1).
- Planning scheme amendment to change the use of the Quarry Hills site from a Rural Conservation Zone to a Place of Assembly (to be completed separately).

#### *5.1.3 Constraints*

The following constraints have been identified by this business case:

- The development of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) and planning scheme amendment application process has commenced, and site-specific investigations will continue throughout the initial design stages. Constraints identified through these processes (for example, identification of artefacts) could impact the delivery timeline proposed in the business case.
- Timeline for the implementation of the recommended option (Option 2) is subject to external government funding. The timing of funding may impact delivery timelines construction costs if delivery was delayed.
- Broader community engagement is still to commence, and outcomes may influence site and facility design.
- Accessibility to WAGPAG members, Aboriginal community, Elders and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung representatives for meaningful consultation / co-design work is limited due to increasing demands on their time.
- Several Building Code of Australia, Utility/Fire Authority, Environmentally Sustainable Design, Gender Equity, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and cultural and Council provision standard requirements must be met and will be contained within the project scope and associated tender documentation.
- Existing site conditions including single access to site, rock ground conditions and varying site contours/levels require detailed design review, particularly when considering





accessibility, construction methodology and staging, environmental impact and future staging works.

#### 5.1.4 Assumptions

Table 11 details the assumptions applied in this business case.

**Table 11. Business case assumptions**

Area	Description
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will commit to the project through a \$5 million budget allocation across FY 2023/24 and 2024/25.</li> <li>• A State Government cash contribution of \$5 million will support project delivery.</li> <li>• Costings provided are indicative based on concept plans developed to date and subject to refinement throughout detailed design stages.</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project will be co-designed in partnership with the WAGPAG but will be managed by Council's Capital Delivery team to ensure infrastructure and project delivery processes adhere to Council required standards.</li> <li>• Proposed governance and operation resources are detailed in Table 3 to 5.</li> </ul>
Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place will commence once the Victorian Government confirms its cash contribution to project construction costs.</li> <li>• Access to the Aboriginal community, Elders and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung representatives for meaningful consultation / co-design work will be possible and timely.</li> </ul>

#### 5.1.5 Social, economic, and environmental impacts

A detailed summary of the positive social and economic impacts are articulated in section 3.4 and 4.4 of this business case. These include:

- Improved health and wellbeing and increased education and employment outcomes.
- Empowered Aboriginal people that thrive through self-determination at the facility.
- A greater sense of pride, connection to country, spirituality, culture, community, family, and sense of belonging.
- Increasing trust between the Aboriginal community and government.
- Up to 70 jobs (FTE) during construction, and up to eight new Aboriginal jobs (FTE) as part of the long-term operation of the facility.

The project will also consider and take steps to minimise impacts on the environment by:

- Incorporating Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) principles in line with current best practice for buildings of a similar type and scale. This includes but is not limited to the consideration of energy efficient design, zero emissions targets, the incorporation of water management principles and options to limit waste.
- Completing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan to identify and protect any local Aboriginal cultural heritage at the site throughout the duration of project delivery.



This project is anticipated to have ongoing positive environmental impacts as many Aboriginal Cultural practices relate to sustainable land management practices and connection to nature.

#### *5.2 Forecast resources*

An estimate of Council's operational resourcing is provided in Table 12.

The following allowances have been made:

- Staff costs reduced by 50% in 2022/23 to allow time for recruitment
- Construction is scheduled to be completed within the 2024/25 FY. As such facility operational costs have been halved for the 2024/25 FY as the facility will only be open for a maximum of six months.
- Maintenance costs have been reduced across Phase 2 to account for construction defects liability period.
- Community Grants Program for Aboriginal Partnerships (\$50,000 per annum) to be introduced, funded, and managed by Council as part of the Community Grants program from FY2024/25 onwards and project eligibility to expand to enable non-Gathering Place specific projects to apply.



**Table 12: Estimated operational resourcing**

		PHASE 1 <i>Governance establishment, facility design and commence construction</i>			PHASE 2 <i>Transition to WAGPAG independence and facility construction complete</i>		PHASE 3 <i>Operational Handover</i>	BEYOND	Total cost to Council	
		21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28 onwards	22/23 - 27/28	
Governance	WAGPAG sitting fee		\$3,000						\$3,000	\$23,000
	Support for ACCO establishment & business planning					\$20,000			\$20,000	
Staffing	Aboriginal Gathering Place Full-time Coordinator		\$45,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000		\$405,000	\$513,750
	Aboriginal Gathering Place part-time admin				\$21,750	\$43,500	\$43,500		\$108,750	
Programming Support	Program establishment (Council programs)		\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000			\$70,000	\$120,000
	Community grants program for Aboriginal Gathering Place			\$50,000					\$50,000	
	Community grants program for Aboriginal Partnerships				\$50,000 per annum - New Community Grants Stream					
Facility Maintenance	Minor equipment				\$5,000	\$10,000			\$15,000	\$164,375
	Utilities				\$8,125	\$16,250			\$24,375	
	Maintenance					\$25,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$125,000	
	Total cost to Council 2021/22 - 2027/28	Existing resources	\$58,000	\$160,000	\$144,875	\$224,750	\$183,500	\$50,000 per annum	\$821,125	\$821,125



5.3 Forecast budget

Table 13. Indicative budget for the Aboriginal Gathering Place

Year:	Project Status	Total capital cost	Proposed Capital Budget (Excl. GST):		Proposed Operational Budget	Potential income
			Council funding	External funding		
2021/22	<b>Governance:</b> WAGPAG Terms of Reference endorsed. Council and WAGPAG work together to establish the governance <b>Facility:</b> Site investigations and broader trunk infrastructure	\$550,000	\$250,000*	\$300,000** (from DELWP for associated parkland works)	\$0	N/A
2022/23	<b>Governance:</b> Council delivering Aboriginal programs within CACs. WAGPAG working towards becoming incorporated <b>Facility:</b> Design	\$250,000	\$250,000*	N/A	\$58,000	N/A
2023/24	<b>Governance:</b> Council delivering Aboriginal programs within CACs. WAGPAG working towards becoming incorporated <b>Facility:</b> Construction commenced	\$5,250,000	\$250,000	State Government funding - estimated at \$5,000,000	\$160,000	N/A
2024/25	<b>Governance:</b> WAGPAG is incorporated <b>Facility:</b> Construction completed and facility operational	\$4,750,000	\$4,750,000	N/A	\$144,875	N/A
2025/26	<b>Governance:</b> Governance transition to new entity operating facility commences with some shared functions with Council <b>Facility:</b> Ongoing operations	N/A	N/A	N/A but possible future grant opportunities	\$224,750	< \$10,000 per annum
2026/27	<b>Governance:</b> Governance transition to new entity operating facility finalised <b>Facility:</b> Ongoing operations	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$183,500	< \$10,000 per annum
2027/28 onwards	<b>Governance:</b> Governance transition completed – new entity operate facility <b>Facility:</b> Ongoing operations	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$50,000 per annum	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$10,800,000</b>	<b>\$5,500,000</b>	<b>\$5,300,000</b>	<b>\$821,125</b>	<b>&lt;\$20,000</b>

\* Council endorsed \$250,000 in both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years for site investigations and detailed design.

\*\* Council received \$300,000 from DELWP in the 2021/22 financial year to support multiple projects within the Granite Hills precinct of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland; Granite Hills Playground, Aboriginal Gathering Place and walking trails.



### ***Income***

The project has also received \$300,000 from DELWP in the 2021/22 financial year, this is to support the multiple projects being coordinated within the Granite Hills precinct of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland; Granite Hills Playground, Aboriginal Gathering Place and the Walking Trails.

### ***5.4 Procurement***

This project will be procured by Council's Capital Delivery team in line with Council's procurement procedure as outlined below:

- Written quotes and Request for Quote (RFQ) processes will be used to complete preliminary site investigations as these works are traditionally below the Request for Tender (RFT) threshold of \$50,000.
- An RFT will be utilised to engage a consultant design team to undertake the full scope of design services from design development through detailed design and documentation.
- Upon approval of the final design, an open publicly advertised tender process will be undertaken for facility construction.
- Council will actively notify local Aboriginal-led businesses of procurement opportunities once they have publicly opened and will consider additional incentives (such as higher assessment weightings) for businesses with specific experiences on similar cultural projects and/or the use of Aboriginal-led design consultants and services in line with the principles of co-design and Council's Social Procurement Strategy.

### ***Trunk infrastructure delivery***

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) and Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) are required for a portion of the broader Quarry Hills site, which impacts the procurement strategy for trunk infrastructure, including service utilities and civil works to the Aboriginal Gathering Place and surrounding Quarry Hills.

To avoid lengthy project delays on both this project and other Council commitments at Quarry Hills (such as Granite Hills Masterplan Implementation) which will also be serviced from the trunk infrastructure upgrade works), trunk infrastructure will be procured in two stages.

The first stage will be procured in mid-2023 and focus on delivery of trunk infrastructure outside of the CHMP and PSA areas. This will include upgrade of utility services and civil infrastructure that will service the entire Quarry Hills site. This package was previously approved as part of the Business Case 'Quarry Hills Regional Parkland – Granite Hills Implementation and future connections', at the 6 December 2021 Council meeting. The remainder of infrastructure works will be completed as part of the Aboriginal Gathering Place works once the CHMP and PSA are completed, and works are permitted.

Collaboration across multiple Council departments has taken place throughout this project thus far to reduce any procurement issues. This will continue throughout the duration of the project.

## **6. Approval**

This document will be presented to Council for formal endorsement.



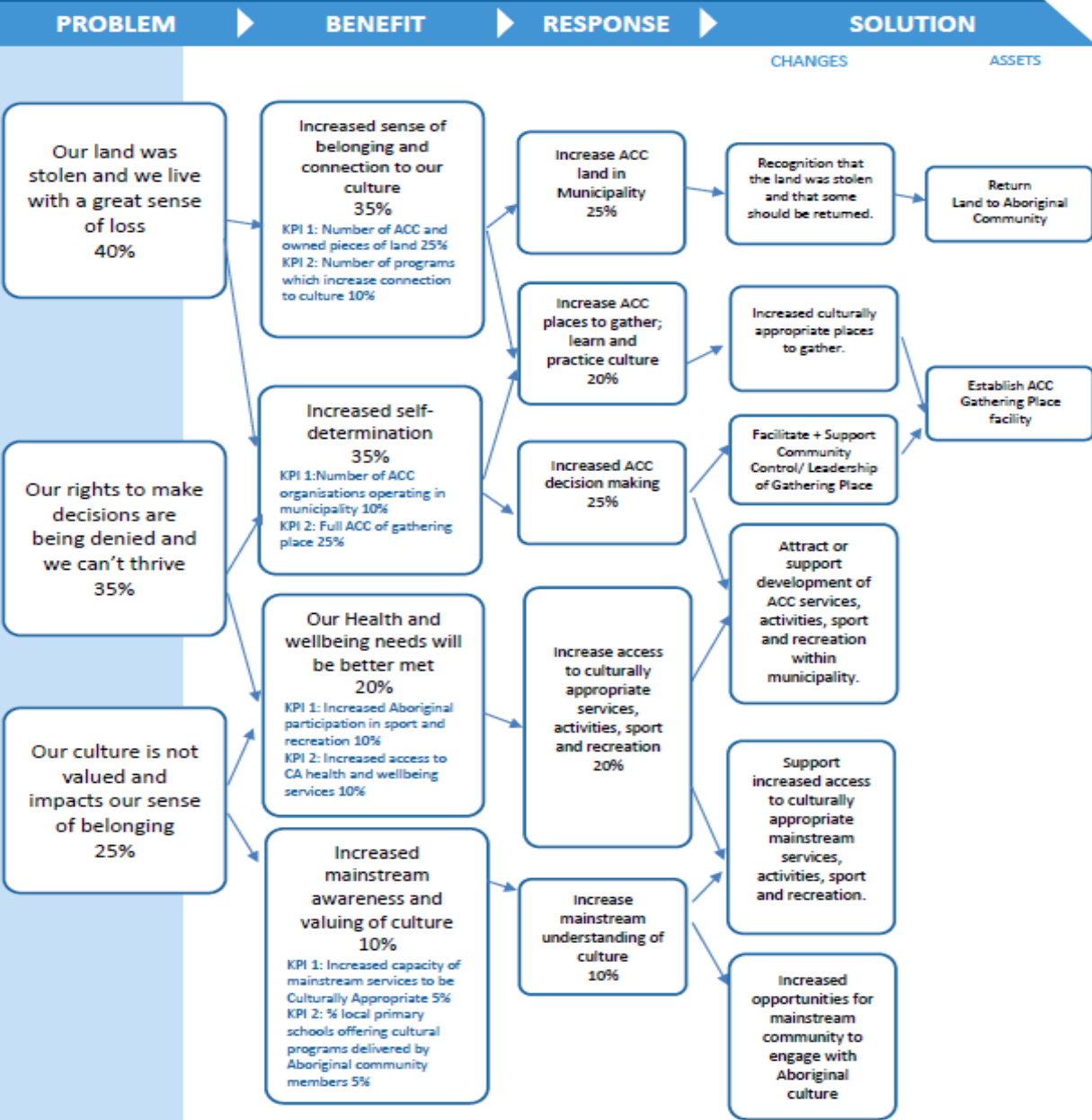
**Appendix 1: Investment Logic Map**

**CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Improving health and wellbeing for Aboriginal community by providing culturally appropriate spaces and services. *Aboriginal Gathering Place*

**INVESTMENT LOGIC MAP**

Initiative

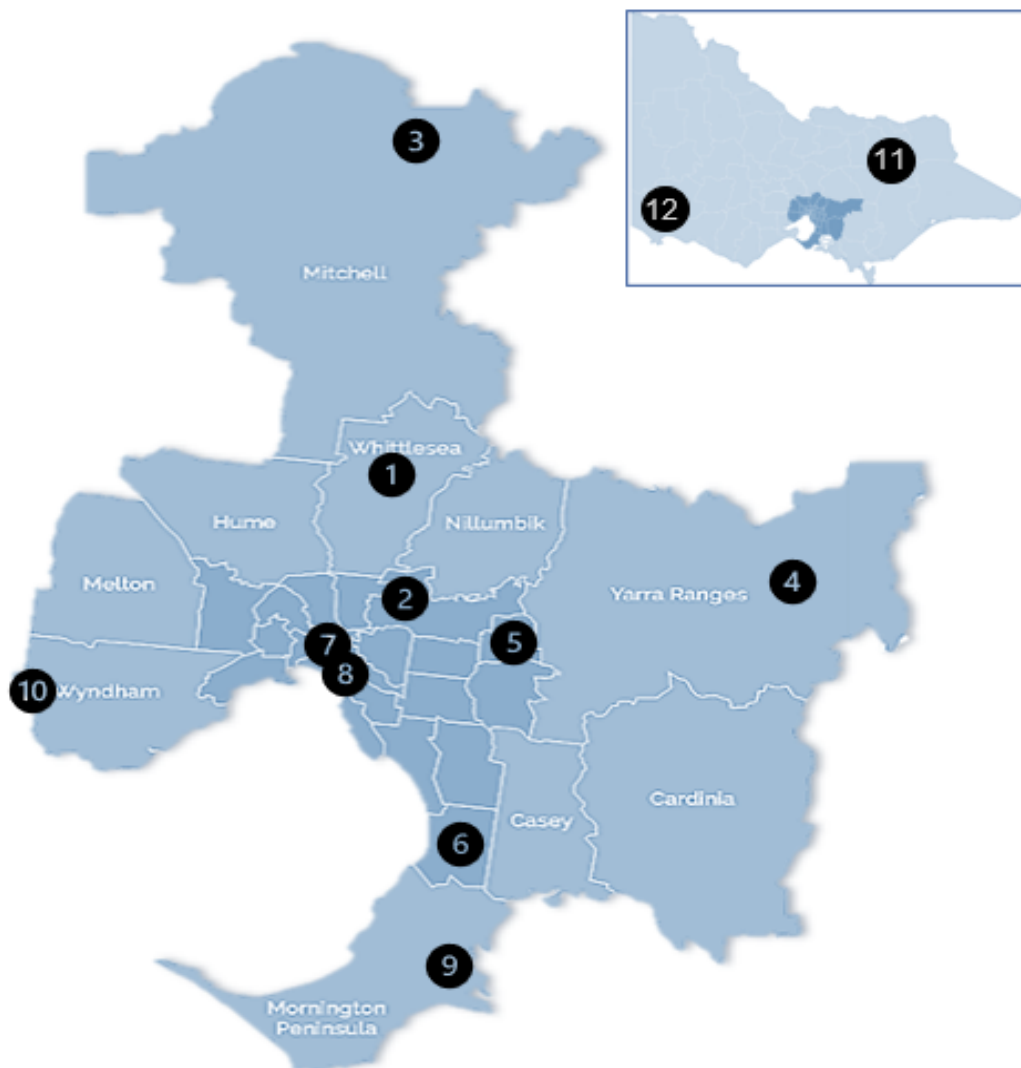


Investor: Russell Hopkins  
 Facilitator: Louise Rose and Steve Ward  
 Accredited Facilitator: No

Version no: 0.1  
 Initial Workshop: 05/06/2019  
 Last modified by: Louise Rose 05/06/2019  
 Template version: 6.0



**Appendix 2: Victorian Gathering Place Locations**



Map Reference	Facility Name	Suburb	Local Government Area	Aboriginal Population (2021)
1	Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place (Planned)	South Morang	City of Whittlesea	2,270
2	Barrbunin Beek Gathering Place	Banyule	Banyule City Council	866
3	Goranwarrabul House	Seymour	Mitchell Shire Council	1,073
4	Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association	Healesville	Yarra Ranges Council	1,713
5	Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place	Ringwood	Maroondah City Council	734
6	Nairn Marr Djambana Gathering Place	Frankston	Frankston City Council	1,800
7	Parkies WomenSpace	Fitzroy	City of Yarra	513
8	Urban South Gathering Places	St Kilda	City of Port Phillip	514
9	Willum Warrain Gathering Place	Hastings	Mornington Peninsula Shire	3,526
10	Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Gathering Place	Wyndham Vale	Wyndham City Council	1,698
11	Central Hume Gathering Place	Benalla	Benalla Rural City	284
12	Well Women's Health Check	Portland	Glenside Shire	588





## Summary of strategic planning and Council resolutions

Year	Activity
2018	2018 Gathering Place Feasibility Study
2019	Council Officers establish the Aboriginal Gathering Place Governance Group - now referred to as Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) - as a project group
	A draft Gathering Place Business Case presented to ELT and Council Briefings
2020	A Council Action Plan initiative delivered leadership and governance training to the WAGPAG
	The preferred Aboriginal Gathering Place site is identified as: <i>105/105W Hunters Road South Morang (within the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland)</i>
	A Gathering Place Community Vision and Investment Logic Map developed and endorsed by the WAGPAG
2021	Draft Gathering Place Business Case presented to ELT, Council Briefings and Council Meeting, endorsed 5th July 2022
	WAGPAG Terms of Reference endorsed 5th July 2021
	Concept drawings completed
	Site investigations completed; Feature & Level Survey and Underground Service Location, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment, Geotechnical Investigation, Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment, Biodiversity and Service & Civil Infrastructure
	Request for Tender (Detail Design)
2022	Design Consultants appointed



# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



## Project summary

Council is working with the local Aboriginal community to source funding for and to build an Aboriginal Gathering Place (AGP).

The establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will increase access to local services and programs and provide a safe and welcoming space for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to reflect, celebrate and (re)connect to Aboriginal culture.

The new AGP is to be located on an elevated plateau within the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland and is proposed to include:

- an educational entrance space to celebrate and teach Aboriginal culture and art
- multiple flexible multi-purpose spaces for large sized events, dining and community activities; as well as media, art, Elder and youth activity spaces
- consultation rooms for health, wellbeing, youth and employment support
- communal kitchen
- staff administration as well as office/working spaces
- amenities and other support spaces.

The AGP will also include external activity spaces, utilising the surrounding natural environment and views that connecting to the new facility. These include:

- covered outdoor communal eating and gathering spaces
- fire pit areas for cultural ceremonies, community education and external gatherings
- bush food/edible gardens
- external active play and discovery areas.

## Background

Aboriginal Gathering Places are community hubs that promote the importance of culture in supporting positive health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people. Activities at Gathering Places may include sharing food, performing ceremony, exchanging knowledge, and creating supportive networks to ensure continuity of culture and traditional practices that create culturally safe places.

The project is a key advocacy funding priority of the City of Whittlesea. The local Aboriginal community have been advocating for 20 years for an AGP.

The community vision for the AGP (developed as part of the *Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Feasibility, 2018*) is for “a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space where all Aboriginal people have a sense of belonging and have access to activities, programs and services which strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing”.

## Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



This project is a tangible way in which Council can provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal and broader community to:

- strengthen identity and wellbeing through reflection, recognition and (re)connection to culture
- empower Aboriginal people to thrive through self-determination at the facility
- educate, learn about and celebrate Aboriginal culture through storytelling, knowledge sharing, cultural events and structured programming.

At the last census in 2020, Whittlesea LGA had an Aboriginal population of 2,270.

Extensive site analysis has been undertaken and some items are outstanding:

- Cultural Values Assessment from the Traditional Owner Group
- Security Audit Report

### Previous engagement

This project has been informed to date by a thorough engagement process, including:

- development of a feasibility study in 2018, comprising input from 67 community members of the City of Whittlesea
- a Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) which includes members of the local Aboriginal community, was established in 2019 and endorsed by Council in 2021, to work in partnership with Council on this project including the intent to rezone the land
- three workshops between Council officers and the WAGPAG (formally known as the Aboriginal Gathering Place Governance Group) to complete an Investment Logic Map and establish the high-level problems, benefits, solutions, and responses which needed to be explored in the final business case
- twelve meetings with the WAGPAG since August 2021 to discuss project needs and refine the community vision, operating model and governance model presented at the July 2021 Council meeting and in the final business case
- multiple visits to other Gathering Places across Melbourne with the WAGPAG to learn about the different approaches being used and key learnings from other similar projects
- preliminary discussions with subject matter experts from State Government Departments including the Department of Health & Human Services, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Aboriginal Victoria and from the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group. Discussions centred around establishing relationships and seeking advice on partnership and funding opportunities, as well as planning requirements.

Below are the negotiables and non-negotiables of the project:

Negotiable	Non-negotiable
The services and programs offered at the AGP	Establishing an AGP
Design principles of the AGP	Location of the AGP

# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



## C&E objectives

- Inform the local community that the AGP is proposed to be built within the Quarry Hills Regional Park Precinct.
- To educate the CoW community about what an AGP is.
- To build understanding about the purpose of an AGP.
- Involve the Aboriginal community about the AGP, the programs offered at the venue and how it's used by the community.
- This engagement will also inform the wider community about the origin story of the Aboriginal Gathering Place journey.

## Engagement approach

A multi-phased engagement approach that informs, consults and involves the Whittlesea community as the project progresses until construction is completed.

### Phase 1 – inform

In this phase we will build understanding and awareness of the AGP within the municipality. This will run for the duration of the project and will involve video and print vignettes featuring current members of the WAGPAG, a project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform, traditional and digital communication channels.

### Phase 2 – involve

The second phase will involve directly contacting adjacent property owners and interest groups to inform them of the project, educate them further as per phase 1 and encourage them to get more involved in the project. During this stage we will inform the adjacent landholders the land has been rezoned to a 'place of assembly' (subject to approval of Planning Scheme Amendment) to utilise the land for the AGP. Depending on the level of interest from the community a project ally group may be formed.

In this phase the project advisory group (WAGPAG) will be consulted on the design principles and service delivery model at the AGP.

The wider community will be able to share feedback on the design principles and service delivery model recommended by WAGPAG through the project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform as well as through face-to-face engagement activities (including pop-ups and information sessions).

### Phase 3 – inform

Ongoing communications until project completion. Traditional and digital communication channels will be used to keep the community updated on the progress of the project.

Below shows the level of the IAP2 Spectrum of public participation that the project will operate within during project delivery and the questions the engagement will address in each level.

AUDIENCE	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE
Whittlesea Aboriginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intent to utilise the land for the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design principles</li> </ul>

# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to get involved</li> </ul>	Aboriginal Gathering Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service delivery model</li> <li>• Usage and programming</li> </ul>
Whittlesea Reconciliation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project updates</li> <li>• Opportunities to get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intent to utilise the land for the Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design principles</li> <li>• Service delivery model</li> <li>• Usage and programming</li> </ul>
Traditional Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project updates</li> <li>• Opportunities to get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intent to utilise the land for the Aboriginal Gathering Place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design principles</li> <li>• Service delivery model</li> <li>• Usage and programming</li> </ul>
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project updates</li> <li>• Opportunities to get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What activities would you like to see at the AGP?</li> <li>• How could you use the space?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services offered at the AGP</li> <li>• Activities to be held at the AGP</li> </ul>
Adjacent property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is an Aboriginal Gathering Place?</li> <li>• Who is it for?</li> <li>• What happens there?</li> <li>• How can the non-Aboriginal community be involved?</li> <li>• What is the benefit to the broader community?</li> <li>• Project updates</li> <li>• Inform the land has been rezoned</li> <li>• Opportunities to get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What activities would you like to see at the AGP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services offered at the AGP</li> <li>• Activities to be held at the AGP</li> </ul>
City of Whittlesea Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project updates</li> <li>• Opportunities to get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What activities would you like to see at the AGP?</li> <li>• How could you use the space?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services offered at the AGP</li> <li>• Activities to be held at the AGP</li> </ul>
Local State Member for Mill Park Lily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy for funding</li> </ul>	

## Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



D'Ambrosio (MLA)			
State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams (MLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy for funding</li> </ul>	

### Issues/Risks

Issue/Risk	Likelihood of Risk L/M/H	Potential Impact	Risk Mitigation Measure
Attracting negative comments about Aboriginal community and culture	H	Reputational risk	Strong messaging highlighting the significance of the AGP, highlights that it is a place for all people to reflect, celebrate and (re)connect to Aboriginal culture. Opportunity to educate the community further on the rich local Aboriginal history.
Misunderstanding of the function and purpose of an AGP	H	Reputational risk Misinformation shared	Clear messaging that educates the community on what an AGP is, its significance and how it will be used.
Concern about preserving the natural integrity of the Quarry Hills Parklands	M	Reputational risk Environmental risk	Strong messaging focussing on the importance of the AGP and highlighting the design principles that the venue will meet as well as the environmental controls put in place throughout construction.
Community concern that the AGP is only for members of the Aboriginal community	H	Reputational risk	Clear messaging that the AGP will provide a safe and welcoming space for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to reflect, celebrate and (re)connect to Aboriginal culture.

### Targeted Stakeholders

- Adjacent property owners
- Whittlesea community



# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan

- Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, specifically:
  - Dardi Munwurro
  - Bubup Wilam
  - Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, First Peoples Health & Wellbeing, and
  - Connecting Home
- Local State Member for Mill Park Lily D’Ambrosio (MLA)
- State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams (MLA)

## Key messages

The media spokesperson for this project are City of Whittlesea Administrators.

<b>Key messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council is working in partnership with the local Aboriginal community to source funding for and to build an Aboriginal Gathering Place.</li> <li>• Aboriginal Gathering Places are community hubs that promote the importance of culture in supporting positive health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people</li> <li>• The establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will increase access to local services and programs and provide a safe and welcoming space for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to reflect, celebrate and (re)connect to Aboriginal culture.</li> <li>• The establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place is a key advocacy funding priority of the City of Whittlesea. The local Aboriginal community have been advocating for 20 years for an Aboriginal Gathering Place.</li> <li>• The Aboriginal Gathering Place will be located within the Quarry Hills Park Precinct.</li> <li>• At the last census in 2021, Whittlesea LGA had an Aboriginal population of 2,270.</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project has been informed by a thorough engagement process and Council is committed to continuing the conversation with the Aboriginal community.</li> <li>• A Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) which includes members of the local Aboriginal community, was established in 2021 to work in partnership with Council on this project.</li> <li>• Council will consult with the community to help shape the programs and services offered at the AGP and how the community can use the space.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning scheme amendment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council worked in partnership with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) which includes members of the local Aboriginal community on this project including the intent to rezone the land.</li> <li>• The site of the Aboriginal Gathering Place (AGP) has gone through a rigorous Planning Scheme Amendment process to have the land classified as a ‘place of assembly’ and utilised for the AGP (subject to approval of Planning Scheme Amendment).</li> </ul>

# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



## Key activities (highlight in blue those that Administrators can play a role in)

Project Activity	Description	Timing
<b>PHASE 1 – Foundation (from July 2022)</b>		
<i>Broad City of Whittlesea engagement to inform and raise awareness about the Aboriginal Gathering Place.</i>		
Digital engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project page developed on for the Engage Whittlesea platform. The page will be regularly updated throughout the project with opportunities to provide feedback made available when required. Interested community members will be encouraged to subscribe to the page to be kept updated.</li> </ul>	July 2022 – project completion
AGP awareness raising vignettes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video and print vignettes featuring current members of the WAGPAG and Council Administrators will be developed and disseminated to raise awareness of what an AGP is and the importance of such a venue.</li> <li>Vignettes featured on Councils digital communications and engagement platforms.</li> <li>Vignettes disseminated through traditional and digital communication channels.</li> </ul>	July 2022  July 2022– project completion  July – November 2022
AGP awareness raising campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness raising campaign utilising traditional and digital communications channels used to raise awareness of the AGP and its importance</li> </ul>	July – November 2022
Stakeholder briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings and briefings with key stakeholders:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WAGPAG</li> <li>- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations</li> <li>- Gabrielle Williams MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs</li> <li>- The Hon. Lily D’Ambrosio, Member for Mill Park</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing until project completion
<b>PHASE 2 – Targeted Approach and broad community consultation (from November 2022)</b>		
<i>Direct consultation with landholders, direct communication with WAGPAG and broad consultation on use</i>		

# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



Project Activity	Description	Timing
Digital engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform updated to include an opportunity to provide feedback on the design principles and service delivery model recommended by WAGPAG.</li> <li>Interested community members will be encouraged to subscribe to the page to be kept updated.</li> </ul>	November 2022 (TBC)
Targeted communications to adjacent property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct mail to adjacent property owners to inform them of the project, educate them further as per phase 1 and encourage them to get more involved in the project. Property owners will be informed that the land has been rezoned to a 'place of assembly' (subject to approval of Planning Scheme Amendment) to be utilised for the AGP. Depending on the level of interest from the community a project ally group may be formed.</li> </ul>	November 2022 (TBC)
Face-to-face engagement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council will hold pop-ups in community locations with high levels of foot traffic within the local area (i.e.: Coles Mill Park Lakes, Westfield Plenty Valley, Mernda Central etc). Pop-ups will be staffed by engagement and business area representatives and designed to educate and encourage visitors to share their feedback through the Engage Whittlesea platform.</li> <li>Council will hold information session/s designed to educate the community and raise awareness of the AGP and its importance.</li> </ul>	November 2022 – XXX (TBC)  November 2022 – XXX (TBC)
Stakeholder briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings and briefings with key stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WAGPAG</li> <li>- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations</li> <li>- Gabrielle Williams MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing until project completion



# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



Project Activity	Description	Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Member for Mill Park</li> </ul>	
Engagement promotion and continued awareness raising of AGP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of communications collateral to continue to raise awareness of the AGP and its importance to promote the upcoming engagement activities.</li> <li>• Dissemination of communications collateral via social media and traditional media channels.</li> </ul>	<p>November 2022</p> <p>November 2022 – XXX (TBC)</p>
<p><b>PHASE 3 – Construction and implementation</b></p> <p><i>Ongoing communication with all stakeholders until project completion</i></p>		
Project Activity	Description	Timing
Digital engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform updated regularly to keep the community updated on the progress of the project throughout construction</li> </ul> <p>Interested community members will be encouraged to subscribe to the page to be kept updated.</p>	Following completion of phase 2
Stakeholder briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular meetings and briefings with key stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WAGPAG</li> <li>- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations</li> <li>- Gabrielle Williams MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs</li> <li>- The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Member for Mill Park</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing until project completion
Communications collateral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications collateral regularly prepared and disseminated via digital and traditional media channels to update the community on the progress of the project</li> </ul>	Ongoing until project completion
Grand opening	<p>Opening of the AGP event and associated communications collateral prepared.</p> <p>Digital engagement platform updated to reflect project completion.</p>	Upon project completion

# Aboriginal Gathering Place Community Engagement Plan



## Monitoring and Evaluation

Success of this engagement will be measured and monitored by the following:

Measure	Success Criteria	Data Collection Point
<b>Outcome 1: Stakeholders will feel their views have been considered</b>		
Engagement opportunities are designed in a way that is suitable for the different demographics within the municipality	Avenues for feedback are designed to enhance participation from diverse populations, including CALD communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage Whittlesea platform respondents</li> <li>Visitors to community pop-up stalls and information sessions</li> </ul>
Stakeholder feedback is received and considered in decision making	Regular project updates to the community highlight the feedback received and how that has translated in the progress of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage Whittlesea platform respondents</li> <li>Key stakeholder briefings</li> <li>Visitors to community pop-up stalls and information sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2: The project reflects WAGPAG's vision</b>		
WAGPAG are satisfied with the physical AGP that is constructed	Regular meetings and briefings with WAGPAG to ensure Council understands and can meet the design principles put forward by WAGPAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings and briefings</li> <li>Meeting minutes</li> </ul>
WAGPAG are satisfied with the service delivery model selected for the AGP	Regular meetings and briefings with WAGPAG to ensure Council is aware of the preferred service delivery model for the AGP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings and briefings</li> <li>Meeting minutes</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 3: The general community understands the purpose of an AGP and understands the importance of an AGP to the Aboriginal community.</b>		
Communications collateral is developed with a strong narrative that highlights the importance of the AGP and educates the community on what it is and how it is used	Community is aware of what an AGP is, how it is used and its importance to the municipality. Community are aware that the AGP is a place for all, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage Whittlesea platform respondents</li> <li>Visitors to community pop-up stalls and information sessions</li> <li>Attendees of the grand opening event</li> <li>Visitors to the AGP in the first two months since opening</li> </ul>

## 5.1.2 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund & Local Sports Infrastructure Fund

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Customer & Corporate Services
<b>Author</b>	Amanda Reed, Coordinator Capital Programming and Reporting
<b>In Attendance</b>	Amanda Reed, Coordinator Capital Programming and Reporting

### Attachments

1. Growing Suburbs Fund - Priority Projects [5.1.2.1 - 10 pages]
2. CEO Letter - GSF [5.1.2.2 - 1 page]
3. Local Sports Infrastructure Fund - Priority Projects [5.1.2.3 - 1 page]

### Purpose

This report provides an overview of the current grant programs open for application and seeks endorsement to proceed applications for funding as noted below.

### Brief Overview

Applications for the 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund (GSF) opened on 23 May 2022 and closed 4 July 2022. Council has submitted applications for seven projects, totalling \$7,600,000 which will need to be matched by Council funding.

Applications for the 2022 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund (LSIF) opened on 19 May 2022 and closed 12 July 2022. Council has submitted applications for three projects totalling \$520,000 which must be matched by Council funding.

Both funding program guidelines require a council resolution to support the project applications in priority order.

Due to the submission periods not aligning with Council meeting schedules, confirmation has been received from both Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions (DJPR) and Sport Recreation Victoria (SRV) that Council can provide a letter from the CEO confirming the prioritised list of projects along with the submission of applications. Council's resolution can then be submitted after the 18 July Council Meeting.

## Recommendation

### That Council:

1. Provides retrospective approval and support of the submission of the following projects in priority order through the 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund;
  - a. Aboriginal Gathering Place, \$5,000,000
  - b. Whittlesea Township Park, \$500,000
  - c. Atrium Reserve at Quarry Hills Regional Parklands, \$500,000
  - d. Epping Community Services Hub Upgrade, \$375,000
  - e. Riverside Reserve Community Activity Centre and Reserve Upgrade, \$500,000
  - f. Community Energy Transition Program, \$250,000
  - g. Mill Park Reserve Connecting Shared Trail, \$475,000
2. Provides retrospective approval for the submission of the following three projects through the 2022 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund;
  - a. Doreen Dirt Jumps, \$300,000
  - b. Mill Park Reserve Softball and Baseball Practice Nets \$180,000
  - c. Master planning of three sites; Ashley Park, Edgars Creek and Alkira Blvd (SR03) Recreation Reserves, \$40,000

## Key Information

### 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund

The 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund will contribute to meeting critical local infrastructure needs for communities in our changing and fast-growing outer suburbs. It is positioned to quickly respond to the pressures being experienced by interface and peri-urban communities by accelerating infrastructure projects that will make a difference to the liveability and resilience of these areas.

Grants will be targeted towards high priority community infrastructure projects that contribute to:

- the social and economic recovery of communities and groups impacted by Coronavirus (COVID-19);
- the needs of rapidly growing communities;
- local employment creation in both the construction phase and the ongoing operation;
- improved local economic conditions in interface and peri-urban communities;
- improved capacity for councils to respond to changing community needs and demands;
- the delivery of innovative models of integrated/shared community infrastructure;
- creating a safe and engaging environment for vulnerable and isolated community members;

- progressing key priorities of the Victorian Closing the Gap implementation plan by delivering important cultural community infrastructure, and further enhancing the partnership between government sectors, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and the wider community.

A cross-organisation working group was established to identify opportunities in the Capital Works Program and shortlist projects that best met the grant guidelines. Meetings with the funding agency, (DJPR) helped inform the likely strength of the shortlisted projects against the grant fund objectives and criteria.

The projects listed below were identified as best meeting the grant funding objectives and criteria and are listed in priority order:

1. Aboriginal Gathering Place, \$5,000,000
2. Whittlesea Township Park, \$500,000
3. Atrium Reserve at Quarry Hills Regional Parklands, \$500,000
4. Epping Community Services Hub Upgrade, \$375,000
5. Riverside Reserve Community Activity Centre and Reserve Upgrade, \$500,000
6. Community Energy Transition Program, \$250,000
7. Mill Park Reserve Connecting Shared Trail, \$475,000

Applications for the 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund opened on 23 May 2022 and closed 4 July 2022. Council has submitted applications for seven projects, totalling \$7,600,000 which must be matched by Council funding. Further information on the projects can be found in Attachment 1 presented to DJPR on the 11 May 2022.

The GSF guidelines require a council resolution to support the project applications in priority order. The next available Council meeting is 18 July 2022, which is after the applications closing date of 4 July 2022. Confirmation has been received from DJPR that Council can provide confirmation of the prioritised listing of projects via a letter from the CEO at the time of submission and provide the Council resolution after the 18 July Council meeting.

### **2022 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund**

The 2022 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund (LSIF) will invest in proposals that can demonstrate commitment to the following outcomes:

- More participation opportunities made available through the development of new or upgraded existing multi-use, sport, and active recreation infrastructure;
- Improved participation of those who participate less in community sport and recreation, particularly those from communities experiencing long-term socio-economic disadvantage, growth and regional areas and areas affected by natural disaster;
- More equitable and inclusive participation of women and girls in local sport by investing in well-designed and high-quality facilities;

- Improved sustainable design and planning to ensure infrastructure investment is building better and more liveable communities;
- Increased local economic activity through the planning, building, management, and activation of redeveloped or new infrastructure.

The LSIF guidelines state that construction commencement for eligible projects must be within 6 months of the execution of the funding agreement, April 2023, and construction completion by October 2024.

The projects listed below have been identified as best meeting the grant funding objectives and criteria:

- Community Facilities: Doreen Dirt Jumps \$300,000,
- Community Facilities: Mill Park Softball & Baseball Practice Nets \$180,000,
- Planning: Master planning of three sites; Ashley Park, Edgars Creek, and Alkira Blvd (SR03) Recreation Reserves \$40,000.

A working group was established to identify potential capital works projects suitable to each funding stream and discussions held with Sport and Recreation Victoria representatives to provide feedback on the suitability of each project to the program guidelines.

Applications opened on the 19 May 2022 and closed 12 July 2022. Guidelines also state a council resolution is required on all project submissions, however, as with the GSF program the dates did not align to provide this in time for inclusion with the submission.

Confirmation has been received that Council can provide a letter from the CEO in lieu of this, and an official Council resolution be provided after the 18 July 2022 Council meeting.

### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

A cross-organisation working group was established to identify opportunities within the 4 Year Capital Works Program and shortlist projects that best met the grant guidelines. Meetings with the funding agencies, Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions and Sport & Recreation Victoria helped inform the likely strength of the shortlisted projects against the grant fund objectives and criteria.

Community consultation to date has included liaising with local stakeholders, residents, local sporting clubs, community groups and service providers and will comprise various methods to ensure involvement reflective of the local community.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

### High performing organisation

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

## Considerations

### Environmental

Replacing the gas appliances at Council owned facilities will not only make the facilities more sustainable and reduce Council's GHG emissions, it will show the community the economic and environmental benefits of not using gas.

### Social, Cultural and Health

Successful applications will bring forward delivery of infrastructure to promote healthy and active lifestyles and provide places and spaces for community connections.

### Economic

No implications

### Financial Implications

The nominated projects are currently listed with forecast budgets in the 4 Year Capital Works Program. If the grant applications are successful, this will reduce Council's financial contribution to the future Capital Works Program.

## Link to Strategic Risk

### Strategic Risk *Financial Sustainability - Inability to meet current and future expenditure*

This report provides Council with oversight of proposed grant applications that will result in the delivery of important infrastructure to the community and will reduce Council's financial contribution.

## Implementation Strategy

### Critical Dates

The closing dates for applications were:

Growing Suburbs Fund – 4 July 2022

Local Sports Infrastructure Fund 12 July 2022

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

### Conclusion

After extensive consideration of the projects currently listed in Council's 4 Year Capital Works Program the projects identified within this report were found to best meet the criteria and are recommended for Council approval for submission to the 2022-23 Growing Suburb Fund and 2022 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund grant programs.



# 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund

Proposed Applications in Priority Order



# Aboriginal Gathering Place, South Morang



The vision for the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place is to create a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space where the local Aboriginal community can access a comprehensive range of community supported programs and activities that are responsive to their needs.

The new Aboriginal Gathering Place is to be located on an elevated plateau within the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland, with strong connections to the Granite Hills Major Community Park (which is currently in development). The Aboriginal Gathering Place will include:

- An educational entrance space to celebrate and teach aboriginal culture/art
- Multiple flexible multi-purpose spaces for large sized reconciliation, dining and community activities; as well as Media, art, elder and youth activity spaces
- Consultation rooms for health, well-being, youth and employment support
- Communal kitchen
- Staff administration as well as office/working spaces for community use
- Amenities and other support spaces

The Gathering Place will also include external activity spaces, utilising the surrounding natural environment/views and connecting to the new facility. These include:

- Covered outdoor communal eating and gathering spaces
- Fire pit areas for cultural ceremonies, community education and external gatherings
- Bush food/edible gardens
- External active play and discovery areas

**Total Project Cost:** \$ 10,000,000

**GSF Application:** \$ 5,000,000

**Delivery Timeframe:** Construction 2023-24



# Aboriginal Gathering Place – cont'd



- LEGEND**
- P1 Proposed location of Aboriginal Gathering Place facility and support spaces, including carparking and external gathering spaces.
  - P3 Upgrade of existing road for Aboriginal Gathering Place vehicle and pedestrian access.
  - P4 Future location of Granite Hills Major Community Park.
  - P5 Upgrade of existing infrastructure (road and services) for park use.
  - P6 New site entrance and carpark.
  - P7- Proposed locations of trails & rest stops for the Quarry Hills Regional Parklands Connecting Trails Project.
  - P10 Existing Yarra Valley Water storage facility.
  - P12 Authority service (utility) main lines to connect to site entry.



# Whittlesea Township Park – Connecting Community through Improved Access



In 2020 the Whittlesea Township community petitioned to Council for better access to public open space areas in the Whittlesea Township. The petition received strong online support and Council resolved to undertake a landscape master plan. The site is located on Crown Land with the City of Whittlesea and the Whittlesea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management (the CoM) nominated as the Committee of Management. Council is working with the Whittlesea Showgrounds Committee to prepare a landscape master plan to create a vision and prioritisation for future development over the next 3 to 10 years. One of the main factors contributing to the lack of community access to the 25 hectare open space area is the poor access from Laurel Street which connects the centre of the Township to the residential area to the east known as Eastern Hill. The pedestrian and cycle infrastructure is in poor condition and requires immediate redevelopment which includes a dilapidated timber bridge and eroded gravel tracks.

## Project Works

- Construct pedestrian and cycle bridge crossing over the Plenty River to connect Eastern Hill residents to the Township and community services.
- Construct 2.5m wide shared paths along Laurel Street to provide all weather access to community services and facilities.
- Construct 2.5m wide shared paths through Whittlesea Township Park to provide all weather access to community services and facilities.
- Improve drainage and kerb along Laurel Street road reserve to mitigate flooding issues preventing access
- Install lighting along Laurel Street for improved visibility and safety



**Total Project Cost:** \$1,000,000  
**GSF Application:** \$ 500,000  
**Delivery Timeframe:** Construction 2023-24

# Atrium Reserve at Quarry Hills Regional Parklands



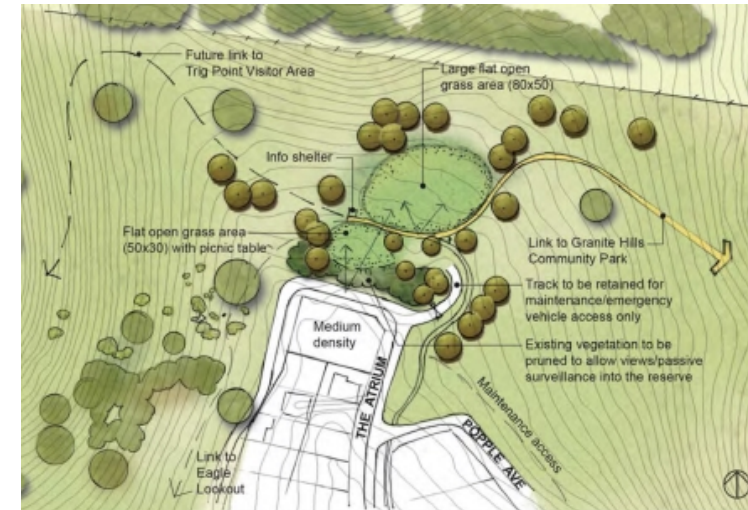
Quarry Hills Regional Parklands is located within the growth corridor between Epping, South Morang, Wollert and Mernda. Council currently manages 440 hectares of open space area which is planned to expand to approx. 1,100 hectares to meet the passive recreation needs of the growing community. Atrium Reserve will act as the gateway and entry node for community to access the broad range of passive recreation activities from the South Morang side of the Regional Parklands. It will become a meeting place for community as the location where 5 trails converge.

## Project Scope

Establish entry node and visitor area including:

- Construct formal paths to connect to the boarder network of 5km of trails
- Construct a grassed flat open space as informal kick about area
- Install informative and interpretive signage to showcase the natural flora and fauna of the parklands and recognise the sites historic cultural significance
- Construct social gathering space including picnic table shelters, drinking fountains and new landscape planting
- Construct parking to accommodate 15 accessible spaces

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,000,000  
**GSF Application:** \$ 500,000  
**Delivery Timeframe:** Construction 2023-24





# Epping Community Services Hub Upgrade



Epping Community Services Hub brings together a range of not-for-profit organisations to provide community services in an integrated, collaborative and multidisciplinary approach within the City of Whittlesea; and to find new and improved ways to work together in order to achieve best possible outcomes for the community and the sector as a whole. In order to increase the number of not-for-profit organisations operating within the facility – and the number of community members accessing the services – additional consulting rooms and staff desk space is required within the Hub.

## Project Scope

- Internal refurbishment to include:
- Construction of three additional consultation spaces increasing number of community members that can access services, as well as number of not-for-profit organisations operating within facility.
- Upgrading North-West wing (furniture, layout, access, electrical services) to double desk numbers, as well as overall facility staff capacity.
- Upgrade of heating & cooling mechanical/electrical system

**Total Project Cost:** \$ 750,000

**GSF Application:** \$ 375,000

**Delivery Timeframe:** Construction 2023-24



# Riverside Reserve Community Activity Centre and Reserve Upgrade, South Morang



The Riverside Community Activity Centre is well-loved by the community, however after 21 years its on-going use is hampered by poor functionality including acoustics, aging facilities and restricted room layouts/joinery that prohibit the number of activities that can occur simultaneously. Non-compliant and worn out, externally accessed public amenities, inefficient heating/cooling and deteriorating façade elements also impact its ability to continue as a thriving community hub, needing immediate modernisation throughout. This facility has also been identified as one of City of Whittlesea’s first Community Activity Centres that could be de-gassed.

Riverside Reserve is a 12,500m2 municipal level open space as classified by the City of Whittlesea’s Open Space Strategy (2016). The reserve is on Council owned public open space which directly adjoins Plenty Gorge Park. It is visited by a diverse range of users and is highly valued by users of the adjacent Riverside Community Activity Centre and Morang South Primary School. Some of the key uses include walking, play, dog walking, group gatherings and enjoying the peace and quiet.

Although a well-loved open space by the local community, facilities are now 21 years old and have become dilapidated, making them unsafe to use or have reached the end of their useful life. There is also a clear disconnection between the play space and picnic area, resulting in a significant decrease in use. The City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy identifies that the reserve is required to be improved to diversify facilities and to appeal to a broader age range. This includes facilities that encourage people to spend more time in the open space (e.g. additional seating and picnic facilities).

### Building Works

- Acoustic and black-out blind upgrade in hall to increase performance and activity opportunities.
- Internal refurbishment of existing consultation and meeting room spaces to increase access, privacy, support infrastructure (kitchenette) and allow multi-use of spaces concurrently.
- Modernisation of existing community kitchen.
- Heating/cooling upgrade in existing community room spaces.
- Refurbishment to External Public Toilets, including unisex disabled toilet.
- De-gassing and installing replacement electric appliances/equipment (utilising existing solar PV systems for additional demand)
- Replacement and re-staining of external timber cladding.

### Reserve Works:

- Refurbishment to the existing social gathering space, incl new BBQ, public furniture, drink fountain and bike racks.
- Improvement to the timber access ramp to the playgrounds for safety and compliance
- Refurbishment of existing large shelters
- Upgrade of aged asphalt to concrete path
- Park and precinct maps and signage
- Landscape and vegetation works

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,000,000

**GSF Application:** \$ 500,000

**Delivery Timeframe:** Construction 2023-24



# Community Energy Transition Program



The Community Energy Transition Program has been developed to ensure community facilities continue to minimise energy consumption, reduce fossil fuel consumption, and reduce Council’s corporate greenhouse gas emissions and impact on the environment.

### Project Scope

- The project will de-gas a range of community facilities, such as Community Centres, Kindergartens and Preschools by removing gas hot water and heating systems at the sites and installing replacement electric appliances.

The additional electricity demand will then be offset by either installing a solar PV system or supplementing an existing solar PV system reducing any financial strain for the site users. The electricity used at the sites will be sourced from Council’s 100% renewable electricity contract.

### Proposed Sites for Installation

- Riverside Community Activity Centre
- Laurimar Community Activity Centre
- Mill Park Community Centre
- Epping Preschool
- Edwards Street Preschool
- Harbard Street Preschool
- Nebel Street Preschool
- The Heights Kindergarten
- Mernda Community House
- Whittlesea Community House



**Total Project Cost:** \$500,000  
**GSF Application:** **\$250,000**  
**Delivery Timeframe:** 2023-2024



# Mill Park Reserve Connecting Shared Trail

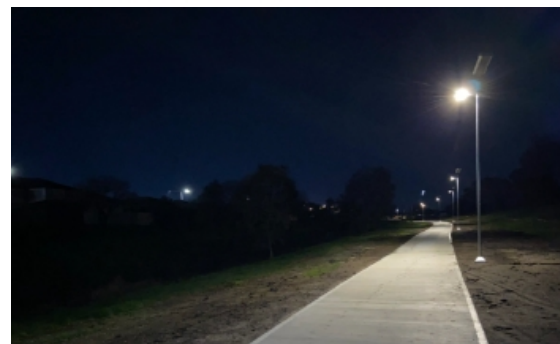
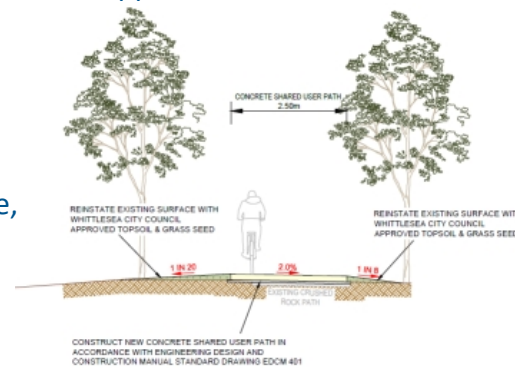


In 2021 Council consulted with the Mill Park residential community through its Streets for People Program on how the streets and access through public spaces currently function and how they could be improved. Following the impacts of Covid restrictions and the rise of communities' dependency on local services and the local open spaces which connect them, the community requested an accessible, safer, all-weather shared trail to connect the services and facilities in and around Mill Park Recreation Reserve. Seven important community services or facilities are within 450m radius of each other. The shared trail will provide a connection between facilities, provide excellent passive recreation opportunities and encourage walking to and between services which supports the health and wellbeing of the Mill Park and surrounding community.

### Project Works

- Construct 1.6km length of 2.5m wide concrete pedestrian and cycle path through Mill Park Recreation Reserve connecting Mill Park Leisure Centre, All Abilities Play Space, Mill Park Softball Diamonds, Mernda Rail line, Mill Park Salvation Army, DPV Health and Mill Park Heights Kindergarten.
- Installation of informative map based and way-finding signage
- Installation of rest-stops along the shared trail including small shelters, seating, drinking fountains and bins.
- Installation of solar lighting along the path corridor to increase perceptions of safety

**Total Project Cost:** \$950,000  
**GSF Application:** \$475,000  
**Delivery Timeframe:** Construction 2023-24



# Growing Suburbs Fund - Summary



Priority	Project Name	Total Project Cost	GSF Requested Funding
1	Aboriginal Gathering Place	\$ 10,000,000	\$ 5,000,000
2	Whittlesea Township Park - Connecting Community through Improved Access	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 500,000
3	Atrium Reserve at Quarry Hills Regional Parklands	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 500,000
4	Epping Community Services Hub Upgrade	\$ 750,000	\$ 375,000
5	Riverside Reserve Community Activity Centre and Reserve Upgrade	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 500,000
6	Community Energy Transition Program	\$ 500,000	\$ 250,000
7	Mill Park Reserve Connecting Shared Trail	\$ 950,000	\$ 475,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 15,200,000</b>	<b>\$ 7,600,000</b>



29 June 2022

Andrew Clegg  
Program Manager  
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions  
Andrew.Clegg@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Dear Andrew,

#### **2022-23 GROWING SUBURBS FUND – PRIORITY PROJECTS AND COUNCIL RESOLUTION**

Please find below seven projects that the City of Whittlesea would like to submit in priority order for consideration for the 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund.

1. Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place, for \$5,000,000
2. Whittlesea Township Park, for \$500,000
3. Atrium Reserve at Quarry Hills Regional Parklands, for \$500,000
4. Epping Community Services Hub Upgrade, for \$375,000
5. Riverside Reserve Community Activity Centre and Reserve Upgrade, for \$500,000
6. Community Energy Transition Program, for \$250,000
7. Mill Park Reserve Connecting Shared Trail, for \$475,000

We understand the GSF guidelines require applicants to approve a priority list of projects at a Council meeting. The next scheduled Council meeting for the City of Whittlesea is 18 July 2022, which is beyond the GSF close date of 4 July 2022. In lieu of this, I can confirm that the above priority projects will be reported to the 18 July 2022 Council meeting for application to the 2022-23 Growing Suburbs Fund Program. Formal minutes of the Council meeting will be forwarded to you shortly thereafter.

I can also confirm that all projects listed above are currently listed in Council Capital Works Program and will have matched Council funding. Should the project expenditure run over budget, Council will cover those costs with Council funding.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Nick Mazzarella, Manager Capital Delivery on 9217 2302.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Lloyd'.

**Craig Lloyd**  
Chief Executive Officer

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#### **Council Offices**

25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang VIC 3752  
Mail to: Locked Bag 1, Bundoora MDC VIC 3083

Phone: 9217 2170

National Relay Service: 133 677 (ask for 9217 2170)

Email: [info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au)

Free telephone interpreter service

131 450

ABN 72 431 091 058

[whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://whittlesea.vic.gov.au)

# Local Sport Infrastructure Fund - Summary



Funding Stream	Project Name	Project Summary	Total Project Cost	LSIF Requested Funding
Community Facilities	Doreen Dirt Jumps	Constructions of a beginners and intermediate lopped mounded earth dirt jump track and social gathering spaces and connecting paths with an emphasis on youth orientated design. The project will also deliver a bike repair station to service dirt jumps and connecting shared path network, water access for maintenance and drinking fountains and spectator spaces. There will be fitness equipment installed along existing shared paths and the installation of information and instructional signage.	\$500,000	\$300,000
Community Facilities	Mill Park Softball & Baseball Practice Nets	Construction of Softball and Baseball nets at Mill Park Reserve.	\$300,000	\$180,000
Planning	Master planning for three sites; Ashley Park, Edgars Creek and Alkira Blvd (SR03) Recreation Reserves	Development of Master Plans for three precincts, Edgars Creek, Ashley Park and Alkira Blvd (SR03) Recreation Reserve, within the City of Whittlesea with the intention to use these plans to inform the delivery of sporting pavilions, ovals, carparks, landscaping and playgrounds for each of the sites in the near future.	\$120,000	\$40,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$920,000</b>	<b>\$520,000</b>

### 5.1.3 Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at Mernda Business Case

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Community Wellbeing
<b>Author</b>	Agata Chmielewski, Manager Strategic Projects
<b>In Attendance</b>	Agata Chmielewski, Manager Strategic Projects

#### Attachments

1. Attachment 1 - RSAC at Mernda Final Business Case [5.1.3.1 - 105 pages]
2. Appendix C - Active Xchange Social Value Model report [5.1.3.2 - 2 pages]
3. Appendix F - Options Assessment Paper [5.1.3.3 - 48 pages]
4. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Appendix G - Aquatics Capital Projects Lessons Learned [5.1.3.4 - 9 pages]
5. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Appendix H - Project Development and Due Diligence Assessment [5.1.3.5 - 2 pages]
6. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Appendix I - Procurement Options Paper [5.1.3.6 - 18 pages]
7. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Appendix J - Peer Review Cost Plan [5.1.3.7 - 78 pages]
8. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Appendix K - Financial Assumptions and CBA Methodology [5.1.3.8 - 11 pages]
9. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Appendix L - Preliminary Risk Register [5.1.3.9 - 3 pages]
10. Attachment 2 - Previous planning and Council decisions for RSAC [5.1.3.10 - 2 pages]

These attachments have been designated as confidential by the Director Community Wellbeing, under delegation from the Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with Rule 53 of the Governance Rules 2021 and sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—

- (i) relates to trade secrets; or
- (ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

In particular the attachments contain information that includes budget details and may prejudice future procurement processes



## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the business case for the Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre (RSAC) at Mernda for endorsement and outline the proposed approach for design, delivery and funding of the key project stages.

Council sought independent advice to optimise community benefits and determine the most financially responsible approach to delivering RSAC. Deloitte Australia were subsequently engaged as the lead consultant to prepare the RSAC business case. The RSAC Business Case (the Business Case, **Attachment One**) provides Council with robust and independent project assessment, including market conditions, financial implications and projected delivery timelines.

The Business Case and other analysis including a cost review<sup>1</sup> (**Attachment One, Appendix H (confidential)**) identifies the constraints and challenges of major infrastructure delivery in the current operating environment and evaluates the organisational impacts of various project delivery options. In short, COVID-19's impact on the industry and associated global supply chain and labour pressures mean construction costs are at an all-time high. This has contributed to a significant increase in forecast project costs for RSAC; with the total project cost increasing to \$180.53 million from \$113.4 million since the scope was endorsed by Council in December 2021.

In line with the December 2021 Council report, delivery of RSAC is dependent on a significant financial contribution (\$80 million) from the State and/or Federal government. That is, the project cost is beyond the financial capacity of Council to deliver on its own, and a partnership with other levels of government is fundamental to Council's ability to realise this project. A staged delivery of the much-needed RSAC is proposed to maximise external funding opportunities; reduce the financial and delivery impact on Council's operating environment; and better position Council to ensure it can continue to invest in capital projects across the municipality.

In light of the significant increase in cost, it is proposed that Council also builds into project design and development a scope review process that seeks to reduce the capital and operational cost to Council and the community. Council would be regularly updated in regard to the scope review component of the project; and this process would also be communicated as part of community engagement processes.

Community engagement will be designed in response to the approved Business Case option and delivery approach; with the establishment of a Stakeholder Reference Group for Stage 2 being the initial priority.

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<sup>1</sup> Slattery, *Mernda Aquatic & Indoor Sports Centre Peer Review REV 2*, June 2022

Endorsement of the business case commits financial and human resources to the project.

### Brief Overview

Council endorsed the project scope for the Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at Mernda (RSAC) at the 6 December 2021 Council meeting subject to the development of a detailed business case.

The business case has been prepared by external consultants Deloitte (with input from other external experts) to provide Council with a robust and independent project assessment, including the constraints and challenges of major infrastructure delivery in the current operating environment and the organisational impacts of project options.

Due to current and projected future market conditions, the estimated cost of delivering RSAC has increased to \$180.53 million from \$113.4 million since financial modelling was last presented to Council in December 2021.

RSAC will be Council's single-biggest investment in health and wellbeing infrastructure to date. An \$80 million contribution from State and/or Federal Government and a staged delivery approach is critical for delivering RSAC to ensure Council remains financially sustainable and is able to continue to deliver a comprehensive program of infrastructure and facilities across the entire municipality.

### Recommendation

#### That Council:

- 1. Receives the Regional Sports and Aquatics Centre in Mernda Business Case (Attachment One), developed in accordance with the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance High Value High Risk (HVHR) Framework for projects requiring significant investment.**
- 2. Endorses Option 2 in the Regional Sports and Aquatics Centre in Mernda Business Case summarised in Table 3 of this report.**
- 3. Endorses the Regional Sports and Aquatics Centre in Mernda project to move to Stage 2 commencement, which includes construction of indoor and outdoor courts, and detailed design for Stage 3 (aquatics and leisure), subject to external funding (detailed at Recommendation 7 below).**
- 4. Notes that construction of Stage 2 is proposed to commence in the 2024/25 financial year, subject to external funding.**
- 5. Approves the allocation of Council's financial contribution for Stage 2 (including detailed design of Stage 3) of \$47.99 million comprising Council cash, reserves and borrowings.**
- 6. Notes that approval for funding for Stage 3 (aquatics and leisure) construction will be presented to Council for consideration in the 2025/26 financial year, noting the current volatility of the construction industry.**

7. **Endorses an advocacy position that a partnership with State and/or Federal Government is a pre-requisite for the Regional Sports and Aquatics Centre in Mernda's delivery; with Council seeking \$40 million for Stage 2.**
8. **Notes that Council's Long-Term Financial Plan has been updated and will be presented to Council for endorsement as part of the 2022/23 mid-year budget process.**
9. **Notes that community and stakeholder engagement for the Regional Sports and Aquatics Centre in Mernda will be designed in response to the approved Business Case option and delivery approach; with the establishment of a Stakeholder Reference Group (including community representatives) for Stage 2 as the initial priority.**

## Key Information

### BACKGROUND

A significant amount of planning, research, options analysis and community and stakeholder consultation has been undertaken over the past ten years to ensure a sports court, aquatic and leisure facility in Mernda meets community needs and expectations and that Council's investment delivers maximum community benefit.

Most recently, Council resolved to adopt the recommended provision of leisure, aquatics and sports court facilities in Mernda at the 6 December 2021 Council meeting, which included:

- A 50-metre multipurpose pool with boom wall
- Warm water program pool, teaching pool, leisure pool, spa, steam and sauna
- Gymnasium, group fitness, program rooms
- Health consulting and wellness suites
- Six indoor sports courts (including show court) and eight outdoor floodlit netball courts.

A summary of strategic planning and Council resolutions for the project to-date is provided in **Attachment Two**.

### Business case methodology

The December 2021 Council resolution also noted the importance of actively pursuing external funding opportunities for an investment of this magnitude from other levels of government. To align with government requirements, the business case for the Regional Sports and Aquatic Facility at Mernda (RSAC) was written according to the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance High Value High Risk (HVHR) Framework. The HVHR Framework seeks to ensure that projects requiring significant investment have been subject to a robust planning and procurement process and that delivery risks have been identified and thoroughly considered.



The HVHR business case process required Council to explore different options to solve the ‘problem’ the business case is seeking to address. Four facility options were assessed which included different combinations of leisure, aquatic and sport elements endorsed by Council for further exploration (December 2021).

### Preferred option

Option 2 achieved the highest overall score against the criteria and was the preferred option progressed through the business case. It included all the elements endorsed in December 2021 (outlined above). Option 2 was found to align to government policy most strongly, best meet the needs and expectations of the community and was more strongly placed for financial sustainability. The full options assessment is provided in **Attachment One, Section 4 and Appendix F (confidential)**.

## PROJECT BENEFITS AND RATIONALE

### Benefits to be delivered

Building on work conducted by Council (and outlined in **Attachment Two**), the Business Case identified three key benefits which were weighted in accordance with the Department of Treasury and Finance’s Investment Management Standard. Table 1 summaries these benefits and their weightings, with further detail provided in **Attachment One, Section 2**.

**Table 1: Overview of benefits identified**

Benefit	Benefit summary	Weighting
<b>Benefit 1: Whittlesea is a place for all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City of Whittlesea Council is committed to fostering a healthy community of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities that can easily access support services.</li> <li>Increasing social and civic engagement amongst the community, particularly within priority groups, will foster a socially cohesive, healthy, and participating community in Whittlesea LGA.</li> <li>Removing the barriers for women and girls to participate in physical activity is crucial for their development and health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>	50%
<b>Benefit 2: Improved health, wellbeing, and social inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased physical activity directly contributes to improved health and wellbeing among residents, leading to a happier and higher quality life.</li> <li>Improving the health and wellbeing among residents of Whittlesea LGA will also benefit the economy through increased productivity and a reduced burden on the healthcare system.</li> </ul>	30%
<b>Benefit 3: Safer people and places</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased participation in swimming lessons and water safety activities will reduce the risk of drownings, particularly in children</li> <li>Community infrastructure fosters a safer community with an increased sense of pride, helping to attract and retain future residents and visitors.</li> </ul>	20%

### Rationale

Almost 45 per cent of adults residing in the City of Whittlesea undertake insufficient physical activity – the second highest proportion in north-eastern Melbourne.

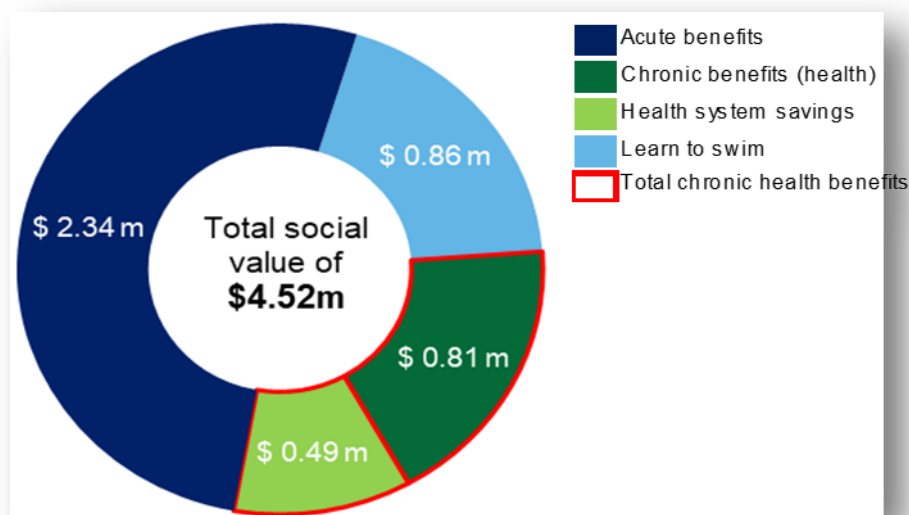
The City of Whittlesea also has:<sup>2</sup>

- the highest proportion of adults who are overweight in north-eastern Melbourne – 58 per cent
- the sixth highest proportion of adults with heart disease in Victoria – 7 per cent
- the third highest proportion of adults with type 2 diabetes in Victoria – 6 per cent
- high rates of adults with arthritis (25 per cent) and osteoporosis (20 per cent).

Increasing the rate of physical activity by just 10% can reduce disease and death related to physical inactivity by 13 per cent and 15 per cent per year respectively.<sup>3</sup> Research shows the following benefits of increased participation in sport and physical activity:<sup>4</sup>

The Business Case also used the ActiveXchange Social Value Model<sup>5</sup> to quantify in dollar terms the health system savings that result from lower incidence of disease and better managed mental health issues including lower wait times, less congestion and health cost savings. The analysis conducted for the City of Whittlesea suggests that reducing residents' risk of chronic health conditions would prevent disease and save the health care system almost \$0.5 million in 2022 alone as shown in Figure 1.

Further benefits are outlined in the 'Social, Cultural and Health' section of this report.



<sup>2</sup> Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017, *Dashboard, selected results and quick statistics for local government areas and time series data (2015-2017), LGA Snapshot.*

<sup>3</sup> Boston Consulting Group, 2017, [Intergenerational review of Australian sport.](#)

<sup>4</sup> KPMG, 2020, *The value of community sport and active recreation infrastructure.*

<sup>5</sup> ActiveXchange is a consultancy that specialises in capturing and analysing sport and leisure data. Their Social Value Model used for the business case quantifies the social impact of community infrastructure.

**Figure 1: Health system savings per annum (in 2022 figures)** (Source: ActiveXchange 2022 (refer to Attachment One, Section 2.1.2))

## STAGING, COST AND SCOPE

### Cost escalations and instability in the construction sector

A global supply chain crisis has been escalated in the past six months due to a number of factors including: the on-going impact on materials supply and labour as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; the war in Ukraine; and major flooding on Australia's eastern seaboard. The Australian construction industry has been impacted through an unprecedented scarcity of construction materials. The resulting surge in local demand has seen material and labour cost escalations far exceeding annual inflation projections.

The Australian construction industry is largely dependent on foreign trade for common construction materials including fabricated steel, stone and timber. Many of the international factories that produce these materials have closed or are experiencing significant delays, creating a premium for these sought-after products.<sup>6</sup>

The cost of steel products experienced an annual increase of 42.1 per cent to March 2022. Structural timber products and electrical equipment rose in cost by 39.2 per cent and 13.9 per cent respectively.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, shipping costs have skyrocketed in the last 12-18 months, with an increase of 300 per cent contributing to the volatile materials market.<sup>8</sup>

The current instability in the construction sector is further impacted by larger contractors with greater purchasing power purporting to stockpile key materials to hedge against rising costs on long term projects.

To counter the economic impact of the pandemic, governments are investing heavily in infrastructure to energise state economies.<sup>9</sup> Major government infrastructure projects (many of which are not scheduled to be complete for 8-10 years) have significantly stimulated the industry over the last few years, further impacting ongoing resource and labour pressures.

The industry's inability to attract labour resources, including engineers, consultants, and contractors, will also continue to put pressure on pricing, signalling project delays throughout the sector.

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<sup>6</sup> Marcum Accountants and Advisors, *Cost Inflation: Construction Costs and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, October 2021

<sup>7</sup> Australian Financial Review, June 2022

<sup>8</sup> Slattery, *Mernda Aquatic & Indoor Sports Centre Peer Review REV 2*, June 2022

<sup>9</sup> BCG, *The Role of Infrastructure Stimulus in the COVID-19 Recovery and Beyond*, September 2020

These supply chain issues, material cost increases and labour shortages will significantly and adversely affect the delivery of RSAC, as cost escalations and tightening supply are predicted to continue.

### **CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IMPACTS ON THE COST OF DELIVERING RSAC**

In view of the recent and ongoing price volatility in the construction industry, Council engaged independent consultant Satterley to review the RSAC cost estimates presented to Council in December 2021.

The cost review (**Attachment One, Appendix H (confidential)**) found that the cost of delivering the endorsed RSAC scope as a single-stage construction had increased from an estimated \$113.4 million in December 2021 to \$141million in June 2022<sup>10</sup>. A staged construction was estimated at approximately \$161 million, depending on the timing of the stages and associated escalation.

The increase in cost between December 2021 and June 2022 is directly attributed to the unprecedented cost increases in the construction industry<sup>11</sup>, which have a flow-on effect on project contingency, escalation, and non-construction costs (consultants, project management etc).<sup>12</sup>

### **RSAC COST ESCALATION IMPACTS ON COUNCIL'S LONG-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

Financial modelling was undertaken by Council to understand the impact of the RSAC cost escalations (**Attachment One, Appendix H (confidential)**) on Council's Long-Term Financial Plan and determine the most financially sustainable delivery option.

Assumptions applied in the modelling are described in Tables 2 and 3.

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<sup>10</sup> Slattery, *Mernda Aquatic & Indoor Sports Centre Peer Review REV 2*, June 2022

<sup>11</sup> The December 2021 and June 2022 estimates costed the same project elements (i.e. both adopted the same inclusions and exclusions). When not taking escalation into consideration, the variance between the December 2020 and July 2021 cost estimates was negligible (i.e., 1 per cent). The increase in cost between the two estimates is only due to escalation in the construction industry.

<sup>12</sup> Slattery, *Mernda Aquatic & Indoor Sports Centre Peer Review REV 2*, June 2022

**Table 2. Long-Term Financial Plan modelling for RSAC - assumptions**

Assumption summary	Description
<b>1. Mix of Council-controlled project funding sources</b>	<p>A mix of Council-controlled funding sources is important for a project of this magnitude. It ensures Council can continue to deliver required infrastructure and facilities across the municipality and distributes the cost of RSAC equitably across current and future generations of residents who will benefit from the facility. Funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash funds allocated for capital works: paid for by the ratepaying population of the year in which the works are undertaken.</li> <li>• Council cash reserve funds: paid for by ratepayers in years where the funds were set aside.</li> <li>• Loan borrowings: paid for the by the ratepaying population which will benefit from using RSAC in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>2. External funding</b>	<p>The financial modelling was based on a \$80 million cash co-contribution towards the project from State and/or Federal Government.</p>
<b>3. Cost escalation</b>	<p>Cost escalation rates of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5% for the 2022/23 financial year</li> <li>• 3.5% per annum for the 2023/2024 financial year and beyond</li> </ul>
<b>4. Construction contingency</b>	<p>A construction contingency of 10 per cent, which is the standard contingency applied to Council's capital projects.</p>
<b>5. Additional items</b>	<p>Inclusion of additional items that were not in the costings for the June 2022 cost estimate, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retractable grandstand seating</li> <li>• Authority charges</li> <li>• Information technology fit-out costs</li> <li>• Gym equipment.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Project staging</b>	<p>A staged construction of RSAC outlined in <b>Table 3</b> to maximise opportunities for Council to secure funding from other levels of government through infrastructure funding programs and election cycles.</p>

Council's Long-Term Financial Plan modelling showed that the total cost of constructing RSAC in the stages and timeframes outlined in Table 3 will be \$180.53 million, which is \$19.5 million more than the \$161 million staged construction estimate provided in June 2022 (**Attachment One, Appendix H (confidential)**).

The higher project cost in Council's financial modelling compared to the June 2022 cost review (**Attachment One, Appendix H (confidential)**) is attributed to:

- The addition of the items listed in Table 2 that were not included in the June 2022 cost review.
- The application of Council's standard construction contingency of 10 percent in Council's modelling, which is higher than the 7.5 percent in the June 2022 cost estimates.
- Higher cost escalation rates applied in Council's modelling for the 2024/25 financial year and beyond (3.5 per cent) than the June 2022 cost review (3 per cent).

Table 3 below identifies the proposed stages and associated scope and costs, including:

- **Stage 1:** Early works and detailed design for Stage 2
  - Early works commenced in FY 2021/22
  - Detailed design for Stage 2 to commence in FY 2022/23
- **Stage 2:** Indoor and outdoor courts and detailed design for Stage 3
  - Stage 2 construction scheduled to commence in FY 2024/25, subject to external funding
  - Detailed design for Stage 3 to commence in FY 2034/24
- **Stage 3:** Aquatics and leisure scheduled to commence in FY 2027/28, subject to external funding

The proposed staging approach prioritises delivery of the indoor and outdoor sports courts because community demand for courts already far exceeds capacity. The *Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan, 2019* (WNBP) found that there is a significant shortage of suitable indoor and outdoor sports courts in the municipality with approximately half of registered netball and basketball players having to leave the City of Whittlesea to play their sport. In Mernda and Doreen specifically, the WNBP identified that an additional 13 indoor courts and up to 18 floodlit outdoor netball courts are required to meet recommended facility provision ratios. RSAC will significantly increase much-needed netball and basketball participation opportunities.

Whilst Stage 1 (Early Works) has been included in Table 3 to illustrate the entirety of the project, only Stages 2 and 3 are the subject of the business case. Stage 1 has already commenced and has an endorsed budget of \$13.27 million in the Long-Term Financial Plan. It should be noted that financial modelling in the Business Case (**Attachment One**) only includes the cost of Stages 2 and 3.

**Table 3. RSAC Business Case (Option 2): Staged construction, scope and estimated cost approach for RSAC**

Stage	Financial Year/s	Estimated Cost	Scope (aligned to December 2021 Council resolution)
<b>Stage 1 (Early Works and Stage 2 detailed design)</b>	Early works commenced in FY 2021/22 Detailed design for Stage 2 to commence in FY 2022/23	\$13.27 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early works including Plenty Road intersection upgrade and connecting road to Everton Drive</li> <li>• Bulk earthworks and rock removal</li> <li>• Retarding basins and drainage connection</li> <li>• Service connections to site</li> <li>• Detailed design for Stage 2</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2 (Indoor and Outdoor Courts and Stage 3 detailed design)</b>	Stage 2 construction scheduled to commence in FY 2024/25, subject to external funding Detailed design for Stage 3 to commence in FY 2034/24	\$87.99 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six indoor sports courts (including show court)</li> <li>• Eight outdoor floodlit netball courts</li> <li>• Foyer and support areas for the sports courts and future aquatic facilities</li> <li>• Changing Places facilities</li> <li>• Environmental design elements associated with Stage 2</li> <li>• Detailed design for Stage 3</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3 (Aquatics and Leisure)</b>	Stage 3 construction scheduled to commence in FY 2027/28, subject to external funding	\$79.28 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50-metre multipurpose pool with boom wall</li> <li>• Warm water program pool, teaching pool, leisure pool, spa, steam and sauna</li> <li>• Gymnasium, group fitness, program rooms, occasional care</li> <li>• Health consulting and wellness suites.</li> <li>• Environmental design features associated with Stage 3</li> <li>• A café, family change village and Changing Places facilities</li> </ul>

Given the significant increase in cost, it is proposed that Council also builds into project design and development a scope review process that seeks to reduce the capital and operational cost to Council and the community. Council would be regularly updated regarding the scope review component of the project. This process would also be communicated as part of community engagement.



Table 4 below models how the delivery of RSAC could be accommodated in Council's Long-Term Financial Plan according to the stages outlined in Table 3. Without external funding from State and/or Federal Government, Council would need significant loan borrowings which would reduce its future capacity to deliver on its ongoing capital works program in other geographic and service areas of the municipality.

In light of this, the optimal funding mix for Council to deliver Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the \$180.53 million RSAC project is shown in Table 4 and has been identified as:

1. \$80 million of funding from State and/or Federal Government
2. \$58.59 million of Council cash
3. \$33.95 million of Council cash reserves
4. \$7.99 million of loan borrowings.

**Table 4. Proposed RSAC funding and delivery timelines**

	Forecast 2021-22	Budget 2022-23	Forecast 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26	Forecast 2026-27	Forecast 2027-28	Forecast 2028-29	Forecast 2029-30	Forecast 2030-31	Forecast 2031-32	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Phase 1	702	500	7,568	4,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13,270
Phase 2	400	500	2,500	8,712	35,962	36,569	3,341	-	-	-	-	87,984
Phase 3	624	-	3,000	2,000	-	-	6,241	30,904	34,763	1,745	-	79,277
<b>Capital expenditure</b>	<b>1,726</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>13,068</b>	<b>15,212</b>	<b>35,962</b>	<b>36,569</b>	<b>9,582</b>	<b>30,904</b>	<b>34,763</b>	<b>1,745</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>180,531</b>
<i>Less Funding Sources</i>												
Council cash	1,726	1,000	5,140	6,717	10,962	15,136	9,582	5,904	679	1,745	-	58,591
Reserves	-	-	7,928	8,495	-	6,433	-	-	11,092	-	-	33,948
Borrowings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,992	-	-	7,992
External funding	-	-	-	-	25,000	15,000	-	25,000	15,000	-	-	80,000
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>1,726</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>13,068</b>	<b>15,212</b>	<b>35,962</b>	<b>36,569</b>	<b>9,582</b>	<b>30,904</b>	<b>34,763</b>	<b>1,745</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>180,531</b>

### Community Consultation and Engagement

Council has undertaken four community consultations since 2013 on a regional sports and aquatic centre in Mernda which have demonstrated significant community support for a facility. In the most recent consultation in 2020, 72% of survey respondents rated the centre's importance at 7/10 and 45% rated it at 10/10.

Council will continue to identify and consult with key stakeholders during each stage of the project, including the design development stage. This will include development of stakeholder reference groups by the project team to inform key development stages.

It will be important to manage community expectations around the delivery and timeframe of this high-profile project throughout its lifespan.

Council will ensure the community is kept informed about the project and its progress as well as Council's advocacy efforts via Council's communication and community engagement channels.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

### Connected communities

We work to foster an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported

The provision of leisure and aquatic facilities within the municipality strongly aligns with the Whittlesea 2040 strategic priority of 'Connected Community' as the provision of sport and recreation infrastructure supports the key directions of encouraging a socially cohesive, participating and healthy and safe community. This project is identified in two key initiatives in the Community Plan 2021-2025:

1. Commence construction of a leisure and wellbeing facility in Mernda; and
2. Build additional outdoor netball courts in a number of neighbourhoods including Epping, Doreen, Mill Park, Whittlesea, South Morang and Mernda.

The Community Plan Action Plan 2021-22 includes an action to advocate for a regional indoor netball basketball centre. Community Plan consultation identified that to help recovery from COVID-19, the community asked Council to focus on:

- Health promotion, emphasising mental health and wellbeing; natural environments and green open space; connected walking and cycling paths and trails, safety in public places and opportunities for social connection and exercise.
- Community connections, including supporting vulnerable people and providing facilities and spaces for groups of people to meet.

The proposed facility also aligns with the following Council-endorsed policies and key strategy documents:

- Whittlesea 2040: *A Place for All*, 2019
- Community Plan 2021-2015
- Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study, 2018
- Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy, 2014
- Mernda Strategy Plan 2011 (amended 2016)
- Mernda Regional Recreation Reserve Master Plan, 2011 (draft)
- Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041
- Active Whittlesea Policy, 2019
- Whittlesea Water for All 2020 – 2030
- Zero Net Emissions Plan 2022

## Considerations

### Environmental

#### *Environmental and cultural heritage investigations*

Council engaged relevant independent consultants to undertake flora and fauna studies, heritage investigations and a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the Mernda Sports Hub site on which RSAC will be located.

The findings of these investigations are provided in **Attachment One, Section 7** as well as actions Council will undertake to mitigate any potential environmental and cultural heritage impacts.

#### *Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)*

The design for RSAC will support Council in achieving its zero-emission target by 2022 through energy efficiency, sourcing renewable energy (avoiding the use of natural gas) and sustainable building design including photovoltaic solar panels and rainwater collection. It will also incorporate water sensitive urban design elements.

The cost estimates include a three per cent allowance for Environmentally Sensitive Design (ESD) initiatives. ESD initiatives will be explored and refined through the detailed design process.

### Social, Cultural and Health

RSAC will provide significant opportunities for participation in active recreation, leisure activities and structured sport; resulting in positive physical, mental and social health outcomes for decades to come.

As illustrated in Figure 2, investment in RSAC will deliver over \$4.5 million of social value per year by providing a contemporary, industry leading aquatic, leisure and sports centre tailored to the needs of the City of Whittlesea community. Over a 30-year period, RSAC will deliver \$784 million in social value. Improved physical activity and social engagement among City of Whittlesea residents would deliver exceptional health benefits. Relative to comparable facilities, RSAC would be in the top 90 per cent for acute benefits and top 85 per cent for both chronic benefits and learn to swim benefits.

	Scope of benefits	Benefit value	Percentile ranking*
<b>Acute benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Increase productivity</li> <li>• Improved educational outcomes</li> </ul>	<p><b>\$2.34m</b> p.a. in 2022</p>	<p><b>90<sup>th</sup></b></p>
<b>Chronic benefits (health)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardio-vascular disease</li> <li>• Breast and bowel cancer</li> <li>• Type 2 diabetes</li> <li>• Dementia</li> <li>• Health system savings</li> </ul>	<p><b>\$1.31m</b> p.a. in 2022</p>	<p><b>85<sup>th</sup></b></p>
<b>Learn to swim benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of drowning</li> </ul>	<p><b>\$0.86m</b> p.a. in 2022</p>	<p><b>85<sup>th</sup></b></p>

**Figure 2. Social value of RSAC**

A full description of social, cultural and health benefits is provided in **Attachment One, Section 2.1** and summarised below:

- Providing an inclusive environment for social engagement through adopting universal design principles that consider the community’s abilities, needs and preferences.
- Increased rates of participation in structured and unstructured physical activity (starting at around 474,601 annual visits to gym and aquatics facilities alone).
- Providing spaces that support flexibility in programming (such as the ability to host female-only swim and gym sessions) can provide greater opportunities for females to participate in inclusive activities that are in culturally appropriate and welcoming environments, without fear of judgement.
- Meeting current and future demand for court sports (including badminton, basketball, netball, table tennis, volleyball) which encompasses both casual demand (34,600 people) and organised demand (2,213 people after drive time).
- Increased participation in a broader range of activities beyond active recreation including supporting community service providers in assisting priority groups within the community.
- Increased opportunities for residents, particularly children, to develop swimming skills and water safety education with 1,720 members projected to partake in learn to swim activities.

## Economic

A Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for RSAC was undertaken using forecasted attendances, memberships and associated benefits. The resulting Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) for RSAC is 1.15, which means that it is projected to create \$1.15 in value for every dollar invested. The RSAC BCR is a conservative estimate and is consistent with community infrastructure projects. It generates a net economic gain of \$255.5 million.

There are also numerous benefits that RSAC will deliver that are not typically captured in Cost Benefit Analysis. These include intangible social and community benefits and several unquantified benefits such as job creation and improved injury rehabilitation from co-location of allied health and aquatic facilities. These types of benefits were considered in **Attachment 1, Section 2 and Section 4**. RSAC is expected to create over 430 jobs in the City of Whittlesea during construction and 54 ongoing jobs for day-to-day operations of the facility.

## Financial Implications

### Costs

The cost implications of RSAC are detailed earlier in this report. The costs on which financial modelling was based exclude finance costs, cost escalations outside of those outlined in this report and costs associated with potential Green Star accreditation.

Risks identified in the June 2022 cost estimate (**Attachment One, Appendix H (confidential)**) which could require additional expenditure include:

- *Asbestos/hazardous material removal*: It is unlikely that the site has had prior use but there remains a possibility for localised in-ground pockets of contaminated material. The overall risk is considered low.
- *Relocation or upgrade of existing services and infrastructure*: The June 2022 cost estimate includes \$300K for bulk earthworks / site levelling and a further \$1 million contingency item for abnormal ground conditions. However, abnormal ground conditions remain a critical project risk until the design of the facility is developed further and design directed geotechnical investigations are undertaken.
- *Market conditions/cost escalation*: If costs escalate further than accounted for in the cost estimates presented in this report, there may be a need to undertake value management exercise/s. Any significant proposed scope changes will be brought back for Council consideration.

### Profit projections

RSAC is forecast to run at a slight profit in Year 1 of operations (2027-28, courts only), then at a loss in Year 4 (2030-31, courts and aquatic) which is when the full facility is operational and lifecycle costs begin to be incurred. Financial performance is expected to improve over time. By 2045-46 the facility breaks even and in the final year of modelling (2051-52) it returns a profit of \$215,000. Further detail is provided in **Attachment One, Section 9**.

### Link to Strategic Risk

#### **Strategic Risk** *Financial Sustainability - Inability to meet current and future expenditure*

A preliminary project risk register was developed as part of the business case which identifies and scores foreseeable project risks. The full preliminary risk register is provided in **Attachment One, Section 10 and Appendix L (confidential)**. It includes 32 risks relating to project delivery, timing, budget and future operations of the facility.

Once the business case for RSAC is endorsed, Council's Strategic Risk Framework will be used to develop a Risk Management Plan specific to the delivery of RSAC. Project risks will be continuously monitored, assessed and managed during the development and delivery of the facility.

### Implementation Strategy

#### **Communication**

Council will keep community and stakeholders updated and informed on the status and progress of the project across a range of Council's channels including print, digital, social media, web, e-news, newsletters, advertising, and Council's engagement platform [engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au](https://engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au).

The communications strategy will be tailored to the endorsed approach to the project rollout to effectively manage community expectations in relation to project delivery. The communications narrative will highlight Council's fiscally responsible approach to delivering this much-needed project within the constraints of the challenging capital delivery environment.

#### **Critical Dates**

A project of this magnitude has critical lead times for design and procurement. Project timelines will need to be reviewed regularly and adjusted in response to market conditions and external funding opportunities as the project evolves. Significant changes in project timeframes will be brought to Council for consideration.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

### Conclusion

The RSAC Business Case identifies some key community benefits including:

- Increased rates of participation in structured and unstructured physical activity - particularly for women and girls
- Increased participation in a broader range of non-physical activities (particularly for low-income groups and other cohorts who experience comparatively greater barriers to sport, leisure and recreation)
- Increased social value and community connection
- Increased water safety and education.

In addition, the RSAC Business Case identifies that current market conditions in the construction industry present significant challenges for major infrastructure projects such as RSAC. The cost of delivering RSAC is beyond the financial capacity of Council to deliver on its own and a partnership with other levels of government is fundamental to Council's ability to realise this project.

This report proposes a staged delivery of the much-needed RSAC to maximise external funding opportunities; ensure Council remains financially sustainable; and can continue to deliver a comprehensive program of infrastructure and facilities across the entire municipality.



# Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at Mernda Business Case

## City of Whittlesea

### Senior Responsible Officer attestation

- with consideration of the applicable sections of the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1984 (Vic)* (refer section 7.2.1) and the *Investment Management and High Value and High Risk Guidelines* (both available on the DTF website).
- that the business case will achieve the full intended service outcome.
- that the business case will achieve the intended service outcome subject to the following additional investments ...

**Signature:**



**Date:**

18 July 2022

**Name of Senior  
Responsible Officer:** Craig Lloyd

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**Title:** Chief Executive Officer

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## Glossary

Acronym	Description
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BCE	Base Cost Estimate
BCR	Benefit Cost Ratio
CAC	Capital Asset Charges
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CAM	Centralised Accommodation Management
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis
CoW	City of Whittlesea
DJPR	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (Victoria)
DoH	Department of Health
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance (Victoria)
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESD	Environmentally Sustainable Design
ILM	Investment Logic Map
LGA	Local Government Area
MCA	Multi Criteria Assessment
NPV	Net Present Value
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDDD	Project Development and Due Diligence
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RFT	Request for Tender
RSAC	Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at Mernda
SLIP	Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Profile 2021-2041
SRV	Sport and Recreation Victoria
TEI	Total Estimated Investment
VHBA	Victorian Health Building Authority
WNBP	Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan

## Overview

The Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at Mernda (RSAC) will be a state-of-the-art facility that embodies a holistic approach to wellness by providing core sports, aquatic and leisure facilities alongside an enhanced health and wellbeing offering. It is a significant opportunity to increase rates of participation in structured and unstructured physical activity, increase participation in non-physical activities, provide social value and community connection, and increase water safety and education within Whittlesea Local Government Area.



- 5 multipurpose indoor courts + 1 show court
- 350 fixed seats
- 1,000 retractable seats
- 12 outdoor floodlit netball courts



- Health consult and wellness rooms
- Multipurpose room
- Café
- Crèche



- Multipurpose 8-lane 50 metre pool
- Warm water exercise pool
- Leisure pool
- Learn to swim pool



- Gymnasium
- Group fitness/program rooms
- Spa, steam and sauna

The City of Whittlesea will pursue staged investment from State Government to support the project. **This business case is seeking \$80 million in asset funding over the forward estimates to support the delivery of ‘Stage 2’ and ‘Stage 3’ of the RSAC.** Stage 2 provides indoor and outdoor sports courts, core infrastructure, carparking and the detailed design for Stage 3, which includes is the aquatics and gymnasium facilities.

## Why does the Whittlesea LGA community need investment in sport and aquatic infrastructure?

Whittlesea LGA is one of Melbourne’s largest and most diverse municipalities with population growth significantly above the Victorian average. As one of Victoria’s designated ‘growth areas’, Whittlesea LGA plays an important role in housing and infrastructure for communities of the future.



Whittlesea LGA population is currently 238,000 and expected to surpass 353,910 by 2037



Approximately 35.5% of Whittlesea LGA residents were born overseas (compared to 33.8% across Greater Melbourne)



Only 45% of Whittlesea LGA adults rated their general health as very good or excellent

The City of Whittlesea serves a population with wide-ranging characteristics. Some challenges mirror state-wide challenges, such as increasing need for mental health services, whilst other characteristics stand out within the catchment area. These characteristics include a higher-than-average rate of families and multigenerational households, diverse cultures and communities, a broad socio-economic profile and a high proportion of existing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the pandemic. Investment in the RSAC will address the following problems:



### Problem One

A lack of opportunities to socialise through diverse structured and unstructured physical activity limits intergenerational social participation and positive connection across all communities



### Problem Two

Inactive, sedentary lifestyles are contributing to a comparatively lower health profile for residents across the City of Whittlesea



### Problem Three

A lack of a culture of lifelong participation in sport and recreation prevents many, and particularly women, from acquiring a range of life fulfilling experiences and life-saving skills

## What are the benefits of building the RSAC?

The diversity and growth of the region means that initiatives focussed on community building, increasing economic activity, and supporting the community's health and wellbeing are likely to have a major impact. The RSAC project will provide industry-leading diversity in sports courts, aquatic spaces, health and wellbeing facilities, multipurpose spaces and allied health suites which will encourage and support physical activity and social interaction. Investment in the RSAC will:

- **ensure Whittlesea LGA is a place for all** through fostering a healthy community, increasing social engagement for priority groups, and removing barriers for women and girls participation in physical activity
- **improve health and wellbeing** of the community through increased physical activity leading to a happier and higher quality of life and benefitting the broader economy through increased productivity and reduced burden on the healthcare system
- **foster safer people and places in Whittlesea LGA** by increasing participation in swimming lessons and water safety activities, increase community pride and creating safe spaces for formal and informal events and gatherings.

## The economic value of the RSAC to the Whittlesea LGA

The project solution delivers a gross economic benefit of \$255.5 million for Victoria over the project's 30-year evaluation period with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 1.15.

The quantified economic benefits that the RSAC at Mernda delivers have been derived through:

- **consumer surplus** which is a benefit when consumers value attending the facility more than its entry/membership cost
- **travel time benefits** which is the benefit consumers gain through reductions in travel time
- **social value** which is the impact physical activity has on improving quality of life and reducing the burden on the health care system through reducing a person's risk of chronic disease and acute health problems
- **operational income** from operating the facility.

This output is considered conservative as there are numerous intangible social and community benefits that this investment will deliver (such as stronger social bonds, increased social capital, and reduced anti-social behaviour) as well as several unquantified benefits (such as job creation and improved injury rehabilitation from co-location of allied health and aquatic facilities)

## How will the RSAC be delivered?

The RSAC will be the largest social infrastructure project ever delivered by the City of Whittlesea. It is not viable for Council to fund the full scope of the project in a single stage so for practicality and affordability reasons multiple stages are proposed. This approach has been developed to prioritise those components of the project where community demand already far exceeds capacity – the indoor and outdoor sports courts.

Delivering this project requires three separate procurements:

- **Design of the facility.** A brief for a consultant to deliver the detailed design and have input into the construction process is currently being developed and is expected to be finalised in July 2022.
- **Construction of the facility.** Tier 2 building contractors are likely to be the target market given the size and scope of the project, even if it is delivered in the stages outlined above. Several delivery models are considered feasible and Council will confirm selection prior to commencing the project.
- **A third-party operator to operate the facility.** Council is likely to release this tender to market during construction so that operators can submit more accurate responses based on the finalised scope and design.



## What State Government investment is required to support the RSAC?

To achieve the vision of the RSAC, Council will continue to explore opportunities for co-funding with the State Government on all stages of the project, including seeking funding from the Commonwealth Government. This business case seeks \$80 million of co-funding from State Government as part of the 2023-24 State Budget to deliver 'Stage 2' and 'Stage 3' of the project. This funding will be asset funding and Council will be responsible for the remainder of the capital investment (\$87.261 million) as well as the ongoing financial performance of the facility (revenue and operating costs), asset maintenance and renewal. These figures exclude Stage 1 which will be fully funded by Council.

**Table 1: Capital costs**

Capital funding	(\$ million)										
Est. asset investment cash flow	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	5 year total	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	TEI
Stage 2	0.754	2.095	7.299	30.131	30.639	<b>70.918</b>	2.799	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>73.717</b>
Stage 3	0.523	2.514	1.676	0.000	0.000	<b>4.712</b>	5.229	25.893	29.126	1.462	<b>66.422</b>
Project risk allocation	0.119	0.431	0.840	2.818	2.866	<b>7.074</b>	0.751	2.422	2.724	0.137	<b>13.108</b>
Project contingency allocation	0.128	0.461	0.897	3.013	3.064	<b>7.563</b>	0.803	2.589	2.913	0.146	<b>14.014</b>
Principle repayments for leases – CAM	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>
Principle repayments for leases – department	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Subtotal (gross asset price increase)</b>	<b>1.524</b>	<b>5.500</b>	<b>10.712</b>	<b>35.962</b>	<b>36.569</b>	<b>90.267</b>	<b>9.582</b>	<b>30.904</b>	<b>34.763</b>	<b>1.745</b>	<b>167.261</b>
Council offset	(1.524)	(5.500)	(10.712)	(10.962)	(21.569)	<b>(50.267)</b>	(9.582)	(5.904)	(19.763)	(1.745)	<b>(87.261)</b>
<b>Net impact capital</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>25.000</b>	<b>15.000</b>	<b>40.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>25.000</b>	<b>15.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>80.000</b>

## What are the next steps?

Council will work with key stakeholders to:

- consider and confirm the preferred governance structure for the delivery of the RSAC
- continue with the preliminary design and masterplan for the RSAC
- continue with the 'Stage 1' Early Works to prepare the site and design 'Stage 2' (the Early Works have already commenced and will be fully funded by Council)
- undertake further community demand analysis and advocacy with the community
- commence preparation for procurement processes for each stage of project delivery
- consider preferred governance structure for the ownership, management and ongoing operation of the RSAC
- progress planning with the relevant State Government departments for the build and the relationship and integration with surrounding land uses.

Further activity will depend on the date of any funding decision and the funding allocated by the State Government. Should insufficient funding be available from State Government, Council will need to make a policy decision on its financial viability of proceeding with the project, recognising that the full scope of the project is needed to unlock the full benefits. This decision would be subject to further analysis.

## **Part 1 – Investment case**

# 1. Problem definition

## 1.1 Background

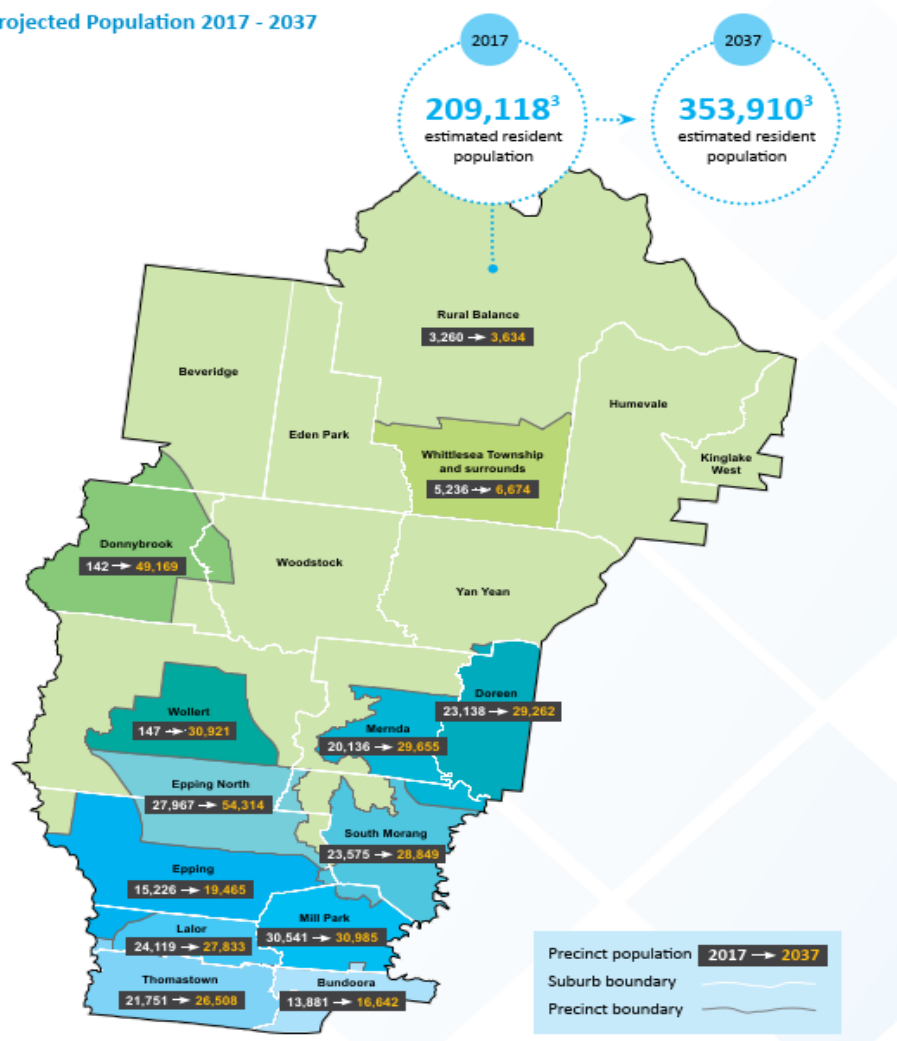
### 1.1.1 City of Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea is one of Melbourne’s largest and most diverse municipalities. It is approximately 20 kilometres north of Melbourne’s central business district and encompasses an area of nearly 490 square kilometres<sup>1</sup>.

Whittlesea Local Government Area (LGA) has long been a designated ‘growth area’ intended to play an important role in housing and infrastructure for communities of the future. The residential population of Whittlesea LGA in 2022 is just over 238,000<sup>2</sup> and is expected to increase to over 353,000 by 2037 (refer Figure 1). This represents an annual population growth rate of more than 2.8 percent, far higher than the 1 to 1.73 percent forecast across Victoria over the same period.

Figure 1: Projected population of Whittlesea (2017-2037)

Projected Population 2017 - 2037



Source: Community Wellbeing Indicators Report 2017, City of Whittlesea.

<sup>1</sup> Profile.ID (2022). City of Whittlesea Community Profile

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

### 1.1.2 Demographic trends driving the need for action

The City of Whittlesea Council (Council) provides a broad range of services in the community across all population cohorts including early childhood, youth services, age and disability services, sport and recreation and arts and cultural programs. In addition to Council run services, Council facilities are also used by organisations who provide early childhood, youth services, migrant and refugee support as well as services for older adults, people with disabilities, people experiencing economic hardship and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups.

The City of Whittlesea serves a population with wide-ranging characteristics. Some challenges mirror state-wide challenges, such as increasing need for mental health services, whilst other characteristics stand out within the catchment area including:

- higher than average rate of families and multigenerational households
- community with diverse backgrounds
- a very broad socio-economic profile
- a high proportion of existing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the pandemic.

#### Higher than average rate of families and multigenerational households

As a growth municipality, the City of Whittlesea has always attracted young families who migrate to the area in search of affordable housing. The 2016 Census revealed that 54.6 percent of households in the City of Whittlesea were family households, compared to an average of just 43.5 percent across Greater Melbourne.

Council conducts a periodic *Household Survey* of approximately 3,000 respondents every year. Comparing the data over the period 1997 to 2017 shows that the median age of respondents is increasing as the proportion of respondents below age 49 years is decreasing, whilst the proportion of respondents above age 50 years is increasing. The median age increased from thirty-nine years in 2015 and 2016 to forty years in 2017.

This trend is expected to continue with the forecast proportion of young people (0-19 years) in Whittlesea LGA predicted to remain relatively constant over the next 20 years at around 27.5 percent<sup>3</sup> and the proportion of people aged 65 years and over projected to increase from 12.1 percent in 2021 to 14.1 percent in 2041<sup>4</sup>.

#### Home to diverse culture and communities

The municipality has a diverse population and is home to many cultures and communities. Approximately 35.5 percent of residents were born overseas (refer Figure 1Figure 2), compared to the Greater Melbourne average of 33.8 percent. The number of local residents born overseas increased by approximately 35 percent between 2011 and 2016, compared to growth in the Australian-born population of 20 percent during this period. The most significant emerging cultural groups in the City of Whittlesea are people born in India, China, Iran and Sri Lanka.

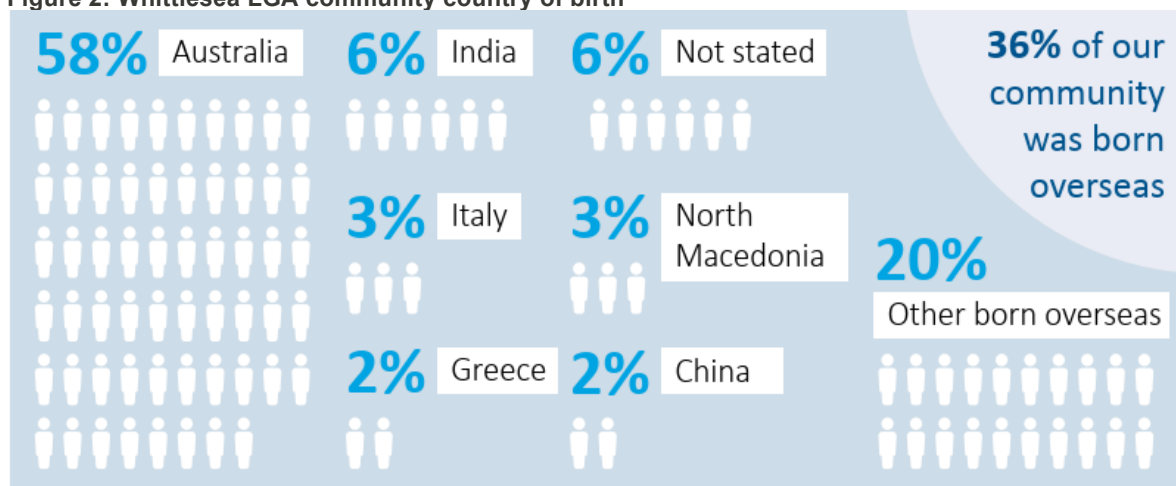
Further, 44 percent of residents speak a language other than English at home in comparison to an average of 32.3 percent across Greater Melbourne<sup>5</sup>. With 1,638 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents, the City of Whittlesea has the second largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Greater Melbourne. This increased by 46 percent between 2011 and 2016, a higher rate than the LGA's total population growth in this period of 27.5 percent.

<sup>3</sup> Decreasing from 27.8 percent of the population in 2021 to 27.5 percent in 2041.

<sup>4</sup> City of Whittlesea, Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041

<sup>5</sup> Profile.ID (2022). City of Whittlesea Community Profile

Figure 2: Whittlesea LGA community country of birth



Source: Census of Population and Housing 2016, ABS.

### A broad socio-economic profile

There are also large spatial differences in terms of the socio-economic profile of residents in Whittlesea LGA. Whittlesea LGA is the fifth most socio-economically disadvantaged of Melbourne's 31 metropolitan local government areas<sup>6</sup>. Approximately 17 percent of Whittlesea LGA residents live in poverty compared to 13 percent across Victoria<sup>7</sup>. The economic challenges vary from location to location, with established areas of Whittlesea LGA (such as Thomastown, Lalor and Epping) having on average lower incomes and lower labour force participation in contrast to growth areas (such as Doreen and Mernda) which have higher rates of educational attainment and higher labour force participation.

Data collected by the City of Whittlesea for the *Community Attitudes and Liveability Survey* in 2018 identified that<sup>8</sup>:

- 1 in 2 households were experiencing moderate/heavy housing related stress (higher for renters and sole parent families)
- 1 in 4 households could not access \$2,000 in an emergency (higher for sole parent families)
- 1 in 4 households ran out of food and could not afford to buy more (higher in the suburbs of Epping North and Mernda)
- 3 in 10 households did not participate in social activities due to a lack of money
- 36.2 percent of households were experiencing financial hardship (for example delayed payment of bills and fines).

Gambling losses also contribute to financial pressures for individuals and families in Whittlesea LGA, with electronic gaming machine losses 22.6 percent higher per capita than the average for Metropolitan Melbourne<sup>9</sup>.

Socio-economic factors such as limited income and access to economic resources are the fundamental causes of a wide range of negative health and wellbeing outcomes in the community. These factors affect Whittlesea LGA residents to access basic material goods and services, the ability to pay for health-related expenses, housing, education, capacity to choose healthy lifestyle behaviours and participate fully in social activities.

### A high proportion of existing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the pandemic

Council is committed to improving the safety and inclusion of all groups in the community. Whittlesea LGA is home to several vulnerable groups in the community including people

<sup>6</sup> ABS, Census of Population and Housing

<sup>7</sup> National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, *Every suburb Every town: Poverty in Victoria*, Nov 2018.

<sup>8</sup> City of Whittlesea, Financial Vulnerability Advocacy and Action Plan 2020-2022

<sup>9</sup> City of Whittlesea, Gambling Strategy and Action Plan 2014 to 2024 (2014)

experiencing problems with physical and mental health, family violence and homelessness. As Whittlesea LGA continues to grow and support diversity, it also faces challenges in relation to health outcomes. According to a 2017 report<sup>10</sup>:

- Only 45 percent of adults rated their general health as very good or excellent, a significant decline from the 2013 result of nearly 60 percent.
- In line with national trends 31 percent of individuals were overweight, and 24 percent were obese.
- Less than one-quarter (24.5 percent) of households in Whittlesea LGA thought accessing mental health services was 'very easy'.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an unequal impact across Melbourne, creating areas of more and less advantage across the city and exacerbating existing health and income disparity<sup>11</sup>. Whittlesea LGA was fourth overall for number of COVID-19 cases (compared to other councils within Victoria) and third for cases per capita<sup>12</sup>. The impact of the pandemic on Whittlesea LGA has been wide ranging, however a recent survey of residents outlined key concerns<sup>13</sup>:

- 56 percent of parents were concerned about their children's social wellbeing
- 66 percent of respondents felt the pandemic was having a negative impact on their mental health
- 60 percent of respondents felt less connected to their community
- more than 80 percent of businesses had lost revenue and customers.

The pandemic has directly intensified the rates of mental ill-health and disadvantage in Whittlesea LGA's youth:

- 23 percent of young people in Whittlesea LGA aged between 18 and 24 reported experiencing high psychological distress, compared with 16 percent of Victorians.
- 39 percent of young people in Whittlesea LGA reported experiencing hardship during the first lockdown (March 2020 to May 2020), compared to 24 percent of Victorians.
- 30 percent of young people in Whittlesea LGA reported experiencing financial hardship in February 2020, compared to 16 percent of Victorians<sup>14</sup>.

This is consistent with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research<sup>15</sup>, which found that symptoms of anxiety and depression have risen dramatically among young people and remain higher than pre crisis levels.

Further, the Whittlesea LGA has the highest rate of family violence in the North East Melbourne Support and Safety Hub catchment area (see Figure 3) and one of the highest across metropolitan Melbourne<sup>16</sup>. Family violence impacts a diverse range of people in the community, including pregnant women (pre and post pregnancy), children, young women, women with disabilities, women seeking refuge or asylum, and Aboriginal women<sup>17</sup>.

Council estimates there are at least 700 people within its community who are experiencing homelessness, some of whom are living on the street, out of their car with their children or in overcrowded houses. There was at least a 7 percent increase in homelessness rates in Whittlesea LGA from 2011 to 2016, which is higher than the national average of 5 percent<sup>18</sup>. The increase in the

<sup>10</sup> City of Whittlesea, 2017 Community Wellbeing Indicators.

<sup>11</sup> KPMG, *The Widening Divide in Melbourne How COVID-19's transmission through the city increased the existing inequality*, August 2021.

<sup>12</sup> The Age, COVID-19 data centre, accessed 24 May 2022 <[https://www.theage.com.au/national/covid-19-data-centre-coronavirus-by-the-numbers-20200401-p54g4w.html?permanent\\_redirect=true](https://www.theage.com.au/national/covid-19-data-centre-coronavirus-by-the-numbers-20200401-p54g4w.html?permanent_redirect=true)>

<sup>13</sup> City of Whittlesea, *Municipal pandemic readiness and recovery plan, January – June 2021, 2021*.

<sup>14</sup> City of Whittlesea, *2022-2023 Australian Government pre-budget submission*, January 2022

<sup>15</sup> OECD, *Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID-19 crisis*, 2021.

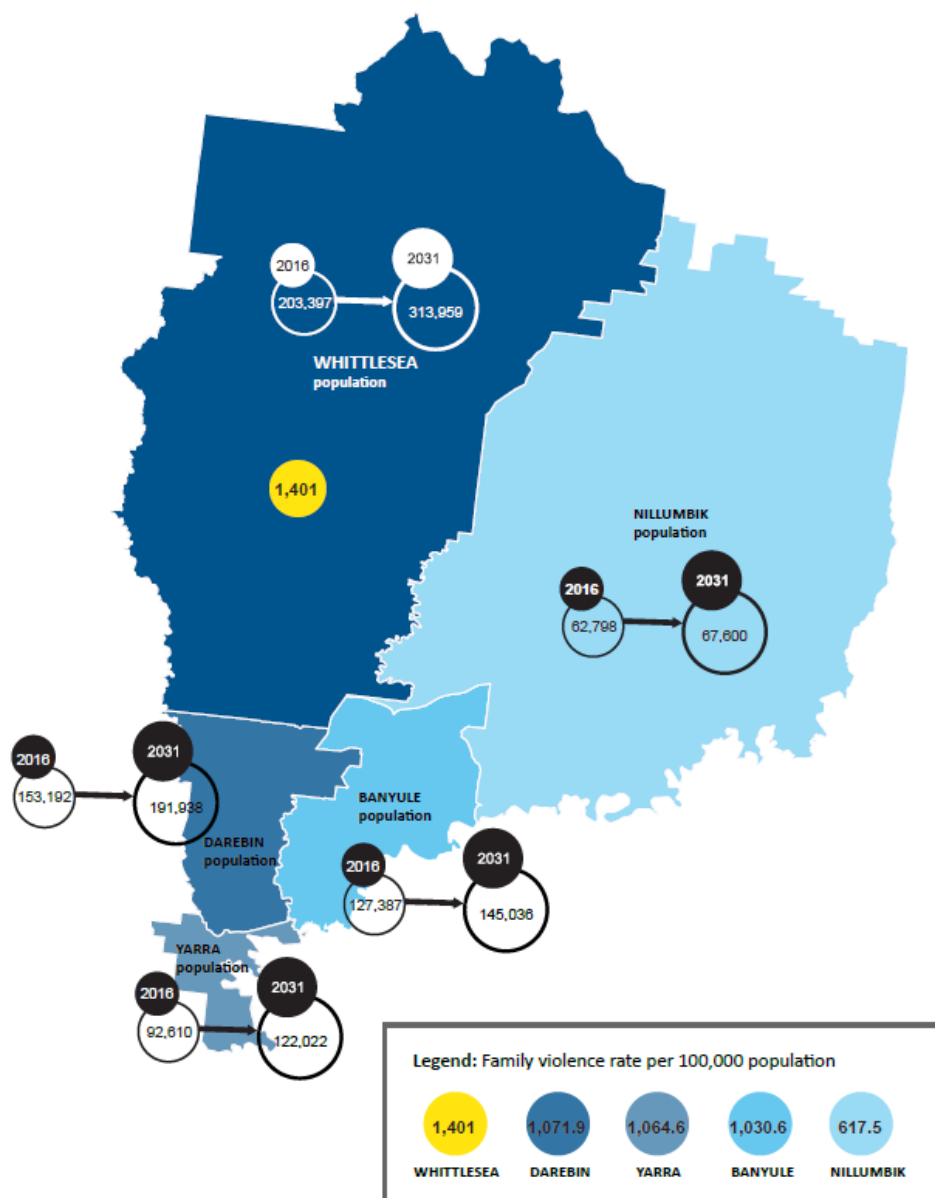
<sup>16</sup> City of Whittlesea, *The Right Location for a Support and Safety Hub*

<sup>17</sup> VicHealth (2007), *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*.

<sup>18</sup> City of Whittlesea, *Social and Affordable Housing*

rate of homelessness is putting increased pressure on specialist homelessness services within Whittlesea LGA.

Figure 3: Population growth and family violence rate per capita for North East Metropolitan Region



Source: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria (2017), Family Violence Data Portal

### 1.1.3 The vision for sports, aquatics and leisure within the City of Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea's overarching strategic vision of Whittlesea 2040 indicates Council's commitment to promoting 'a social cohesive community' and 'a healthy and safe community' as key directions. Council provides a range of services and infrastructure to benefit its community whilst ensuring appropriate levels of provision across all demographics and income levels. One of the fundamental ways in which Council supports its residents is through the provision of services and infrastructure that support the health and wellbeing of the community and reducing barriers to participation.

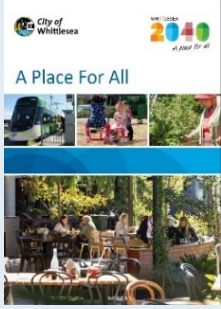

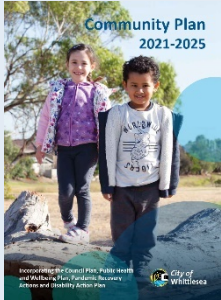
Mernda and Doreen, on the eastern border of Whittlesea LGA, are the particular focus of this business case as they have experienced significant growth over the past decade. While the cycle of residential development is beginning to slow down, these precincts will continue to experience



steady population growth for the next 10-15 years. Together, Mernda and Doreen are forecast to grow from 56,000 residents in 2021 to 65,000 residents in 2041<sup>19</sup>.

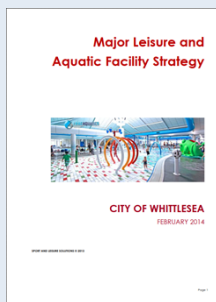
To ensure the City of Whittlesea understands the needs of its diverse and growing community, Council has undertaken substantial community engagement and strategic planning to best position the Whittlesea LGA for the future. In line with Council’s provision of services and infrastructure to support the health and wellbeing of the community, Table 2 is a summary of the key strategies and policies relating to the vision for a sports, aquatic and leisure within the Whittlesea LGA.

**Table 2: City of Whittlesea’s key strategy and policy documents**

Document	Description
<p><b>Whittlesea 2040</b></p> 	<p>In recognition of the rapid and diverse population growth in the Whittlesea LGA, Council developed the <i>Whittlesea 2040: A place for all</i> vision report. This long-term vision outlines four distinct directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected community</li> <li>• Liveable neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Strong economy</li> <li>• Sustainable environment</li> </ul> <p>Within the <i>Connected Community</i> goal Council have identified three further sub-directions of a socially cohesive community, a healthy and safe community and a participating community. Each of these directions reinforce the vision for sports, aquatic and leisure centres in the community to achieve connection in the community.</p>
<p><b>Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028</b></p> 	<p>Active Whittlesea 2019-2028 is an evidence-based strategy and action plan that guide the planning, provision and promotion of sport, leisure and recreation programs, services, and facilities within the City of Whittlesea over the ten-year period. Active Whittlesea aims to increase the number of residents who are physically active by 10 per cent and will deliver actions that achieve the overall goal of 75 per cent of residents participating in one or more hours of physical activity per week by 2028.</p> <p>Three key directions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and promotion</li> <li>• Responsive programs and partnerships</li> <li>• Open space and infrastructure</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Plan 2021-2025</b></p> 	<p>Key initiatives to enhance community connection in the Whittlesea LGA were further outlined in the <i>Community Plan 2021-2025</i>. The <i>Community Plan 2021-2025</i> was informed by extensive community engagement and considers key priorities with respect to Council resources and efforts.</p> <p>Two of the initiatives developed in the <i>Community Plan 2021-2025</i> explicitly support the development of further sports and wellbeing facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commence construction of a leisure and wellbeing facility in Mernda; and</li> <li>• build additional outdoor netball Courts in a number of neighbourhoods including Mernda.</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> ProfileID, City of Whittlesea

**Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy / Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study**



In recognition of the need to deliver leisure and aquatic facilities to the residents of the Whittlesea LGA, the *Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy 2014* was developed. This *Strategy* identified Mernda as prime location for a potential aquatic centre, which transpired into the *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study*. The vision of both strategies was to ensure that aquatic and leisure facilities are easily accessible by residents, are a meeting place and make a significant contribution to the physical and mental wellbeing of the City of Whittlesea community. The four guiding principles established were:

- accessible and equitable
- affordable
- viable
- maximising social and health benefits.

**Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan**



Guided by participation trends and current netball and basketball infrastructure, Council developed the Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041 (WNBP) to guide future development of netball and basketball courts.

Council endorsed the Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041 findings and recommendations with regards to:

- court provision ratios to guide the future provision of netball and basketball facilities across the City of Whittlesea
- preferred models for facility provision of the respective state governing bodies, Netball Victoria and Basketball Victoria
- possible locations for future facility provision, including a facility within Mernda, consisting of 6 indoor courts and 8-12 outdoor courts.

**Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Profile 2021-2041**



Guided by the analysis of participation trends, local demographics, facility audits and a thorough engagement with key stakeholders, Council developed the *Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Profile 2021-2041* (SLIP). The SLIP provides a framework to guide the provision of sport and leisure infrastructure within the City of Whittlesea. It is currently in draft form and will form a key chapter of Council's Long Term Community Infrastructure Strategy once endorsed (due 2023).

The SLIP identifies the facility categories and asset response required within the City of Whittlesea such as:

- indoor multipurpose facilities
- indoor and outdoor sport courts
- aquatic and leisure centres

**1.1.4 Existing sports, aquatic and leisure centres**

In general, growth areas are known to have fewer libraries and aquatic centres than more developed areas of Melbourne<sup>20</sup>. Recommendation 73 of *Victoria's infrastructure strategy: 2021-2051* recognises this disparity and recommends funding to address these gaps<sup>21</sup>. This is particularly true of the Whittlesea LGA which is experiencing rapid population growth without a corresponding increase in sports, aquatic and leisure centre infrastructure.

In the previous section (refer Table 2) Council's *Community Plan 2021-2025* and *Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041* both identify Mernda as the location for the development of further sports and wellbeing facilities. There are no aquatic and leisure centres located within a 10-minute drive of the proposed site at Mernda. Table 2 lists swim schools or small standalone gyms and Figure 4 displays facilities within a 10-minute drive time catchment of Mernda. This analysis clearly demonstrates the lack of aquatic and leisure facilities within Mernda.

**Table 3: Existing privately owned swim schools and gyms within 10-minutes**

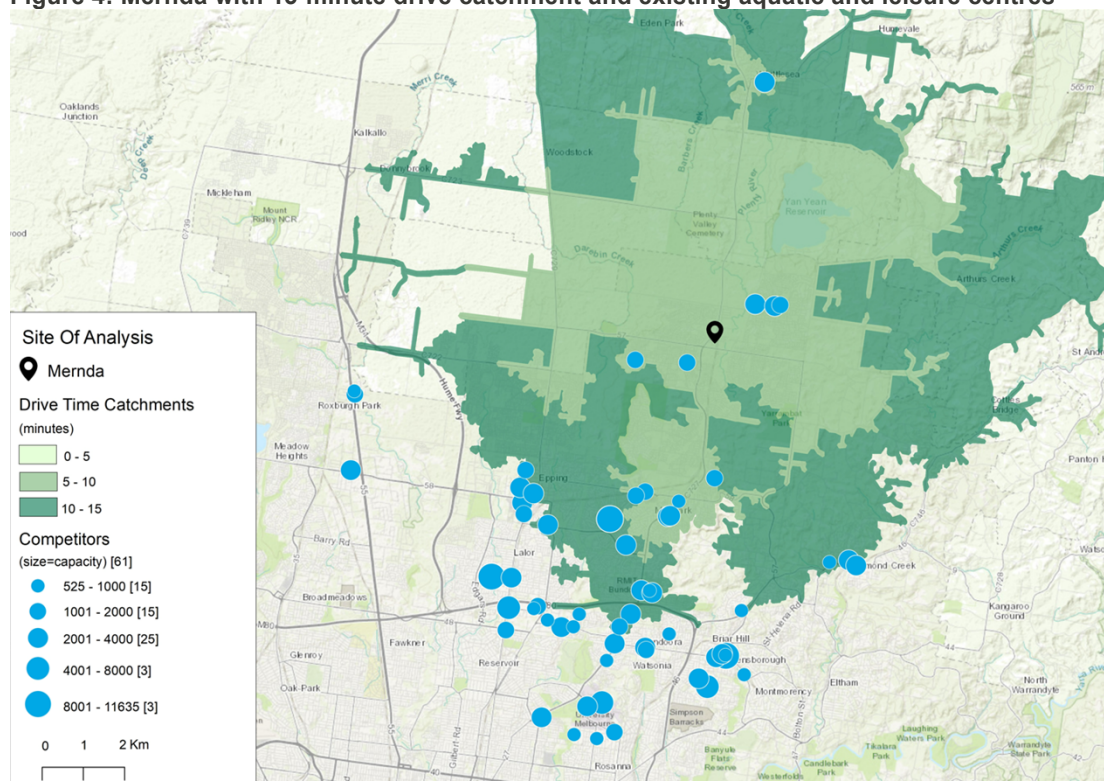
Site	Drive time (minutes)	Description
Kingswim Mernda	2.24	Educational kids swimming classes from 12 weeks old through to graduate level swimmers
Jump Swim School Mernda West	4.16	Boutique learn to swim facility for babies aged from 3 months through to stroke development

<sup>21</sup> Infrastructure Victoria, *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051*

Anytime Fitness Doreen	6.85	Gym amenities, cardio, strength/weights, functional training and training/coaching services
Laurimar Kids Learn to Swim	6.85	Family owned and operated boutique learn to swim facility beginning at 6 months old
Studio 63 Health and Fitness	7.45	Private boutique fitness training studio located in South Morang
Power House Gym South Morang	8.62	Gym amenities, cardio, personal training and a ladies-only training area
One Health & Fitness	9.15	Group fitness studio, cardio, strength & functional equipment, designated lifting areas and a ladies-only training area
Jetts Plenty Valley	10.64	Gym amenities, cardio, functional training, and personal training.

Source: ActiveXchange

Figure 4: Mernda with 15-minute drive catchment and existing aquatic and leisure centres

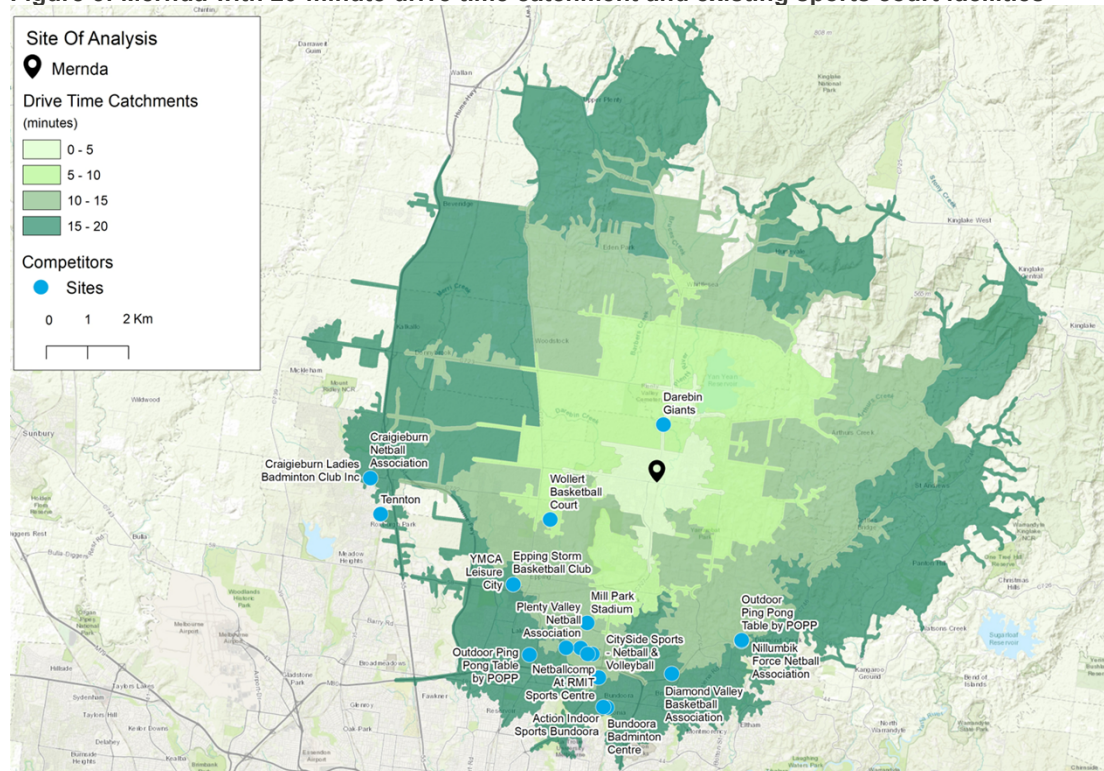


Source: ActiveXchange

Whittlesea LGA, and Mernda specifically, lacks infrastructure supporting a range of other sporting activities, such as basketball and netball. Figure 5 identifies the sports facilities within Mernda’s 20-minute drive time catchment.



Figure 5: Mernda with 20-minute drive time catchment and existing sports court facilities



Source: ActiveXchange

The unmet need for suitable sports and leisure facilities in Mernda, will be exacerbated as the population of the area increases in the coming years. Key considerations include:

- There are no 50-metre pools or aquatic centres within 10 kilometres. Facility development guidelines<sup>22</sup> developed by Aquatics and Recreation Victoria recommend that a 50-metre pool should be considered where the catchment population is between 70,000 and 100,000 and included where the catchment population is above 100,000. The current population within a five-kilometre radius of Mernda is nearly 68,000 which is anticipated to grow to more than 83,000 residents by 2041.
- No single centre caters for diverse water activities (lap swimming, recreational swimming, water aerobics, swim lessons and hydro) within a nine-kilometre radius of Mernda town centre.
- Council has planned for future sports, aquatic and leisure centre facilities in Mernda, and is considered pressing due to the population growth and lack of existing suitable infrastructure.
- Neighbouring councils are considering the development for future sports, aquatic and leisure centre facilities in Merrifield (Hume City Council) and Wallan (Mitchell Shire Council).
- None of the current Council owned indoor courts are compliant based on Netball Victoria’s compliance standards which means their use is limited, particularly for formal competition training or events with the potential to raise revenue.

## 1.2 Define the problem

The three problems this Business Case will address have been identified and weighted in accordance with the Department of Treasury and Finance’s (DTF) Investment Management Standard. Table 4 summarises the problems and the full Investment Logic Map (ILM) is provided in Appendix A.

Table 4: Business case problems

Problem	Weighting
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<sup>22</sup> Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, Indoor Recreation Facility Development Guidelines

<b>Problem 1:</b> A lack of opportunities to socialise through diverse structured and unstructured physical activity limits intergenerational social participation and positive connection across all communities	50%
<b>Problem 2:</b> Inactive, sedentary lifestyles are contributing to a comparatively lower health profile for residents across the City of Whittlesea	30%
<b>Problem 3:</b> A lack of a culture of lifelong participation in sport and recreation prevents many, and particularly women, from acquiring a range of life fulfilling experiences and life-saving skills	20%

The next sections of this business case break down each identified problem.

## 1.3 Evidence of the problem

### 1.3.1 Opportunities to socialise around diverse structured and unstructured physical activity limit positive intergenerational social participation and connection across all communities

#### Summary – Problem 1

- Structured and unstructured physical activity is integral to society's culture and wellbeing. Whittlesea LGA currently lacks key infrastructure enabling structured and unstructured sports for the growing population.
- Whittlesea LGA's growing population is diverse in a range of demographic measures. The community requires suitable facilities that appropriately cater for everyone's needs.

### **Whittlesea LGA lacks key infrastructure enabling structured and unstructured physical activity**

The lack of suitable infrastructure supporting physical activity outlined in Section 1.1.4 limits the ability of Council and other groups (such as sporting clubs and community service providers) to provide opportunities for socialisation and reach the community. This affects both structured and unstructured sports<sup>23</sup> and affects all age groups within the community.

The *Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019 – 2028* described a decline in community participation rates in structured sports. This could be linked to several causes, but the declining participation rates are particularly affected by the lack of suitable infrastructure. For example, the lack of formal netball and basketball facilities has resulted in Whittlesea LGA having 830 fewer netballers and 3,220 fewer basketballers<sup>24</sup> than would be expected based on participation rates across Greater Melbourne and the Northern Metro Region. To meet current demand, an additional 21 indoor courts and 20 outdoor netball courts are urgently required within the Whittlesea LGA<sup>25</sup>.

In response to the growing population, Council undertook an assessment of sport participation trends, local demographics, sporting facility audits and a thorough engagement process with key stakeholders to make informed and evidenced-based recommendations on the distribution of possible locations for future facility provision. This assessment informed the Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 and split up Whittlesea LGA into regions to better understand facility requirements and the appropriate asset response from Council. In the Central East region, which includes Mernda, Doreen and South Morang, there is substantial demand for aquatic and leisure centres as well as indoor multipurpose spaces to accommodate for the future population.

As described in Section 1.1.4, the catchment around Mernda town centre will soon exceed the population level for which Aquatic and Recreation Victoria recommends a 50-metre pool, with the nearest 50-metre being Watermarc in the Banyule LGA, 16 kilometres away. Local Whittlesea LGA schools and swim clubs have identified a lack of suitable infrastructure and facilities supporting structured aquatic sports as having a negative impact on participation and opportunities for residents, particularly children, to develop swimming skills and water safety education.

Over half of Australians (51 percent) prefer to exercise in facilities or studios and/or outdoors with personal training, compared to 29 percent who prefer structured sport and 20 percent who prefer casual activities such as walking or swimming<sup>26</sup>. This is reflected within the Whittlesea LGA community, where community engagement indicates that the inflexible scheduling of traditional sports, flourishing fitness and gym industries, and impact of virtual fitness are all playing a role in driving increased popularity for unstructured sports. The growing population in the context of these trends is putting ever increasing pressure on existing infrastructure such as walking, aerobics and other group fitness classes, swimming and cycling. This infrastructure is available at any time and is either free (walking and cycling paths) or available at affordable prices at convenient times when owned by LGA's (aquatic and leisure centres offering swimming, group fitness class and 24/7 gyms).

Given the Whittlesea LGA's growing diverse and multicultural community, supporting physical activity requires a more unique and tailored response from Council. Community consultations to understand barriers for multicultural people to access public centres and sporting facilities highlighted the need to make badminton courts available for the Malaysian/Asian and Indian groups within the community<sup>27</sup>. Indoor courts primarily catering for both netball and basketball are versatile

<sup>23</sup> The difference between structured and unstructured sports is that structured sport is usually part of a formal competition, is played on a formal sports space, has a club or overarching controlling entity involved, and can be either indoor or outdoor. Unstructured sport is the informal version of structured sport, and captures all sport played outside of formal competition.

<sup>24</sup> Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan 2019-2041

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> AUSactive, 'A more active Australia for a healthier nation' (2022)

<sup>27</sup> City of Whittlesea, Consultation Summary Report, 2017

enough to cater for badminton as well as other sports including volleyball, soccer, futsal, dodge ball, cricket, hockey and more.

### Whittlesea LGA has a lack of suitable facilities to cater for the growing diverse population

The combination of a highly multicultural community and strong population growth means that there are many individuals, community groups and organisations seeking support, facilities and opportunities to participate in physical and social activities. The gap will continue to widen as the population increases. Community consultation supporting Council's *Active Whittlesea Strategy* identified multiple existing problems and the need for:

- diverse infrastructure and free-to-public local facilities such as exercise equipment, bike paths and walking trails to reduce time, cost and location barriers
- safer environments to be active including more lighting and public toilets in open spaces
- club development opportunities to ensure sports clubs create welcoming and inclusive environment for under-represented groups such as women, newly arrived communities and people with a disability
- increased transport options and/or decreased burden of travelling to make existing programs and opportunities more accessible
- flexible and affordable opportunities for seniors, families, youth and low-income groups to be active, noting Council programming, leisure centres and local play spaces as popular solutions
- increased promotion of services and facilities and various communication methods to ensure equitable opportunity across all demographics.

Capacity constraints cause residents to either forego participating in physical or social activities or, if motivated sufficiently, needing to leave the area to access the infrastructure they require.

### 1.3.2 Inactive, sedentary lifestyles are contributing to a comparatively poorer health outcomes for residents across the City of Whittlesea

#### Summary – Problem 2

- Whittlesea LGA residents are particularly susceptible to an inactive lifestyle compared to greater Victoria, and this was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Low levels of physical activity contribute to the poor community health and wellbeing profile of Whittlesea LGA compared to the rest of Victoria.

#### Whittlesea LGA, and particularly Mernda, residents are less active and leading a more sedentary lifestyle

Victorian Population Health Survey (2017) highlights health indicators are generally less favorable for the City of Whittlesea than Victoria:

- a higher proportion of both women and men are overweight or obese and higher proportion of men are overweight: pre-obese/obese compared to women in the City of Whittlesea.
- sedentary behavior (women 2.3 percent and men 6.0 percent compared to Victoria women 2.8 and 2.3 percent men)
- insufficient physical activity (women 43.6 percent and men 45.2 percent compared to Victoria women 45.4 and men 42.8 percent<sup>28</sup>)

Table 5: Physical activity status (%) of adults (18+) by gender

	Sedentary		Insufficient physical activity		Met physical activity guidelines	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Whittlesea	2.3	6.0	43.6	45.2	51.3	45.9
VIC	2.8	2.3	45.4	42.8	49.0	52.8

Source: Department of Health and Human Services, 2017

The Mernda community is particularly susceptible to sedentary behaviour. In 2019, Council's household survey revealed that over 45 percent of Mernda respondents indicated they spend 60+

<sup>28</sup> Physical activity status (%) of adults (18+) by gender, Department of Health and Human Services, 2017



minutes commuting on an average day, compared to the municipal average of nearly 34 percent<sup>29</sup>. Workers in Melbourne's outer growth suburbs experience significant commutes which contributes to inactivity and sedentary lifestyles. 78 percent of full-time workers and 59 percent of part time workers have long commutes over 10 kilometres, with an average commuting distance of nearly 46 kilometres<sup>30</sup>. Physical activity also declines with age and Mernda is experiencing particular growth in the 50+ demographic which will rise by 74 percent (5,578 residents) by 2038<sup>31</sup>.

A recent study conducted by AUSactive, Australia's peak Health and Exercise Industry Association, estimated that COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns across 2020 and 2021 resulted in a:

- 25 percent reduction in national physical activity levels
- 35 percent increase in national physical inactivity / sedentary behaviour
- 41 percent of Australians having less money to spend on exercise.

Further, Table 6 identifies the national average minutes spent for different types of activity for pre-COVID-19 to September/October 2021:

**Table 6: Australia's decreased physical activity levels**

Activity Type	% of Population	Pre COVID-19 Average mins	Sep/Oct 2021 Average mins	Change %
<b>Walking briskly or cycling</b> (for recreation or exercise, or to get from place to place/commute) for at least 10 minutes continuously)	57.5%	149.4	133.7	-12%
<b>Moderate exercise or leisure activity</b> (like social tennis, moderate exercise classes like yoga, recreational swimming, dancing)	37.6%	53.6	20.9	-39%
<b>Moderate household, garden or work activities</b> (that cause small increases in breathing or heart rate, such as carrying light loads) for at least 10 minutes continuously	56.8%	130.8	115.9	-13%
<b>Vigorous exercise or leisure activity</b> (that makes you breathe harder or puff and pant) like High Intensity Interval Training classes, weight lifting, competitive sport)	24.1%	49.9	15.5	-45%
<b>Vigorous household, garden or work activities</b> (that make you breathe harder or pudd and pant, such as carrying or lifting heavy loads, digging or construction work) for at least 10 minutes continuously	16.7%	33.8	10.6	-46%

Source: A more active Australia for healthier nation, AUSactive

These trends have particularly impacted activity levels across the Whittlesea LGA given its high proportion of Victorian COVID-19 cases. Further, two of the three worst affected activity types by COVID-19, moderate and vigorous exercise and leisure activity, largely involve sporting infrastructure such as a gym or activity spaces in which councils typically provide communities.

### **Low rates of physical activity contribute to poor community health and wellbeing outcomes**

Inactivity and sedentary behaviour across the Whittlesea LGA are impacting the community's health profile, as physical activity is the second most important risk factor contributing to the burden of disease in Australia<sup>32</sup>. The 'cost' of inactivity is well known and includes increased risks of obesity and diseases and poorer rehabilitation outcomes. It also impacts mental health by reducing social engagement, increasing anxiety and stress, and decreasing self-esteem and confidence<sup>33</sup>. Prior to COVID-19, physical inactivity among Australians was estimated to result in 16,178 premature

<sup>29</sup> Community Attitudes and Liveability Survey 2018, Household Survey Municipal Report 2019, Mernda profile 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Jobs and Commuting in Outer Growth Suburbs, National Growth Areas Alliance

<sup>31</sup> Profile ID, City of Whittlesea

<sup>32</sup> Amanda Biggs and Dr Rhonda Jolly, Parliament of Australia, *Improving the health of all Australians: the role of preventative health*, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> The Department of Health (Commonwealth) – Benefits of Physical Activity (<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phy-activity>)

deaths per annum and cost the economy up to \$15.6 billion via direct healthcare costs and indirect productivity losses (such as absenteeism)<sup>34</sup>.

Table 7 outlines the key modifiable risk factors as a percentage of Whittlesea LGA's adult population compared to Victoria. Analysis identified several additional prevalent health issues within the community including declining perceptions of good health across the community (especially amongst women), increasing rate of food insecurity, below average rates of physical activity, and low sports participation amongst women and girls<sup>35</sup>. The municipality has a high proportion of residents with health risk factors including daily smoking (women 12.1 percent, men 24.4 percent compared to Victoria 10.2 and 14.7 percent respectively)<sup>36</sup>. Residents are also more likely to have high or very high levels of psychological distress and doctor-diagnosed hypertension, anxiety or depression and Type 2 diabetes. Women living in the municipality are more likely to report their health status as 'fair/poor' (29. percent) compared to men living in the municipality (16.3 percent) and to Victoria (20.8 percent)<sup>37</sup>.

**Table 7: Proportion (%) of adults (18+) in Whittlesea with selected risk factors compared to Victoria**

Modifiable Risk Factors	City of Whittlesea	Victoria	Difference
Obese	23%	19%	+4%
Overweight	58%	51%	+7%
Sedentary behaviour	4%	3%	+1%
Insufficiently physically active	44%	44%	-
Not complied with vegetable consumption guidelines	98%	95%	+3%
Daily smoker	18%	12%	+6%
Increased lifetime risk of alcohol related harm	48%	59%	-11%
Fair or poor self-reported health	23%	20%	+3%
Low or medium life satisfaction	22%	20%	+2%
High or very high levels of psychological distress	17%	15%	+2%
Doctor diagnosed hypertension	27%	25%	+2%

Source: Department of Health and Human Services (2017)

### 1.3.3 A lack of a culture of lifelong participation in sport and recreation excludes many, and particularly women, from acquiring a range of life fulfilling experiences and life-saving skills

#### Summary – Problem 3

- Females generally have lower participation rates in sports and physical activity due to a number of barriers, such as access, intimidation and activity programming.
- Enabling children to participate in sports and physical activity is crucial for development and health and wellbeing. Ensuring appropriate infrastructure supports lifelong participation is therefore essential for Whittlesea LGA children.

#### There is relatively low female participation in sport and physical activity

Only two in five Australian women aged 18+ meet physical activity guidelines<sup>38</sup>. Indeed, women are underrepresented in organised sport when compared to men as participants, coaches, officials, administrators and board members and this gap widen with age<sup>39</sup>. Understanding the many barriers preventing more female participation in physical activity is complex and the result of deeply entrenched practices, cultural norms and stereotypes that are perpetuated and reinforced in our broader society<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> AUSactive, *A more active Australia for a healthier nation*

<sup>35</sup> City of Whittlesea, Health and Wellbeing Profile (draft - unpublished), 2021

<sup>36</sup> Smoking status (%) of adults (18+) population, by gender, Department of Health and Human Services, 2017

<sup>37</sup> Self-reported health status (%) of adults (18+) by gender, Department of Health and Human Services, 2017

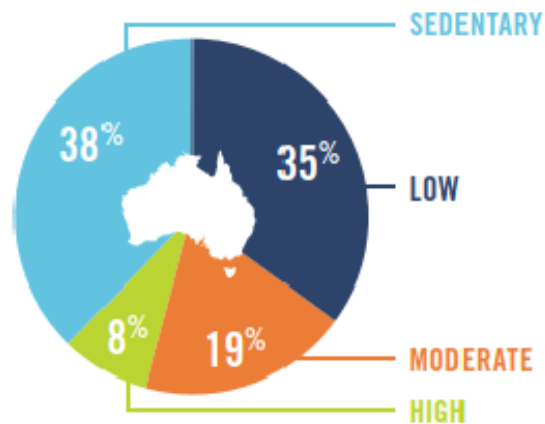
<sup>38</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The health of Australia's females*, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The health of Australia's females*, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation: A Five Year Game Plan for Victoria, 2015.

Figure 6 shows that in 2015 more than two-thirds of adult Victorian females were classified as being sedentary or having low levels of exercise. In 2015 in the Whittlesea LGA specifically, nearly twice as many women (31 percent) reported getting no exercise during a typical week compared to men (17 percent)<sup>41</sup>. The 2022 Household Survey confirmed these patterns are still evident. Embedded within the *Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028* was the recognition and need to remove social and structural barriers to female participation in sports and recreation.

**Figure 6: Female participation in sports and physical activity**



Source: Female participation in sports and physical activity, VicHealth

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) identified limited opportunities and unwelcoming environments as the two key requirements for addressing the barriers for females participating in sport<sup>42</sup>:

*...without a variety of affordable, accessible and available opportunities, which are designed specifically with females in mind, it can be difficult for females to be active.*

*...Physically, females may feel uncomfortable or intimidated. This may be due to location, facilities (e.g. changing rooms and toilets), lighting or room layout.*

The negative impacts of inactivity on health and wellbeing combined with gender inequality in participation rates results in an overwhelming health impact on females compared to males. Further, the investment by councils and State and Commonwealth Governments for sports, active recreation and community spaces is intended to provide for the whole community, but the disproportionate participation rates of women means that the benefit of the public services and infrastructure is not shared equally amongst the community.

### Child participation in sport and physical activity is crucial for development

Sport and physical activity opportunities is critical for a child's physical and social development. Alarming, around 40 percent of Australian children don't participate in sport at all<sup>43</sup>. These children miss out on critical benefits including:

- reduced risk of obesity
- increased cardiovascular fitness
- healthy growth of bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons
- improved coordination and balance
- improved sleep
- mental health benefits
- improved social skills
- improved personal skills such as cooperation and leadership.

A number of health issues, including obesity, disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. While many factors contribute to the development of overweight and obesity, including environmental or individual behaviours, the lack of physical activity is a key contributor.

The 2021 Australian Early Development Census collected data from Australian children as they start their first year of full-time school. The Census measures and highlights important areas of

<sup>41</sup> VicHealth (2015), Community Wellbeing Indicator Survey

<sup>42</sup> VicHealth, Females and physical activity, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Victorian Department of Health, BetterHealth Channel: Sport and Children

children development and categorises whether the children are developmentally vulnerable, at risk or are on track in the following areas.

- physical health – whether the child is ready each day, healthy and independent
- social competence – whether the child gets along with others and shares, is self-confident
- emotional – the child is able to concentrate, help others, is patient, not aggressive or angry
- gross and fine motor skills – skills involving large and small muscle movements with precision.

This census found that within Whittlesea LGA:

- 6.9 percent developmentally vulnerable in physical health
- 9 percent of children were developmentally vulnerable in social competence
- 7 percent of children were developmentally vulnerable in emotional intelligence
- 5.2 percent of children were developmentally vulnerable in gross and fine motor skills.

Addressing these areas of developmental vulnerability and encouraging a culture of lifelong participation in sports requires understanding the profile of activity preferences for children and providing suitable infrastructure and opportunities for participation. Figure 7 provides a snapshot of the top physical activities for girls and boys in Australia. The Whittlesea LGA, particularly Mernda, lacks appropriate infrastructure as further outlined in Section 1.1.4.

Figure 7: Top ten organised out-of-school physical activities for boys and girls in 2017



Source: Australian Sports Commission, 2018

### Adequate water safety and swimming education is critical for residents

Residents of all ages, but particularly children, are at greater risk of water related incidents in the absence of appropriate adequate aquatic facilities and access to water safety and swimming lessons. Drowning is the most common cause of preventable death of young children (aged under

five years). Within Victoria, the most common location for fatal drownings of young children is home swimming pools, which accounted for 27 fatalities of young children between 2000 and 2019<sup>44</sup>.

Drownings can also be non-fatal. On average for every fatal drowning of a young child in a private swimming pool there are approximately six non-fatal drowning incidents. Approximately 20 percent of non-fatal drowning incidents result in some form of long-term behavioural and learning impairments and a severe neurological deficit occurs in 10 percent of cases<sup>45</sup>.

Unfortunately, the number of people losing their lives to drowning is increasing year on year. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, 61 drowning deaths occurred in Victoria, representing a 79 percent increase on the previous year and a 42 percent increase on the Victorian 10-year average<sup>46</sup>. Figure 8 demonstrates that falling and swimming and recreation were the most common events prior to drownings in Victoria in 2021, while also highlighting whether the contributing factor relates to water safety, learn to swim, or unknown factors.

Figure 8: How drownings occurred in Victoria in 2021



Source: Royal Life Saving, National Drowning Report 2021

Swimming ability and water safety education are clear contributing factors. The Whittlesea LGA and Mernda community is at a particularly high risk of harm in water because:

- The demographic profile of the City of Whittlesea means that there is a higher share of family households (55.9 percent) compared with 44.9 percent across Greater Melbourne<sup>47</sup>.
- One quarter of people that drowned in Australia in 2021 were from a multicultural background<sup>48</sup> and approximately 36 percent of residents in the City of Whittlesea were born overseas compared with 33.7 percent in Greater Melbourne<sup>49</sup>.
- There is a nearly 50-kilometre drive between Mernda and the nearest beach. This increases the necessity of accessible local pool facilities to learn and practice water safety and swimming skills.
- There aren't local council operated facilities in Mernda and surrounds (refer to Section 1.1.4).

## 1.4 Timing considerations

The problems identified in this business case will only be exacerbated in the absence of government intervention. Investment is required as part of **this** budget because:

- Growth areas are known to lag in the provision of aquatic, leisure, and sporting infrastructure. The existing infrastructure in the Whittlesea LGA is insufficient for the current community, let alone the projected future population. As outlined in Section 1.1.4, there are a lack of suitable sports, aquatic, and leisure facilities currently in Mernda. As there is a significant lead time between investment in and delivery of additional capacity, action is needed urgently.
- Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* recognises the importance of aquatic and leisure centres in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the community. The report notes that each visit to a swimming pool generates \$26 in health benefits.
- There is strong demand for netball and basketball courts within the municipality. Mernda has been identified as a priority location to address projected demand for court-based sports and provide an alternative for community members who must currently travel outside their local area to participate in these activities.

<sup>44</sup> Building Amendment (Swimming Pool and Spa) regulations 2019

<sup>45</sup> Building Amendment (Swimming Pool and Spa) regulations 2019

<sup>46</sup> Royal Life Saving, National Drowning Report 2021

<sup>47</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/households>

<sup>48</sup> Royal Life Saving, National Drowning Report 2021

<sup>49</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/birthplace?WebID=10>

- The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected residents of the Whittlesea LGA and has exacerbated pre-existing challenges relating to social connection and the short and long-term health profile of the community.
- Investment in the Whittlesea LGA will complement and strengthen other investments across the health system including:
  - construction of the City of Whittlesea Community Hospital at 140 Plenty Road, Mernda, expected to be completed in 2024 and provide a range of local services including chronic disease management, chemotherapy, social support, and women's health
  - local adult and older adult mental health and wellbeing services to be open by the end of 2022 as established by the Victorian Government and recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.
- There is an opportunity for Commonwealth, State and Local Government to work together to service some of Victoria's most disadvantaged and socially disengaged communities. Combining funding from all three tiers of government would allow for an investment response appropriate for the scale of the identified problems to deliver real change to the residents of this important growing community.
- Residents of the City of Whittlesea are highly supportive of investment to address the challenges outlined in this section of the business case and Council has confirmed that it is a strong advocacy priority for 2022 across all tiers of government.

## 1.5 Consideration of the broader context

There are a range of on-going contextual issues and/or policy initiatives which are considered within this Business Case.

### 1.5.1 Aquatic centres as Preventative Hospitals/Allied Health Centres

Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV), within the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) is exploring ways in which the 'next generation' of aquatic centres could do more to support the positive health and wellbeing outcomes for the community. The Community Infrastructure division of SRV is considering the merits and potential of facilities which integrate health and human services with the aquatic leisure planning, to act as "Preventative Hospitals"<sup>50</sup>. Preliminary consideration of this integrated wellbeing centre concept has identified potential benefits including:

- ability to partner with the health sector to deliver multiple health benefits simultaneously
- sharing of capital and operational risks and costs
- opportunity to create wholistic health outcomes (through primary care and physical activity) for individuals and groups of vulnerable opportunities
- ability to promote and educate the community about the lifelong benefits of physical activity and wellbeing to their physical and mental health, and quality of life.

### 1.5.2 City of Whittlesea Community Hospital

The Victorian Government is investing over \$675 million to build 10 community hospitals in major growth areas, including Whittlesea LGA. The construction of the City of Whittlesea Community Hospital is expected to be complete in 2024 and will provide a range of services including chronic disease management, chemotherapy, social support, and women's health. The preferred site identified for the Community Hospital is at 140 Plenty Road, Mernda, close to Mernda Train Station and the Mernda town centre.

The City of Whittlesea Community Hospital will be managed by Northern Health, aiming to take pressure off other nearby major hospitals, including Northern Hospital Epping, and ensure there is seamless access to health providers and support services for the local community.

<sup>50</sup> Sport and Recreation Victoria – *Next Generation Aquatic Centres: A case for integrating health and human services* (February 2020).



Any potential sporting, aquatic and leisure centre in Mernda must be designed and planned to complement the future Community Hospital. The Victorian Government is also looking to open one of the state's first Mental Health Hubs in the municipality in late 2022.

### 1.5.3 20-minute neighbourhoods

*Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* is the Victorian Government's long-term planning strategy. Plan Melbourne supports the concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood which is about 'living locally'—giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute return walk from home, with access to safe cycling and local transport options. Figure 9 outlines the features required for a liveable community. The problems outlined in this chapter align with many of these key features of a 20-minute neighbourhood, particularly a lack of sport and recreation facilities, safe streets and spaces, walkability, local employment opportunities, green streets and spaces and local health facilities and services.

Figure 9: Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood



Source: Plan Melbourne 2017 – 2050, Victoria State Government

## 1.6 Problem dependencies and interfaces

Throughout procurement and delivery, planning will be important to ensure appropriate coordination of site access and to generate efficiencies across any dependent and interfacing projects where possible. The master planning process will consider the long-term strategy to balance full service need with the project budget (for example through project staging). Potential project options will consider interfaces with any existing infrastructure and current operations. Further information on critically interdependent projects and complementary projects is available in Section 5.2.

## 1.7 Uncertainty around the problem

There is a relatively high degree of certainty about the main factors underpinning the problem such as the level of disadvantage in the City of Whittlesea and the impact of a lack of physical activity on health outcomes. In addition, the extensive consultation and research conducted in the development of the City of Whittlesea's strategies and planning documents over the last decade provides evidence of existing limitations and its inability to cater for the needs of the community. Table 8 summarises the areas of uncertainty with the definition of the problems and the need for investment.



**Table 8: Uncertainty around the problem**

Uncertainty	Description	Impact
Impact of COVID-19 on forward projections of population growth	The medium- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on migration and population growth is uncertain	Population growth lower than previously projected could reduce the magnitude of the problem in the long-term, however the problems exist now and will continue. The impact of uncertain population growth is likely to be small in the long-term.
Private sector investment	Investment by the private sector could improve physical activity levels	Given the level of investment required for aquatic infrastructure, this is likely to be limited to gymnasium and allied health facilities. A reduction in attendance levels would place upward pressure on any Council subsidies.
Impact of COVID-19 on participation rates	The medium-term impact of COVID-19 on sport, recreation and leisure participation rates and habits	The pandemic continues to assess the impact on sport, recreation and leisure participation rates and habits – in the municipality this has played out in older and low-income populations who have been slower, more reluctant, and perhaps less able to participate in programs offered at Council's existing leisure centres.

## 2. Case for change

### 2.1 Benefits to be delivered

Three benefits were identified in this business case and weighted in accordance with the Department of Treasury and Finance's (DTF) Investment Management Standard (refer to Appendix A). Table 9 outlines these benefits and their weightings.

Table 9: Overview of benefits identified (ILM)

Benefit	Weighting
<b>Benefit 1:</b> Whittlesea is a place for all	50%
<b>Benefit 2:</b> Improved health, wellbeing, and social inclusion	30%
<b>Benefit 3:</b> Safer Whittlesea people and places	20%

#### 2.1.1 Whittlesea LGA is a place for all

##### Summary – Benefit 1

- The City of Whittlesea Council is committed to fostering a healthy community of all backgrounds, ages, genders, and abilities that can easily access support services.
- Increasing social and civic engagement amongst the community, particularly within priority groups, will foster a socially cohesive, healthy, and participating community in Whittlesea LGA.
- Removing the barriers for women and girls to participate in physical activity is crucial for their development and health and wellbeing.

##### Increased social engagement for priority groups in the community

Building upon the core values within its overarching strategy document, *Whittlesea: 2040*, Council is committed to foster a connected community which is socially cohesive, healthy and participates in civic life. Bringing to life this strategy means improving accessibility and social engagement for several key priority groups including:

- people with disabilities
- people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged
- members of the LGBTQIA+ community
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- refugees and new arrivals
- victims of family violence
- people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- children in out-of-home care.

Providing multi-purpose spaces, services and facilities that carefully tailor community services to the needs of these priority groups will improve their sense of community and belonging.

Designated, appropriate and culturally safe spaces for social interaction that support both structured and unstructured activities will encourage use by the whole community. They will allow for a range of uses such as, community programs and activities, educational and training and well-being services. These will offer further opportunity to address the low levels of social engagement within the community.

##### Increased rates of participation for women and girls

As is common globally, women in Whittlesea LGA are more likely to be the primary carers of children, more likely to be the carers for people with a disability, less likely to be participating in active recreation, and more likely to feel and be unsafe in the public realm<sup>51</sup>. Sports, active recreation, social and leisure spaces are an important setting for gender equality because these

<sup>51</sup> Women's Health in the North, Feb 2017, Victorian Women's Health Atlas: Gendered fact Sheet, Whittlesea.

environments can have a powerful influence on gender relations through their modelling of attitudes, behaviours, and social norms<sup>52</sup>. VicHealth has identified that limited opportunities, unwelcoming environments, and the fear of judgement are three major key barriers which, if reduced, can increase participation for women and girls in physical activity<sup>53</sup>.

There is an opportunity to increase the wellbeing of and better cater to the needs of the broader Whittlesea LGA community by providing Council services in facilities with design elements that focus on addressing these barriers to female participation. For example:

- Providing spaces that support flexibility in programming (such as the ability to host female-only swim and gym sessions) can provide greater opportunities for females to participate in inclusive activities that are in culturally appropriate and welcoming environments, without fear of judgement.
- Offering childcare removes barriers to participation in physical activity for parents and carers.
- In 2017 Netball Victoria identified that half of the 1,967 registered netballers within Whittlesea LGA (96 percent of whom are female) played with associations based outside Whittlesea LGA. Increasing the opportunity to play netball locally would mean nearly 1,000 netballers would no longer need to leave the area to access competitions<sup>54</sup>. It could also attract those who have been discouraged by the travel distance currently required.
- A striking 73 percent of the 67,000 workers within the national aquatic industry are female<sup>55</sup>, so providing infrastructure with services that support gender equity in physical activity and social connection is also linked to improved job opportunities for women. Examples of job roles within this sector that require vocational education and training include sports and recreation centre managers, pool lifeguards, customer service officer, group exercise instructor, health club instructor, swimming and water safety teacher, and recreation leaders.

### 2.1.2 Improved health and wellbeing

#### Summary – Benefit 2

- Increased physical activity directly contributes to improved health and wellbeing among residents, leading to a happier and higher quality life.
- Improving the health and wellbeing among residents of Whittlesea LGA will also benefit the economy through increased productivity and a reduced burden on the healthcare system.

#### Increased physical activity is pivotal for good health and wellbeing

The health benefits from regular physical activity are well understood within society and supported by a substantial body of literature and evidence. Figure 10 summarises the beneficial health outcomes as a direct result from physical activity, and the flow on effects delivered with these benefits.

Figure 10: Health benefits from physical activity



<sup>52</sup> City of Whittlesea, Equal and Safe Strategy 2019

<sup>53</sup> VicHealth, Females and physical activity, 2019

<sup>54</sup> The City of Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041

<sup>55</sup> Royal Life Saving Australia (2019), National Aquatic Workforce Profile

Source: Australian Sports Commission: The Value of Community Sport Infrastructure

A greater focus on Council's role in enhancing community physical activity will contribute towards more active lifestyles. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and helps to control weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes. It also strengthens the musculoskeletal system, reducing the risk of osteoporosis and the severity of injuries sustained in falls. Physical activity improves mental wellbeing by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. The World Health Organisation identifies further important benefits around enhanced thinking, learning and judgement skills, and ensuring healthy growth and development in young people<sup>56</sup>.

There is a growing trend for councils to expand beyond supporting traditional physical activity and supporting more holistic health and wellbeing. This can include the integration of broader services such as allied health (physiotherapy, osteopathy etc.) into facilities, the provision of designated space for passive activity, and educational programs focussed on improving general wellbeing. For example, in council aquatic centres, warm water pools are becoming an increasingly popular means to cater for non-traditional lap swimming cohorts such as older adults, people with a disability, families with young children, and those not confident to swim in the lap pool. Warm water pools enable these cohorts to undertake physical activity and provides an opportunity for social connections that are otherwise missed, contributing positively to physical and mental wellbeing. Warm water and hydrotherapy pools can also be used for rehabilitation purposes, with hydrotherapy often prescribed by allied health specialist as part of a broader rehabilitation program.

Improved and more contemporary community infrastructure and service offerings are therefore likely to contribute to improved health outcomes in the City of Whittlesea by increasing physical activity through catering to a wider section of the community and facilitating health and rehabilitative activities.

### **This will lead to improved quality of life of residents in the region**

Improving the physical and mental health of residents as well as their level of social engagement (refer Section 2.1.1) will dramatically increase their quality of life. Through lower risk of chronic diseases and poor mental health from greater physical exercise and social engagement, residents can live longer, live a less sedentary lifestyle, have greater cognitive function and improved social skills that allow them to live higher quality and happier lives.

Greater participation in physical activity and use of community infrastructure delivers benefits to the region and wider community including

- economic impacts - employment, economic activity, and productivity improvements
- social impacts - a human capital uplift from improved skills, knowledge and experience, improvements to the community's urban environment space, reduced crime and antisocial behaviour and increased social inclusion<sup>57</sup>.

### **Active-Xchange Social Value Model**

Active-Xchange is a leading data specialist for the community leisure, aquatic, fitness and sport sector. It's Social Value Model translates the modelling principles behind Sports Australia's publication, *The Value of Community Sport*, to a local level. It uses site specific member and activity data to develop the risk profiles of facility users (or predicted users) and quantifies the acute and chronic benefit of a range of health and wellbeing indicators in improving a person's quality of life. This includes the prevention of chronic diseases, reduced likelihood and/or severity of mental illness and broader productivity benefits such as reduced absenteeism.

<sup>56</sup> World Health Organisation, *Physical Activity*, webpage, 2022. <<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>>

<sup>57</sup> Pg. 8, *The Value of Community Sport Infrastructure*, KPMG 2018

Given Whittlesea LGA’s comparative disadvantage, an increase in physical activity and social engagement has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The Social Value Model indicates that improved physical activity and social engagement among Whittlesea LGA residents would deliver significant health benefits of over \$4.5 million per annum. Figure 11 shows that relative to comparable facilities, a sports, aquatic and leisure centre at Mernda would provide exceptional health benefits relative to comparable facilities – in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile for learn to swim benefits, 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for acute benefits, and 85<sup>th</sup> percentile for chronic benefits

**Figure 11: Benefits of improved health outcomes in the Whittlesea LGA**

	Scope of benefits	Benefit value	Percentile ranking*
<b>Acute benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Increase productivity</li> <li>• Improved educational outcomes</li> </ul>	<b>\$2.34m</b> p.a. in 2022	<b>90<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Chronic benefits (health)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardio-vascular disease</li> <li>• Breast and bowel cancer</li> <li>• Type 2 diabetes</li> <li>• Dementia</li> <li>• Health system savings</li> </ul>	<b>\$1.31m</b> p.a. in 2022	<b>85<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Learn to swim benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of drowning</li> </ul>	<b>\$0.86m</b> p.a. in 2022	<b>85<sup>th</sup></b>

Source: ActiveXchange (refer to Appendix C for the full report)

\* Percentile ranking compared to 150+ similar facilities in Australia.

**It will also minimise the burden on the healthcare system**

In 2018, a study commissioned by KPMG found that physical activity delivers approximately \$0.5 billion annually in health system savings due to the reduced risk and severity of chronic disease and illness<sup>58</sup>. A subsequent study in 2020 that indicated local sport and active recreation infrastructure contribute to an estimated \$2.3 billion (at least) in annual health benefits to Australia. This figure includes both personal health and system health benefits attributed to the reduced risk of chronic disease, improved mental health and wellbeing, increased productivity, reduced risk of falls and reduced risk of drowning<sup>59</sup>.

A report published by the Commonwealth Department of Health cited two separate population-based studies which found that regular vigorous physical activity can reduce the likelihood of individuals developing an anxiety disorder by between 48 percent and 53 percent. The report found further compelling evidence to support the impact of physical activity on preventing depressive symptoms – reviewing the findings of 28 separate studies, physical activity was found to on average reduce the odds of developing depressive symptoms by 25 percent and 40 percent<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Pg. 15, *The Value of Community Sport Infrastructure*, KPMG 2018

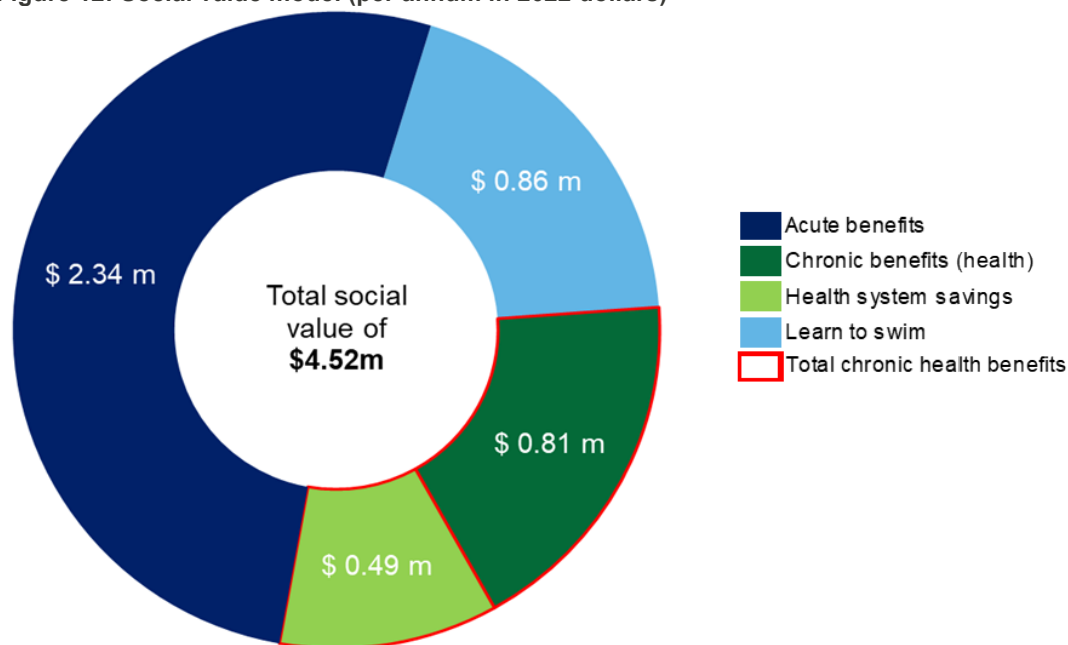
<sup>59</sup> Pg. 17, *The Value of Community Sport Infrastructure*, KPMG 2020

<sup>60</sup> *Evidenced- based Physical Activity Recommendations for Adults (18-64 years)*, Department of Health ([https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/F01F92328EDADA5BCA257BF0001E720D/\\$File/DEB-PAR-Adults-18-64years.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/F01F92328EDADA5BCA257BF0001E720D/$File/DEB-PAR-Adults-18-64years.pdf))

### Active-Xchange Social Value Model

The ActiveXchange Social Value Model also quantifies in dollar terms the health system savings from lower incidence of disease and better managed mental health issues including lower wait times, less congestion and health cost savings. Figure 12 summarises the analysis conducted for Whittlesea LGA which found that the combined acute, chronic and learn to swim benefits amount to \$4.5 million each year, including \$0.49 million of health system savings in 2022 alone by reducing residents' risk of chronic health conditions.

Figure 12: Social value model (per annum in 2022 dollars)



Source: ActiveXchange (refer to Appendix C for the full report)

### 2.1.3 Safer Whittlesea people and places

#### Summary – Benefit 3

- Increased participation in swimming lessons and water safety activities will reduce the risk of drownings, particularly in children
- Community infrastructure fosters a safer community with an increased sense of pride, helping to attract and retain future residents and visitors.
- The creation of a major leisure and recreation facility creates opportunities for formal and informal events and gatherings which bring people together.

#### Water safety

Increased water safety education and safe places to learn to swim reduce several of the risks associated with drowning (refer Section 1.3.3). A study conducted by America's National Institute of Health revealed that participating in formal swimming lessons is associated with an 88 percent reduction in the risk of drowning in children aged 1 to 4 years<sup>61</sup>.

*Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030* reveals that individuals from multicultural backgrounds may be less likely to have been taught swimming and water safety skills throughout their childhood and they are less likely to participate in aquatic activities<sup>62</sup>. When considering the implementation of

<sup>61</sup> Brenner, R. Tangeja, G. Haynie, D. Trumble, Ann. Qian, C. Klinger, R. Klebanoff, M. (2009). Association between swimming lessons and drowning in childhood: A case study. *Archives of Paediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, 163(3), 201-210.

<sup>62</sup> Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030, p.40.



further regulations to improve safety around swimming pools and spas, the Victorian Government identified the following benefits:

- avoided deaths – fatal accidents involving pools affect toddlers more than any other group, and the value of an avoided death is estimated to be \$5.9 million per life
- avoided costs due to non-fatal injuries – most non-fatal injuries have ongoing brain injury with permanent mental impairment. Royal Life Saving Australia estimate that each non-fatal drowning incident costs the community \$690,000<sup>63</sup>
- avoided community trauma – the death of a loved one causes immeasurable trauma and pain that often affects a large network of people – family, friends, and broader community. In many cases, such an event is impossible to get over and may lead to long-term neurosis<sup>64</sup>.

Given the diverse, growing community in Whittlesea, starting swimming lessons at a young age best positions the children of Whittlesea to develop lifelong life-saving skills and expands the available physical activity and leisure for residents. It will also indirectly expose older residents (including parents and grandparents) to water safety education and aquatic activities.

### Place making and safer spaces

Regional or civic pride relates to how a region such as Whittlesea associates with and promotes a local identity. Regional pride is often a key government priority as it can create a cohesive and consistent shared regional identity, promotes civic engagement and establishment of new relationships, and is a source of social capital<sup>65</sup>. Initiatives to address the challenges around social engagement and sedentary lifestyles will:

- support community connection and enhanced sense of place in Mernda
- support growing local businesses and provide greater employment opportunities
- support growing the community with infrastructure that attracts and retains residents of Whittlesea.

Community facilities that achieve strong social, economic, and environmental benefits are well-designed, and promote increased civic engagement and greater resiliency<sup>66</sup>. Victoria's *2021 Crime Prevention Strategy* supports investment in local communities as "*connected, inclusive communities are safer communities, and local solutions work best*"<sup>67</sup>. Thoughtful urban design plays a particularly important role in making public places feel safer for vulnerable community members because:

- a place that generates a sense of ownership discourages crime
- public places that are well maintained generally feel safer and encourage people to use them
- co-design can help with how safe individuals or groups feel
- activity which increases passers-by reduces the risk of crime<sup>68</sup>.

Victoria's *2021 Crime Prevention Strategy* identified the use of sport as a powerful tool to engage young people, build community connection and prevent crime. Providing appropriate access and sporting facilities to engage youth is critical.

### 2.1.4 What would realising these benefits mean?

Investment to address the problems outlined and deliver the benefits described above will:

- increase rates of participation in structured and unstructured physical activity
- increase participation in broader range of non-physical activities.

<sup>63</sup> Royal Life Saving, Summary Cost of Drowning

<[www.royallifesaving.com.au/RLS\\_ResearchSummary\\_CostOfDrowning](http://www.royallifesaving.com.au/RLS_ResearchSummary_CostOfDrowning)>

<sup>64</sup> Building Amendment (Swimming Pool and Spa) regulations 2019

<sup>65</sup> Deakin University – Civic Pride and Community Identity (2015) (<https://regionalarts.com.au/uploads/files/Stats-Stories-4-Civic-Pride.pdf>)

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/resources/urban-design-and-crime>

<sup>67</sup> Victorian Government, Community Crime Prevention Program, *Crime Prevention Strategy 2021*










<sup>68</sup> Urban design and crime, The Community Crime Prevention Unit within the Department of Justice and Community Safety



- increase social value and community connection
- increase water safety and education.

The broader benefits of sporting facilities are highlighted in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Benefits of sporting facilities


<p><b>Human capital uplift</b></p>  <p>Sport participation improves cognition skills and employability outcomes</p>	<p><b>Green space benefit</b></p>  <p>Green space at community sport facilities generates numerous benefits</p>	<p><b>Social inclusion</b></p>  <p>Community sport infrastructure can improve social inclusion</p>
<p><b>Community pride</b></p>  <p>Communities take pride in the success of their local sporting teams and facilities</p>	<p><b>Increased levels of trust</b></p>  <p>Involvement in community programs has shown to increase levels of trust</p>	<p><b>Positive role modelling</b></p>  <p>Role models of positive behaviour provided for young people in the form of coaches and other players</p>
<p><b>A reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour</b></p>  <p>Evidence shows there is a relationship between community sport and reduction in crime</p>	<p><b>Elite sporting outcomes</b></p>  <p>Development of professional athletes is supported through community sports</p>	<p><b>Disaster response / community meeting places</b></p>  <p>The community benefits from broader uses of community facilities</p>

Source: Australian Sports Commission: The Value of Community Sport Infrastructure

## 2.2 Importance of benefits to Government

The health and wellbeing of the local community is important to Local Council, State and Commonwealth governments. Investment to address the challenges and realise the benefits outlined in this business case is aligned to key policies from all three levels of government.

### Commonwealth policies

Key policies and initiatives	Business case alignment
<b>Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines</b>	
 <p>More than half of all Australian adults are not active enough</p> <p>Make your move – Sit less Be active for life!</p> <p>Adults</p>	<p>The Commonwealth Government provides recommended physical activity levels for children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly through these Guidelines. The guidelines detail the level of physical activity required for each age group to support a healthy lifestyle and good wellbeing. The requirements are informed by a rigorous evidence review process that considers relationships between physical activity and sedentary behaviour/sitting time with health outcome indicators, including the risk of chronic disease.</p> <p>This business case outlines the benefit of improved health and wellbeing in Section 2.1.2. Encouraging greater physical activity will support more residents meeting physical activity requirements and discourage sedentary behaviour.</p>

State government policies

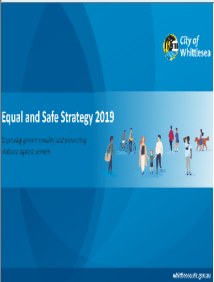

Key policies and initiatives	Business case alignment
<b>Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing plan 2019-2023</b>	
	<p>The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-23 outlines the State's approach to improving public health and wellbeing outcomes for all Victorians, recognising that socioeconomic disadvantage is the greatest cause of health inequalities. The plan outlines 10 priority areas, four of which are a key focus for the next four years. The priority areas cover the broad spectrum physical and mental health, social engagement, health living and environment.</p> <p>There is potential to benefit the community in 8 of 10 priority areas identified by the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• three from increased physical activity in the community</li> <li>• five from increased opportunities for holistic wellbeing including education and community support services.</li> </ul>
<b>Victorian Infrastructure Plan 2017</b>	
	<p>The Plan prioritises Government infrastructure investment across nine priority sectors, including Culture, Sport and Community. It recognises that sporting, cultural and community assets have an enormous impact on quality of life, given participation in sport and cultural activities benefits health and wellbeing, and makes cities more liveable, communities more inclusive and supports economic development. The sector has three relevant priorities: planning for a growing population, growing participation, and maintenance of current facilities.</p> <p>This business case directly responds to the core future directions of the sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investments in modern, flexible, and fit for purpose facilities that meet community needs</li> <li>• co-location of facilities in strategically positioned precincts to maximise their value, impact, and effectiveness</li> <li>• continuing to ensure all Victorians can access sport and cultural facilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Active Victoria Strategic Framework 2017-2023</b>	
	<p>The Active Victoria Strategic Framework outlines the blueprint for Victoria's future priorities and strategies to strengthen the sport and recreation sector, boost participation and ensure every Victorian has the chance to be involved in physical activity. The Framework outlines six strategic directions to deliver its vision of increased participation in sport and active recreation through collaborative planning and investment in a robust, flexible, sustainable, affordable, integrated, and inclusive system.</p> <p>This business case directly responds to five of the six strategic directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meeting demand by increasing participation opportunities</li> <li>• broader and more inclusive participation through design</li> <li>• focus on active recreation as the best prospect to improve health/wellbeing</li> <li>• building system capacity</li> <li>• working together for shared outcomes by joining with health policy goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Health 2040: Advancing health, access and care</b>	
	<p>Health 2040: Advancing health, access and care sets out Victoria's vision for health outcomes to be achieved by 2040, the strategies used to achieve them, and how progress will be tracked. The strategy's vision comprises of three key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better health – skills and support to be healthy and well</li> <li>• Better access – fair, timely and easier access to care</li> <li>• Better care – world-class healthcare every time.</li> </ul> <p>This business case directly responds to the principles of the strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing an accessible environment that promotes active living</li> <li>• investing in prevention and early intervention</li> <li>• sustainable use of resources that benefits people (now and future)</li> <li>• innovation responsive to changing community needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan Melbourne Strategy 2017-2050</b>	
	<p>Plan Melbourne is a long-term plan to accommodate Melbourne's future growth in population and employment. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 principles that underpin a long-term vision for Melbourne</li> <li>• 7 Outcomes to drive Melbourne as a competitive liveable and sustainable city</li> <li>• 32 directions setting out how these outcomes can be achieved</li> <li>• 90 policies outlining how each outcome will be approached and achieved.</li> </ul> <p>The benefits illustrated in the business case address five of seven outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supporting innovation and creating jobs</li> <li>• improving the liveability of the city through promotion of pride</li> <li>• providing a more vibrant, healthy, and inclusive city</li> <li>• economic opportunity through greater access to commercial events</li> </ul>

### Council policies, plans and strategies

Section 1.1.3 describes six important Council documents that support the development of this business case:

- Whittlesea 2040
- Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028
- Community Plan 2021-2025
- Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy
- Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study
- Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan.
- Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041

The table below lists additional important Council strategies and policies. A longer list of relevant documents is contained in Section 4.2.

Key policies and initiatives	Business case alignment
<b>Equal and Safe Strategy 2019</b>	
 <p>Equal and Safe Strategy 2019</p>	<p>Equal and Safe Strategy 2019 outlines Council's work to improve gender equality and prevent violence against women. It highlights the key settings and environments for this work – including sports and leisure – where Council has a significant impact on women and girls' social and economic wellbeing.</p> <p>This business case delivers on all four strategic objectives of the Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide services and programs that normalise gender equality and are responsive to the needs of our diverse community experiencing family violence</li> <li>• ensure that community facilities and public spaces enable safe and gender equitable access and an active community life for all</li> <li>• build a well-informed, connected community who understand and embrace gender equality and are empowered to prevent violence against women.</li> </ul>
<b>A Voice for All, Community Engagement Policy 2021</b>	
 <p>A Voice For All Community Engagement Policy 2021</p>	<p>The Community Engagement Policy outlines Council's commitment to actively involve the community in decision making so to deliver better quality outcomes and reach their Whittlesea 2040 Vision. In adopting the Policy, Council commits to engage its community in a deliberative, proactive, and flexible way. This will ensure the decision making of Council is fully informed of our community's views, ideas and suggestions, and all options have been carefully considered.</p> <p>Understanding the problems and corresponding benefits outlined in this business case which derive from extensive community consultation. Aligning the interests and needs of residents to community services and future council investment.</p>

## 2.3 Constraints, risks and dependencies

Table 10 details the constraints and risks associated with the delivery of the benefits described in Section 2.1.

**Table 10: Constraints and risks associated with the delivery of benefits**

Constraint/risk	Potential management strategy
<p>Any investment in new services or infrastructure does not attract sufficient attendance from Whittlesea residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council has undertaken significant community consultation in recent years to understand the diverse needs and preferences of the community.</li> <li>• The use of Universal Design principles and compliance with modern building standards should minimise the risk of residents being unable to access the facility.</li> <li>• Council is working with State Sporting organisation to build the capacity of the sporting associations within Whittlesea to improve governance and service delivery.</li> </ul>

Physical health outcomes achieved are dependent on the level and nature of activity undertaken

- The delivery of wellbeing and physical activity programs can be tailored to meet the needs of different cohorts while maintaining a minimum level of activity required to generate health benefits.
- The communication and promotion programs and strategy of Council can be tailored to specific groups to raise awareness and encourage participation
- Partnerships with the facilities management and health and community welfare providers when developing services at the facilities.

Poor design means optimal programming for formal and informal (structured/unstructured) programming is limited.

- Council will continue to optimise the concept and detailed design in line with consultations with State Sporting organisation and Whittlesea LGA residents to ensure programming meets demand for structure and unstructured activities.

### 3. Response option development

Having articulated the problems facing the residents of the City of Whittlesea and identified the benefits Government, Council and the community can expect to receive through addressing these challenges, the next step is to consider a range of high-level potential actions and recommend a response for Government and Council.

The information contained in this section is a summary of the more detailed analysis provided in Appendix D (which has been conducted in accordance with the DTF long form business case guidance).

#### 3.1 Strategic interventions

Strategic interventions consider the outcome to be achieved via a range of available high-level actions. Government and Council could respond in a variety of ways across three broad categories of strategic interventions:

- **Manage demand** – address the demand, both now and into the future, for access and use of sports and aquatic centres in City of Whittlesea
- **Improve productivity** – address the utilisation and efficiencies of current and future operational practices leveraging existing assets and resources
- **Increase supply** – address the ability to improve services through greater capacity availability of resources or reducing barriers to access.

#### 3.2 Response options

A response option is a combination of interventions that, when packaged together, form a response. The ability of the project's response options (and hence project options) to address the problems and benefits is compared to the 'Base Case' which is summarised in Section 3.3.

The strategic interventions were packaged into five response options. Each response option seeks to resolve the problems and deliver the benefits:

- **Response Option 1: Business as usual (base case)** assumes the minimum investment required to continue to deliver services safely from existing facilities with unavoidable capital works investment only.
- **Response Option 2: Asset focus** concentrates investment on initiatives that maximise the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of existing facilities within existing capabilities.
- **Response Option 3: Utilisation focus** promotes greater utilisation of existing aquatic and leisure facilities by reducing barriers for the community. This increased utilisation would be supported by a greater number of tailored and diverse range of health and wellbeing programs at existing facilities.
- **Response Option 4: Health focus** seeks to maximise the health outcomes for the community by increasing supply of health and wellbeing services at lower cost to the community.
- **Response Option 5: Community focus** combines interventions that deliver holistic health and wellbeing services highly aligned to the community's needs, in an efficient and sustainable way for Council to further maximise opportunities for it to further support the community.

#### 3.3 The Base Case

Given the undersupply of sports, aquatics, and recreation facilities in Whittlesea LGA (refer Section 1.1.4) it is critical that the Base Case assumes a 'business as usual' approach under which Council continues to deliver services to the community as they are today. The Base Case assumes funding, processes and facilities at existing service locations remain largely unchanged and there is minimum capital investment to support operations and maintenance.

The assumptions underpinning the Base Case are summarised below.

***In summary, the Base Case (business as usual) includes:***

- the continued operation of existing City of Whittlesea sports, aquatic and leisure facilities in line with current service models
- minimum operations and maintenance costs to continue to meet minimum safety requirements
- unavoidable capital works to ensure today's standards and conditions are maintained
- no capital investment to expand capacity either at existing facilities or through the development of a new facility.

The Base Case defines the future for City of Whittlesea without strategic intervention and is compared to the ability of the project's response options (and hence project options) to address the problems and benefits.

### 3.4 Recommended response option

The advantages and disadvantages of each response option were considered and ranked against a range of high-level criteria: alignment with identified benefits, financial costs, timing, risks, and the level of dis-benefits and inter-dependencies. This detailed analysis is provided in Appendix D.

The analysis found **Response Option 5 – Community Focus** to be the preferred response from Government to progress project options development. Response Option 5 considers investment to improve the capacity and diversity of integrated health and wellbeing services and ensure facilities and services are designed for the community's unique needs. It also involves operational efficiency initiatives that improve the sustainability of facilities and services for Council. This option is preferred because it:

- provides significant and tailored health and wellbeing opportunities for the community improve physical and mental health
- lowers barriers to accessibility and maximises participation by providing flexibility in service programming
- considers multiple ways to improve the financial and environmental sustainability of Council's services which will provide opportunities for Council to reinvest in the community
- is fully aligned with all Council objectives and policies
- supports Government health and wellbeing and accessibility policies.

**Response Option 5 delivers a superior solution to the identified problems than the alternatives as it enhances opportunities to address community needs in the City of Whittlesea in a sustainable way for Council.** It has the greatest alignment to the project benefits while minimising the relative risks and disbenefits.

This response informs the development of more detailed project options for assessment against the base case under qualitative and quantitative criteria in Section 4.



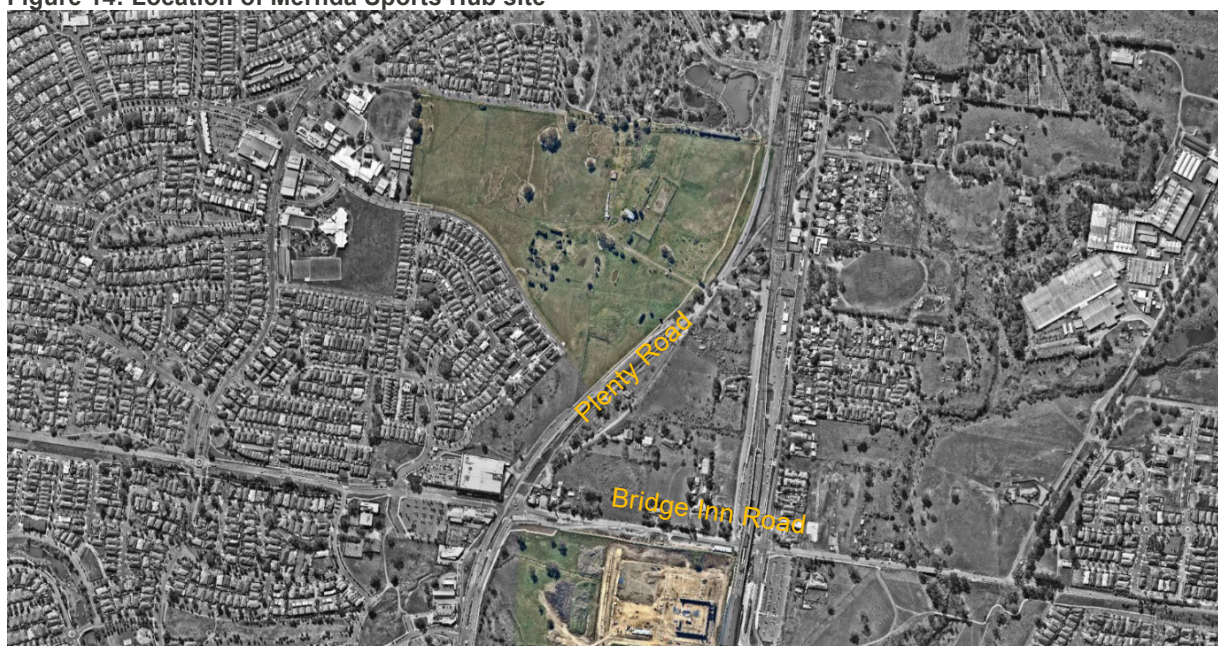
## 4. Project options assessment

This chapter outlines the four project options developed and considered by Council based on previous concept designs and community demand analysis. The quantitative and qualitative analysis assesses the impact of each option against multiple criteria (such as social, community, economic and financial) to determine the preferred project solution.

### 4.1 Project options considered

The Mernda Sports Hub site on Plenty Road in Mernda, to the north of Bridge Inn Road, has been long been earmarked by Council within its strategic plans as a potential site to assist in addressing the challenges identified in this business case. It is a greenfield site shown in green in the map in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Location of Mernda Sports Hub site



Building on Response Option 5 – Community Focus (refer Section 3.4) and in line with DTF investment management standard, the four project options identified for consideration in the business case all envisage using this site to some extent. The project options are described in Table 11. Indicative sketches for each option are provided in Appendix E.

Table 11: Project options considered

Project option	Description
<p><b>Option 1: Aquatic Centre Only (no Sports Centre)</b></p> <p>Located at the Mernda Sports Hub with a focus on aquatics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-lane 25 metre pool</li> <li>• Warm water, water play, teaching pool</li> <li>• Gymnasium</li> <li>• 3 program rooms</li> <li>• Spa, steam, and sauna</li> <li>• Health consult rooms</li> </ul>
<p><b>Option 2: Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre (RSAC) at Mernda</b></p> <p>Located at Mernda Sports Hub combining an indoor facility for aquatics and sports with additional outdoor courts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8-lane 50 metre multipurpose pool</li> <li>• Warm water, water play and learn to swim pools</li> <li>• Health and fitness facilities including a gymnasium, group fitness room, program rooms and health consulting / wellness suites</li> <li>• Creche and café</li> <li>• 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts</li> <li>• 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators</li> <li>• 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts with the potential for 4 additional courts delivered in a subsequent stage</li> </ul>



<p><b>Option 3: Mernda Town Centre</b></p>	<p>Mernda Town Centre Hub:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8-lane 25 metre pool</li> <li>• Warm water, water play and learn to swim pools</li> <li>• Gymnasium, group fitness and consulting suites</li> <li>• Large learning and wellbeing community hub over four floors with a separate entry</li> <li>• Multilevel carpark</li> </ul>	<p>Mernda Sports Hub:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts</li> <li>• 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators</li> <li>• 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Option 4: Sports Centre Only (no aquatics)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts</li> <li>• 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators</li> <li>• 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts with the potential for 4 additional courts delivered in a subsequent stage</li> <li>• Reduced foyer compared to Option 2</li> </ul>	
<p>Two facilities – the Mernda Town Centre Hub (combining aquatic, leisure, learning, and wellbeing) and the Mernda Sports Hub (for indoor and outdoor sports)</p>		
<p>Located at the Mernda Sports Hub with a focus on sports</p>		

Options 1, 2 and 3 all include an aquatic facility which has evolved from extensive industry consultation and key learnings associated with maximising community health and wellbeing benefits. Option 4 is the only option without an aquatic centre and includes similar indoor and outdoor capacity as identified in Options 2 and 3.

The difference between Option 2 compared to Options 1 and 3 is the size of the 50-metre, 8-lane pool instead a 25-metre pool with either 4 or 8 lanes. These are considered as different projection options to balance potential demand, future capacity, and community expectations. Initial demand analysis and expected population growth indicates that an 8-lane 50-metre pool will increase flexibility to conduct several activities concurrently and cater for demand<sup>69</sup>. A smaller pool would provide a lower level of service (including potential capacity constraints) in the future.

Options 2, 3 and 4 all include capacity for indoor and outdoor courts, which facilitate sports such as netball, basketball, badminton, futsal, and volleyball. Initial demand analysis and industry consultation has identified a current need for netball and basketball courts within Whittlesea, as currently residents are required to leave the municipality to participate<sup>70</sup>. Further, there are no current netball or basketball courts in Whittlesea which are suitable for formal competition, which Options 2, 3 and 4 all cover.

## 4.2 Multi-criteria assessment

The project options were considered as part of a Multi Criteria Assessment (MCA) workshop attended by Council Officers and project consultants. The remainder of this section provides the outcome of this workshop. The Options Assessment Report is available in Appendix F.

### 4.2.1 Assessment criteria

The criteria in Table 12 were developed in consultation with key stakeholders to reflect the project benefits and other Council priorities.

Table 12: MCA criteria

Criterion	Measure:
Alignment to Policy	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which each option aligns to State and Council policies and strategies
Social impact	Qualitative assessment of the potential for the facility and services to improve health and wellbeing outcomes
Customer experience	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option supports the community's needs and encourages participation for priority community groups
Capital impact	Quantitative assessment of total capital cost of construction

<sup>69</sup> City of Whittlesea, MACPS Pool Options Analysis Paper

<sup>70</sup> City of Whittlesea, Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041

Financial performance	Qualitative assessment of the relative financial performance of each option including operating costs
Economic activity	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option will have an impact on economic activity in City of Whittlesea
Risk	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option will impact risk
Environment impact	Qualitative assessment of likely environmental impacts

## 4.2.2 Results

Table 13 contains a summary of the options assessment. Workshop attendees collaborated to assess each option against the elements within each criterion, after which each option received a score on a scale of 1 to 5. The scores for each criterion were summed and the option with the highest overall score was determined to be the preferred option.

**Table 13: Results of MCA**

Criterion	Description	Assessment			
<b>Alignment to Policy</b>	Considers the extent to which each project option is aligned to a range of relevant Council, State and Commonwealth government initiatives. Further information on these documents is in Sections 1.1 and 2.2.	Option 1 2.75	<b>Option 2 4.42</b>	Option 3 4.22	Option 4 3.14
Discussion	<p>Option 2 was considered to have the highest alignment to government policy and objectives due to its enhanced health and wellbeing offering with the sport, aquatic, leisure, and health facilities proposed. Offered in a location convenient for community members, Option 2 better supports encouraging a socially cohesive, participating, and healthy and safe community, a key component in <i>Whittlesea 2040</i>. Option 2 aligns with Council endorsed <i>Whittlesea 2040</i>, <i>Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy 2014</i>, <i>Community Plan 2021-2025</i>, and <i>Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019</i>. In comparison to Option 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 1 did not align with the <i>Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019</i></li> <li>• Option 3 provided a broadly consistent health and wellbeing offering as Option 2 but did not align as highly with the <i>Mernda Strategy Plan</i></li> <li>• Option 4 did not align with <i>Victoria's Infrastructure Plan</i> or fully align with the <i>Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy 2014</i>.</li> </ul>				
<b>Social Impact</b>	<p>Considers the social value of participation in physical activity and health and wellbeing facilities generated by each project option through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of space for use by allied health services and other business partnerships</li> <li>• Availability of space to run health and wellbeing focussed programs e.g., nutrition or education</li> <li>• Capacity to cater for and deliver a broad range of physical activity-based programs.</li> </ul>	Option 1 1.67	Option 2 3.89	<b>Option 3 4.44</b>	Option 4 0.56
Discussion	Options 1, 2 and 3 all have allocated space for health consult/wellness rooms to be used by allied health professionals and space for running health and wellbeing focussed programs. Option 3 has significantly larger space available than Option 1 and 2, whilst Option 4 lacks allocated space for these purposes. With the only 50 metre pool, Option 2 better caters for school carnivals and club events, whereas Option 1 and 3 are only suitable for small primary school carnivals and short course club activities. Although Option 3 and Option 2 both cater for a broad range of programs, Option 3 is split across two sites whereas Option 2 is on a single site, providing greater reach and accessibility to the community.				
<b>Customer experience</b>	<p>Considers the extent to which the facility will meet the needs of the City of Whittlesea community and encourage participation for priority community groups (such as females, people with a disability, 50+, disengaged youths, emerging communities, young families etc.) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility – the extent to which the project option is accessible to priority groups</li> <li>• Engagement – the extent to which the project option provides space and/or is available for use by different community groups</li> <li>• Capacity – the extent to which the project option can cater to the diverse needs of the community</li> </ul>	Option 1 2.22	<b>Option 2 4.44</b>	Option 3 3.89	Option 4 2.78

Discussion	Programming and design features would be considered in the detailed design of the preferred option. Although Option 3 offers greater public transport accessibility, it requires a multilevel carpark to be developed as part of the second stage of works. It offers additional space within the learning and wellbeing hub targeting broader community engagement but is unable to host larger events. Options 1, 2 and 3 all offer social spaces and allied health services. Options 2 and 3 offer the widest variety of physical activity spaces. Option 2 better meets community expectations as it has a 50m lap pool as well as indoor and outdoor courts. Further, Option 2 provides childcare services compared with the other options which do not offer this service, and therefore exacerbating a barrier for parents and carers to access the respective facility.				
<b>Capital impact</b>	Considers the construction costs to build, deliver and commission each project option including construction costs and allowances for contingency (design and construction), escalation, project management fees, fit-out and other indirect costs.	Option 1 2.79	Option 2 1.39	Option 3 0.56	<b>Option 4 3.06</b>
Discussion	The capital costs of each option are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$65.4 million estimate for Option 1</li> <li>• \$113.4 million estimate for Option 2</li> <li>• \$150.8-158.5 million estimate for Option 3</li> <li>• \$47.6 million estimate for Option 4.</li> </ul> <p>Comparing the relative costs of each option, Option 1 and Option 4 are moderate, Option 2 is high, and Option 3 is very high. Further details on the cost of each option can be found in Appendix F.</p>				
<b>Financial performance</b>	Considers the extent to which the option will support sustainable financial performance for elements that differentiate the options including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission (casual and memberships)</li> <li>• Hire and lease (meeting rooms/consulting suites)</li> <li>• Visitation dependent revenue</li> <li>• Staffing and labour on-costs</li> <li>• Administrative costs</li> <li>• Utilities, cleaning, maintenance, and asset renewal</li> <li>• Staging implications</li> </ul>	Option 1 2.38	<b>Option 2 4.05</b>	Option 3 3.33	Option 4 3.81
Discussion	The 50m pool in Option 2 will have a significant impact on revenue associated with admission, hire and license and visitation dependent revenue. It will also increase utility, cleaning, and maintenance costs. Staffing and labour costs and administrative costs for Options 1 and 4 would increase as out of scope facilities would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some function and cost, such as running costs and site overheads. These options can be delivered in a single stage whereas Options 2 and 3 may require a short-term operational agreement and operating environment that is compromised until full completion. With Option 2 having the increased revenue opportunities, it received higher preference for this criterion.				
<b>Economic activity</b>	Considers the extent to which the option will have an impact on economic activity in Whittlesea through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendances (consider the relative floor area dedicated to the different activities as a proxy for the impact of health and wellbeing benefits created by attendances of patrons)</li> <li>• Job creation (using capital costs to indicate the number of jobs created in construction)</li> </ul>	Option 1 1.70	Option 2 3.89	<b>Option 3 4.17</b>	Option 4 0.56
Discussion	Option 2 has the largest pool area (1,745m <sup>2</sup> ) which will generate more aquatic attendances whereas Option 3 has a larger gymnasium and community hub. Options 2, 3 and 4 all have the same area for indoor and outdoor courts. Option 1 has no courts and Option 4 has no pool. By comparing the capital cost estimates for each option, Option 3 is expected to create approximately 586 local jobs compared to 430 for Option 2. With the increased offerings for greater participation and attendance rates and jobs creation, Option 3 has opportunity for greatest economic activity.				
<b>Risk</b>	Considers the multidisciplinary risks in delivering and operating the new facility under each project option to deliver the assumed benefits, capturing at a high level those risks that are not otherwise considered through the other evaluation criteria.	Option 1 2.36	Option 2 3.75	<b>Option 3 4.03</b>	Option 4 3.61
Discussion	Many risks associated with Option 1 were considered a 'high' or 'moderate' because of its limited supply of offerings and associated demand risks. High and moderate risks associated with Option 2 include delivery complexity, the potential for an oversupply of capacity, contribution to the broader precinct, and transport access. For Option 3 these include delivery complexity, land acquisition and the potential for an undersupply of capacity. For Option 4 they include delivery complexity, contribution to the broader precinct, transport, and the ability to meet community expectations.				

<b>Environmental impact</b>	Considers the extent to which the option will have an impact on the City of Whittlesea's environmental footprint including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards – Project options may envisage a 5 Star or 6 Star Green Star rating, targeting net zero emissions, or make an allowance for environmentally sustainable design (ESD)</li> <li>• Footprint – the size of the footprint of each facility will impact energy usage and consumption.</li> <li>• Emissions – the size and design of the facility will both impact the volume of emissions.</li> <li>• Energy usage – smaller pools and rooms will consume less energy</li> <li>• Indirect impacts – the location of the facility will impact transport access.</li> </ul>	Option 1 2.08	Option 2 3.33	<b>Option 3 3.75</b>	Option 4 2.92
Discussion	All cost estimates include a percentage allowance for ESD over and above BCA Section J requirements but there is no allowance for Green Star design and certification. The higher capital cost of Option 3 results in a higher budget for ESD initiatives. The footprint for Option 1 and Option 4 is increase as out of scope items would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some functions and overhead site costs. Water heating is a major contributor to the overall energy consumption which means Options 2 and 3 will have higher gas, electricity, water and pool chemical usage. Option 3 is expected to have a higher proportion of visitors accessing the facility via public or active transport, given its proximity to Mernda town centre Mernda train station. The other options will rely more heavily on private vehicles.				

### 4.2.3 Preferred project solution

The results of the MCA assessment are summarised in Table 14. Option 2 achieved the highest overall score and therefore is the preferred option for progression in the business case. It is most strongly aligned to local government and State policy, best meets the needs of customers to deliver a positive customer experience and has more elements supporting sustainable financial performance. Option 3 scored the next highest and performing favourably against the social impact, economic activity, risk, and environmental impact criteria.

Table 14: Overview of MCA results

Criteria- Assessment	Option 1: Aquatic Centre	Option 2: RSAC at Mernda	Option 3: Mernda Town Centre Hub	Option 4: Sports Centre
Alignment to policy	2.75	<b>4.42</b>	4.22	3.14
Social impact	1.67	3.89	<b>4.44</b>	0.56
Customer experience	2.22	<b>4.44</b>	3.89	2.78
Capital impact	2.79	1.39	0.56	<b>3.06</b>
Financial performance	2.38	<b>4.05</b>	3.33	3.81
Economic activity	1.70	3.89	<b>4.17</b>	0.56
Risk	2.36	3.75	<b>4.03</b>	3.61
Environment impact	2.08	3.33	<b>3.75</b>	2.92
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>2.55</b>
<b>Overall Rank</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

### 4.3 Stakeholder identification and consultation

The project options align to varying extents with the vision for the new sports, aquatic and leisure centre set out in Whittlesea Council's *Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy* and *Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan*. These documents were developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholder groups covering Council, State Government (including DJPR and SRV), community groups and other not for profit organisations. Four consultation processes undertaken since 2013 have shown significant community support for the RSAC facility, identifying cost and affordability, safety, transport connectivity, and accessibility as key priorities. Table 15 contains a summary of the key stakeholders and their impacts on the project to date.

Table 15: Key stakeholders involved in the development of the project

Stakeholder	Summary of consultation
<b>City of Whittlesea (project team)</b>	City of Whittlesea Council is the key stakeholder, sponsor of the project, and owner of the Mernda Sports Hub site. Council is leading the development of the Business Case.
<b>Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) – SRV</b>	SRV is supporting the development of the business case and will sponsor the business case through the government process.
<b>Whittlesea Basketball Association</b>	The Association indicated they expect that the use of their current venues (Reservoir Leisure Centre, Lalor East Primary School and Mernda Park Primary schools and Leisure City Epping) would change significantly if a sport and leisure centre became operational in the proposed locations. These changes include ceasing to use existing facilities which are located outside of Whittlesea LGA and to expand competitions that they offer for girls and women.
<b>Whittlesea City Basketball Association</b>	The Association indicated they would not change their use of Whittlesea Secondary College if a new facility becomes operational, because very few of their participants live south of Whittlesea. However, they would be interested in establishing an expanded competition at Mernda. This would allow the Association to provide recreational basketball options for people living in the Mernda area.
<b>Whittlesea District Netball Association</b>	The Association indicated they are not sure if their use of Whittlesea Secondary College would change if the Mernda facility becomes operational. While they don't have enough space to cater for demand (have increased from 21 – 47 teams in the past 2 years), they are not sure Mernda is the right location for their participants. Most of their netball players come from around the Whittlesea, Kinglake and Wandong areas.
<b>Plenty Valley Netball Association</b>	The Association indicated they expect their use of the RMIT Sports Centre would remain the same once the Mernda facility is operational, however they would hope to establish a new junior competition operating from the Centre. The Association would establish a Net Set Go Program and from this build a new junior competition.
<b>Aquajets</b>	Aquajets would hope to make use of a proposed aquatic facility at Mernda to expand their reach and capacity by offering additional programs. They believe there is an opportunity to focus on providing opportunities for elite swimmers at a Mernda facility.
<b>Northern Football Netball League</b>	The Northern Football Netball League indicated they would be keen to access a Mernda facility if it becomes operational and they would likely reduce the number of facilities they currently use, particularly any single courts. This would help reduce the number of venues they are operating and reduce labour costs. It would also allow them to improve the management of the competition and provide a stronger training and support environment for umpires.
<b>Netball and Basketball Clubs:</b> Laurimar Power Netball Club Laurimar Power Basketball Club Doreen Cougars Basketball Club Laurimar Thunder Basketball Club Mernda Bull Basketball Club Marymeade Flames Basketball Club	The listed clubs identified that existing facilities in the region can currently cater for large scale tournaments / events. Currently they are travelling to places such as Werribee and Parkville to access these opportunities. To have this type of capacity at a Mernda facility would be a great asset and would mean the community can access these types of events more locally.

Further opportunities to engage with key cohorts include:

- targeted cohort consultation and focus groups
- Council's advisory groups (Whittlesea Disability Network, Whittlesea Reconciliation Group, Whittlesea Youth Advisory Group, Whittlesea Interfaith Network, Whittlesea Multi-cultural Network, etc.)
- other key groups such as Council's 80+ seniors' groups and Whittlesea U3A.

## 4.4 Uncertainties and further considerations

The Mernda Sports Hub site has sufficient vacant capacity to accommodate any new facility without imposing on the community.

There are no significant uncertainties relevant to the project except for the possibility of major reduction in demand for health and wellbeing facilities (for example, from State mandated facility closures in response to COVID-19). To account for this, the economic modelling of the preferred solution in Section 9.5 will include demand sensitivity analysis.

The Victorian climate change framework has a target for Victoria to have net zero carbon emissions by 2050. There is a strong commitment for government to demonstrate best practice in emission reductions and a requirement under the *Climate Change Act 2017* for departments to prepare emission reduction plans. As part of the developing the preferred option, the environmental impact both during construction and through ongoing operations will be considered.



## **Part 2 – Delivery case**

## 5. Project solution

The delivery of Project Option 2 has been identified through the MCA as the preferred project solution. In summary, the MCA process found that the Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre (RSAC):



**Strongly aligns with the benefits** as this option delivers the most favourable outcomes as outlined in Section 2.1 of the Business Case



**Strongly aligns with Government** policy due to the significant alignment with key State and Council strategy objectives



**Strongly aligns with all project stakeholders** ensuring a solution that will provide beneficial outcomes for Council, State Government, the community and other key stakeholders



Likely to receive **strong community support** due to the intended 365-day use of the asset and its response to the needs identified in extensive community consultation process, making it a key landmark for the people of the City of Whittlesea region



**Delivery and implementation** challenges will be managed to control deliverability risks of the asset

### 5.1 Detailed project scope, service specification and outcomes

The project solution delivers the RSAC at the Mernda Sports Hub site. This site is greenfield and predominantly owned by Council (refer Section 7.1.2). The RSAC will be a state-of-the-art facility that embodies a holistic approach to wellness by providing core aquatic and leisure facilities alongside an enhanced health and wellbeing offering, while also providing multipurpose indoor and outdoor sports courts. The scope of the facilities, design intent and concept design, key outcomes, early works, and jobs created through the project are explored within this section.

#### 5.1.1 Project scope

The RSAC project will provide industry-leading diversity in sports courts, aquatic spaces, health and wellbeing facilities, multipurpose spaces and allied health suites which will encourage and support physical activity and social interaction. Table 16 outlines the key features of the full scope of the project.

Table 16: Long-term project scope

<b>Sports courts</b>	Indoor courts - 5 multipurpose + 1 show court
	Indoor seating
	Outdoor - 12 floodlit netball courts
<b>General</b>	Health consult/wellness rooms
	Multipurpose room
	Cafe
	Creche
<b>Aquatic</b>	8-lane multipurpose 50m pool
	Warm water exercise pool
	Leisure pool
	Learn to swim
<b>Health club and group exercise</b>	Gymnasium
	Group fitness/program rooms
	Spa, steam, and sauna
<b>Site works</b>	Preston Hall refurbishment
	External works
	Carparking

Source: Areas Schedule and Masterplan, Mantric Architecture

Council's preference is to implement the project as soon as possible to fast track the delivery of benefits to the community, particularly where community demand already far exceeds capacity. However, for practicality and affordability reasons, a potential approach to staging is discussed in Section 5.1.4.

Given the current construction industry operating environment, Council may also consider building a scope review process into the project design and development that seeks to reduce the capital and operational cost to Council and the community. The intent of such a review process is not to drive scope change, rather to monitor the current volatile market conditions, which Council believes is prudent and to the benefit of Council. Council would be regularly updated regarding the scope review component of the project and this process would also be communicated as part of the community engagement process.

## 5.1.2 Statement of design intent

### Universal Design and Accessibility

The RSAC will adopt universal design principles to ensure that the building design and facility experiences are accessible to as many residents as possible. The design will consider age, level of ability, cultural background and other factors that contribute to community diversity. To achieve this, the design will:

- be purposeful, marketable and accommodate people with diverse abilities and preferences
- be easy to understand and communicate necessary information effectively, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or sensory abilities
- minimise hazards and other potential accidents
- ensure the RSAC can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue to get around the centre
- provide appropriate size and space for users with varying body size, posture, or mobility that create different approach, reach, manipulation and use characteristics.

The facility design is critical to increasing the health and wellbeing of all sectors of the community. The provision of accessible, inclusive, and welcoming spaces, together with the right facility mix is critical to servicing community needs and maximising attendance and participation. The RSAC design will respond to community needs and maximise participation for all by:

- maximising user accessibility through best practice Australian universal design principles and relevant international guidelines
- reducing barriers to ensure the design is appropriate for females, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and other target groups by minimising intimidation factors commonly associated with aquatic facilities
- maximising social interaction and participation through customised facility elements, good seating areas, subtle lighting, and excellent acoustics
- maximising operational flexibility. For example, there is retractable seating for the indoor show court (1,000 seats) and there are admin work areas and meetings rooms for additional staff and multipurpose activities.
- maximising financial sustainability and enhanced affordability with a design objective to reduce operational costs. For example, considering the depth of the 50-metre pool (i.e., to a maximum of 1.5 metres), a highly insulated building shell and excellent ESD elements.
- maximising facility access via a range of transport modes and a well-designed car park allowing ease of access to the RSAC for all groups. The project delivery, design and construction will also support active transport opportunities to ensure that people without access to private vehicles are able to access the site and facility.

### Operational functionality and customer experience

The design of the RSAC focusses on the delivery of high levels of customer experience and operational functionality.

High quality customer experience will encourage participation through considering:

- customer 'flow' through the centre and intuitive customer navigation

- customer behaviour and the interrelationship between facility elements to enhance efficiency and ease of use
- perception of safety and the 'first time user' consideration as part of the analysis ensuring the design team considers people that are not as comfortable in, or familiar with, a health and fitness environment.

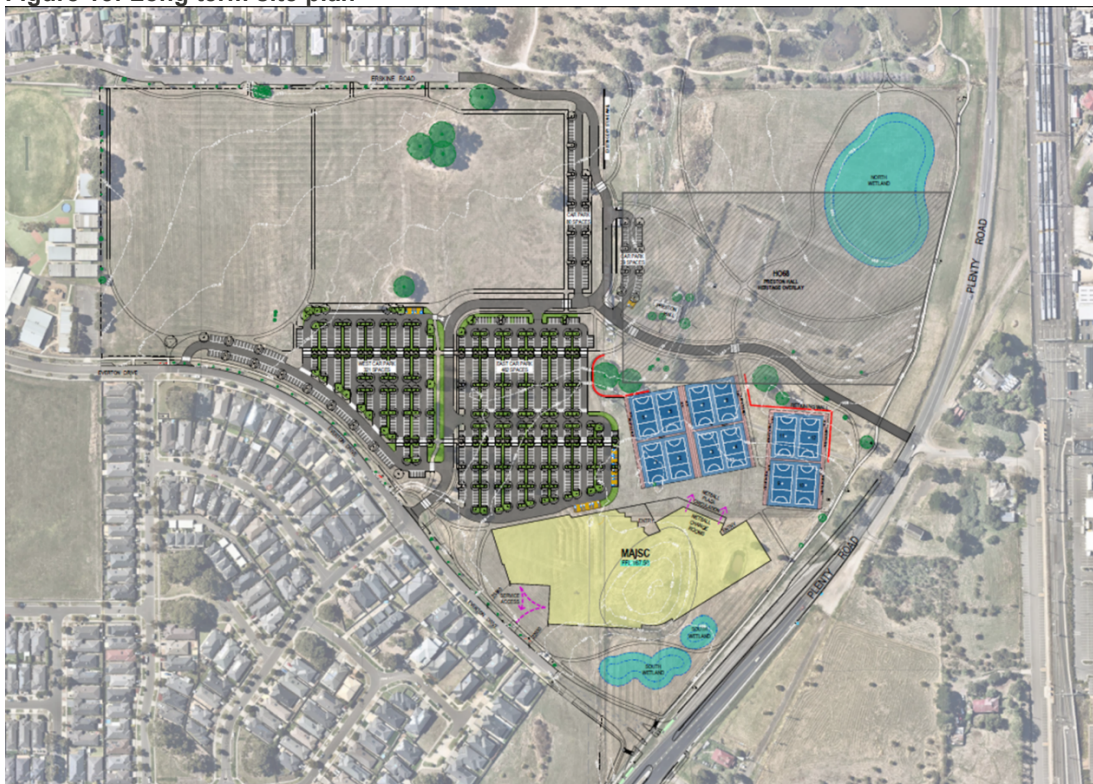
Maximising efficiency and minimising operational costs together maximise operational efficiency by:

- maximising staffing efficiency particularly in aquatic areas
- ensuring emergency plans can be quickly implemented
- providing sufficient office space to facilitate staff productivity
- preliminary consideration of resource requirements for cleaning and maintenance
- requirements for service deliveries and plant maintenance.

### 5.1.3 Concept design

City of Whittlesea engaged Mantric Architecture to develop the site plan and concept design in accordance with the list of key scope items. The masterplan for the site is currently being finalised and is expected to be completed in late 2022. Figure 15 shows an indicative long-term plan for the Mernda Sports Hub site, which will be subject to further community and stakeholder consultation.

**Figure 15: Long term site plan**



Source: Mantric Architecture

Figure 16 and Figure 17 show the concept designs for the ground floor and first floor.



Figure 16: RSAC concept design – ground level



Source: Mantric Architecture

Figure 17: RSAC concept design – first level



Source: Mantric Architecture

### 5.1.4 Staging approach

The RSAC will be the largest social infrastructure project ever delivered by the City of Whittlesea. It is not viable for Council to fund the full scope of the project in a single stage so for practicality and affordability reasons multiple stages are proposed in Table 17. This approach has been developed to prioritise those components of the project where community demand already far exceeds capacity – the indoor and outdoor sports courts.

The City of Whittlesea will pursue staged investment from State Government to support the project. The Early Works under Stage 1 have already commenced and will be fully funded by Council. **The funding request within this Business Case seeks a co-contribution from State Government towards Stage 2 (indoor and outdoor courts, plus the detailed design of Stage 3) and Stage 3 (aquatics and gym, plus the detailed design of any longer-term site works).** Council intends to fully fund any longer-term site works but if a contribution from State Government is required, this

will be the subject of a subsequent business case. Section 9 details the total project budget and funding requested from the State Government as part of this Business Case.

**Table 17: Scope of project stages**

Scope of each project stage	Construction commencement	Funding ask
<b>Stage 1: Early Works</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business case for courts and aquatic facility</li> <li>Preliminary masterplan for whole Mernda Sports Hub site</li> <li>Plenty Rd/Everton Drive intersection</li> <li>Bulk earthworks, rock removal, and site preparation works for RSAC site only</li> <li>Site stormwater works</li> <li>Site utilities design works, and construction of utilities to netball courts only</li> </ul>	Commenced	Nil
<b>Stage 2: Courts</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor floodlit sports courts (8 courts)</li> <li>Indoor stadium (5 multipurpose courts + 1 show court)</li> <li>Indoor seating (350 fixed seats + 1,000 retractable seats)</li> <li>Stage 2 and 3 core infrastructure including foyer, creche, administrative area, multipurpose rooms</li> <li>Carparking</li> <li>Stage 3 detailed design</li> </ul>	FY23/24	\$40 million
<b>Stage 3: Aquatics and gym</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aquatic facility</li> <li>Gymnasium</li> <li>Café</li> <li>Group fitness / program rooms</li> <li>Spa, steam, and sauna</li> <li>Consulting area for allied health</li> <li>Additional carparking</li> </ul>	FY27/28	\$40 million

### 5.1.5 Key outcomes

The RSAC will provide a myriad of opportunities for participation in active recreation, leisure activities and structured sport; resulting in positive physical, mental, and social health outcomes for decades to come. Investment in RSAC will:

- deliver on Council's visions, policies and strategies to best leverage its aquatic, leisure, and sport centres for the community
- provide a contemporary, industry leading sports, aquatic and leisure centre tailored to the needs of the City of Whittlesea community
- increase rates of participation in structured and unstructured physical activity (starting at around 474,601 annual visits to gym and aquatics facilities alone<sup>71</sup>) which is aligned with health policies from all tiers of government
- meet current and future demand for court sports (including badminton, basketball, netball, table tennis, volleyball) which encompasses both casual demand (34,600 people) and organised demand (2,213 people after drive time)<sup>72</sup>
- increase participation in a broader range of activities beyond the physical including supporting community service providers in assisting priority groups within the community

<sup>71</sup> Infrastructure Planning Report, ActiveXchange

<sup>72</sup> Investment Planning Report – Sports, ActiveXchange



- promote further economic growth in the region through job creation during construction (420 local jobs in Whittlesea LGA and 354 non-local jobs) and an uplift in on-going employment given the broader services at the RSAC<sup>73</sup>
- increase opportunities for residents, particularly children, to develop swimming skills and water safety education with 1,720 members projected to partake in learn to swim activities, based off 2022 projections (2,682 in 2041)<sup>74</sup>
- increase social value by over \$4.5 million per year<sup>75</sup> and community connection by providing an inclusive environment for the community to improve social engagement through adopting universal design principles that consider the community's abilities, needs and preferences.

## 5.2 Interdependencies and interfaces

The Mernda Sports Hub site has ample space for the development so there are minimal interfaces and interdependencies impacting the delivery of the RSAC. Maximising the site's overall potential requires investigation through the development of the masterplan which is expected to be finalised late in 2022.

City of Whittlesea already owns the bulk of the site and strategic planning has long envisaged the development of a sports, aquatic and leisure centre. There is a small parcel of land straddling Plenty Road that was recently sold by one private entity to another. Council is currently waiting for the titles to clear so it can issue the new property owner with the notice of intention to acquire the land to the west of Plenty Road on the Mernda Sports Hub site. Council has engaged with the new owner and understands there will be no objection to the process as the new owner's interests are focussed on the land to the east of Plenty Road.

Further investigation is required to determine viable partnerships for the site. Council will consult with potential partners such as allied health services and other businesses and consider opportunities for Council-run services to operate from the facility (for example playgroups or social support groups).

## 5.3 Lessons learnt

Council owns a similar facility in Mill Park. After a \$28 million building redevelopment, the Mill Park Leisure Centre reopened in 2021 as an inclusive community health and fitness facility. Council explored and documented key lessons learned from the redevelopment project. These learnings have influenced the development of this business case and help to de-risk the delivery of the RSAC. A summary of the lessons learned are identified in Table 18 with further detail available in Appendix G.

**Table 18: Lessons learned from Mill Park Leisure Centre redevelopment**

Category	Key lessons
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil contractor pool works experience</li> <li>• Include float period</li> <li>• Inclusion of standard item rates</li> <li>• Geotechnical engineering expertise engaged by contractor</li> <li>• Include a shop drawing review</li> <li>• Detailed tender variation processes</li> <li>• Agreed costs for excavation, disposal, and rubble</li> <li>• Early site visits</li> </ul>

<sup>73</sup> Council's economic projections program (EconomyID). These estimates were based on an early project concept which envisaged constructing the RSAC in a single stage. The staged approach outlined above is expected to deliver even greater economic growth and employment uplift.

<sup>74</sup> City of Whittlesea – Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre, ActiveXchange

<sup>75</sup> Social Value Model – Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre Mernda, ActiveXchange

Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design guided by relevant Council strategy</li> <li>• Design peer review</li> <li>• Clarify operators' authority in design process is clarified</li> <li>• Power supply lease as part of the design process</li> <li>• Existing services identified in early planning/design stages</li> <li>• Timely identification and resolution of all existing conditions</li> <li>• Document errors</li> <li>• Low-complexity constructability</li> <li>• Use local materials – design process should support local material use</li> <li>• Begin artwork coordination during design phase</li> </ul>
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved business case</li> <li>• Allow adequate time for all planning, design, tender and construction stages</li> <li>• All cost plans/costing viewed by delivery group</li> <li>• Staging or works – ensure all key stakeholder are accurately informed about realities of staging options, including time, noise, costs, safety, and risk</li> </ul>
Tender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liquidated damages outlined in contract/RFQ documents</li> <li>• Blinding concrete clearly instructed as a requirement</li> <li>• Specify rock removal allowances</li> <li>• Exclusion review</li> </ul>

## 5.4 Project development and due diligence (PDDD)

To enable better decision making and reduce risk through the Investment Lifecycle for RSAC a Project Development and Due Diligence (PDDD) assessment has been conducted. Extensive investigation and planning have informed the development of this business case and hence the PDDD assessment demonstrates the likely success of delivering the RSAC's outcomes.

Table 19 contains a summary of the key elements in the PDDD assessment (provided in Appendix H) includes references to PDDD activities described within this business case.

**Table 19: Summary of PDDD assessment**

PDDD element	Summary	Evidence
Project scope and design	<p>Client requirement documents, operational requirements, functional requirements, principal project requirements, concept design and design reports, scope development plan and site layout are all finalised.</p> <p>System requirements, development brief, project charter, standards and specifications, urban design framework are all at the preliminary stage.</p> <p>Digital engineering and information requirements, and reference design are not applicable.</p>	Section 5
Feasibility, planning, and approvals	All elements are finalised except for the approvals process plan which is at the preliminary stage.	Sections 4 and 7, Appendices A, B and K
Project management	<p>Cost estimation, project schedule, project assurance plan, governance plan, interfaces and interdependencies, resource management plan, stakeholder matrix and benefits realisation management are all finalised.</p> <p>Constraints, risks, and opportunities register is at the preliminary stage.</p> <p>Asset handover plan, commissioning plan and interface and integration plan have been initiated.</p>	Sections 5, 8, 9 and 10

Investigations	Asset audit, constructability assessment, contamination and spoil management assessment, cultural heritage assessment, ecological assessment, ecological audits, existing conditions assessment, existing conditions plan, geotechnical assessment, hydrological, hydrogeological, and hydraulic conditions, land survey, land use assessment, and major utility locations and diversion strategies have all been finalised. Disruption identification, landscape and visual assessment, noise and vibration assessment, and water quality assessment are at the preliminary stage. Air quality assessment is not applicable.	Sections 5 and 7
Procurement and delivery	All elements are at the preliminary stage except for the handover of design, drawings and reports which has been finalised.	Section 6
Management plan	Community and stakeholder engagement plan has been finalised. Project management plan, design management plan, procurement management plan, change management plan, cost management plan, information management plan and risk and opportunity management plan are at the preliminary stage. Construction environmental management, construction management plan, fire and life safety plan, and quality assurance management plan have been initiated. Decanting management plan is not applicable.	Section 10

## 5.5 Value Creation and Capture opportunities

The Value Creation and Capture (VCC) framework seeks to identify and deliver additional economic value and benefits than might normally have been achieved from investments, activities, and policies by considering the wider opportunities available. It is required for precinct projects, development of public land, non-ICT capital investments meeting HVHR criteria or investments over \$100 million.

Although the RSAC meets the criteria for the application of the VCC framework the level of investment requested from Government is substantially lower (refer Section 9.4), and Council's vision for the Mernda Sports Hub as a health and wellbeing precinct already embodies the intent and principles of the VCC framework. Council has considered opportunities to deliver broader outcomes through:

- its strategic vision and policy objectives for the Mernda Sports Hub site
- resources and capabilities required to achieve the strategic vision
- potential partnerships that deliver greater community health and education services (such as the delivery of Council and community programs)
- alternative revenue streams that can be generated to minimise funding requirements (such as commercial opportunities related to allied health services, a creche, and a café)
- increasing social capital (such as through the inclusion of spaces that encourage social connection)
- enhancing public safety and amenity (through thoughtful urban design to ensure public areas feel safer for vulnerable community members)
- consolidating land parcels through acquisition to enable development and infrastructure opportunities (refer Section 7.1 for further detail)
- other ways to create more value for the community and increase precinct amenity (such as green spaces, architectural features, and integration with the broader Mernda Sports Hub site).

A specific VCC Plan has therefore not been documented for this business case as the considerations listed above will create strong value for money and broader societal benefits, ensuring increased public returns on the State Government's investment in RSAC.

## 6. Commercial and procurement

This section provides a high-level overview of the current thinking regarding the commercial and procurement approach, market conditions and risk allocation associated with the delivery of the RSAC. More detailed information is available in Appendix I which contains the Procurement Management Plan prepared by Tetra Tech Coffey.

### 6.1 Procurement strategy

The procurement approach outlined has been informed by Council's Procurement Policy 2021 and developed in accordance with DTF Guidelines.

The Procurement Policy has been standardised with other northern metropolitan councils and complies with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) which delegates procurement thresholds to local governments. It provides guidance to allow consistency and control over procurement activities. This includes outlining standard core objectives for any procurement relating to Value for Money, ethical conduct and behaviour, technical capability, and social procurement. It also provides guidance on evaluation criteria and weightings, and standard terms for contracting and payment.

Delivering this project requires separate procurement processes including:

- **Design of the facility.**
- **Construction of the facility.**
- **A third-party operator to operate the facility.**

The remainder of this section outlines Council's delivery model options for the construction of the facility. This will be further explored and finalised by the Executive Leadership Team.

#### 6.1.1 Procurement model

In addition to Council's Procurement Policy, key characteristics of the project that are relevant for the delivery model assessment for the construction of the facility are:

- The scope of the procurement is for the design and construction of a new sports, aquatic and leisure centre.
- Detailed design of the facility is still to be completed. A design contractor will be engaged as soon as possible.
- Section 5.1.4 outlines the approach to staging. Due to the timelines and uncertainty of costs, each stage is being treated as a discrete package. Early works in preparation for the site are underway.
- As is the case for the Mill Park Leisure Centre, Council intends to be responsible for hard maintenance (including the roof, air-conditioning system, integrated electrical systems, etc.) as part of its wider portfolio.
- The centre will be operated by a third-party operator, who will be responsible for general maintenance (including equipment, fixtures, fittings, etc.) as part of its contract.
- Council is seeking funding from other levels of government.

On this basis, the Procurement Management Plan considers the following three delivery models in detail for the procurement of the construction of the new facility:

- Early/Main Works
- Construct only (lump sum)
- Novated Design and Construct (D&C).

An Alliance model was not considered appropriate as is it best suited for complex high-risk projects where risks are significant and unpredictable. Given the investment Council has already made in the development and refinement of the requirements of RSAC this model has been discounted. Similarly, a Public Private Partnership (PPP) was not explored due to the nature of the project and the relatively modest (for a PPP) size of the investment required.

The nature of the project is a common service provided by councils and there are recent examples across Melbourne and wider Victoria of councils delivering similar sport, aquatic and leisure projects. The relative advantages and disadvantages of the three delivery models are outlined in Table 20.

**Table 20: Delivery model assessment**

Delivery model	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Early/Main Works</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ earlier commencement on site</li> <li>✓ reduces cost escalation through earlier commencement and shorter project schedule</li> <li>✓ same contractor documents both packages</li> <li>✓ specialised contractors manage the works</li> <li>✓ Early Works contractor's preliminary costs are lower than Main Works contractor's as they typically carry lower overheads</li> <li>✓ Ability to engage new contractor for Main Works if the Early Works contractor is not performing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Main Works design changes can impact on Early Works</li> <li>□ disconnection at handover of the site to the Main Works contractor could add time and cost</li> <li>□ complexities can arise from Early Works and Main Works contractors using different sub-contractors</li> </ul>
<b>Construct Only (fixed price)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ conventional delivery method with low delivery risk</li> <li>✓ highest level of Council control and certainty</li> <li>✓ larger pool of contractors</li> <li>✓ greater scope for competitive prices</li> <li>✓ contract value is known prior to construction</li> <li>✓ Council can commence engaging a design contractor during Business Case approvals process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ no single point of responsibility due to separation of design and construct contracts</li> <li>□ potential for claims and delays due to design deficiencies</li> <li>□ Council retains design risk</li> <li>□ Council manages multiple interfaces between the design and construction contracts, requiring skills and resources</li> <li>□ longer design and overall project duration</li> <li>□ design changes during construction are more expensive and less flexible</li> </ul>
<b>Novated D&amp;C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ achieves single point of accountability, while also retaining high level of Council control and certainty over design</li> <li>✓ contract value is known prior to construction</li> <li>✓ Council can commence engaging a design contractor during Business Case approvals process</li> <li>✓ construction can commence while design documentation is being completed</li> <li>✓ Council manages completion of design documentation and accepts design risk</li> <li>✓ input of both design contractor and builder into finalising design and materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ may pay a premium to transfer design risk above what would be expected for a standard D&amp;C</li> <li>□ possibility of additional consultant fees to obtain independent verification that the contractor complies with the brief and tender documentation</li> <li>□ design risk is compressed</li> <li>□ head contractor manages completion of design documentation which risks design intent being lost if remaining design is not briefed and then documented accurately</li> </ul>

The Procurement Management Plan recommends separating the construction contract into Early Works and Main Works packages aligned with the project stages. This approach provides Council with the option to:

- begin siteworks under Stage 1 and in parallel finalise the detailed design and consultation process for the main building works for Stage 2
- procure a contractor to deliver the Stage 2 works package and complete documentation for Stage 3 as part of Stage 2
- undertake separate procurement processes for each stage given the long lead times and specialist contractors required.

Having Stage 1 Early Works reduces cost escalation by commencing works earlier, reduces the total project schedule by around five months, and avoids additional consultant costs. The approach for Stage 3 will be conditional on Council finalising the funding and financing approach.

**All three delivery models are considered feasible and have been used by other councils in the delivery of similar projects.** Council will confirm the selection of the delivery model at least six months prior to commencing the project.

### 6.1.2 Intended contractual arrangements

Council's executive team will finalise the contractual arrangements, approach to risk allocation and proposed payment mechanism for the project upon completion of the Business Case. The Procurement Policy recommends a series of measures to minimise risk exposure when entering contractual arrangements with third parties. These include:

- standardising contracts to include current, relevant clauses
- requiring contractual agreement before commencement
- use of or reference to relevant Australian Standards (or equivalent)
- effectively managing the contract including monitoring and enforcing performance.

## 6.2 Market conditions

Key characteristics of the current construction market that are relevant are:

- Major government projects have significantly stimulated the industry over the last few years, and many are not scheduled to be completed for eight to ten years.
- Several aquatic and leisure related projects have been completed in recent years which improves the market's knowledge of the nature of the project.
- Several Melbourne based construction companies have a strong presence in the market and relevant experience with similar projects. The same applies to subcontractors.
- Several local design consultancies have strong experience in the aquatic and leisure industry.
- Cost escalations have been high and are expected to continue to rise (refer Section 9 in Appendix J).
- Following multiple national and global events impacting the industry (including floods, fires, war, the pandemic), it is expected that special conditions will be incorporated into contracts.
- A shortage of labour for engineers, consultants and contractors is expected to continue.
- Material shortages and delays in the supply chain are expected to lead to cost increases and/or schedule delays.
- There is a monopoly in the market for the construction of concrete pools.

## 6.3 Commercial and procurement risk assessment

Table 21 describes the key risks and proposed mitigation strategies that relate to commercial and procurement activities. Further detail on the approach to risk is provided in Section 10.6.

**Table 21: Commercial and procurement risks**

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
<b>Latent groundworks issues</b>	Unknown groundwork issues arise which result in increased cost and/or impact to delivery timeframes	●	Multiple strategies to understand the ground conditions and minimise this risk are underway including extensive ground exploration, ground radar survey, investigations to map the farm dam, and geotechnical mapping.
<b>Lack of construction market interest</b>	There is a lack of market interest in the procurement which forces Council into a sub-optimal commercial arrangement due to lack of competition.	●	Council's market understanding suggests there is sufficient market depth and capability to achieve a competitive outcome. Further market sounding to be completed by Council prior to going to market to ensure market is aware of tender and in a position to respond.



			Bidders are selective in a constrained market and focus on well-structured project with clear senior support. When ready to engage the market, Council prepares a clear project structure, including clear risk allocations and demonstrated support from all key stakeholders.
<b>Market demand</b>	Increased demand in the construction market from COVID-19 related stimulus spending drives prices up and/or impacts delivery timeframes for project due to capacity constraints.	●	Further market sounding to be completed by Council prior to going to market to test cost estimates and delivery timeline. The cost plan includes escalation for increased costs at a rate of 5% p.a. for 2022-23, 3.5% p.a. for FY 2023-25 and 3% p.a. for FY 2025 onwards which is aligned to historical long-term trends. Council understands the issues and constraints of the market that cause risk pricing. Council will consider strategies to mitigate issues, such as indexation of costs, benchmark costs for later phases to help minimise risk pricing in bidders' fixed price.
<b>Contractor does not meet obligations</b>	Council does not have commercial arrangements to manage its risk in the event the contractor is unable to meet the construction completion date resulting in time and cost overruns.	●	A firm contract will be developed to mitigate known risks at tender phase. Throughout the life of the project, active monitoring will be undertaken to ensure quality, risk, program, and cost remain as planned. Consider how current issues in the market may impact the delivery schedule and the bidders' strategies for managing the risks. In the procurement process factor in appropriate time allowances within the delivery schedule for key risks.
<b>Commercial management of adverse events impact delivery</b>	Council does not have adequate commercial protection for unforeseen or adverse events (such as extended periods of bad weather, difficulty sourcing materials due to state/national/global events, and/or further workforce shutdowns due to a COVID-19 outbreak) that result in a delay in construction completion.	●	Council will include commercial provisions into the contract to manage adverse events. Contract clauses will be further tightened to mitigate risks associated with the pandemic. Council will consider the contractor's ability to manage such events in the procurement evaluation.
<b>Contractor/subcontractor insolvency</b>	Preferred Contractor or Subcontractor becomes insolvent prior to practical completion/rectification of defects.	●	Council to undertake financial due diligence on prospective construction firms and key contractors and subcontractors during the procurement process (for example, insolvency checks will be undertaken). Council will also ensure appropriate bank guarantees and security agreements are in place with contractor/subcontractors.
<b>Market capability</b>	The response from market does not align with Council requirements, resulting in Council changing its requirements to meet the markets' capabilities	●	Council to appropriately develop and define requirements in tender documentation. Two stage process to be run (EOI/RFT) which would shortlist suitably qualified contractors. The scope of works is within the markets' capabilities, with multiple potential contractors undertaking or completing similar projects across Melbourne. This includes detailed market sounding for specialised contractors and subcontractors, as well as consideration of alternative solutions and product changes if required.
<b>Price rises</b>	The delay between funding approval and executing a contract with the building contractor is likely to be at least	●	Council to ensure appropriate escalation is included in the capital cost estimates and continue to monitor actual escalation against these estimates.

	two years over which time prices will continue to escalate.	
<b>Material shortages</b>	Supply chain disruptions result in critical components or materials being unavailable, increasing cost and/or impacting delivery timeframes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A firm contract will be developed to mitigate known risks at tender phase. Council will include commercial provisions in the contract to manage adverse events. Council understands the key issues in the market and the bidders' strategies for managing the risks. In the procurement process factor in appropriate strategies for the management of costs and time for the key risks</li> </ul>
<b>Pool contractor/subcontractor</b>	The local market for the construction and tiling of concrete pools is small, resulting in a lack of competitive tension and a higher cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council will seek a range of quotes from traditional and alternative pool contractors.</li> </ul>
<b>Unforeseen impacts of pandemic</b>	The extent of the impact of the pandemic on existing and planned construction projects, future demand and on the sector at large remains uncertain and could increase cost and/or impact delivery timeframes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council to consider including appropriate contractual provisions that encourage greater supplier diversity, use of regional suppliers, and increases in local inventories of critical components or materials. Council will also consider the contractor's ability to manage such events in the procurement evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>Indigenous and cultural heritage</b>	Unknown indigenous and cultural heritage issues arise which increase cost and/or impact delivery timeframes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council to undertake a cultural heritage site assessment including stakeholder consultation with community groups to understand any indigenous and cultural heritage issues and identify, prevent, and mitigate harm.</li> </ul>

Risk ratings: Very Low / Low / Medium / High / Extreme

## 7. Planning, environment, heritage and culture

### 7.1 Planning, environment, heritage and culture considerations

This section outlines the planning, environment, heritage and culture considerations for delivering the RSAC.

#### 7.1.1 Planning

The Mernda Sports Hub site and surrounds are currently zoned under the 'General Residential Zone 1' which is intended to:

- encourage development that respects the neighbourhood character of the area
- encourage a diversity of housing types and housing growth particularly in locations offering good access to services and transport
- allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to service local community needs in appropriate locations.

The site will need to be rezoned to reflect the intended uses. As this takes time, Council has commenced this process to avoid significant delays to the RSAC project. Potential zones include 'Public Park and Recreation Zone' (which recognises areas for public recreation and open space, protects and conserves areas of significance where appropriate, and provides for commercial uses where appropriate) and 'Special Use Zone' (which recognises the use and development of land for specific purposes). Council is currently working with legal advisor Maddocks to determine how soon Council can begin Stage 1 (Early Works, refer Section 5.1.4) within the current zoning parameters. Council will also commence the planning scheme amendment process which requires a council resolution to seek ministerial approval.

#### 7.1.2 Property acquisition

City of Whittlesea already owns the bulk of the Mernda Sports Hub site but for a small parcel of land known as part of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda which was recently sold by one private entity to another. As transfer of this land has recently occurred, Council will soon be issuing the new property owner with the notice of intention to acquire the land to the west part of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, for the Mernda Sports Hub site.

The new owner has presented Council with their assessment of fair compensation for this compulsory acquisition of land. Council is now awaiting an assessment of compensation by an independent valuation firm. If an amount of compensation is not agreed to by Council and the property owner, Council will issue a "Notice of Acquisition", at which time Council will become proprietors of that part of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda. A resolution of the amount a fair compensation will continue to be discussed by both parties and if not resolved may proceed to courts for resolution.

There are other strips of land that Council will compulsorily acquire along Plenty Road as part of this process, however, they will be needed for road improvement purposes.

#### 7.1.3 Environment

##### Flora and fauna

A 2017 assessment by Biosis identified the Mernda Sports Hub site as a potential suitable habitat for Matted Flax-lily (*Dianella amoena*), Golden Sun Moth (*Synemom plana*) and Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*) which are all listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth). Council engaged Ecology and Heritage Partners in 2021 to undertake targeted surveys for these three potentially significant flora and fauna species within the site. The report was finalised in April 2022 and found that no matters of National Environmental Significance (which includes the three species of interest) were present within the site.

The site was identified as a suitable habitat for several floral species listed or protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic) and found to contain a small stand of mature River Red Gum trees which hold native significance. They are not recognised as scar trees but are recognised as significant to Aboriginal Culture and predate European occupation.

Council will progress the actions identified in the 2017 and 2021 assessments by:

- preparing and submitting a *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic)* permit application to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to take protected flora from public land
- ensuring any person engaged to salvage, relocate, or handle terrestrial fauna species holds a current Management Authorisation in line with the *Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic)*
- developing a Kangaroo Management Plan prior to the proposed development given the area supports a mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos
- attaining a planning permit to remove, destroy or lop any native vegetation in the area (given there is less than 0.5 hectares of vegetation is proposed for removal, the application would not need to be referred to DELWP)
- adhering to the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (Vic)* by ensuring that listed noxious weeds are appropriately controlled throughout the site
- determining whether a weed management plan is required to be prepared and incorporated into a construction environmental management plan
- complying with the City of Whittlesea River Red-gum Protection Policy to retain as many trees as possible.

### Ground conditions

Multiple assessments to understand ground conditions and minimise the risk of latent groundwork issues have been completed including extensive ground exploration, contamination, bedrock mapping, ground radar survey, investigations to map surface water and geotechnical surveys. This information has influenced the design of the RSAC.

There is a significant dry-stone wall on the site. Its location impacts the location of the north-south internal access road but does not impact the footprint of the RSAC facility. Council has engaged heritage consultant Ray Tonkin to prepare a Heritage Conservation Management Plan which is expected to be finalised in July 2022. This report will consider options including:

- rebuilding in the current location
- relocating the dry-stone wall within the Mernda Sports Hub site
- building the design of the RSAC facility around the dry-stone wall.

### Design considerations

Council recognises the significant role the built environment plays in the region's environmental footprint and is committed to creating and maintaining sustainable infrastructure through the full project lifecycle. The design for RSAC will support Council in achieving its 2022 zero-emission target through energy efficiency, sourcing renewable energy (avoiding the use of natural gas) and sustainable building design including photovoltaic solar panels and rainwater collection. It will also incorporate water sensitive urban design elements.

#### 7.1.4 Heritage and cultural

The Mernda Sports Hub site comprises five separate titles. Preston Hall sits on one of these titles and has a heritage overlay curtilage surrounding the dwelling. Preston Hall is a bluestone building in an open landscape setting and is historically, aesthetically, and architecturally significant as an example of an early 1860s substantial dwelling. Council owns the site and the original curtilage applied to an extensive area reflecting the former title boundary. The future use of Preston Hall will be determined at a later date. It continues to be occupied and appears to be in good condition.

The curtilage was reduced in 2019 to provide suitable protection to this historic building in an open setting whilst still allowing the site to be developed for public purposes. Council engaged heritage consultant Ray Tonkin to advise Council on whether it is possible to further reduce the curtilage.

The advice suggested that a further attempt to reduce the curtilage would be difficult to justify and recommended against amending the planning scheme to reduce the curtilage. Therefore, any works within the curtilage will be dealt with under the planning permit process for the redevelopment of the site. The future zone applied to the area may interact with the heritage overlay which will be considered in further analysis for the ultimate planning process for the site.

Council engaged Biosis to prepare a Cultural Heritage Management Plan which was approved by Wurundjeri Reconciliation Action Plan. The Activity Area investigated included 23.5 hectares of land. A desktop assessment and subsequent field test with Elders concluded that no Aboriginal cultural heritage was identified, and no new Aboriginal Places were identified. The CHMP does not have a set expiry date. If needed, Council will prepare a modified complex cultural heritage management plan.

## 7.2 Planning, environment, heritage and culture risk summary

A risk analysis has been undertaken as described in Section 10.6. Table 22 describes the key risks and proposed mitigation strategies that relate to commercial and planning, environment, heritage, and culture activities.

**Table 22: Planning, environment, heritage and culture risks**

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Diverse community perspectives	There may be multiple and varied perspectives in the community regarding the proposed RSAC location and/or design features. Some of these community perspectives may be opposed impacting on project scope, timing, and cost.	●	Extensive community and stakeholder consultation conducted to date has informed the design intent, specifications, and concept design. Consultation will continue to inform the development of the project. Council will develop and implement a communication and engagement plan (refer Section 10.2). Further, Council will form a Community Reference Group to represent the range of community stakeholders and will arrange a number of communications and continued engagement with the Group.
Environmental impact	The environmental assessment identifies that the proposed works would reduce native vegetation or disturb the habitat of fauna, causing delays or alterations to the design of the facility.	●	Full environmental assessments will be undertaken during planning consent process and progress with recommendations following the assessments.
Land acquisition	A delay in the land acquisition process will delay early works related to the traffic intersection and could potentially have a flow on effect to the project schedule, design, and cost	●	The new landowner is aware that Council intends to issue a notice of intention to acquire the land as soon as the titles have cleared. Council understands there will be no objection to the process as the new owner's interests are focussed on the land to the east of Plenty Road.
Curtilage	Council may not receive a permit exemption for works within the Preston Hall curtilage.	●	This possibility will be considered throughout the design, phasing and staging of the RSAC. It will be further investigated as part of future planning for later stages of the RSAC project.
Dry stone wall	The dry-stone wall impacting the location of the internal access road may not be able to be moved.	●	Council has engaged heritage consultant Ray Tonkin to prepare a Heritage Conservation Management Plan which is expected to be finalised in July 2022. This report will explore options (rebuild, relocate, build around) and make a recommendation to Council.
CHMP	If the CHMP needs to be modified, there is only one party who can do it. If there is a delay in undertaking this work, it may impact on delivery timelines.	●	Council will engage with the consultant to minimise any delays to commencing the modifications to the CHMP.

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Climate change	Climate change risks impacting on the complexity of the design and adversely impacting project budget and scope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council will ensure the concept and detailed design include sustainability features and requirements, such as offsetting materials, to ensure compliance with current and foreseeable future sustainability requirements. Further, Council will consider the re-usage and flexibility of the facility in the design stage.</li> </ul>
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**Risk ratings:** Very Low / Low / Medium / High / Extreme



## 8. Project schedule

### 8.1 Detailed project schedule

The indicative project schedule in the RSAC Procurement Management Plan (refer Section 6) is set out in Table 23. It is based on several key assumptions:

- The project will be delivered in stages with early works already commenced to prepare the site for construction of the RSAC facility.
- A funding decision is approved in the 2023-24 State Budget to be announced in May 2023.
- Stage 2 of the RSAC (indoor and outdoor courts) is operational by 2027-28 with full operational commencement of Stage 3 (aquatics and gym) in 2030-31.

Table 23: RSAC project schedule

Task	Timing
Business Case finalisation	July 2022
RSAC funding approval and announcement	By May 2023
Approval of design development package	By September 2024
Town planning approval granted (if required)	By March 2024
Stage 1 early works	By November 2024
Stage 2 construction begins	March 2025
Stage 2 operations commence	By December 2027
Stage 3 construction begins	January 2028
Stage 3 operations commenced	By December 2030

Source: Procurement Management Plan, Tetra Tech Coffey

A detailed project schedule will be developed by Council as part of finalising the design of the facility. Indicative programs for the various procurement delivery model options are available in Appendix I.

### 8.2 Critical path activities and key milestones

Critical path activities for the implementation of RSAC include:

- finalising the detailed design to accommodate a staged approach to delivery
- finalising the funding strategy and securing co-contributions from State Government
- strategic positioning and potential connections including engagement of a third-party operator.

### 8.3 Project schedule risk assessment

Risk analysis has been undertaken as described in section 10.6. Table 24 described the key risks and proposed mitigations strategies that relate to the project schedule.

Table 24: Project schedule risks

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Adverse events impact delivery, delaying completion	Unforeseen or adverse events such as extended period of bad weather results in a delay in construction completion	●	Council will include commercial provisions in constructions contracts to manage adverse events. Contract clauses will be further tightened to mitigate risks associated with the pandemic and adverse events. Further, Council will consider the contractor's ability to manage such events in the procurement evaluation.
Procurement timelines	The response from market does not align with the project requirements, resulting in the issuing of clarification	●	Council allows sufficient time during procurement process to appropriately develop and define requirements in tender

	addenda and/or seeking re-submission of response which delays both the procurement and broader project delivery. This includes all procurement activities, from construction, operation, and design stages.		documentations. Two stage process to be run (EOI/RFP). Transaction structure will allow time for market clarification.
External (non-Council) funding is not confirmed for FY23/24	State/Commonwealth Government funding does not provide funding in FY23/24 (for Stage 2) resulting in delayed construction	●	Council to continue on-going consultation and seek advocacy across Government departments
Inadequate future proofing	The concept design and/or project scope changes between stages which impacts on the final project delivery.	●	Council will ensure future proofing is a key consideration in the design process and arrange considerable community consultation to ensure final delivery is aligned to community expectations.

Risk ratings: Very Low / Low / Medium / High / Extreme

## 9. Project budget

This section presents the findings of the financial analysis performed for the project solution to inform the funding to be requested for the 2023-24 State Budget. The financial estimates presented in this section of the business case identify the cash flow allocation impacts and set out the detailed costing and funding requirements for the delivery of the RSAC at Mernda as defined in Section 5.

### 9.1 Detailed costing

This project requires \$167.261 million of gross asset (capital) funding to deliver Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the RSAC:

- This Business Case requests net asset funding of \$80.0 million from the State Government.
- The remaining \$87.261 million will be provided by Council.

These figures exclude Stage 1 costs which are fully funded by Council. Council will also be responsible for covering the ongoing operational costs of the project and therefore there is no output funding requested as part of this business case.

This represents a significant capital investment for Council, especially as it is operating in a constrained environment where rates are capped, and it is difficult to increase income to cover the increasing costs of key strategic capital projects. This investment will have a significant impact on Council's financial plan and Council has weighed up how to reschedule its capital investment program to enable this investment.

Capital cost estimates were produced by Council based on advice from an independent quantity surveyor (Slattery Australia Pty Ltd, see Appendix J) and were developed in accordance with DTF guidelines. The costs were based on the defined scope of works of the preferred project option, including enabling works, construction, and indirect costs. These costs reflect Stage 2 and Stage 3 as per the staged delivery timeline outlined in Section 8. Specific items included in the costs include:

- building works
- pools, plant, and equipment
- other building costs
- external works
- ESD initiatives
- contingency
- risk
- escalation.

The breakdown of the capital cost including escalation costs is outlined in Table 25.

**Table 25: Capital costs**

Capital funding											(\$ million)
Est. asset investment cash flow	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	5-year total	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	TEI
Stage 2	0.754	2.095	7.299	30.131	30.639	<b>70.918</b>	2.799	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>73.717</b>
Stage 3	0.523	2.514	1.676	0.000	0.000	<b>4.712</b>	5.229	25.893	29.126	1.462	<b>66.422</b>
Project risk allocation	0.119	0.431	0.840	2.818	2.866	<b>7.074</b>	0.751	2.422	2.724	0.137	<b>13.108</b>
Project contingency allocation	0.128	0.461	0.897	3.013	3.064	<b>7.563</b>	0.803	2.589	2.913	0.146	<b>14.014</b>
Principle repayments for leases – CAM	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>
Principle repayments for leases – department	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Subtotal (gross asset price increase)</b>	<b>1.524</b>	<b>5.500</b>	<b>10.712</b>	<b>35.962</b>	<b>36.569</b>	<b>90.267</b>	<b>9.582</b>	<b>30.904</b>	<b>34.763</b>	<b>1.745</b>	<b>167.261</b>
Council offset	(1.524)	(5.500)	(10.712)	(10.962)	(21.569)	<b>(50.267)</b>	(9.582)	(5.904)	(19.763)	(1.745)	<b>(87.261)</b>
<b>Net impact capital</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>25.000</b>	<b>15.000</b>	<b>40.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>25.000</b>	<b>15.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>80.000</b>

### 9.1.1 Headline project cost element summary

Table 26 provides an overview of the budget for the project solution in nominal terms with further detail provided in the subsequent tables. Cost estimates for all items will be refined as part of the detailed design and throughout the procurement process.

**Table 26: Headline project cost element summary**

Element	Estimate (\$ million)	Table reference
Base cost estimate	\$120.028	(Table 27)
Base risk allocation	\$11.227	(Table 28)
<b>Project cost estimate</b>	<b>\$131.255</b>	
Value Creation and Capture option(s)	\$0.000	
Contingency	\$12.003	(Table 28)
Escalation	\$24.003	(Table 28)
<b>Project budget</b>	<b>\$167.261</b>	

### 9.1.2 Project cost estimate

The total project costs for both stages include capital cost items, such as construction costs and allowances for contingency, project management fees, fit-out and other indirect costs. Table 27 breaks down the direct costs and indirect cost components of the project cost estimate.

**Table 27: Project cost estimate**

Base cost estimate (BCE)		
Effective date of BCE: 01/06/2022		
Estimated date of commencement of Stage 2 construction: March 2025		
1	Direct costs	\$ million
1.1	Building works	\$73.349
1.2	Pools, plant, and equipment	\$11.100
1.3	Other building costs	\$5.255
1.4	External costs	\$12.150
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$101.854</b>

Base cost estimate (BCE)		
Effective date of BCE: 01/06/2022		
Estimated date of commencement of Stage 2 construction: March 2025		
<b>2</b>	<b>Indirect costs</b>	<b>\$ million</b>
2.1	ESD Allowance	\$2.936
2.2	Non-construction costs	\$15.238
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>\$18.174</b>
<b>Total of base cost estimate</b>		<b>\$120.028</b>

### 9.1.3 Project risk quantification and contingency

The base risk allocation and contingency for the project has been provided in Table 28 and includes the following risk allocations which are broadly in line with a project of this nature:

- design contingency for the risk of unforeseen issues identified during the detailed design process due to refinement of project requirements, additional project information and potential changes in market prices
- construction contingency for the risk of unforeseen costs that arise during the construction.

Cost escalation of 3.5 percent per annum has been applied to the base cost estimate as these costs leverage current unit prices. This is based on the escalation advice provided by in the detailed cost plan and has been even further adjusted upward by Council to align with expectations of capital project escalation. Escalation applies annually until project completion which is assumed to be in 2030-2031.

Table 28: Project risks

Risks and contingencies	Basis	(\$ million)
Escalation	Escalation of costs before and during the construction periods of both stages	\$24.003
Project Risk	Project risk for both stages of work	\$11.227
Project Contingency	Project contingency for both stages of work	\$12.003
<b>Total of project risk</b>		<b>\$47.233</b>

## 9.2 State delivery costs

Although this business case only seeks asset funding, the RSAC at Mernda will generate new employment for the region. Table 29 presents the projected staffing requirements once Stage 3 is operational as 'ongoing' staffing (2030-31). No staff are required prior to 2027-28, which is when Stage 2 becomes operational.

Table 29: Staffing impacts – Staff/contractors

Functional category		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	Ongoing
New VPS staff	Frontline	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Back office	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Contractor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Existing VPS staff	Frontline	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Back office	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Contractor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
New non-VPS staff	Casual staff	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.1
	Full time staff	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	32.2
	Contractor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>54.3</b>
Existing non-VPS staff (specify category e.g., nurse, teacher)	Frontline	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Back office	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Contractor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Total staff</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>54.3</b>

### 9.3 Whole of life costs

While this business case is only requesting asset funding, whole of life costs for operational delivery of the RSAC at Mernda have been analysed as part of the economic analysis. This analysis is summarised in Section 9.5 with much greater detail in Appendix K.

### 9.4 Budget impact

This project requires \$167.261 million of gross asset (capital) funding to deliver Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the RSAC at Mernda, with this Business Case requesting net asset funding of \$80.0 million from the State Government. Council will provide the remaining \$87.261 million and be responsible for covering the ongoing operational costs of the project. These figures exclude costs associated with Stage 1 of the project which will be fully funded by Council. No output funding is requested as part of this business case. The asset funding cash flows are provided in Table 30 based on the anticipated construction period (as set out in Section 8.1).

**Table 30: Capital budget impact**

Capital funding											(\$ million)
Cash flow	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	5-year total	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	TEI
Stage 2	0.754	2.095	7.299	30.131	30.639	<b>70.918</b>	2.799	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>73.717</b>
Stage 3	0.523	2.514	1.676	0.000	0.000	<b>4.712</b>	5.229	25.893	29.126	1.462	<b>66.422</b>
Project risk allocation	0.119	0.431	0.840	2.818	2.866	<b>7.074</b>	0.751	2.422	2.724	0.137	<b>13.108</b>
Project contingency allocation	0.128	0.461	0.897	3.013	3.064	<b>7.563</b>	0.803	2.589	2.913	0.146	<b>14.014</b>
Principle repayments for leases – CAM	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>
Principle repayments for leases – department	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Subtotal (gross asset price increase)</b>	<b>1.524</b>	<b>5.500</b>	<b>10.712</b>	<b>35.962</b>	<b>36.569</b>	<b>90.267</b>	<b>9.582</b>	<b>30.904</b>	<b>34.763</b>	<b>1.745</b>	<b>167.261</b>
Council offset	(1.524)	(5.500)	(10.712)	(10.962)	(21.569)	<b>(50.267)</b>	(9.582)	(5.904)	(19.763)	(1.745)	<b>(87.261)</b>
<b>Net impact capital</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>25.000</b>	<b>15.000</b>	<b>40.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>25.000</b>	<b>15.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>80.000</b>

Note: CoW will liaise with DJPR Finance to seek advice on CAC and depreciation

**Table 31: Capital Asset Charge (CAC) and depreciation**

Financial impact							5-year total	Ongoing	(\$ million)
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24				
<b>Capital asset charge</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	
<b>Depreciation</b>									
Leases – centralised accommodation management (CAM)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		<b>0.000</b>	0.000	
Leases – Department	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		<b>0.000</b>	0.000	
Other	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		<b>0.000</b>	0.000	
<b>Total depreciation</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	
<b>Total depreciation and CAC</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	

Note: CoW to liaise with DJPR Finance to seek advice on useful life of asset

**Table 32: Summary of useful life of asset**

Useful life of asset (years)	
Useful life of asset used in depreciation calculation	



## 9.5 Economic assessment

### 9.5.1 Key assumptions and inputs to Cost Benefit Analysis

The RSAC at Mernda is a significant capital project within the Whittlesea LGA. Its ability to deliver a suite of health and wellbeing facilities and services targeted to the needs of residents will generate substantial benefits to the region and the State.

A Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for the RSAC at Mernda was undertaken using economic parameters that are based on 2022 prices and values. The economic benefits are derived principally from the forecasted attendances, memberships and associated benefits which have been developed with Council and inputs from ActiveXchange.

Table 33 describes the general assumptions included in the economic modelling for the delivery and operation of RSAC at Mernda.

**Table 33: Summary of general CBA assumptions**

Variable	Input / Assumption
Analysis region	State of Victoria
Evaluation period	30 years, beginning 1 July 2022
Base year	All benefits and costs are measured as at 1 July 2022.
Real discount rate	7.0%
Operational period	2027-28 until the end of the evaluation period.
Escalation of benefits and costs	2.0% per annum

Table 34 describes the cost and benefit assumptions along with their value and source. Appendix K contains a more detailed methodology, calculations, and basis for these inputs.

**Table 34: CBA assumptions – benefits and costs**

Item	Description	Value/Source
Benefits	Consumer surplus	Consumers gain a benefit when they value a good or service at more than its cost. This is known as 'consumer surplus' and is calculated as the difference between what consumers are willing to pay for a good or service and what they actually pay for it. <b>Value:</b> 15% <b>Source:</b> In the absence of survey data, the consumer surplus has been conservatively estimated
	Travel time savings	The benefit consumers gain as a result of a reduction in travel time. It is calculated by the value of time, multiplied by the time savings. <b>Value:</b> A proportion of consumers are expected to save 30 and 20 minutes per return trip (courts and aquatics). Consumers value their time at \$36 an hour <b>Source:</b> Desktop research (travel time benefit), ABS – 2021 median hourly earnings, Australia
	Social value	The impact physical activity has on improving quality of life and reducing the burden on the health care system through reducing a person's risk of chronic disease, acute health problems or risk of drowning. <b>Value:</b> As described in Appendix K <b>Source:</b> ActiveXchange
	Operational income	Operating the RSAC will generate income that was previously not being captured in Victoria. This additional income has been included in the CBA analysis. <b>Value:</b> As described in Appendix K <b>Source:</b> Deloitte, Sport and Leisure solutions, ActiveXchange
Costs	Construction costs	The costs to construct the centre have also been considered in this analysis. <b>Value:</b> As described in Section 9 <b>Source:</b> Slattery peer review cost plan, adapted by Council
	Operational expenditure	As with operational revenue, operating the RSAC will also generate expenses that previously were not being captured in Victoria. This additional expenditure has been included in the CBA analysis. <b>Value:</b> As described in Appendix K <b>Source:</b> Sport and Leisure solutions, ActiveXchange, Deloitte

### 9.5.2 Economic costs and benefits to the State

Table 35 summarises the cost benefit analysis for the recommended solution. All values represent a 30-year present value expressed as nominal 2022-dollar values.

**Table 35: Detailed Cost Benefit Analysis (NPV \$2022 million)**

Item	PV (\$2022 million)
<b>Costs (\$m)</b>	
Capital costs	\$123.3
Operational expenditure (including lifecycle and management fees)	\$99.3
<b>Total costs (PV)</b>	<b>\$222.7</b>
<b>Benefits (\$m)</b>	
Social value	\$44.6
Consumer surplus	\$14.5
Travel time savings	\$100.0
Operational income	\$96.5
<b>Total value of benefits (PV)</b>	<b>\$255.5</b>
<b>Key Metrics</b>	
NPV	<b>\$32.9</b>
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	<b>1.15</b>

The project solution represents a net economic gain of \$32.9 million for Victoria over the project's life with \$255.5 million of gross benefit gained, which delivers a BCR of 1.15. This output is considered conservative as there are numerous intangible social and community benefits that this investment will deliver (such as stronger social bonds, increased social capital, and reduced anti-social behaviour) as well as several unquantified benefits (such as job creation and improved injury rehabilitation from co-location of allied health and aquatic facilities).

A new aquatic and wellbeing centre that is fit for residents' diverse needs will produce significant economic benefits, is a financially sound investment, and will enable Council's vision of a health and wellbeing precinct within one of Victoria's most disadvantaged communities.

### 9.5.3 Sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity analysis was conducted on the economic analysis to determine the impact to net present value and BCR for the following scenarios:

- **Scenario 1:** Capital costs increase or decrease by 10 percent
- **Scenario 2:** Base year attendances assumptions increases or decreases by 10 percent
- **Scenario 3:** Lifecycle costs (currently calculated as 1.5 percent of base capital costs) increase to 2.5 percent of base capital costs or decrease to 0.5 percent of base capital costs.

Table 36 provides the results of the sensitivity analysis.

**Table 36: CBA sensitivity analysis (NPV \$2022 million)**

(\$m 2022)	Sensitivity	NPV (\$ million)	BCR
<b>Sensitivity 1: Capital Costs variation</b>	+10% of total capital cost	20.5	1.09
	-10% of total capital cost	45.2	1.21
<b>Scenario: 2: Attendance variation</b>	+10% total attendance	57.4	1.26
	-10% total attendance	8.3	1.04
<b>Scenario 3: Lifecycle Cost variation</b>	2.5% of capital cost	25.7	1.11
	0.5% of capital cost	40.0	1.19

The sensitivity analysis shows that delivering the RSAC is a sound and robust investment that will deliver significant benefits for the residents of Whittlesea, maintaining a positive NPV under each scenario.

Scenario 1 highlights that varying the capital costs has an impact on the economic outcome but even if there is a 10 percent increase in capital costs then the NPV will still remain positive at \$20.5 million. Conversely the NPV will increase to \$45.2 million if the realised capital costs of the project are 10 percent lower than currently expected.

Scenario 2 demonstrates that membership has a significant impact on the economic outcomes of the project. Attendance variation will impact the operating costs, revenue, social value, travel time savings as well as the consumer surplus benefit. By assuming base year attendances are 10 percent higher, the BCR increases to 1.26. Conversely, if the attendance in the base year was to be 10 percent lower than expected, then the BCR will reduce to 1.04.

Scenario 3 shows that the lifecycle cost has limited impact on the economic outcome of the RSAC investment with an increase in lifecycle to 2.5 percent of base capital costs resulting in the BCR dropping to 1.11 but still maintaining a positive NPV of \$25.7 million. When the lifecycle costs are reduced to 0.5 percent of base capital costs the BCR increases to 1.19.

## 9.6 Funding sources

Table 37 summarises the funding sources available to Council that will be used to cover its expected investment of \$87.261 million over the life of the capital works for Stages 1 and 2.

Table 37: Funding sources

Output funding										(\$ million)
Estimated investment cash flow	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	TEI
Council cash	1.524	0.000	2.217	10.962	15.136	9.582	5.904	0.679	1.745	<b>47.749</b>
Reserves	0.000	5.500	8.495	0.000	6.433	0.000	0.000	11.092	0.000	<b>31.520</b>
Borrowings	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.992	0.000	<b>7.992</b>
<b>Council – net contribution</b>	<b>1.524</b>	<b>5.500</b>	<b>10.712</b>	<b>10.962</b>	<b>21.569</b>	<b>9.582</b>	<b>5.904</b>	<b>19.763</b>	<b>1.745</b>	<b>87.261</b>

## 9.7 Project budget risk assessment

Risk analysis has been undertaken as described in Section 10.6. Table 38 describes the key risks and proposed mitigation strategies as they relate to the project budget.

Table 38: Project budget risks

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Higher operating expenditure	Ongoing operational and maintenance cost are higher than expected, resulting in a worse financial performance than expected. This may result from complex design features, such as electric pool heating, or unforeseen maintenance costs.	●	Throughout the detailed design phase, lifecycle costing and value management will be applied to ensure operating and maintenance costs are kept within the forecast. Council will ensure contracts with facility users and community service providers incorporate guaranteed pricing. Further, Council will involve potential providers in detailed consultation and engagement to ensure accuracy in pricing expectations.
Lower revenue than forecast	Revenue forecasts rely on assumption relating to the number and type of activities to be offered, the number of attendees and the prices/fees that could be charged. If any of these assumptions are lower	●	The revenue forecasts have been developed based on robust, peer reviewed analysis of demand and pricing from historic and forecast future activities and memberships. Council will also ensure a public tender process is followed to capture competitive prices for the centre operator. The contract, where appropriate, will

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	than expected, there will be a corresponding drop in revenue.		then have guaranteed pricing to ensure consistency.
Construction cost over-runs	Cost over-runs arise during construction adversely impacting the project budget	●	Contingencies in the capital costs will be in line with industry benchmarks and can be tested through a risk adjusted costing exercise. Detailed design will refine cost projections to inform budgeting. Suitable procurement and project management processes will be established to manage costs throughout the delivery. Further de-risking steps will include regular site assessments, feasibility studies regarding utilities and extensive planning controls. Council will undertake regular cost estimates to ensure currency and contingency management.
Detailed design costings	The detailed design and costings anticipate project costs greater than forecast in the concept design (for the same scope), impacting on project budget and viability	●	Council will ensure contingencies (and/or risk adjusted costings) in the concept design capital costs are in line with industry benchmarks and peer reviewed. Cost estimates will be developed by suitably qualified quantity surveyors and informed by a well-developed area-schedule, concept design and functional brief. Council will also ensure frequent costing estimates are undertaken.
Inadequate allowances for fees and charges	The detailed design and costings anticipate non constructions costs (i.e., consultants fee/charges) to be greater than forecast in the concept design, impacting on project budget and viability.	●	Fees and charges in the capital costs are in line with industry benchmarks. Costs have been developed by suitably qualified quantity surveyors and will be further refined in the detailed design.
Funding conditions	External funding conditions (i.e., milestones) cause delays and impact delivery timing and scope	●	Council will set up reporting avenues to government and ensure critical milestones or funding conditions are reflected in the detailed design and construction plan.
No or limited external funding	Council does not receive State or Commonwealth Government support for the RSAC, significantly impacting on project viability	●	Council is progressing with an advocacy campaign for the State and Commonwealth elections, which includes senior members meeting with potential candidates.
Scope creep	Changes to the scope between the concept design and detailed design process result in higher project costs than forecast in the concept design. This includes both behavioural and structural changes	●	Develop and describe a clear concept design to ensure all stakeholders are aware and have "signed-up" to the concept elements. Detailed design team to work to the concept design (business case funding design). Council will engage regular quantity surveyors during project delivery to manage expected costs and adhere to a formal Change Request Process if changes are required. Further, Council will put in place design contingencies to account for any required changes.
Value management impacts on core business elements	Value management during detailed design results in reductions to the core business elements, impacting financial projections (e.g., revenue impacts)		Definition of Critical Success Factors maintained during detailed design. Re-evaluate financial projections to understand full implications of value management initiatives. Development of a Change Request process in place and clear understanding of change impacts.

Risk ratings: Very Low / Low / Medium / High / Extreme

## 10. Management

This chapter outlines the proposed management and governance for the implementation and management of the RSAC, including details of Council's stakeholder engagement and identification of key risks associated with the project.

### 10.1 Governance framework

The governance arrangements critically important for the successful delivery of the RSAC which relies on a high level of investment, involves many stakeholders, and needs an appropriate structure to support delivering the health and wellbeing benefits.

The project will need separate governance structures tailored to both the delivery and subsequent operational phases of the RSAC to:

- increase the likelihood that the project will achieve its stated benefits and be delivered successfully on time and on budget
- verify that robust project planning and procurement processes have been followed to support quality project planning and procurement processes and documentation
- provide impartial and informed advice on deliverability risks.

#### 10.1.1 Delivery phase

Once the Business Case is endorsed, Council's Executive Leadership Team will implement a governance framework for project delivery. According to the roles and responsibilities in Council's *Project Management Framework* (as shown in Figure 18) the Chief Executive Officer will be the project sponsor and the Board will comprise members of the Executive Leadership Team.

Figure 18: Delivery roles and responsibilities

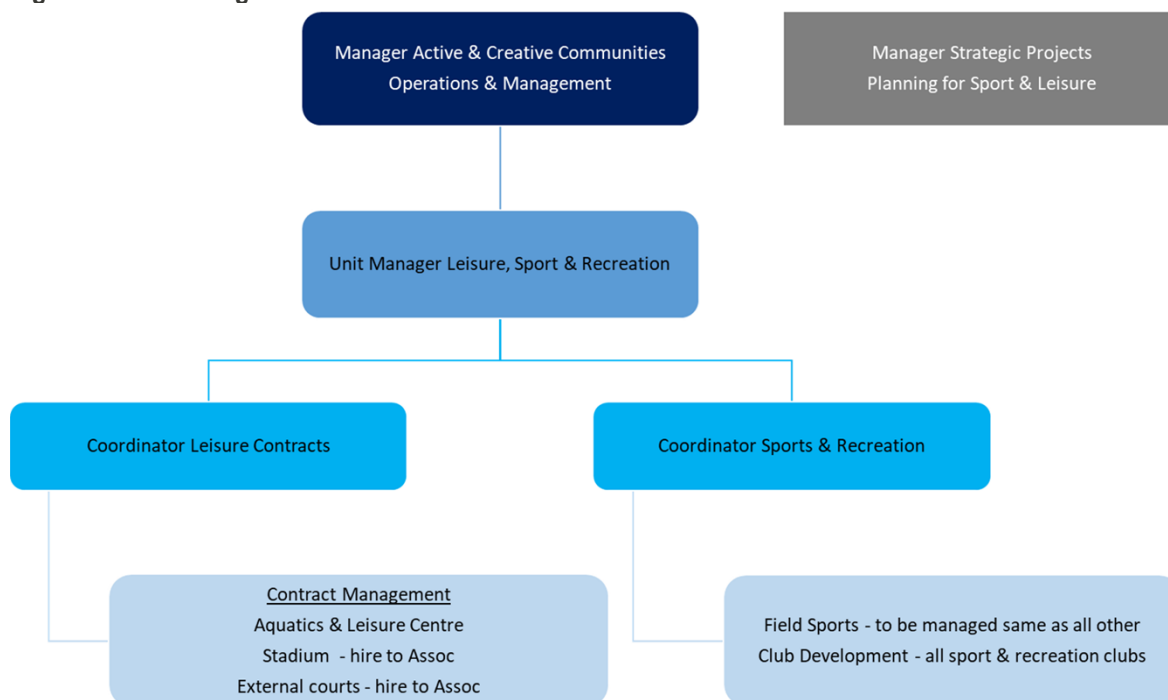
<b>Board</b>	An executive or corporate governance group (e.g. members of ELT) that links the project to corporate governance. The Board may be responsible for approving the project budget.
<b>Sponsor</b>	The Sponsor is accountable for the initiate phase and for benefits/outcome realisation after the project is closed. They represent the main beneficiary of the project.
<b>Delivery Manager</b>	The Delivery Manager is accountable for the success of the project. All projects must appoint a Delivery Manager at the start of the initiation phase.
<b>Project Control Group</b>	An executive/management group that helps the Delivery Manager make decisions about the project. The PCG assists to mitigate risk, resolve issues, and approve changes. The PCG advises the Delivery Manager at key decision points for each phase and should have 3 to 5 members from senior management.
<b>Project Manager</b>	The project manager manages day-to-day project activities and reports to governance bodies.
<b>Sponsor Coordinator</b>	Represents the Sponsor and works closely with the Project Manager particularly on the Project Brief or Business Case.
<b>Business Case Review Panel</b>	Reviews all Business Cases to ensure robustness and to ensure a reasonable spread of options have been assessed. Costs and benefits will be assessed to help with consistency across all project types. This role will be performed by the Project Management Office (PMO).
<b>Project Working Group</b>	Represent those who will use the project's outputs and seen as a key experts in the project subject matter. This team will complete tasks to assist the PM and Sponsor Coordinator.

Source: City of Whittlesea Project Management Framework

#### 10.1.2 Operational phase

Once implemented, Council will manage the RSAC consistent with its existing major leisure facilities (Mill Park Leisure Centre, Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre, and Whittlesea Swim Centre) in line with Council's *Project Management Framework*. The proposed governance structure for the operations of the RSAC is outlined in Figure 19.

Figure 19: RSAC organisational structure



In accordance with Council's *Project Management Framework* and *Procurement Policy*, initiatives and processes will be implemented throughout the operations of the RSAC to ensure:

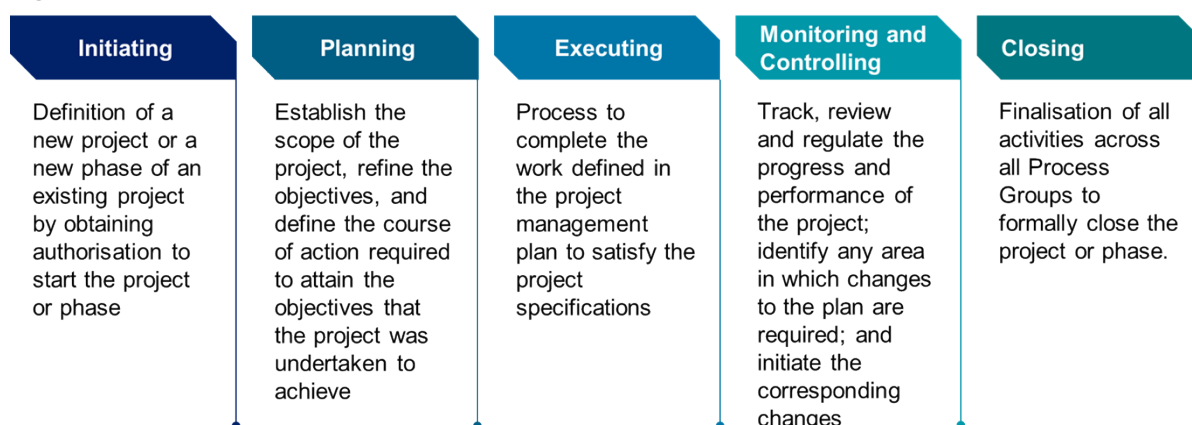
- sustainable procurement which involves decision making that has the most positive environmental, social, and economic impacts possible across the entire lifecycle of goods, services and works
- use of local businesses and suppliers
- alignment with Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and Disability Action Plan
- employment and traineeships at RSAC reflect the Whittlesea community including women and girls, CALD communities, LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with a disability.

## 10.2 Project management strategy

If the RSAC project is funded, Council will apply its *Project Management Framework* to prepare a project management plan (PMP) setting out what is required, how it will be done, who will do what, and when activities will happen.

The key processes to be included in the PMP are outlined in Figure 20.

Figure 20: PMP processes





The PMP for the delivery of the funded works will be a live document to provide overall direction. It will be continually updated to allow flexibility and responsiveness to challenges during delivery. It will incorporate the contents of this business case including:

- **Scope** – defining a work breakdown structure of activities and outcomes (refer Section 5.1)
- **Schedule** – showing activities, deliverables, and milestones (refer Section 8)
- **Project budget** – defining the process for monitoring and adjusting the project budget (refer Section 9).
- **Governance arrangements** – defining roles and responsibilities (refer Section 10.1)
- **Stakeholders** – defining the process for stakeholder communications and managing stakeholder expectations (refer Section 10.2)
- **Risk** – defining the process for identifying potential risks and updating mitigation strategies where needed (refer Section 10.6 and other sections in Part 2 – Delivery Case).

### 10.3 Stakeholder engagement and communications plan

There are a wide range of stakeholders who can impact, are impacted by, or can influence the delivery of the project.

As part of the *Mernda Indoor Sports and Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study*, Council has undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement to inform the project requirements and the development of this business case. Stakeholders consulted to date are summarised in Table 15 in Section 4.2. They include:

- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR)
- Whittlesea Basketball Association
- Whittlesea Community Basketball Association
- Whittlesea District Netball Association
- Plenty Valley Netball Association
- Aquajets
- Northern Football Netball League
- Local netball and basketball clubs
- Whittlesea Disability Network
- different community cohorts (children, young people, older adults etc.)

A robust engagement and communications approach throughout delivery will be required for Council, Government, industry, community, and interest group stakeholders to ensure the project solution considers their position, gains their support, and uses consultation to inform key decision. This will also provide good governance to manage and mitigate risks and provide effective coordination of project interfaces.

Council will develop a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan to embed activities within the project delivery team structure once a delivery approach is endorsed by Council. The communications and engagement objectives are to:

- raise awareness and community support for the project and promote community benefits at key milestones throughout the project
- inform and educate key stakeholders and the community through targeted communications and engagement
- manage reputational risk by identifying, understanding, and responding to stakeholder expectations, community concerns and local issues.

Table 39 provides a preliminary list of key stakeholders and their interest in the delivery of the RSAC project.

**Table 39: Key project stakeholders**

Stakeholder	Description / Likely position	Management plan
City of Whittlesea	Decision making as per Council's governance and delegation policies. Represent current and future interests of residents in Whittlesea LGA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes project governance framework</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Description / Likely position	Management plan
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular project updates and relevant approval processes</li> </ul>
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Sport and Recreation Victoria	SRV aims to maximise the economic and social benefits provided to all Victorians by the sport and recreation sector. This will be achieved through several activities including improving the quality of community sport and recreation facilities. It is critical SRV advocate and support the benefits of the RSAC facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of project governance</li> </ul>
Department of Health (DoH) and Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA)	DoH and CHBA leads the planning, delivery, and oversight of Victoria's public health infrastructure. It is interested in the development of the RSAC to include health service offerings and its support and advocacy for the benefits of the RSAC project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of project governance</li> </ul>
State Government ministers	Relevant State Government ministers may be interested and advocate for the RSAC project. Relevant government ministers will be identified based on availability of State Government funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefings at key meetings or milestones</li> <li>Advocacy strategy</li> </ul>
Health and community service providers	The greater health and service offering at the RSAC provides opportunities for health and community service providers. Potential providers will be interested in the development and implementation of these opportunities during the design and operational phases respectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involved in on-going consultation</li> <li>Benefits of new facilities to be promoted once funding committed</li> <li>Remain updated of any significant milestones or disruption at the RSAC site.</li> </ul>
Special interest and advisory groups and committees	Special interest and advisory groups and committees represent key cohorts of users at the RSAC. They bring a specific perspective to the design and operational requirements of the facility to ensure users' needs are met. Examples include groups with special interest in accessibility, community safety and cultural diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involved in on-going consultation</li> <li>Benefits of new facilities to be promoted once funding committed</li> <li>Remain updated of any significant milestone or disruption at the RSAC site.</li> </ul>
Local business owners / operators	Businesses surrounding the RSAC will have a vested interest on the impact to their business including any noise and traffic disruptions during implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits of new facilities to be promoted once funding committed</li> <li>Remain updated of any significant milestone or disruption at the RSAC site.</li> </ul>
Neighbouring LGAs	Neighbouring local governments will be interested in facilities and services provided in nearby municipalities for a number of reasons including understanding the future needs of their communities (as some are likely to travel to use the RSAC), impact on their current and future services / facilities and lessons learned / insights from the development of the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits of new facilities to be promoted once funding committed</li> <li>Remain updated of any significant milestones or disruption at the RSAC site</li> <li>Implement learnings from other LGAs and track developments in surrounding LGAs</li> </ul>
Media	State and local media outlets typically represent the interests of their readership and will remain informed of the long-term benefits and likely short-term disruptions of the RSAC development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits of the new facilities to be promoted once funding committed</li> <li>Remain updated of any significant milestones or disruption at the RSAC site.</li> </ul>
Sporting and recreation organisations	Local sporting organisation, such as netball and basketball, will be key users of the facility and will have a strong interest in the development and ongoing operations of the facility. Other key stakeholders will include Aquatics and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involved in on-going consultation</li> <li>Benefits of the new facilities to be promoted once funding committed</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Description / Likely position	Management plan
	Recreation Victoria and LifeSaving Victoria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remain updated of any significant milestones or disruptions at the RSAC site</li> </ul>

## 10.4 Change management

Recognising that one of the most challenging aspects of the project is managing the human elements, the change issues and change strategies will be delivered in more detail as the project progresses. Key change management activities will include stakeholder engagement, change impact assessment, change readiness assessment, communications, identified roles and responsibilities and training.

Change management will be developed by Council and implemented by the operator at the new facility in line with Council's Plan and project KPIs which will be included in the management specification and included in regular reporting. This includes management of the change processes and transitioning services around the new infrastructure.

During delivery of the RSAC, four primary guiding principles will be adopted:

- **Focus on benefits and outcomes:** all stakeholders will have transparency of all change management activities with an emphasis on achieving and sustaining the change benefits realised during delivery. This includes input from all stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and ongoing operations of the facility.
- **Engage with end-users early:** it is critical that Council and RSAC staff, users, visitors, and other stakeholders are aware of the RSAC development and what it means for their day-to-day operations and livelihoods
- **Communication aligned to community values:** all stakeholder engagement and communication activities must reflect the values of Council and the Whittlesea LGA community. A detailed change management plan will demonstrate how the RSAC development will align to these values
- **Continuous improvement culture:** change management activities should be embedded from pre-implementation to finalisation.

## 10.5 Performance measures and benefits realisation

The benefits that Council and Government will receive by progressing with the RSAC project are outlined in Section 2 and will be delivered over the medium to long term due to the lead time associated with the delivery of infrastructure. The tables below outline the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will be used to measure the benefits along with reporting structures and responsibilities. The KPIs were developed based on the Benefit Management Plan, which is attached in Appendix B.

### Benefit 1: Whittlesea LGA is a place for all

Council is committed to fostering a healthy community of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities that can easily access support services. Increasing social and civic engagement amongst the community, particularly within priority groups, will foster a socially cohesive, healthy, and participating community in Whittlesea LGA. Removing the barriers for women and girls to participate in physical activity is crucial for their development and health and wellbeing.

KPI 1 seeks to measure increased rates of participation for women and girls at the RSAC through the number of netball and basketball teams (Measure 1a) and the number of female specific service offerings (Measure 1b).

KPI 1	Increase in rates of participation for women and girls (15%)
Measure 1a:	Number of netball and basketball teams
Baseline value (2022)	1,967 registered netballers within Whittlesea; 7,858 basketballers across Whittlesea

<b>KPI 1</b>		<b>Increase in rates of participation for women and girls (15%)</b>
Target value (2035)	50% of court use by girls and women teams for both peak and off -peak use.	
Source	Membership and visitation data; Netball and Basketball Victoria data, bookings data, Whittlesea Basketball and Netball Plan	
<b>Measure 1b:</b>	<b>Female participation in service offerings</b>	
Baseline value (2022)	0	
Target value (2035)	50% participation of women and girls in all programs offered at RSAC	
Source	Facility participation data	
Reporting		
Forum	Monthly facility operator management reports	
Start date	When operational	
Frequency	Monthly	
End date	Ongoing	
Responsibility		
Name	Active and Creative Communities	
Position	Supervisor of the Contract to manage the service	
Organisation	City of Whittlesea	

Councils *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* recognises the particular importance of participating in physical activity and social engagement for members of the community with higher needs. KPI 2 considers the increase in visitors and members with higher needs at the RSAC by measuring the number of visitors with companion cards (Measure 2a) and the number of memberships and casual entries by concession card holders (Measure 2b).

<b>KPI 2</b>		<b>Increase in visitors with higher needs (15%)</b>
<b>Measure 2a:</b>	<b>Number of companion card entries</b>	
Baseline value (2022)	0	
Target value (2035)	15% of the catchment population of Mernda and surrounds who have caring responsibilities	
Source	Membership and visitation data	
<b>Measure 2b:</b>	<b>Number of membership and casual entries by concession card holders</b>	
Baseline value (2022)	0%	
Target value (2035)	30% of membership and casual entries are concession card holders	
Source	Membership and visitation data	
Reporting		
Forum	Quarterly facility operator management reports against KPIs	
Start date	When operational	
Frequency	Monthly	
End date	Ongoing	
Responsibility		
Name	Active and Creative Communities	
Position	To be confirmed	
Organisation	City of Whittlesea	

## **Benefit 2: Improved health and wellbeing**

Council is committed to increasing physical activity which directly contributes to improved health and wellbeing among residents, leading to a happier and higher quality life. Improving the health and wellbeing of the residents of Whittlesea LGA will also benefit the economy through increased productivity and a reduced burden on the healthcare system.

Council's *Active Whittlesea Policy 2019-2028* envisages that significant growth in the range of physical activity opportunities available to the community will increase participation for the municipality's diverse residents, resulting in positive health outcomes. KPI 3 seeks to measure increased physical activity at the RSAC through the total number of visits (Measure 3).

<b>KPI 3</b>		<b>Increase in rates of participation in physical activity (30%)</b>
<b>Measure 3:</b>	<b>Total visitations</b>	
Baseline value (2022)	0	

<b>KPI 3</b>	<b>Increase in rates of participation in physical activity (30%)</b>
Target value (2035)	814,362 (Aquatic and health club) 313,354 (Stadium)
Source	Membership and visitation data
<b>Reporting</b>	
Forum	Facility operator management reports, association and club participation data
Start date	When operational
Frequency	Quarterly
End date	Ongoing
<b>Responsibility</b>	
Name	Active and Creative Communities
Position	To be confirmed
Organisation	City of Whittlesea

### Benefit 3: Safer Whittlesea people and places

Council is committed to increasing participation in swimming lessons and water safety activities for residents, reducing the risk of drownings, particularly in children. Community infrastructure fosters a safer community with an increased sense of pride, helping to attract and retain future residents and visitors.

KPI 4 seeks to measure the increase in swimming education participation rates for children and migrant communities where they don't have strong swimming and water safety backgrounds. This will be measured through the number of children and new arrivals in learn to swim classes (Measure 4).

<b>KPI 4</b>	<b>Increase in swimming education participation rates for children and migrant communities (10%)</b>
<b>Measure 4:</b>	<b>Number of children and new arrivals in learn to swim classes</b>
Baseline value (2022)	0
Target value (2035)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn to swim participants – 2,500<sup>76</sup></li> <li>New arrival and CALD communities – 40% of LTS participants</li> <li>Ongoing learn to swim classes for adults and partnership developed for culturally appropriate learn to swim classes developed in partnership with community groups and service providers</li> </ul>
Source	Membership and visitation data
<b>Reporting</b>	
Forum	Facility operator management reports
Start date	When operational
Frequency	Quarterly
End date	Ongoing
<b>Responsibility</b>	
Name	Active and Creative Communities
Position	To be confirmed
Organisation	City of Whittlesea

KPI 5 considers the increase in safety and access to community service programs for priority groups as a result of the implementation of the RSAC through the number of community partnerships operating at the facility (Measure 5).

<b>KPI 5</b>	<b>Increase in safer access to services and programs for priority groups (10%)</b>
<b>Measure 5:</b>	<b>Number of community partnerships</b>
Baseline value (2022)	0
Target value (2035)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships with stakeholders, service providers, community groups and other entities to deliver participation and inclusion outcomes for women and</li> </ul>

<sup>76</sup> Based on 34% of residents born overseas and 43% from Non-English-Speaking Background

KPI 5	Increase in safer access to services and programs for priority groups (10%)
	<p>girls, CALD communities, LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a disability and those on lower incomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All programs developed to cater for these stakeholders with 40% of programs developed specifically to target under representation in participation by these communities.</li> <li>• Quarterly consultation with identified stakeholders, community groups and service providers.</li> <li>• Employment at RSAC is reflective of the Whittlesea community – women and girls, CALD communities, LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with a disability.</li> </ul>
Source	Membership and participation data
<b>Reporting</b>	
Forum	Quarterly and annual facility operator management reporting KPIs and annual service and inclusion plans
Start date	When operational
Frequency	Monthly
End date	Ongoing
<b>Responsibility</b>	
Name	Active and Creative Communities
Position	To be confirmed
Organisation	City of Whittlesea

The tender specification will include KPIs listed above around participation, equity, access and inclusion and health and wellbeing outcomes which will also be captured in operator plans developed in partnership with Council including:

- annual facility inclusion plans
- annual programs and services plan including any subsidised programs to address KPIs
- annual business and marketing plans.

These will be developed based on the above KPIs, Council strategies and policies and catchment and demographic analysis and will be included in monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting.

## 10.6 Risk management

### 10.6.1 Risk management approach

A risk is the effect of uncertainty on objectives – not all circumstances that may influence the outcomes of the project solution are known or have impacts that can be estimated beforehand. Project risks will be continuously monitored, assessed, and managed during the development and delivery of the project solution. Council will apply its *Strategic Risk Framework* to the development of a Risk Management Plan specific to the delivery of RSAC.

The Risk Management Plan will build on the strength of the existing risk management activities undertaken during this planning and business case stage. For example, a detailed risk register developed as part of this business case identifies and scores foreseeable risks using the standard likelihood and consequence matrix in Table 40. The broad categories are:

- Commercial and procurement
- Planning, environment, heritage, and culture
- Project Schedule
- Project budget
- Management
- Operational.

The risks identified during the facilitated workshop were refined and evaluated to make decisions about prevention, transfer, acceptance, and mitigation. It is a live document to be updated and refined by Council to keep it current. The full risk register includes 32 key risks and is provided in Appendix L.



Table 40: Risk matrix

Consequence		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Likelihood		1	2	3	4	5
Rare	1	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low
Unlikely	2	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
Possible	3	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
Likely	4	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Almost Certain	5	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme

### 10.6.2 Management risks

The most significant management risks and mitigations are listed in Table 41.

Table 41: Management risks

Risk	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Delivery capability	Council experience / proven track record and internal capacity to effectively deliver a project of this scale. This also includes a change of staff during the delivery.	●	Delivery model options will be developed in the business case process. The delivery model will be further developed and refined as part of the detailed design phase, will define both internal and external roles appropriate to manage this risk going forward. Council will further benchmark against similar councils and projects to consider capability requirements, and utilise the lessons learnt in a preventative manner.
Lower benefit delivery	Facilities do not help to improve community health and wellbeing outcomes for the community of Whittlesea, resulting in less value delivered for investment.	●	As part of the detailed design phase, a community and stakeholder strategy will be developed to ensure the recommended solution is promoted throughout the Whittlesea LGA.
Poor change management	Workforce change management strategies are inadequate, unable to support implementation. Timing and establishment planning are insufficient. Workforce backlash, lower workforce productivity, delayed benefits of program, lower customer service standards	●	Prior to the construction being completed, an operational staff plan will be developed which considers training and development requirements of staff.
Internal approvals	Council is unable to obtain the relevant internal approvals to progress the project, delaying the commencement of the project.	●	Council will continue to engage frequently with Administrators/Councillors and ensure an appropriate governance approval is in place.
Diverse community views on the proposed site / design	Community views on RSAC or its design features impacting cost, scope, and timing of the facility.	●	Extensive community and stakeholder consultation has been conducted to date to inform concept design, design intent and specifications. Consultation will continue to inform the development of the project. A Communications plan will be developed and implemented (as part of the Project Management Plan). Further, Council is forming a Community Reference Group to represent the range of community stakeholders and will arrange a number of engagements with the group.
Inadequacy of internal governance	Governance structure does not provide for adequate program delivery and change	●	Council has a proven track record in delivering projects of similar size and scale, utilising the

	management funding and support.		proposed governance model (which will be further developed as part of the detailed design phase)
Council policy	A change in priorities impacts project planning and delivery timing.	●	The detailed design will consider opportunities for future proofing so that it can be modified or extended if needed.
Construction impact	Protracted construction timeframes cause long-term nuisance and impacts to the community	●	Extensive community communications and engagement to keep members informed on the progress of the project. Council will ensure the building contractor will develop an extensive construction management plan to minimise noise, dust, vibration and other pollution impacts.

Risk ratings: **Very Low** / **Low** / **Medium** / **High** / **Extreme**

## 10.7 Exit strategy

If the project is not funded, Council will engage with State Government to:

- prepare a stakeholder and communications strategy to explain the decision and work through this outcome with affected parties and the community
- develop a revised scope and subsequent co-contribution submission for the RSAC in the 2024-25 State Budget
- explore alternative funding options and further staging of the construction of the RSAC.

Should insufficient funding be available from State Government and/or Commonwealth Government, Council will need to make a policy decision on the financial viability of proceeding with the project, recognising that the full scope of the project is needed to unlock the full benefits. This decision would be subject to further analysis.

Exit strategies may be required from business relationships with planning consultants and building contractors. The appropriate exit strategies will be included in the contract for these business relationships and the Project Manager will have oversight responsibility. Once construction of the RSAC facility has commenced, there is typically little likelihood of a need to exit the project.

## 10.8 Readiness and next steps

Council has identified its next steps to meet the project schedule detailed in Section 8:

- consider and confirm the preferred governance structure for the delivery and ongoing operation of the RSAC
- continue with the preliminary design and masterplan for the RSAC
- continue with the Stage 1 Early Works outlined in Section 5.1.4
- undertake further community demand analysis and advocacy with the community
- commence preparation for procurement processes for each stage of project delivery.

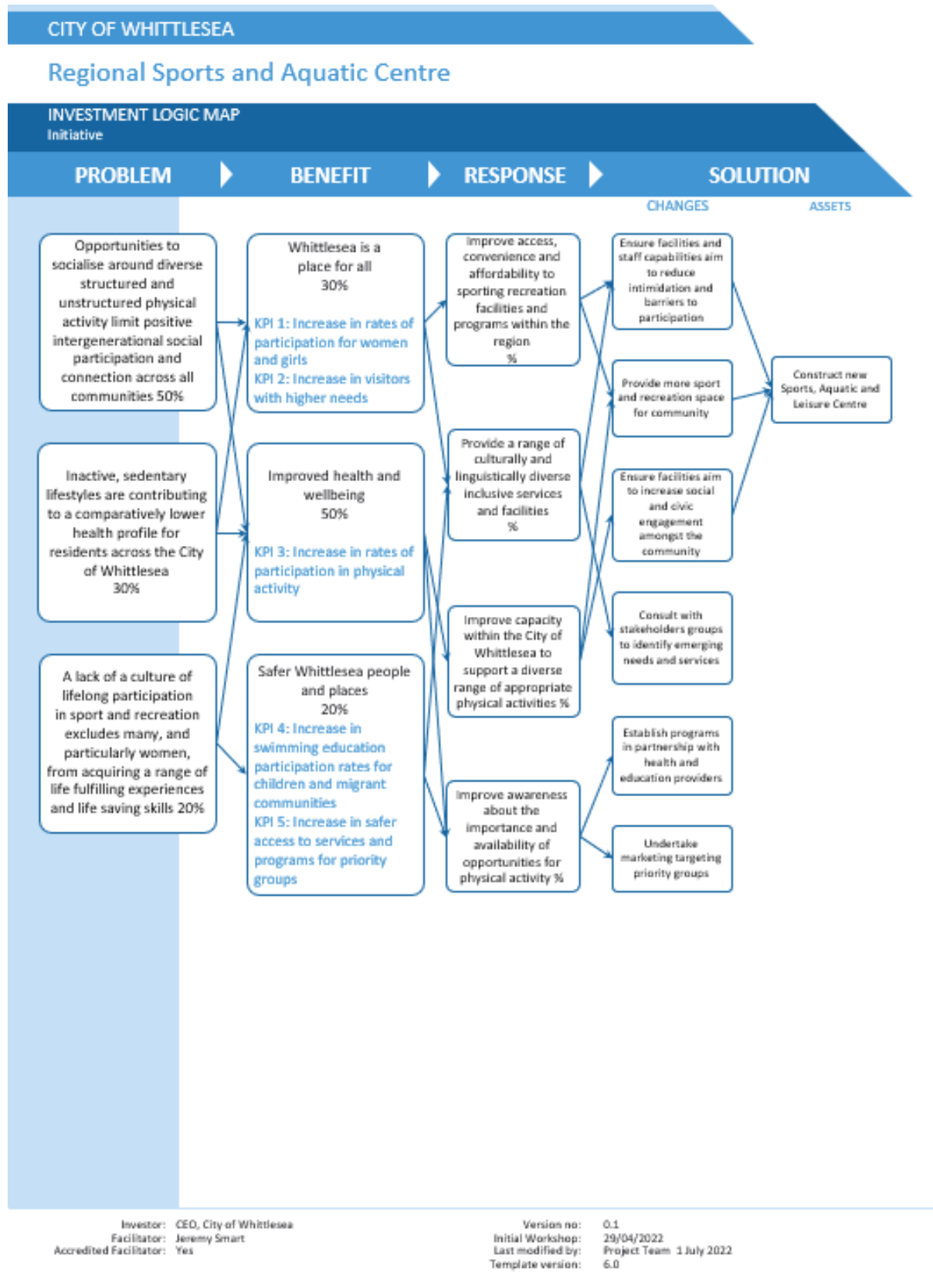
In preparation for funding the State Government, Council and other key stakeholders will jointly:

- consider preferred governance structure for the ownership, management, and ongoing operation of the RSAC
- progress planning with the relevant State Government departments for the build and the relationship and integration with surrounding land uses (i.e., rail corridor).

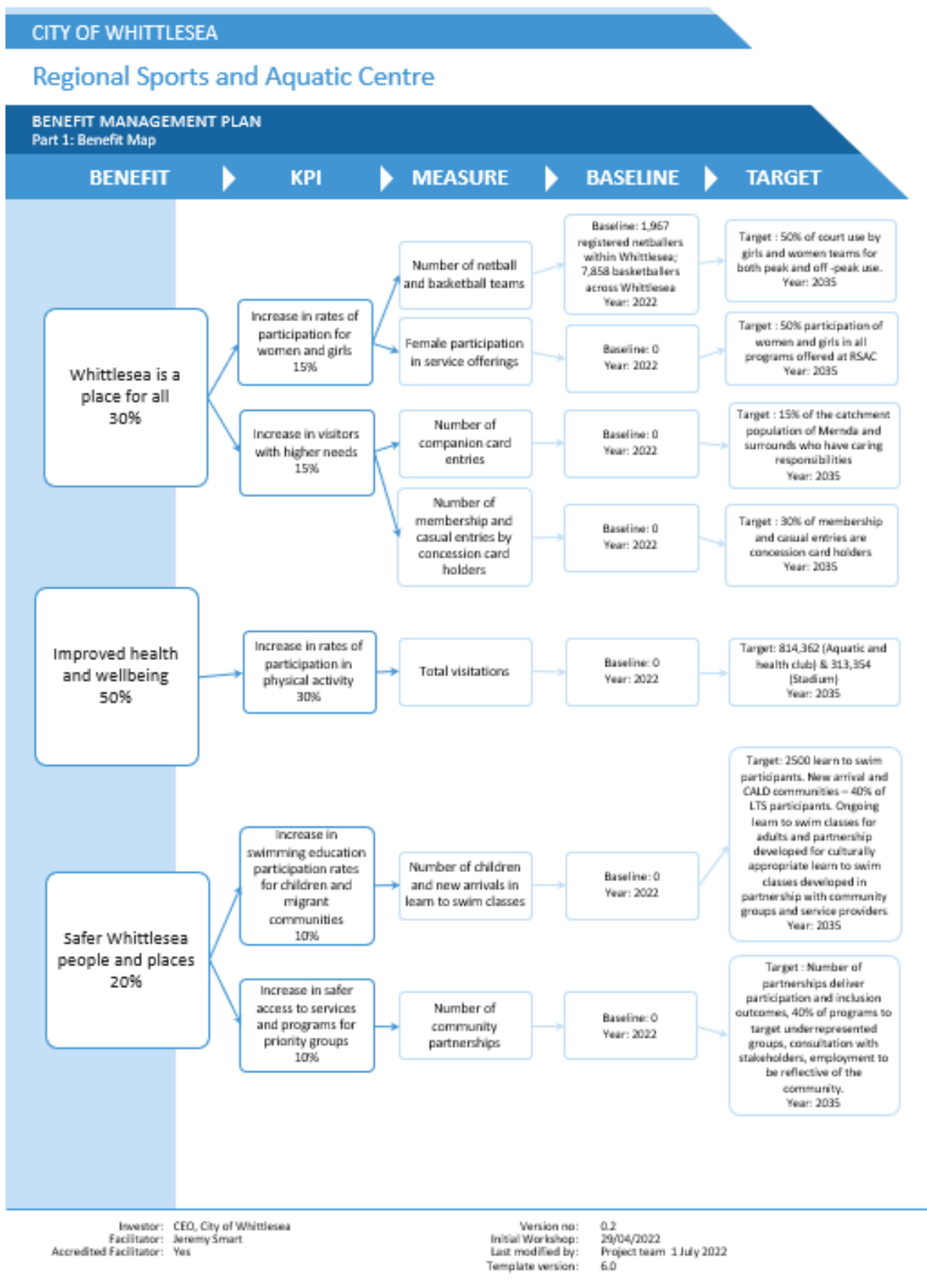
A Working Group is proposed to be established to progress the above tasks comprising of representatives from the City of Whittlesea and the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions represented by Sport and Recreation Victoria.

Further activity will depend on the date of any funding decision and the funding allocated by the State Government. The project delivery arrangements may continue without delay, accelerate, or slow down on delivery as appropriate after any funding decision.

# Appendix A: Investment Logic Map



# Appendix B: Benefit Management Plan



## **Appendix C: ActiveXchange Social Value Model report**

(Separate Attachment)

## Appendix D: Response options analysis

Appendix D provides further information on the selection of the preferred Response Option outlined in Section 3.4.

### Method and criteria

This investment is being instigated by Council to address the problems identified in Section 1.2 and to capture the benefits identified in Section 2.1. These project objectives are to:

- improve social and physical and mental health outcomes for the community
- increase sports participation rates, particularly for women and girls
- create employment opportunities for local young people, Aboriginal people, people with a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse residents
- improve water safety and education amongst the community.

As a component of the ILM process, several possible strategic responses to address the project's objectives were identified. High level actions ('response options') were developed from the interventions and assessed against the criteria outlined below to identify the preferred response option.

This methodology aligns with the DTF's *Investment Management Standard* and *Investment Lifecycle Guidelines* and is summarised in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Methodology to determine preferred response option



The preferred Response Option is developed into Project Options, where a more detailed and thorough assessment (both financial and non-financial) can be made.

### Criteria to assess Response Options

The Response Options have been prioritised based on their identified benefits, cost, time, risk, interdependencies, and any potential dis-benefits. This is captured in the criteria utilised in the Strategic Response Options assessment as described in Table 42 below.

In accordance with Victorian Government guidelines, the 'percentage of full benefit to be delivered' is calculated by:

- awarding a score of 0 to 5 for the indicative contribution of each option to each Benefit
- multiplying the score for each Benefit by the corresponding percentage (from the Investment Logic Map)
- adding the weighted scores across all Benefits to arrive at the weighted Benefit
- expressing the result as a percentage of the maximum score available (100%).

Table 42: Response options assessment criteria

Criterion	Description	Measurement
Benefits	The level of benefit delivery was appraised for each option against each project benefit. The 'percentage of full benefit to be delivered' is calculated using the approach described above where the weightings of each benefit are applied.	A score for each option against each benefit as follows: Very High (5), High (4), Moderate (3), Low (2), Very Low (1) or None (0). This score number is indicated by the number of ticks.
Cost	Order of magnitude operational and capital works funding requirement estimates to provide an indication of the likely financial impact.	A score for each option as follows: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low or None.



Criterion	Description	Measurement
Time	The time required from funding to achieve the benefits (relative to the percentage of full benefit to be delivered).	The estimated number of years, provided as a range.
Risks	Key risks to achieving the benefits were identified and assessed based on both likelihood and consequence. An overall risk profile for the options was determined based on the rating of each risk.	A score for each option as follows: Very High, High, Moderate, Low.
Dis-benefits	Dis-benefits that are likely to occur as a consequence of the response option were identified to determine an overall impact score.	A score for each option as follows: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low or None.
Interdependencies	The interdependencies required for implementation of the response option were identified to determine an overall impact score.	A score for each option as follows: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low or None.

## Strategic interventions

Four types of intervention were considered to address the problem and develop the strategic interventions:

- **Business as usual** – no action or investment above what has already been committed
- **Manage demand** – address the demand, both now and into the future, for access and use of sports and aquatic centres in City of Whittlesea
- **Improve productivity** – address the utilisation and efficiencies of current and future operational practices leveraging existing assets and resources
- **Increase supply** – address the ability to improve services through greater capacity availability of resources or reducing barriers to access.

Ten Strategic Interventions were identified, which were built from a 'business as usual' option. They are identified in Table 43 including a description and their alignment with the intervention types.

**Table 43: Strategic interventions**

Intervention type	#	Strategic intervention	Description of intervention
Business as usual	1	Unavoidable works to ensure continued safe operations	Minimum operations and maintenance required, including unavoidable capital works, to ensure the existing sports and aquatic centres in the City of Whittlesea safely continue providing services.
Manage demand	2	Optimise demand for existing assets	Implement initiatives (which may include new pricing mechanisms or changing services/programming) to manage community demand and more effectively target participation by priority cohorts.
	3	More effectively integrate facilities with community, education and health services	Improve the integration of health and wellbeing services to deliver improved health outcomes within existing facilities, driven by the benefits of colocation and a more cohesive community.
Improve productivity	4	Enhance use of existing assets	Implement initiatives to maximise the productivity of existing sports and aquatics centres (which may include changing timetabling and programming) and improve their long-term condition and availability.
	5	Modernise Council's operating procedures	Implement action plans that improve operational practices to reduce Council's costs, environmental footprint, and/or optimise staffing strategies (which may include targeted employment opportunities).
	6	Improve the reliability and suitability of facilities and services	Identify and undertake priority minor works to improve the functionality, reliability and accessibility of assets and services to meet the community's current and future needs.
	7	Provide a more tailored range of culturally and linguistically diverse services and facilities	Provide more tailored and diverse programs in the City of Whittlesea to offer residents the opportunity to make lasting and supportive social connections, and increase water safety and education.
Increase supply	8	Improve the capacity of aquatic and leisure facilities	Expand the supply of facilities in the City of Whittlesea (either existing or new) to ensure they are fit for

Intervention type	#	Strategic intervention	Description of intervention
			purpose and can deliver programs that support community cohesion.
	9	Make access to physical activity more affordable	Reduce the costs associated with accessing health and wellbeing facilities in the City of Whittlesea to remove barriers to access, encourage use and promote positive health outcomes.
	10	Provide a broader range of health and wellbeing services and facilities	Expand the capabilities of facilities in the City of Whittlesea to offer a more holistic approach to health and wellbeing that considers residents' needs.

## Response options

Each of the strategic interventions have been packaged into a number of strategic options ('response options') that address the problem statements to different extents, enabling the assessment of the relative advantages and disadvantages of different strategic approaches. The response options considered are as follows:

- **Response Option 1: Business as usual (base case)** assumes the minimum investment required to continue to deliver services safely from existing facilities with unavoidable capital works investment only.
- **Response Option 2: Asset focus** concentrates investment on initiatives that maximise the efficiency, productivity and sustainability of existing facilities within existing capabilities.
- **Response Option 3: Utilisation focus** promotes greater utilisation of existing aquatic and leisure facilities by reducing financial barriers for the community. This increased utilisation would be supported by a greater number of tailored and diverse range of health and wellbeing programs at existing facilities.
- **Response Option 4: Health focus** seeks to maximise the health outcomes for the community by increasing supply of health and wellbeing services at lower cost to the community.
- **Response Option 5: Community focus** combines interventions that deliver holistic health and wellbeing services highly aligned to the community's needs, in an efficient and sustainable way for Council to further maximise opportunities for it to further support the community.

## Alignment to strategic interventions

Table 44 summarises each of the response options considered and the alignment against each of the defined strategic interventions.

Table 44: Package of strategic interventions included in each response option

#	Strategic intervention	Option 1 Business as usual (base case)	Option 2 Asset focus	Option 3 Utilisation focus	Option 4 Health focus	Option 5 Community focus
1	Unavoidable works to ensure continued safe operations	✓				
2	Optimise demand for existing assets		✓			✓
3	More effectively integrate facilities with community, education and health services			✓	✓	✓
4	Enhance use of existing assets		✓	✓		✓
5	Modernise Council's operating procedures		✓			✓
6	Improve the reliability and suitability of facilities and services		✓		✓	✓
7	Provide a more tailored range of culturally and linguistically diverse services and facilities			✓	✓	✓

#	Strategic intervention	Option 1 Business as usual (base case)	Option 2 Asset focus	Option 3 Utilisation focus	Option 4 Health focus	Option 5 Community focus
8	Improve the capacity of aquatic and leisure facilities				✓	✓
9	Make access to physical activity more affordable			✓	✓	
10	Provide a broader range of health and wellbeing services and facilities				✓	✓

## Ranking of response options

Each response option was assessed against the criteria and the analysis and ranking is provided in Table 45.

**Table 45: Response options analysis**

	Option 1 Business as usual (base case)	Option 2 Asset focus	Option 3 Utilisation focus	Option 4 Health focus	Option 5 Community focus
<b>Benefits</b>					
Percentage of full benefit to be delivered	20%	27%	56%	80%	87%
Benefit 1: Whittlesea is a place for all (50%)	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓
Benefit 2: Improved health, wellbeing and social inclusion (30%)	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓
Benefit 3: Safer Whittlesea people and places (20%)	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓
<b>Anticipated cost</b>					
Total estimated investment (TEI)	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Risk</b>					
Risk rating	High	Very Low	Low	Low	Very Low
<b>Timeframe</b>					
Range (years)	n/a	1-2 years	2-4 years	3-5 years	3-5 years
<b>Dis-benefits</b>					
Dis-benefit rating	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Very Low
<b>Interdependencies</b>					
Interdependencies ratings	None	Very Low	Low	Low	Low
<b>Ranking (based on highest overall value)</b>					
<b>Highest (1) to Lowest (5)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

## Recommended response option

The response option analysis has identified **Response Option 5 – Community Focus** as the preferred response from Council and Government to progress to project options development. This option considers investment to improve the capacity and diversity of integrated health and wellbeing services and ensure facilities and services are bespoke for the community's unique needs. It also involves operational efficiency initiatives that improve the sustainability of facilities and services for Council.

Compared to other response options, a Community Focus is assessed to deliver the greatest amount of project benefit. This is driven by a holistic approach that highly addresses all project benefits. While Response Option 4 – Health Focus is also expected to deliver significant community and economic benefits, lowering the cost of health and wellbeing services without driving efficiency in operations places a greater financial burden on Council. This is undesirable and risks the sustainability of other Council programs (providing dis-benefits to the community).

Response Option 5 delivers a superior solution to the identified problems than the alternatives through enhancing opportunities to address community disadvantage in the City of Whittlesea in a sustainable way for Council. The relative advantages and disadvantages of each response option and its feasibility as a response from Council and Government is provided in Table 46.

**Table 46: Feasibility of response options**

Summary of Option	Feasibility of Option
<b>(1) Business as usual (base case)</b>	
<p><i>Key advantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimises cost of investment</li> </ul> <p><i>Key disadvantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compromises Council and Government's objectives to improve health and wellbeing, particularly in disadvantaged communities</li> <li>Provides minimal benefits to the community due to a lack of capacity and suitable, tailored services</li> </ul>	<p>This option is <b>not preferred</b> because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jeopardises the provision of essential Council services in a community already lacking appropriate support</li> <li>Likely to discourage community usage further and is likely to increase renewal costs in the future</li> <li>Does not align with Council and Government policy and objectives</li> </ul>
<b>(2) Asset focus</b>	
<p><i>Key advantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves the sustainability of existing facilities, ensuring their remaining life is useful to the extent possible</li> <li>Ensures the community's current use and benefits continue to be reliably provided</li> <li>Targets participation by priority cohorts</li> </ul> <p><i>Key disadvantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community may be discouraged from utilising existing facilities due to higher barriers to use (such as affordability) and lack of targeted services, reducing economic and social value</li> <li>Compromises Council and government objectives to provide equal accessibility for all residents</li> <li>Does not improve integration of aligned Council services</li> </ul>	<p>This option is <b>not preferred</b> because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fails to address the health and wellbeing needs of City of Whittlesea residents by continuing current services</li> <li>Does not align with Council and Government policy and objectives</li> <li>Pricing mechanisms to improve sustainability are likely to reduce community participation creating moderate disbenefits</li> </ul>
<b>(3) Utilisation focus</b>	
<p><i>Key advantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeks to maximise economic and social impact by aligning with community needs</li> <li>Creates greater opportunities for community participation by lowering affordability barriers</li> <li>Targets participation by priority cohorts</li> </ul>	<p>This option is <b>not preferred</b> because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases the significant financial burden borne by Council, placing at risk the sustainability of the existing centres and Council initiatives competing for funding.</li> <li>Does not deliver substantially greater sustainability benefits for Council</li> </ul>

Summary of Option	Feasibility of Option
<p><i>Key disadvantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited potential for Council to provide broader health and wellbeing services aligned to the community's needs</li> <li>Increases the cost to Council through reducing admission prices for the community</li> </ul>	
<p><b>(4) Health focus</b></p>	
<p><i>Key advantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports Council and Government health and wellbeing and accessibility policies</li> <li>Provides the greatest economic and social value for City of Whittlesea by creating greater opportunities for community participation (by lowering affordability barriers)</li> </ul> <p><i>Key disadvantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not improve the sustainability of services as net cost to Council is increased</li> <li>Capturing key benefits is solely reliant on community demand as existing operations are not optimised to improve efficiency of service delivery</li> </ul>	<p>This option is <b>not preferred</b> because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses solely on maximising participation and engagement by the community and does not consider ways to improve efficiency</li> <li>Increases the significant financial burden borne by Council, jeopardising the sustainability of the existing facilities or Council initiatives competing for funding</li> </ul>
<p><b>(5) Community focus</b></p>	
<p><i>Key advantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports Council and Government health and wellbeing and accessibility policies</li> <li>Delivers significant economic and social value for City of Whittlesea through facilities and services</li> <li>Ensures Council services are sustainable into the future</li> <li>Targets participation by priority cohorts</li> </ul> <p><i>Key disadvantages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not directly address affordability as a barrier to community use</li> </ul>	<p>This option is <b>preferred</b> as it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides significant and tailored health and wellbeing opportunities for the community to improve physical and mental health</li> <li>Lowers barriers to accessibility and provides flexibility in service programming</li> <li>Considers multiple ways to improve the financial and environmental sustainability of Council's services which will provide opportunities for Council to reinvest in the community including through targeted employment opportunities</li> <li>Is fully aligned with all Council objectives and policies and supports government health and wellbeing and accessibility policies</li> </ul>

## Appendix E: Project option sketches

Appendix E contains the proposed sketches for each potential project option.

### Project Option 1 is the delivery of an aquatic centre at the Mernda Sports Hub

There is no sketch for Project Option 1.

### Project Option 2 is the delivery of a Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at the Mernda Sports Hub

Figure 22: Project Option 2 ground floor



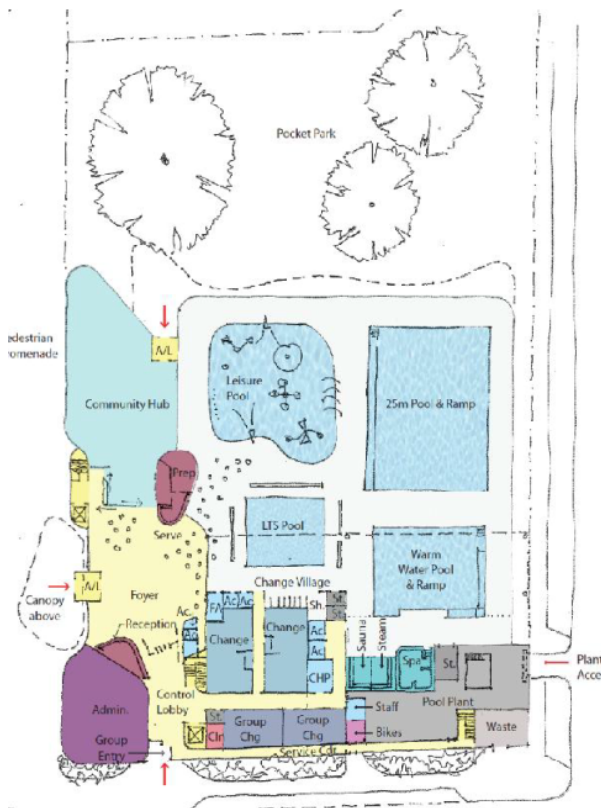
Figure 23: Project Option 2 first floor



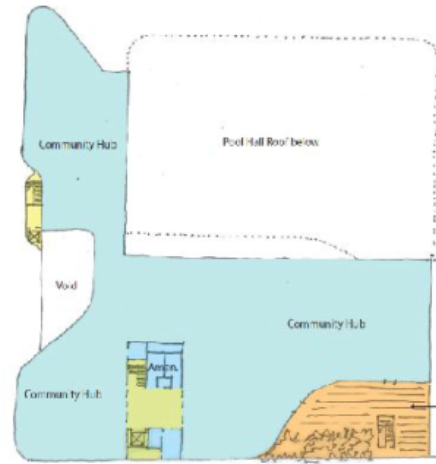


**Project Option 3 is the delivery of an integrated aquatic and leisure centre collocated with a learning and wellbeing hub in Mernda Town Centre**

Figure 24: Project Option 3 floor plans



Ground Floor



Third Floor



First Floor

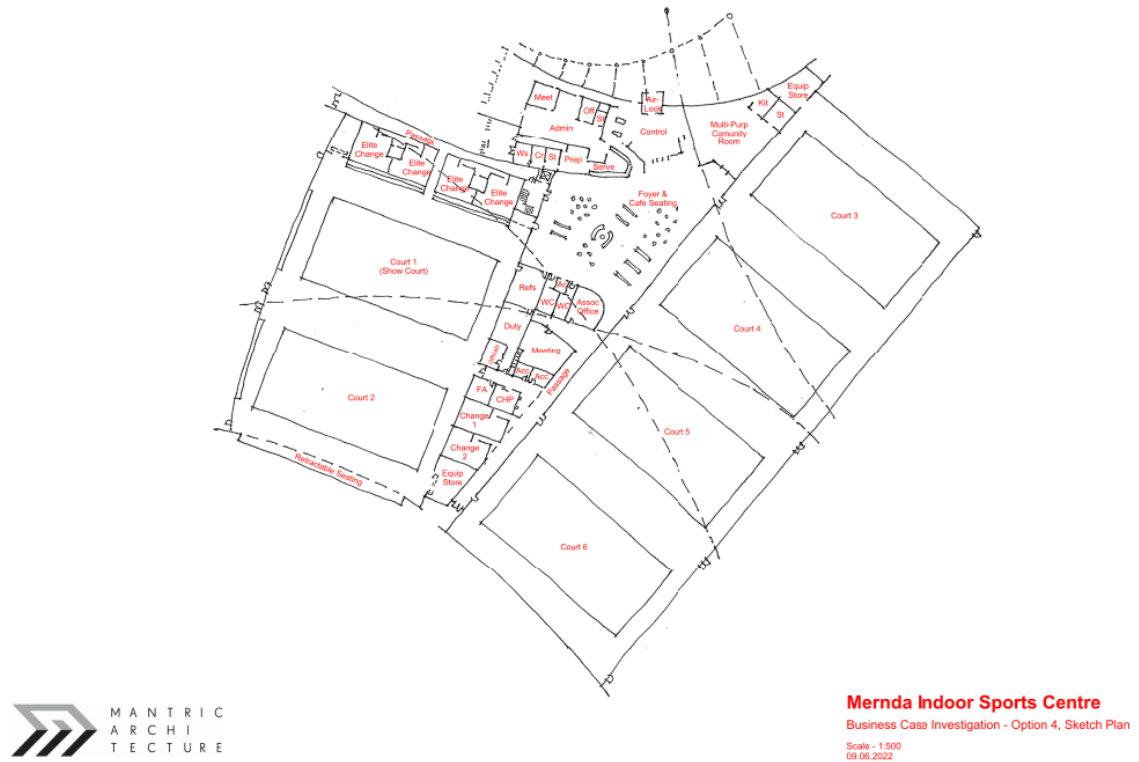


Second Floor

Figure 25: Project Option 4 site plan



Figure 26: Project Option 4 sketch



## **Appendix F: Options Assessment Paper**

Appendix F contains the Options Assessment Paper which comprises the multi-criteria assessment of the four project options considered in Section 4.

## **Appendix G: Lessons Learned (Confidential)**

Appendix G summarises the lessons learnt workshopping session held by Council regarding the Mill Park Leisure Redevelopment.

## **Appendix H: Project development and due diligence assessment (Confidential)**

The Project Development and Due Diligence requirement for business cases is designed to help ensure the effective, timely and cost-effective delivery of the project. It enables the risks of an investment to be identified, understood, and more accurately quantified at each stage of the project.

## **Appendix I: Procurement Management Options (Confidential)**

Appendix I contains the Procurement Management Options Paper prepared by TetraTech Coffey.



## **Appendix J: Slattery Peer Review cost plan (Confidential)**

Appendix J contains the Slattery Peer Review cost plan.

## **Appendix K: Financial assumptions and CBA methodology (Confidential)**

Appendix K provides further information on the methodology used to calculate the financial performance and conduct the Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) of the RSAC (Section 9.5).

## **Appendix L: Preliminary risk register (Confidential)**

Appendix L contains the preliminary risk register as at 6 July 2022. This is a live document to be kept current by Council.

[Go to explainer page](#)

How much social value my site created over time?

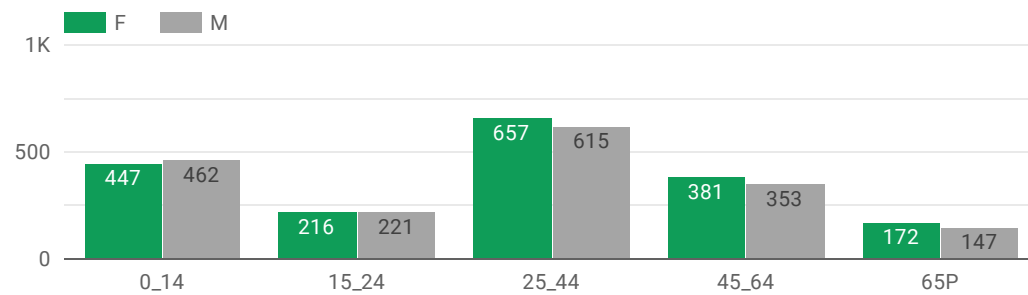


Social Value Model - Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre Mernda

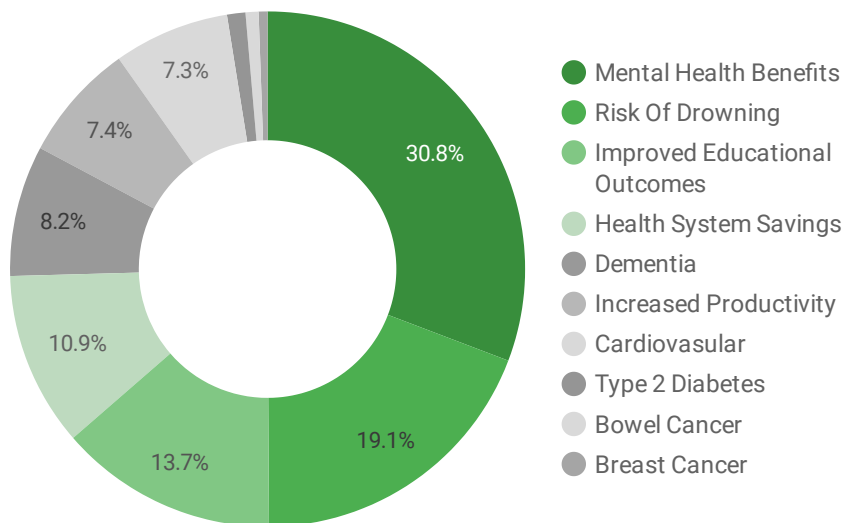
[Next Page](#)

Site  Type  Age Group

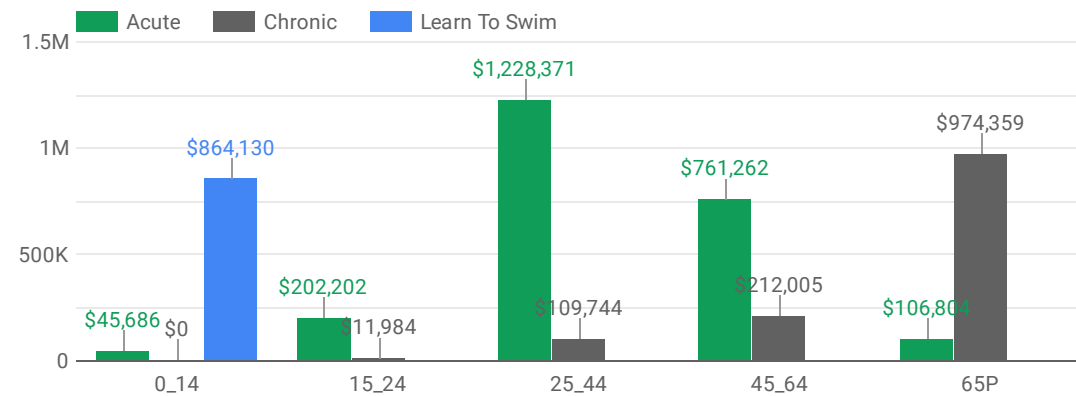
Value Generating Members by Age Group



Community Savings by indicators



Community Savings by Indicator Type by Age Group



\*Except for Learn To Swim, other social values are projection for 2021 using member count.



ActiveXchange uses data to provide partner organisations with the confidence to change, using analysis and predictive modelling to create a clear line of sight on outcomes and impacts. This creates active communities and extends the reach of each delivery and investment partners. This includes being lead partner of this Social Value Model service.

KPMG provides ongoing expertise and research in relation to the broader social and health benefits of physical activity, sport and recreation. Most recently KPMG's Sports Advisory team partnered with Sport Australia to investigate the economic, social and health value of Community Sports Infrastructure.

[Go to explainer page](#)



Social Value Model

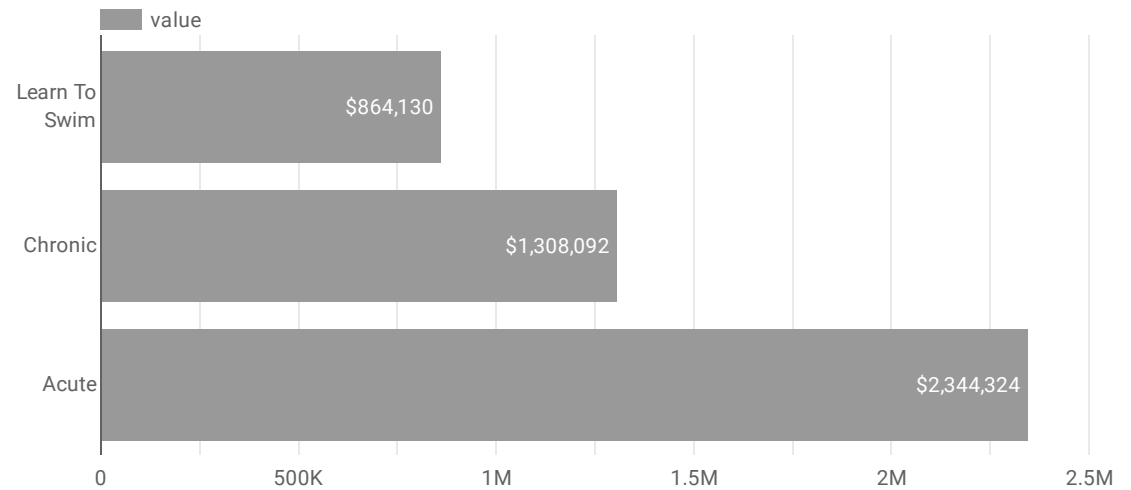
[Previous Page](#)

LocationName	Type of facility ^
Regional Sports and Aq...	Multifunctional facility

Site  Type



Total Social Value per Indicator Type per Year



Type ^	Site Value	Sector 25 Percentile	Sector 50 Percentile	Sector 75 Percentile
Acute	\$2,344,324	\$297,518	\$768,146	\$1,363,062
Chronic	\$1,308,092	\$198,788	\$496,523	\$1,092,344
Learn To Swim	\$864,130	\$78,359	\$253,159	\$438,006
Savings per person	\$995	\$686	\$807	\$1,131
Total savings per site	\$3,652,417	\$506,488	\$1,266,385	\$2,460,344

\* All benchmarks are sector trend in 2021



ActiveXchange uses data to provide partner organisations with the confidence to change, using analysis and predictive modelling to create a clear line of sight on outcomes and impacts. This creates active communities and extends the reach of each delivery and investment partners. This includes being lead partner of this Social Value Model service.

KPMG provides ongoing expertise and research in relation to the broader social and health benefits of physical activity, sport and recreation. Most recently KPMG's Sports Advisory team partnered with Sport Australia to investigate the economic, social and health value of Community Sports Infrastructure.



RSAC at Mernda  
Multi Criteria Assessment

JUNE 2022

## Context and purpose

The purpose of the workshop is to confirm the scope of the proposed project options, the assessment criteria and the preferred project solution

### Context

The City of Whittlesea (CoW) is developing a Detailed Business Case for the proposed Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre (RSAC) at Mernda.

The RSAC is intended to address a gap in the provision of infrastructure that promotes participation in active recreation, leisure activities and structured sport. The facility will remove barriers to participation and result in positive physical, mental and social health outcomes.

### Purpose

The purpose of the workshop is to confirm the scope of the three proposed project options, understand the assessment criteria to be used in the multi-criteria analysis, and confirm the preferred project option for inclusion in the business case. This information will form the 'Project Options Analysis' chapter of the business case (Chapter 4).

Analysis of the preferred project solution will include:

- On-going discussions with CoW and other stakeholders to refine scope and assumptions
- An updated feasibility study
- Consideration of the staging plan
- Updated detailed costings.

This will then be included in the 'Project Solution' chapter of the business case (Chapter 5).

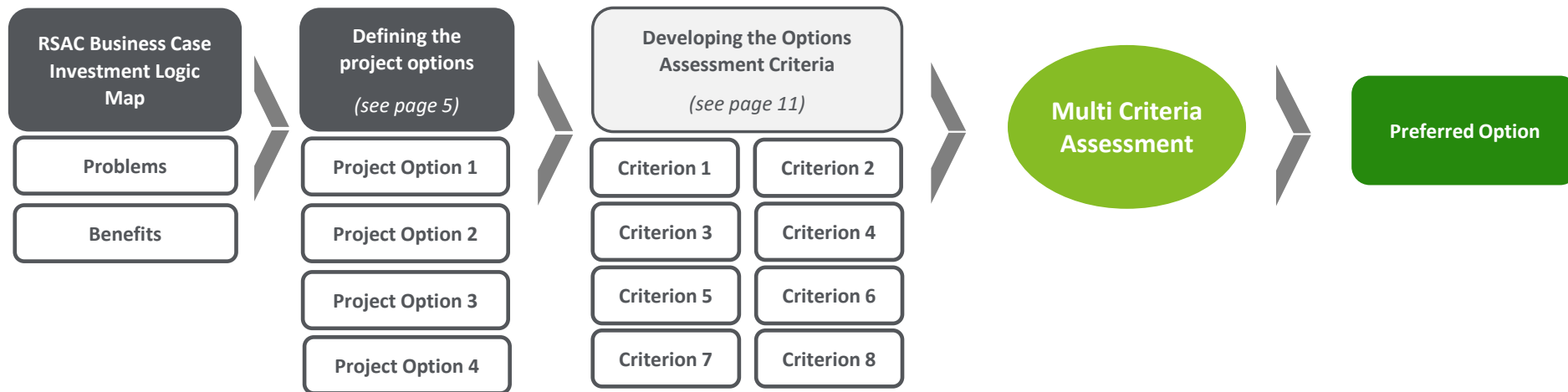


## Overview of the Multi Criteria Assessment (MCA)

The MCA compares quantitative and qualitative impacts across options by assigning scores to various criteria linked to objectives, policy or a mandate

### An MCA is required by the business case guidelines because:

- there is a basis for scoring project options against criteria and the evaluation framework is agreed and documented before the analysis has commenced
- there are non-quantifiable consequences or benefits which cannot be assessed or compared (e.g. community impact) by other assessment methodologies
- flexibility is required, particularly where the objectives and criteria identified for the assessment can be easily altered and amended throughout the process if they are inappropriate or irrelevant
- criteria can be linked to government policy and objectives.



# Project Options

## Scope of project options

Four project options have been assessed during this workshop. Further detail is provided on the following pages.

		Option 1: Aquatic Centre	Option 2: RSAC at Mernda	Option 3: Mernda Town Centre Hub	Option 4: Sports Centre
<b>Total capital cost</b>					
<b>Escalated to \$2024</b>		<b>\$65.4 million</b>	<b>\$113.4 million</b>	<b>\$150.8 - \$158.5 million</b>	<b>~\$47.6 million</b>
<b>Differentiating Features</b>					
<b>Aquatic areas</b>	<b>Main pool</b>	4-lane 25 m	8-lane multipurpose 50 m pool	8-lane 25m (485 m <sup>2</sup> )	×
	<b>Warm water exercise pool</b>	250 m <sup>2</sup>	300 m <sup>2</sup> + ramp	237 m <sup>2</sup>	×
	<b>Water play</b>	350 m <sup>2</sup>	375 m <sup>2</sup> incl. ramp	368 m <sup>2</sup>	×
	<b>Learn to swim</b>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	125 m <sup>2</sup> + ramp	128 m <sup>2</sup>	×
<b>Health club and group exercise</b>	<b>Gymnasium</b>	600 m <sup>2</sup>	650 m <sup>2</sup>	2502 m <sup>2</sup>	×
	<b>Group fitness/program rooms</b>	3	3	<i>Included in gymnasium above</i>	×
	<b>Spa, steam and sauna</b>	✓	✓	✓	×
<b>General</b>	<b>Health consult/wellness rooms</b>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	<i>Included in gymnasium above</i>	×
	<b>Multipurpose room</b>	×	1	×	×
	<b>Creche</b>	✓	✓	×	×
<b>Sports courts</b>	<b>Indoor</b>	×	5 multipurpose + 1 show court	5 multipurpose + 1 show court	5 multipurpose + 1 show court
	<b>Outdoor</b>	×	8 outdoor floodlit netball courts + 4 potential additional courts at a later stage	8 outdoor floodlit netball courts	8 outdoor floodlit netball courts + 4 potential additional courts at a later stage
<b>Learning and wellbeing hub</b>		×	×	5028 m <sup>2</sup> (Health, Arts, Community Learning, Office/Co-working etc)	×
<b>Environmental initiatives</b>		Includes 5% allowance for ESD	Includes 3% allowance ESD initiatives and a further \$500k for WSUD	5% on cost in build cost assumptions	Assume 5% allowance for ESD
<b>Carparking</b>		At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub)	At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub)	At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub) At grade to be replaced by multilevel in second stage (Mernda Town Centre)	At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub)

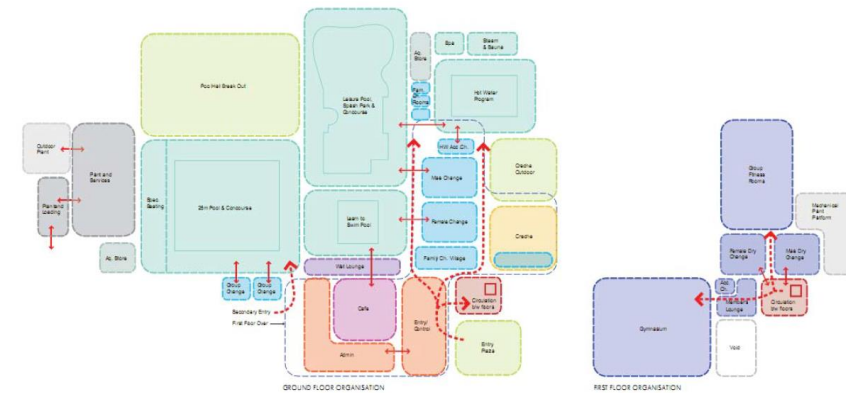
*Note: All options are the 'final stage' as any option could be staged to reduce initial investment and allow for a transition over time. Slides 6-9 and 29 provide further detail on scope and costs.*

## Overview of project options

Project Option 1 (PO 1) is the delivery of an aquatic centre at the Mernda Sports Hub

### Option 1: Aquatic Centre

- The aquatic centre will be located on Plenty Road north of Bridge Inn Road at the Mernda Sports Hub.
- This option is focussed on aquatics and includes:
  - 4-lane 25 metre pool
  - Warm water, water play, teaching pool
  - Gymnasium
  - 3 program rooms
  - Spa, steam and sauna
  - Health consult rooms.
- There is no provision for sports courts.
- 'Option 1' in this analysis is 'Option 5' from the 2018 *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study* which explored a range of options designed to meet community needs whilst being sensitive to the implications of the costs involved.
- The capital cost in \$2024 is \$65.4 million (assuming a single stage construction). This estimate was developed by taking the capital cost plan from the *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study* (which includes a cost plan in November 2020 dollars), removing escalation back to 2018 and then applying high level historic escalation to adjust it to 2024 dollars.



## Overview of project options

Project Option 2 (PO 2) is the delivery of a Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at the Mernda Sports Hub

### Option 2: RSAC at Plenty Rd

- The RSAC at Plenty Road will be located on Plenty Road north of Bridge Inn Road at the Mernda Sports Hub.
- This option will combine an indoor facility for aquatics and sports with outdoor netball courts:
  - 8-lane 50 metre multipurpose pool
  - Warm water, water play and learn to swim pools
  - Health and fitness facilities including a gymnasium, group fitness room, program rooms and health consulting / wellness suites
  - Creche and café
  - 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts
  - 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators
  - 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts (with the potential for 4 additional courts delivered in a subsequent stage)
  - 4 outdoor sports fields, pavilions, open spaces (delivered in a longer term stage).
- 'Option 2' in this analysis is 'Option 3' from the 2021 *Pool Options Analysis Paper* which was a feasibility and comparative analysis that considered a 25 metre lap swimming pool, a 50 metre FINA pool and a 50 metre multipurpose pool. In December 2021 Council resolved to progress this option through to the detailed business case.
- The capital cost in \$2024 is \$113.4 million. This estimate was developed for the *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study Pool Options Analysis Paper* prepared in 2021 which included a cost plan in 2024 dollars
- The cost estimate assumes a single stage construction. City of Whittlesea is exploring the implications of staging within Chapter 5 of the business case.



## Overview of project options

Project Option 3 (PO 3) is the delivery of an integrated aquatic and leisure centre collocated with a learning and wellbeing hub in Mernda Town Centre

### Option 3: Mernda Town Centre Hub

- This option will be located in Mernda Town Centre adjoining the Mernda Railway Station (350 metres) surrounded by commercial and residential areas.
- The Mernda Town Centre Hub combines aquatic, leisure, learning and wellbeing with:
  - 8-lane 25 metre pool and warm water, water play and learn to swim pools
  - Gymnasium, group fitness and consulting suites
  - Large learning and wellbeing community hub over four floors with a separate entry
  - Multilevel carpark
- This option also includes the development of sports courts at the Mernda Sports Hub:
  - 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts and 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators
  - 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts (with the potential for 4 additional courts delivered in a subsequent stage)
  - 4 outdoor sports fields, pavilions, open spaces (delivered in a longer term stage).
- It offers opportunities for to consolidate council assets in a single building to house complementary activities (learning, wellbeing, aquatic, leisure), with proximity to the proposed community hospital and to residential aged care.
- ‘Option 3’ in this analysis is the ‘Facility Integrated Option’ from the 2021 *Mernda Integrated Option Report* which compared the facility integrated option (an integrated aquatic and leisure centre collocated with a learning and wellbeing hub) alongside a facility separated option (an aquatic and leisure centre at the Mernda Sports Hub on Plenty Road and a learning and wellbeing hub in the Mernda Town Centre.
- The total capital cost in \$2024 is \$150.8 - \$158.5 million. This estimate was adjusting the capital costs in the *Mernda Integrated Option Project Report* in \$2023 and applying 4% escalation to adjust it to \$2024.
- Stage 1 includes the indoor and outdoor courts at Mernda Sports Hub. Stage 2 includes the aquatic centre at Mernda Town Centre and the multilevel carpark.



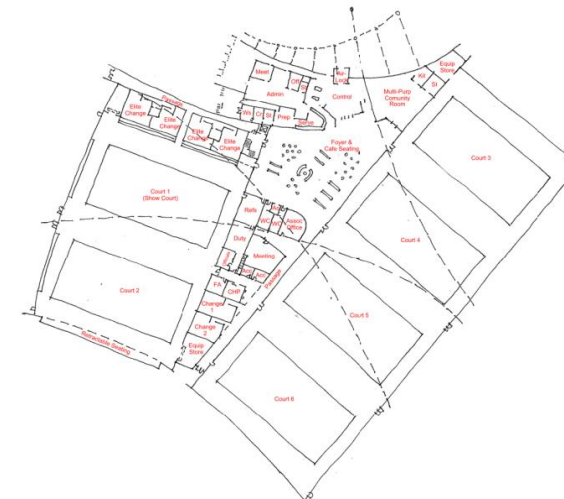


## Overview of project options

Project Option 4 (PO 4) is the delivery of an indoor and outdoor sports centre at the Mernda Sports Hub

### Option 4: Sports Centre

- The sports courts will be located on Plenty Road north of Bridge Inn Road at the Mernda Sports Hub.
- This option is focussed on sports and includes:
  - 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts
  - 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators
  - 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts (with the potential for 4 additional courts delivered in a subsequent stage)
  - 4 outdoor sports fields, pavilions, open spaces (delivered in a longer term stage).
  - Reduced foyer compared to Project Option 2.
- There is no provision for aquatics, gymnasium, program rooms or health consulting suites.
- 'Option 4' in this analysis was first raised by City of Whittlesea at the Options Assessment Workshop on 4 May 2022.
- The capital cost in \$2024 is approximately \$47.6 million (assuming a single stage construction). This high level estimate was formed by extracting the carparking and indoor and outdoor sports courts estimates from Option 3 (the 2021 *Mernda Integrated Option Report*) and applying escalation to \$2024. City of Whittlesea is currently seeking an updated cost estimate which will be incorporated into the business case.





# Assessment criteria

## Assessment criteria

The project options are assessed against eight criteria using the measures listed below on a scale from 1 to 5

Criterion	Measure	0	2.5	5
1. Alignment to Policy	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which each option aligns to the State and Council policies and strategies	Limited to no alignment	Moderate alignment	Significant alignment
2. Social impact	Qualitative assessment of the potential for the facility and services to improve health and wellbeing outcomes	Low social impact	Moderate social impact	High social impact
3. Customer experience	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option supports the community’s needs and encourages participation for priority community groups	Low customer experience impact	Moderate customer experience impact	High customer experience impact
4. Capital impact	Quantitative assessment of total capital cost of construction	High capital costs	Moderate capital costs	Lower capital costs
5. Financial performance	Qualitative assessment of the relative financial performance of each option including operating costs	Low financial performance	Moderate financial performance	Higher financial performance
6. Economic activity	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option will have an impact on economic activity in City of Whittlesea	Low economic impact	Moderate economic impact	High economic impact
7. Risk	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option will impact risk	Higher risks	Moderate risks	Lower risks
8. Environment impact	Qualitative assessment of likely environmental impacts	High environmental impact	Moderate environmental impact	Low environmental impact

# Criterion 1

## Alignment to policy

## Criterion 1 – Alignment to policy

### The extent to which the project option delivers on government (State and Council) policy objectives

#### Approach to assessment

A qualitative assessment of the extent to which each option aligns to the State and Council policies and strategies has been undertaken. The table below describes each relevant document.

Policy	Description
<b>State</b>	
Active Victoria Strategic Framework 2017-2023	The Framework describes six strategic directions: Meeting demand by increasing participation opportunities; Broader and more inclusive participation; Promote active recreation, through opportunities via professional sport; Building system capacity; and More events in the region through high performance infrastructure.
Plan Melbourne Strategy 2017-2050	The focus of this strategy is to accommodate long-term economic growth by: Supporting innovation and creating jobs; Increasing liveability of the city; and providing a more vibrant, healthy, and inclusive city.
Victoria’s Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051	Recognises the importance of aquatic and leisure centres in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing.
Gender Equality Act 2020	Requires the public sector, Councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services.
<b>Council</b>	
Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy 2014 (MLAFS)	Provides direction on the delivery of major leisure and aquatic facilities to 2034. The strategy provides that aquatic and leisure facilities should be easily accessible by residents, a meeting place and make a significant contribution to the physical and mental wellbeing of the City of Whittlesea community. Four guiding principles were established to inform the MLAFS: accessible and equitable, viable, affordable, and maximising social and health benefit.
Whittlesea 2040: A place for all (2018)	Builds on the achievements of Shaping Our Future Whittlesea 2030 and provides a new long term vision for the City of Whittlesea. The goals of the 2040 vision are: 1. Connected community, 2. Liveable neighbourhoods, 3. Sustainable environment and 4. Strong local economy.
Community Plan 2021-2025	Primary medium-term strategic planning document that considers the goals and aspirations set out in Whittlesea 2040, incorporating the CoW’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Disability Action Plan, and the Pandemic Recovery Plan. It identifies two key initiatives: commence construction of a leisure and wellbeing facility in Mernda; and build additional outdoor netball courts in a number of neighbourhoods including Epping, Doreen, Mill Park, Whittlesea, South Morang and Mernda.
A Voice for All, Community Engagement Policy 2021	This Community Engagement Policy outlines CoW’s commitment to actively involve the community in decision making so in order to deliver better quality outcomes and reach their Whittlesea 2040 Vision.

## Criterion 1 – Alignment to policy

The extent to which the project option delivers on government (State and Council) policy objectives

### Approach to assessment (continued)

Policy	Description
Mernda Strategy Plan 2011 (amended 2016)	Identifies the Mernda Regional Recreation Reserve (now referred to as 'Mernda Sports Hub') as a regional recreation node suitable for development of various sports, aquatic centre and stadium.
Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019	Audits undertaken to inform the WNBPA identified that there is a significant shortage of suitable indoor and outdoor sports courts in the municipality which is negatively impacting on netball and basketball participation rates. The Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan recommends the construction of six indoor sports courts and eight outdoor netball courts at the Mernda Sports Hub site as short-term high priority projects, with an additional four outdoor courts as a long-term priority project.
Active Whittlesea Policy 2019	Aims to build capacity and create opportunities for people within the municipality to become more physically active and live healthier lives. The policy aims to have 75% of residents participating in one or more hours of physical activity per week by September 2028.
Mernda Regional Rec. Reserve MP 2011	Provides a proposed design for the Plenty Road / Everton Drive location that includes sports grounds and car parks.
Zero Net Emissions Plan 2022	Sets a clear pathway of clean energy actions and greenhouse gas emissions reduction to ensure that it can reduce its impact on climate change and become a zero net emissions organisation by 2022.
Whittlesea Water for All 2020 – 2030	Outlines a ten-year framework for the City of Whittlesea to become a leader in the planning, use and management of water. Includes reducing potable water consumption and ensuring water sensitive urban design outcomes.
Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040	Sets out plans for the protection, growth and management of trees and green cover as part of Council's commitment to the Whittlesea 2040 community goals of sustainable environment, liveable neighbourhoods and connected communities. The aim is a 20% increase in the City's existing green cover by 2040, starting in neighbourhoods that would achieve the biggest impact on heat islands, hot spots and liveability.
Equal and Safe Strategy 2019	An integrated strategy which shapes Council's work in improving gender equality, building the recognition and understanding across the organisation and community that sports, active recreation, social and leisure spaces are an important setting and that consideration of equity and diversity during planning and development can have a significant bearing on the extent of women's economic, social and civic participation.
Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan July 2017 – September 2020	Council's reconciliation policy is based on five key principles that were developed in consultation with local Aboriginal communities and are designed to underpin the Reconciliation Policy and guide all RAP actions. The five key principles include: Respect, Self-determination, Equity, Justice, and Partnerships.

## Criterion 1 – Alignment to policy

The extent to which the project option delivers on government (State and Council) objectives

### Assessment

Policy	Commentary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
<b>State</b>					
Active Victoria Strategic Framework 2017-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 2, 3 and 4 address high performance infrastructure with respect to sporting facilities while PO 1 does not include a provision for any sports courts.</li> </ul>	x	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Plan Melbourne Strategy 2017-2050	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All options support long term economic growth, to a greater extent under PO 2 and PO 3.</li> <li>An additional 430 local jobs are expected under PO 2. Number of jobs is related to capital expenditure so PO 3 can be expected to create a slightly higher number of jobs and PO 1 &amp; 4 a lower number.</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 offer a broader range of sports and leisure activities which could be expected to have a greater impact on liveability, health and social benefits.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Victoria’s Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 73 of Infrastructure Victoria’s is to increase funding to support local governments to plan and deliver aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne’s seven growth area municipalities.</li> <li>PO 1, 2 and 3 all include aquatic recreation centres. PO 4 does not.</li> </ul>	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	x
Gender Equality Act 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All options facilitate the provision of policies, programs and services that will support gender equality and workplace gender equality.</li> <li>PO 2 and 3 offer a broader range of sports and leisure activities which could be expected to better support gender equality.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
<b>Council</b>					
Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 1, 2 and 3 all deliver aquatic and leisure facilities however PO 2 delivers a larger multipurpose pool and greater leisure facilities compared with PO 1. PO 3 has a larger gymnasium and program room footprint.</li> <li>PO 4 does not include aquatics, gymnasium or program rooms.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Whittlesea 2040	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provision of aquatic and leisure facilities within the municipality under all options strongly aligns with the Whittlesea 2040 strategic priority of ‘Connected Community’ as the infrastructure supports encouraging a socially cohesive, participating and healthy and safe community.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Community Plan 2021-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All options incorporate the construction of a leisure and wellbeing facility in Mernda.</li> <li>Only PO 2 &amp; 4 delivers outdoor netball courts. PO 1 does not include any outdoor courts at all. PO 3 includes outdoor courts.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
A Voice for All, Community Engagement Policy 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four consultation processes undertaken since 2013 have shown significant community support (2013, 2017, 2018 and 2020). Respondents have constantly reinforced the need for the facility to be accessible to everyone; a place for the community to spend time together that is affordable and inclusive.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓

**Legend:** Is not aligned to policy x Partially aligned to policy ✓ Aligned to Policy ✓✓ Highly aligned to policy ✓✓✓

## Criterion 1 – Alignment to policy

The extent to which the project option delivers on government (State and Council) objectives

Policy	Commentary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Mernda Strategy Plan 2011 (amended 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 1 is the development of an aquatic and leisure centre at the Mernda Sports Hub site, whilst PO 2 also includes indoor and outdoor sports courts.</li> <li>PO 3 only includes indoor and outdoor sports courts at the Mernda Sports Hub site with the aquatic and leisure component developed at the Mernda Town Centre.</li> <li>PO 4 includes indoor and outdoor sports courts at Mernda Sports Hub site.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓
Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 1 does not provide for any sports courts.</li> <li>PO 2, 3 and 4 all include indoor and outdoor sports courts which meet the Netball and Basketball Plan’s recommendation.</li> </ul>	✗	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Active Whittlesea Policy 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 offer a broader range of sports, aquatic and leisure activities.</li> <li>PO 1 is limited to aquatics and leisure and PO 4 is limited to court based sporting activities.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Mernda Regional Rec. Reserve MP 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All options partially align to this masterplan as they have been developed much more recently. PO’s 2-4 better align as they offer sports courts whereas PO 1 does not.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Zero Net Emissions Plan 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each option includes an allowance for ESD: PO 1 is 5% (~\$2.35m), PO 2 is 3% (~\$3.39m) and PO 3 is 5% (~\$7.5m).</li> <li>PO 4 will produce far fewer emissions as it does not include any aquatics.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Whittlesea Water for All 2020 – 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The environmental footprint of the 50 metre pool in PO 2 is greater than the 25 metre pools in PO 1 and PO 2. The footprint of the other aquatic areas are comparable across the options.</li> <li>PO 2 includes an allowance of \$500,000 for water sensitive urban design.</li> <li>PO 4 will use far less water as it does not include any aquatics.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the smaller scope of PO 1, this allows for more trees and more protection of city forest.</li> <li>PO 2 plans for a canopy cover target of 20% as per the scheduled council meeting 6 December 2021.</li> <li>All options include opportunities for initiatives that reduce the Urban Heat Island Effect.</li> <li>PO 4 better aligns due to the less trees being removed for aquatic purposes.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Equal and Safe Strategy 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 2, 3, and 4 include indoor and outdoor sports courts which better support participation by women and girls whereas PO 1 only provides aquatic and leisure facilities.</li> <li>PO 1, 2, and 3 all include consulting suites, multipurpose and program rooms which better support women’s social and civic participation. PO 4 is limited to sports courts.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan July 2017 – September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 2 and 3 providing the greatest employment opportunities based on capital cost and size of facility.</li> <li>PO 2 and 3 provide a broader range of sports, aquatic and leisure activities which will appeal to a wider range of community members including the Aboriginal community.</li> <li>PO 1, 2 and 3 all include consulting suites and multipurpose rooms that could be used to deliver tailored programs for the Aboriginal community.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓

Legend: Is not aligned to policy ✗ Partially aligned to policy ✓ Aligned to Policy ✓✓ Highly aligned to policy ✓✓✓  
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## Criterion 1 – Alignment to policy

The extent to which the project option delivers on State and Council objectives

Summary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
<b>State</b>				
Active Victoria Strategic Framework 2017-2023	x	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Plan Melbourne Strategy 2017-2050	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Victoria’s Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	x
Gender Equality Act 2020	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
<b>Council</b>				
Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy 2014 (MLAFS)	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Whittlesea 2040: A place for all (2018)	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Community Plan 2021-2025	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
A Voice for All, Community Engagement Policy 2021	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Mernda Strategy Plan 2011 (amended 2016)	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓
Whittlesea Netball and Basketball Plan 2019	x	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Active Whittlesea Policy 2019	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Mernda Regional Rec. Reserve MP 2011	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Zero Net Emissions Plan 2022	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Whittlesea Water for All 2020 – 2030	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-40	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Equal and Safe Strategy 2019	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan July 2017 – September 2020	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
<b>Score</b>	<b>28/51 = 2.75/5</b>	<b>45/51 = 4.42/5</b>	<b>43/51 = 4.22/5</b>	<b>32/51 = 3.14/5</b>
<b>Criterion</b>				
<b>Alignment to policy</b>	Limited to no alignment to policy		Moderate alignment to policy	
			Significant alignment to policy	

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# Criterion 2

## Social impact

## Criterion 2 – Social impact

### The social value of participation in physical activity and health and wellbeing facilities

#### Approach to assessment

A sports and aquatic centre is more than just a place to swim or workout. It's a central social hub where people come together, increasing social cohesion and improving health and wellbeing. This boosts health by reducing the burden of disease, improving mental health outcomes, and improving connection and a sense of belonging across society.

The social impact assessment considers the social value of participation in physical activity and health and wellbeing facilities generated by each project option. This assessment will be completed in two phases.

#### Phases

- **Phase 1: qualitative assessment of the potential for the facility and services to improve health and wellbeing outcomes as part of the MCA** through:
  - availability of space for use by allied health services and other business partnerships
  - availability of space to run health and wellbeing focussed programs e.g. nutrition or education
  - capacity to cater for and deliver a broad range of physical activity based programs.
- **Phase 2: quantitative assessment of the economic value of physical activity using the ActiveXchange Social Value Model for the preferred solution**
  - Note that this analysis can commence once the project options are finalised and the preferred solution is identified. The results will be documented in the business case in Chapters 4 (Project options assessment) and 5 (Project solution).

## Criterion 2 – Social impact

The social value of participation in physical activity and health and wellbeing facilities

### Assessment

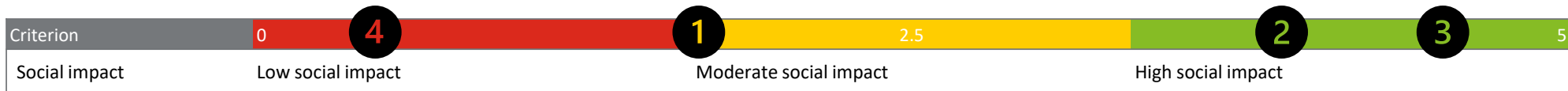
Sub-criterion	Commentary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
<b>Availability of space for use by allied health services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 4 is the only option without allocated space for health consult/wellness rooms to be used by allied health services.</li> <li>PO 1, 2 and 3 support continued job opportunities in allied health services, with PO 3 offering the greatest space and therefore opportunities across the spectrum of health services. They all support the integration of the allied health services within the facility and complimentary to the activities undertaken within, i.e. physio or rehabilitation space.</li> <li>PO 1 and PO 2 have the same amount of space (150m<sup>2</sup>) for health consult/wellness rooms, compared to PO 3 allocated to its learning and wellbeing hub which provides greater flexibility and opportunities (~5000m<sup>2</sup>).</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 would host a wider variety of activities not just focused on aquatics, attracting greater use and potential applications for allied health services.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✗
<b>Availability of space to run health and wellbeing focussed programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 4 is the only option without space for running health and wellbeing focussed programs, either aquatic and non-aquatic.</li> <li>PO 3 will have greater space and more flexibility to run health and wellbeing focussed programs with the development of the learning and wellbeing hub.</li> <li>PO 2 offers greater availability of space to run health and wellbeing programs than PO 1 due to the indoor and outdoor court facilities and available aquatic areas.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✗
<b>Capacity to cater for and deliver a broad range of physical activity based programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No project option is suitable for major sporting events, however PO 2 has a show court which offers increased spectator capacity across two levels.</li> <li>PO 2 aquatic areas cater for school carnivals and club events as the only 50m pool option. PO 1 and PO 3 are only suitable for small primary school carnivals and short course club activities.</li> <li>PO 2, PO 3 and PO 4 has both indoor and outdoor courts which offer a wider range of physical activity based programs, including netball and basketball.</li> <li>PO 3 is split across multiple sites which reduces the social value of collocated activities.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓

**Legend:** Limited to no benefit expected ✗    Some benefit expected ✓    Moderate benefit expected ✓✓    Significant benefit expected ✓✓✓

## Criterion 2 – Social impact

The social value of participation in physical activity and health and wellbeing facilities

Summary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Availability of space for use by allied health services	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✗
Availability of space to run health and wellbeing focussed programs	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✗
Capacity to cater for and deliver a broad range of physical activity based programs	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
<b>Score</b>	<b>3/9 = 1.67/5</b>	<b>7/9 = 3.89/5</b>	<b>8/9 = 4.44/5</b>	<b>1/9 = 0.56/5</b>



**Legend:** Limited to no benefit expected ✗      Some benefit expected ✓      Moderate benefit expected ✓✓      Significant benefit expected ✓✓✓

# Criterion 3

## Community impact

## Criterion 3 – Community impact

The extent to which the option will help to support the community's needs and encourages participation for priority community groups

### Approach to assessment

The Mernda and Doreen communities comprise residents from a wide range of cultures, languages, demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. Sports and aquatic centres play a role in encouraging a sense of community pride, an uplift in public amenity and increased security in the surrounding locale (by providing secure areas for recreation and socialisation). The RSAC will need to be accessible to everyone, affordable and inclusive.

The community impact assessment considers the extent to which the facility will meet the needs of the City of Whittlesea community and encourage participation for priority community groups (such as females, people with a disability, 50+, disengaged youths, emerging communities, young families etc.). The qualitative assessment is informed by a series of sub-criteria.

### Sub- Criteria

- **Accessibility** – the extent to which the option minimises barriers to participation and is accessible to priority community groups
- **Engagement** – the extent to which the option is likely to promote physical activity, and provides space and/or is available for use by different community groups
- **Capacity** – the extent to which the option can cater to the diverse needs of the community and accommodate emerging trends and changing demographics over its lifespan



### Criterion 3 – Community impact

The extent to which the option will help to support the community’s needs and encourages participation for priority community groups

**Assessment**

Sub-criterion	Commentary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
<b>Accessibility</b> – the extent to which the option minimises barriers to participation and is accessible to priority community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 3 offers greater public transport accessibility due to proximity to Mernda train station, with PO 1 and PO 2 offering greater carparking availability. The multi-level carpark for PO 3 will need to be developed in a second stage.</li> <li>All project options except PO 4 propose aquatic areas for all age demographics, from learning to swim to warm water exercise pool. Each option includes aquatic change room facilities. However PO 2 has increased accessibility into the aquatic areas with ramp and disability access included. PO 1 and PO 3 are less accessible for wheelchair users.</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 and PO 4 have indoor and outdoor spaces accommodating a variety of sports which will reduce barriers to participation (particularly for females through netball and basketball).</li> <li>PO 1 and PO 2 have creche facilities increasing accessibility to parents with young children.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
<b>Engagement</b> – the extent to which the option is likely to promote physical activity, and provides space and/or is available for use by different community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>POs 1, 2 and 3 offer similar congregation and social spaces by way of a café, public spaces and a foyer/reception.</li> <li>POs 1, 2 and 3 provide opportunities to partner with and engage community enterprises, such as allied health services (e.g. physio or rehabilitation centre).</li> <li>PO 4 could be used by a larger number of sports clubs and community groups than PO 1.</li> <li>PO 3 offers additional space within the learning and wellbeing hub targeting community engagement and reach to different community groups.</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 offer the wider variety of physical activity spaces, therefore engaging with different community groups.</li> <li>Programming and design features would be considered in the detailed design of the preferred option.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
<b>Capacity</b> – the extent to which the option can cater to the diverse needs of the community and accommodate emerging trends and changing demographics over its lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 2 better meets community expectations with a 50m lap pool and indoor and outdoor basketball and netball courts.</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 offer greater diversity of activities with regard to the indoor and outdoor courts, both multipurpose or netball specific.</li> <li>PO 3 has a significantly larger gymnasium (2502m<sup>2</sup>) than PO 1 and PO 2 (600m<sup>2</sup>).</li> <li>PO 1 has a larger learn to swim pool (150m<sup>2</sup>) than PO 2 (125m<sup>2</sup>) and PO 3 (128m<sup>2</sup>).</li> <li>PO 1 and PO 3 are unable to host large events, however PO 2 has 1 indoor show court which allows greater spectators.</li> <li>PO 4 caters to a wide range of users due to the nature of indoor and outdoor sports facilities.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

**Legend:** Limited to no benefit expected  Some benefit expected  Moderate benefit expected  Significant benefit expected 

### Criterion 3 – Community impact

The extent to which the option will help to support the community’s needs and encourages participation for priority community groups

Summary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
<b>Accessibility</b> – the extent to which the option minimises barriers to participation and is accessible to priority community groups	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
<b>Engagement</b> – the extent to which the option is likely to promote physical activity, and provides space and/or is available for use by different community groups	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
<b>Capacity</b> – the extent to which the option can cater to the diverse needs of the community and accommodate emerging trends and changing demographics over its lifespan	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
<b>Score</b>	4/9 = 2.22/5	8/9 = 4.44/5	7/9 = 3.89/5	5/9 = 2.78/5



**Legend:** Limited to no benefit expected ✘    Some benefit expected ✓    Moderate benefit expected ✓✓    Significant benefit expected ✓✓✓

# Criterion 4

## Capital impact

## Criterion 4 – Capital impact

### Total capital cost of construction

#### Approach to assessment

The new facility is a significant capital project for City of Whittlesea. The total project cost includes construction costs and allowances for contingency (design and construction), escalation, project management fees, fit-out and other indirect costs. Cost estimates have been prepared by independent Quantity Surveyor based on a concept design, area schedule and functional brief for each project option.

The capital cost criterion considers the construction costs to build, deliver and commission each project option. The analysis involves a qualitative comparison of the total capital cost of construction for each option:

- For Option 1, taking the capital costs from the *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study* by Sports and Leisure Solutions prepared in 2018 (which includes a cost plan in November 2020 dollars), removing escalation back to 2018 and then applying high level historic escalation to adjust it to 2024 dollars.
- For Option 2, taking the capital costs from the *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study Pool Options Analysis Paper* prepared in 2021 which included a cost plan in 2024 dollars
- For Option 3, taking the capital costs from the *Mernda Integrated Option Project Report* by Navire in March 2021 report (in July 2023 dollars) and applying 4% escalation to adjust it to 2024 dollars.
- For Option 4, extracting the carparking and indoor and outdoor sports courts estimates from Option 3 and applying 4% escalation to 2024. This figure is expected to be refined by CoW and updated in the drafting of the business case.

Costs for Options 2 and 4 will continue to be refined following this options assessment process as the business case progresses.

#### Key notes

- Cost plans for Option 1 and Option 3 are indicative only of the possible order of cost. The cost plan for Option 2 is more detailed and is currently being revised including to update for staging. There is no specific cost plan for Option 4 at this time.
- The Option 1 cost estimate was prepared in 2018 and predates COVID-19.
- The assumptions and exclusions vary between the project options.

## Criterion 4 – Capital impact

The table below reconfirms the scope of each option

		Option 1: Aquatic Centre	Option 2: RSAC at Mernda	Option 3: Mernda Town Centre Hub	Option 4: Sports Centre
<b>Total capital cost</b>					
<b>Escalated to \$2024</b>		<b>\$65.4 million</b>	<b>\$113.4 million</b>	<b>\$150.8 - \$158.5 million</b>	<b>~\$47.6 million</b>
<b>Differentiating Features</b>					
<b>Aquatic areas</b>	<b>Main pool</b>	4-lane 25 m	8-lane multipurpose 50 m pool	8-lane 25m (485 m <sup>2</sup> )	×
	<b>Warm water exercise pool</b>	250 m <sup>2</sup>	300 m <sup>2</sup> + ramp	237 m <sup>2</sup>	×
	<b>Water play</b>	350 m <sup>2</sup>	375 m <sup>2</sup> incl. ramp	368 m <sup>2</sup>	×
	<b>Learn to swim</b>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	125 m <sup>2</sup> + ramp	128 m <sup>2</sup>	×
<b>Health club and group exercise</b>	<b>Gymnasium</b>	600 m <sup>2</sup>	650 m <sup>2</sup>	2502 m <sup>2</sup>	×
	<b>Group fitness/program rooms</b>	3	3	<i>Included in gymnasium above</i>	×
	<b>Spa, steam and sauna</b>	✓	✓	✓	×
<b>General</b>	<b>Health consult/wellness rooms</b>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	<i>Included in gymnasium above</i>	×
	<b>Multipurpose room</b>	×	1	×	×
	<b>Creche</b>	✓	✓	×	×
<b>Sports courts</b>	<b>Indoor</b>	×	5 multipurpose + 1 show court	5 multipurpose + 1 show court	5 multipurpose + 1 show court
	<b>Outdoor</b>	×	8 outdoor floodlit netball courts + 4 potential additional courts at a later stage	8 outdoor floodlit netball courts	8 outdoor floodlit netball courts + 4 potential additional courts at a later stage
<b>Learning and wellbeing hub</b>		×	×	5028 m <sup>2</sup> (Health, Arts, Community Learning, Office/Co-working etc)	×
<b>Environmental initiatives</b>		Includes 5% allowance for ESD	Includes 3% allowance ESD initiatives and a further \$500k for WSUD	5% on cost in build cost assumptions	Assume 5% allowance for ESD
<b>Carparking</b>		At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub)	At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub)	At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub) At grade to be replaced by multilevel in second stage (Mernda Town Centre)	At grade on site (Mernda Sports Hub)

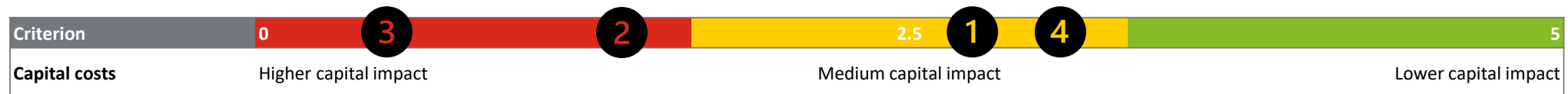
*Note: All options are the 'final stage' as any option could be staged to reduce initial investment and allow for a transition over time. Slides 6-9 and 29 provide further detail on scope and costs.*

## Criterion 4 – Capital impact

### Impact of total capital cost of construction

#### Assessment

Item	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Quantified costing:	<b>\$65.4 million</b>	<b>\$113.4 million</b>	<b>\$150.8 - \$158.5 million</b>	<b>~\$47.6 million</b>
<b>Construction Costs</b>	~\$56.6m	\$101.19m	<i>Not known</i>	<i>Not known</i>
<b>Non-Construction Costs</b>	~\$8.80m	\$12.21m	<i>Not known</i>	<i>Not known</i>
<b>Assumptions</b>				
ESD Allowance	5.0%	3.0%	5.0%	<i>Not known</i>
Design Contingency	10.0%	7.5%	7.5%	<i>Not known</i>
Contract Contingency	10.0%	10.0%	7.5%	<i>Not known</i>
Consultant fees	8.0%	6.0%	6.0%	<i>Not known</i>
Council management and admin fees	~\$1.3m	-	-	<i>Not known</i>
Authority/headwork charges	-	-	1.0%	<i>Not known</i>
Project management fees	-	2.5%	-	<i>Not known</i>
Cost escalation (allow 24 months)	8.0%	-	8.0%	<i>Not known</i>
Client Costs	-	0.5%	0.5%	<i>Not known</i>
<b>Exclusions</b>	Asbestos removal, site decontamination, permits and levies, legal and finance costs, new traffic light requirements, gym and pool equipment, rates and taxes	Asbestos removal, abnormal ground conditions, decontamination, cost escalation, IT and sport equipment, permits and levies, legal and finance costs, land acquisition costs	<i>Not known</i>	<i>Not known</i>



# Criterion 5

## Financial performance



## Criterion 5 – Financial performance

The extent to which the option will support sustainable financial performance

### Approach to assessment

A new facility needs to be financially viable; the project needs to generate financial benefits (e.g. revenue and profits) that are sufficient to meet financial costs (e.g. capex and opex). Some financial items are variable and depend on visitation, whilst others are fixed.

Key revenue items	Key cost items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Casual admission fees e.g. for aquatics and fitness</li> <li>Memberships for ongoing access e.g. for aquatics and/or health facilities</li> <li>Hire and lease e.g. for meeting rooms and consulting suites</li> <li>Visitation dependent revenue e.g. retail, café, creche, lockers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing and labour on-costs</li> <li>Administrative costs</li> <li>Utilities and maintenance</li> <li>Marketing</li> <li>Fees e.g. contracts, banking fees for cash collection, waste management etc</li> </ul>

The financial performance criterion will be completed in two phases:

- Phase 1: qualitative assessment of the relative financial performance of each option as part of the MCA for elements that differentiate the options**
- Phase 2: quantitative assessment of the financial performance of the preferred project solution**

### Key notes

- The financial analysis considers these revenues and costs from the ‘venue’ perspective. Hence, there may be revenues or costs incurred by other parties (tenants, event organisers) that are excluded for the purposes of this analysis.
- The operational financial assumptions are based on reasonable information sources including cost plans, CoW data for existing facilities, outputs from stakeholder engagement, and industry benchmarks.
- On-going discussions will test and refine the commercial, financial and operating assumptions to finalise the financial analysis for inclusion in the business case.

## Criterion 5 – Financial performance

### The extent to which the option will support sustainable financial performance

#### Assessment

Sub-criterion	Commentary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Admission (casual and memberships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 50m pool (PO 2) can deliver ~25% increase in casual use and memberships compared to a 25m pool (PO 1, PO 3) which is approximately \$240k p.a.</li> <li>A 50m pool (PO 2) will also attract additional members to the gym, estimated to be \$50k p.a.</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 offer adjacent sporting facilities and greater room for allied health services or community programs, attracting greater admissions.</li> <li>PO 4 offers indoor and outdoor sporting facilities which will attract significant admissions.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Hire and lease e.g. for meeting rooms and consulting suites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 50m pool (PO 2) will generate greater hire and lease opportunities (school swimming or lessons), compared to a 25m pool (PO 1, PO 3).</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 offer indoor and outdoor courts, compared to PO 1, which increased opportunity for hire and leasing revenue.</li> <li>PO 4 does not offer aquatic hire and lease opportunities but has significant opportunities to hire and lease sporting facilities.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Visitation dependent revenue e.g. retail, café, creche, lockers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 50m pool (PO 2) delivers the opportunity for an increase in carnival revenue of approximately \$10k p.a. compared to a 25m pool (PO 1, PO 3).</li> <li>Indoor and outdoor courts (PO 2 and PO 3) similarly increase visitation dependant revenue. PO 4 does not have the aquatic facilities or gymnasium and leisure facilities.</li> <li>PO 3's additional learning and wellbeing hub provides revenue and commercial opportunity linked to office and community centres.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Staffing and labour on-costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased for PO 1 and PO 4 as the out of scope facilities would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some function and costs.</li> <li>PO 2 and PO 3 and PO 4 require additional cleaning, plant servicing and maintenance costs due to indoor and outdoor courts.</li> <li>Safe pool operations for PO 2 (50m pool) require an additional lifeguard which increases costs by ~\$100k p.a.</li> <li>Operational impact of a 4 lane 25m lap pool for PO 1 is untested.</li> <li>PO 4 would require less staff and labour than all other options due to the absence of aquatic staff.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Administrative costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased for PO 1 and PO 4 as the out of scope facilities would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some function and costs.</li> <li>Administrative costs are relatively similar for each project option.</li> <li>PO 4 would have less administrative costs related to the aquatic facilities.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Utilities, cleaning, maintenance, and asset renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utility costs for a 50m pool (PO 2) are expected to be ~\$300k p.a. higher than for a 25m pool (PO 1, PO 3).</li> <li>Additional utility costs expected for indoor and outdoor courts (PO 2, PO 3) (e.g. outdoor lights).</li> <li>PO 4 would have far fewer utility costs than the options with aquatic facilities.</li> <li>Similar for PO's 1-3 except for an additional \$50k p.a. for PO 2 for increased plant and equipment for water and airflow.</li> <li>Additional costs for PO 2 and PO 3 for maintenance of indoor and outdoor courts.</li> <li>PO 4 would have far fewer cleaning and maintenance costs than the options with aquatic facilities.</li> <li>Lifespan of aquatic assets deteriorate more quickly.</li> <li>Increased for PO 1 and PO 4 as the out of scope facilities would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some function and costs.</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Staging implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 1 and PO 4 can be delivered in one stage.</li> <li>PO 2 needs a short term operational agreement and operating environment that is compromised until stage 2 completion.</li> <li>PO 3 includes staging within the scope and also the surrounding town centre area, difficult to fund in one stage.</li> </ul>	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓

**Legend:** Limited to no benefit expected ✘      Some benefit expected ✓      Moderate benefit expected ✓✓      Significant benefit expected ✓✓✓

## Criterion 5 – Financial performance

The financial performance for each option

Summary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Admission (casual and memberships)	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Hire and lease e.g. for meeting rooms and consulting suites	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Visitation dependent revenue e.g. retail, café, creche, lockers	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Staffing and labour on-costs	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Administrative costs	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Utilities	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Cleaning and maintenance	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
<b>Score</b>	<b>10/21 = 2.38/5</b>	<b>17/21 = 4.05/5</b>	<b>14/21 = 3.33/5</b>	<b>16/21 = 3.81/5</b>



# Criterion 6

## Economic activity

## Criterion 6 – Economic activity

The extent to which the option will have an impact on economic activity in City of Whittlesea

### Approach to assessment

The new centre will deliver a suite of health and wellbeing facilities and services targeted to the needs of the City of Whittlesea community, generating significant benefits. Economic impacts are broader than financial impacts (revenue and costs) and they consider impacts beyond the ‘four walls’ of the new facility.

Qualitative economic impacts	Quantitative impacts
Higher employment (e.g. indirect flow on to local businesses) Improved health and wellbeing Better injury rehabilitation (through collocation with allied health)	Social value (of increased physical activity on quality of life) Consumer surplus (value of broader benefits beyond attendance)

The assessment of economic activity will be considered in two phases:

- **Phase 1: Qualitative analysis for the MCA**
  - **Attendances** – the health and wellbeing benefits created by attendance by patrons is directly proportional to the number of attendances. The number of attendances expected under each project option will be used as a proxy for this indicator.
  - **Job creation** – increased employment creates opportunities to address unemployment and disadvantage in City of Whittlesea. Direct job creation (in construction and during operations) increases spending flow on to local businesses. Capital costs and revenue generated will be used as a proxy for this indicator.
- **Phase 2: Quantitative analysis of the project solution**
  - **Social value** – ActiveXchange will prepare a Social Value Model and associated report to estimate the benefit of a range of health and wellbeing indicators including the prevention of chronic diseases, reduced likelihood and/or severity of mental illness and broader productivity benefits such as reduced absenteeism.
  - **Consumer surplus** – the difference between what consumers are willing to pay for a good or service and what they actually pay for it. This captures the benefits of the increased visitation at the centre and quantifies the broader benefits of the increased patronage and engagement beyond the pure health benefits. In the absence of survey data, the consumer surplus will be conservatively estimated at 15 percent of admission price (based on benchmarking).

## Criterion 6 – Economic activity

The extent to which the option will have an impact on economic activity in City of Whittlesea

### Assessment

#### Part 1 – Attendances

Item	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
<b>Area:</b>				
<b>Pools</b>	929 m <sup>2</sup>	1,745 m <sup>2</sup>	1,218 m <sup>2</sup>	Nil
	Lap swimming (restricted), warm water pool (rehab), water play and Learn to swim pool.	Increased lap swimming, club/school swimming, warm water (rehab), water play and learn to swim	Lap swimming (restricted), warm water, water play and learn to swim.	n/a
<b>Gymnasium</b>	600 m <sup>2</sup>	600 m <sup>2</sup>	2,502 m <sup>2</sup> *	Nil
	Weights, cardio and stretching	Weights, cardio, stretching	Larger area for weights, cardio, stretching, classes	n/a
<b>Courts</b>	Nil	12,327 m <sup>2</sup>	12,327 m <sup>2</sup>	12,327 m <sup>2</sup>
	n/a	6 indoor 8 outdoor	6 indoor 8 outdoor	6 indoor 8 outdoor
<b>Consulting suites</b>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	150 m <sup>2</sup>	Included in gymnasium floor area	Nil
	Holistic health focus (via allied health partnerships)	Holistic health focus (via allied health partnerships)	Co-located with Community Health / Knowledge Hub	n/a

#### Part 2 – Job creation

Item	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
<b>Construction Costs</b>	\$65.4m	\$113.4m	\$150.8m - \$158.m	\$47.6m
<b>Local Job Creation:</b>				
Direct (local building construction sector)	~78	~135	~184	~57
Indirect (intermediate industries)	~139	~241	~329	~101
Indirect (Consumption impacts)	~31	~54	~74	~23
<b>Total Local Jobs</b>	<b>~248</b>	<b>~430</b>	<b>~586</b>	<b>~180</b>
<b>Total Non-local Jobs</b>	<b>~204</b>	<b>~354</b>	<b>~483</b>	<b>~148</b>

Note: Council's economic projections program (EconomyID) identified that an investment of \$113.4 million (PO 2) into the building construction industry would create an additional 430 local jobs and 354 non-local jobs. Figures for PO 1, PO 3 and PO 4 have been estimated by scaling PO 2.



# Criterion 7

## Risk



## Criterion 7 – Risk

The extent to which the option will impact risk

### Approach to assessment

The risk criterion considers the multidisciplinary risks in delivering and operating the new facility under each project option to deliver the assumed benefits.

The risks analysis will involve:

- Phase 1: Initial analysis for the MCA** – An initial list of risks that materially differentiate the project options are presented on the following slide for discussion. This table is intended to capture at a high level those risks that are not otherwise considered through the other evaluation criteria in this project (e.g. capital costs, environmental impacts, financial performance). These risks are intended to assess the overall risk profile of each option as part of the MCA. This will be documented in Chapter 4 (Project options assessment).
- Phase 2: Risk register for the project solution** – Key risks associated with the project solution will be assessed at a risk workshop and the consequence, likelihood, mitigations and management approach will be documented. The output will be a risk register for inclusion within Chapters 8 (Project schedule), 9 (Project budget) and 10 (Management).

#### Risk rating matrix

Identified risks will be reviewed with the likelihood and consequence of each risk assessed in accordance with the standard risk matrix on right.

Consequence		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Likelihood		1	2	3	4	5
Rare	1	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low
Unlikely	2	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
Possible	3	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
Likely	4	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Almost Certain	5	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme

## Criterion 7 – Risk

### The extent to which the option will impact risk

Category	Risk	Consequence	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Supply risks	<b>Undersupply:</b> The extent to which the capacity of the facility meets forecast demand	Demand exceeding current projections would constrain services and the capacity of the facility to support the community’s physical and mental health.	High	Low	Moderate	Low
	<b>Oversupply:</b> The extent to which the capacity of the facility does not meets forecast demand	Demand not reaching capacity would mean over investment in the facility which represents poor value for money .	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
	<b>Delivery complexity:</b> The scale and nature of the design may increase the complexity of construction and delivery	Generally there is a deep pool of contractors that are familiar with the construction of facilities of this nature. The design or scope may need to be amended, and / or delivery may be materially affected, impacting cost or timeframes.	High	High	High	Moderate
Demand risks	<b>Facility features:</b> The extent to which demand is contingent on the size and features of the centre	The size of the venue and provision of appropriate facilities to cultivate the right atmosphere and image for the facility will be key to attracting attendee.	High	Low	Very Low	Low
	<b>Partnership attraction:</b> The extent to which there is risk in attracting partnerships to the facility	The assumed partnerships underpin the financial sustainability of the facility and an inability to fulfil these assumptions may lead to significant deficits.	Moderate	Very Low	Very Low	Low
	<b>Equity and inclusion:</b> The extent to which the facility is accessible and inclusive of priority groups	If the facility is not accessible and inclusive of priority groups, there is a risk that the facility will not deliver on CoW’s strategic goals.	High	Very Low	Low	Low
Interface risks	<b>Precinct:</b> The proposed facility does not fulfil its intent as part of a broader development of central Mernda	The project does not achieve some of the key benefits behind the investment, including attracting further investment and activation in the region.	High	Moderate	Very Low	Moderate
	<b>Land acquisition:</b> The availability and timing of the land required to develop the proposed facility	If negotiations with the adjoining landowner to agree a land swap under PO 3 are delayed or CoW must compulsorily acquire the necessary land, the delivery may be materially affected impacting cost and timeframes.	Very Low	Low	High	Very Low
	<b>Transport:</b> The extent to which pedestrian access to Mernda Railway Station supports the projected events and attendees	Insufficient pedestrian pathways pose a safety risk and may inhibit the number of attendees.	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Moderate
Political/ reputational risks	<b>Community:</b> The extent to which the option meets community expectations	There is a reputational risk that the facility is received poorly by the community.	High	Low	Low	High

## Criterion 7 – Risk

The extent to which the option will impact risk

Summary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
<b>Undersupply:</b> The extent to which the capacity of the facility meets forecast demand	High	Low	Moderate	Low
<b>Oversupply:</b> The extent to which the capacity of the facility does not meets forecast demand	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
<b>Delivery complexity:</b> The scale and nature of the design may increase the complexity of construction and delivery	High	High	High	Moderate
<b>Facility features:</b> The extent to which demand is contingent on the size and features of the centre	High	Low	Very Low	Low
<b>Partnership attraction:</b> The extent to which there is risk in attracting partnerships to the facility	Moderate	Very Low	Very Low	Low
<b>Equity and inclusion:</b> The extent to which the facility is accessible and inclusive of priority groups to target groups	High	Very Low	Low	Low
<b>Precinct:</b> The proposed facility does not fulfil its intent as part of a broader development of central Mernda	High	Moderate	Very Low	Moderate
<b>Land acquisition:</b> The availability and timing of the land required to develop the proposed facility	Very Low	Low	High	Very Low
<b>Transport:</b> The extent to which pedestrian access to Mernda Railway Station supports the projected events and attendees	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Moderate
<b>Community:</b> The extent to which the option meets community expectations	High	Low	Low	High
<b>Summary</b>	1 – Very low 1 – Low 2 – Moderate 6 – High	2 – Very low 4 – Low 3 – Moderate 1 – High	4 – Very low 3 – Low 1 – Moderate 2 – High	1 – Very low 5 – Low 3 – Moderate 1 – High



# Criterion 8

## Environmental impact

## Criterion 8 – Environmental impact

The extent to which the option will have an impact on the City of Whittlesea’s environmental footprint

### Approach to assessment

A facility of this size will have a significant impact on the City of Whittlesea’s environmental footprint.

Water heating is a major contributor to the overall energy consumption of an aquatic and leisure centre.

The assessment of the environmental impact of each project option will include consideration of:

- **Design standards** – Project options may envisage a 5 Star or 6 Star Green Star rating, targeting net zero emissions, or make an allowance for environmental sustainable design (ESD)
- **Footprint** – the size of the footprint of each facility will impact energy usage and consumption.
- **Emissions** – the size and design of the facility will both impact the volume of emissions.
- **Energy usage** – smaller pools and rooms will consume less energy
- **Indirect impacts** – the location of the facility will impact transport access.

## Criterion 8 – Environmental impact

The extent to which the option will have an impact on the City of Whittlesea’s environmental footprint

### Assessment

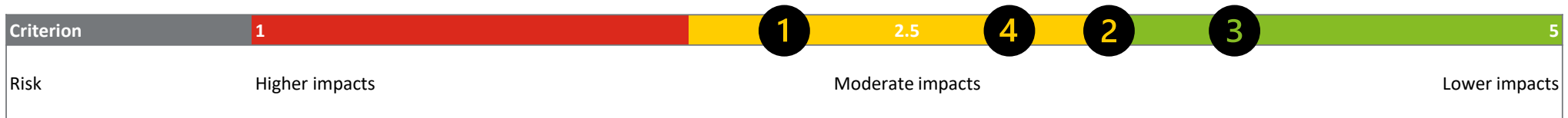
Sub-criterion	Commentary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Design standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 2 includes an allowance of 3% for ESD initiatives over and above BCA Section J requirements (i.e. PV solar panels, rainwater collection etc), \$500k for WSUD, but no allowance for Green Star design and certification.</li> <li>PO 3 includes an allowance of 5% for ESD initiatives.</li> <li>PO 1 includes allowance of 5% for ESD initiatives, noting at a smaller scale to PO 2 an PO 3.</li> <li>PO 4 minimal design initiatives required for the scope of works, will include WSUD and an allowance for ESD (\$tbc).</li> </ul>	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased for PO 1 and PO 4 as the out of scope facilities would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some functions.</li> <li>PO 1 has a reduced footprint to PO 2 and PO 3 given the reduced spatial requirements from excluding indoor and outdoor courts and the reduced main pool size (25m).</li> <li>All options include allowance for ESD initiatives and reducing carbon footprint.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Emissions and energy usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased for PO 1 and PO 4 as the out of scope facilities would need to be provided at a separate site which would duplicate some functions.</li> <li>PO 3 assumes significant ESD initiatives which would have the most positive impact on Council’s emissions and energy usage.</li> <li>PO 3 and PO 2 will inherently produce greater emissions due to the size and number of additional activities resulting from increased aquatic space and indoor and outdoor courts.</li> <li>Assume options include allowance for ESD initiatives and reducing emissions.</li> <li>Heating water is a major energy consumption factor. PO 2 has the largest pool area (total 300m<sup>2</sup>) which will require increased gas, electricity, water and pool chemicals.</li> <li>PO 3 assumes significant ESD initiatives which would have the most positive impact on Council’s emissions and energy usage.</li> </ul>	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Indirect impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO 1 and PO 2 and PO 4 are located outside walking distance of Mernda Railway Station so it likely that the majority of attendees will travel there by private car.</li> <li>PO 3 is located in Mernda Town Centre close to a variety of transport options.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓✓	✓

**Legend:** Limited to no benefit expected ✘ Some benefit expected ✓ Moderate benefit expected ✓✓ Significant benefit expected ✓✓✓

## Criterion 8 – Environmental impact

The extent to which the option will have an impact on the City of Whittlesea’s environmental footprint

Summary	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Design standards	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Footprint	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Emissions and energy usage	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Indirect impacts	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
<b>Score</b>	<b>5/12 = 2.08/5</b>	<b>8/12 = 3.33/5</b>	<b>9/12 = 3.75/5</b>	<b>7/12 = 2.92/5</b>





# Identification of the preferred option

## Identification of the preferred option

Each option has been assessed on a scale of 1 to 5 for each criteria

### Criteria and measurement scale

### Rating

Criterion	0	2.5	5	Option 1: Aquatic Centre	Option 2: RSAC at Mernda	Option 3: Mernda Town Centre Hub	Option 4: Sports Centre
<b>1. Alignment to Policy</b>	Limited to no alignment	Moderate alignment	Significant alignment	2.75	4.42	4.22	3.14
<b>2. Social impact</b>	Low social impact	Moderate social impact	High social impact	1.67	3.89	4.44	0.56
<b>3. Customer experience impact</b>	Low customer experience impact	Moderate customer experience impact	High customer experience impact	2.22	4.44	3.89	2.78
<b>4. Capital impact</b>	High capital impact	Moderate capital impact	Lower capital impact	2.79	1.39	0.56	3.06
<b>5. Financial performance</b>	Low financial performance	Moderate financial performance	Higher financial performance	2.38	4.05	3.33	3.81
<b>6. Economic activity</b>	Low economic impact	Moderate economic impact	High economic impact	1.70	3.89	4.17	0.56
<b>7. Risk</b>	Higher risks	Moderate risks	Lower risks	2.36	3.75	4.03	3.61
<b>8. Environment impact</b>	High environmental impact	Moderate environmental impact	Low environmental impact	2.08	3.33	3.75	2.92
<b>Overall score</b>				<b>2.24</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>2.55</b>

## Identification of the preferred option

The preferred option is Project Option 2 (PO 2), the delivery of a Regional Sports and Aquatic Centre at the Mernda Sports Hub

### Option 2: RSAC at Plenty Rd

- The RSAC at Plenty Road will be located on Plenty Road north of Bridge Inn Road at the Mernda Sports Hub.
- This option will combine an indoor facility for aquatics and sports with outdoor netball courts:
  - 8-lane 50 metre multipurpose pool
  - Warm water, water play and learn to swim pools
  - Health and fitness facilities including a gymnasium, group fitness room, program rooms and health consulting / wellness suites
  - Creche and café
  - 5 multipurpose indoor sports courts
  - 1 netball and basketball indoor show court with capacity to attract special events with permanent seating for 500 spectators
  - 8 outdoor floodlit netball courts (with the potential for 4 additional courts delivered in a subsequent stage)
  - 4 outdoor sports fields, pavilions, open spaces (delivered in a longer term stage).
- 'Option 2' in this analysis is 'Option 3' from the 2021 *Pool Options Analysis Paper* which was a feasibility and comparative analysis that considered a 25 metre lap swimming pool, a 50 metre FINA pool and a 50 metre multipurpose pool. In December 2021 Council resolved to progress this option through to the detailed business case.
- The capital cost in \$2024 is \$113.4 million. This estimate was developed for the *Mernda Aquatic Centre Planning Study Pool Options Analysis Paper* prepared in 2021 which included a cost plan in 2024 dollars
- The cost estimate assumes a single stage construction. City of Whittlesea is exploring the implications of staging within Chapter 5 of the business case.





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**Attachment 2: Previous planning and Council decisions for RSAC**

Date	Summary
2011	Mernda Strategy Plan endorsed; identifies site as regional recreation node suitable for development of various sports, aquatic centre and stadium.
2014	Major Leisure and Aquatic Facility Strategy endorsed; development of an aquatic centre is a key recommendation.
February 2019	Council endorsed two facility options for further development through a detailed business case; both facility options varied in the scale of the aquatic and dry components with neither including the provision of a 50-metre pool.
March 2019	An item of Urgent Business was endorsed, which sought the preparation of a report back to Council of indicative costs for inclusion of a 50-metre competition pool.
July 2019	Council resolved to receive a petition with 1621 signatures calling for Council to review the need for a 50-metre competition sized pool rather than the lesser aquatic options being considered.
August 2019	Council resolved to note the report on 50-metre pool costings and advise the head petitioner accordingly.
December 2019	Council endorsed the Whittlesea Netball Basketball Plan, which recommends the construction of six indoor sports courts and eight outdoor netball courts at the Mernda Sports Hub site as short-term high priority projects, with an additional four outdoor courts as a long-term priority project.
December 2019	<p>Council resolved to undertake further community consultation regarding aquatic and leisure facilities at Mernda and whether to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the pool to 50-metres</li> <li>• Incorporate large scale water play (such as water slides and outdoor activities)</li> <li>• Include netball and basketball courts in stage one of the project.</li> </ul>
December 2020	<p>Council resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a feasibility and comparative analysis for two facility options; a 25- metre pool option and a 50-metre FINA compliant competition pool.</li> <li>• Consolidate opportunities for the project to enhance strategic planning in the area (i.e. linkages with Mernda Town Centre).</li> </ul>

<b>December 2021</b>	<p>Council resolved to adopt the recommended provision of leisure, aquatics and sports court facilities in Mernda at the 6 December 2021 Council meeting, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A 50-metre multipurpose pool with boom wall</li><li>• Warm water program pool, teaching pool, leisure pool, spa, steam and sauna</li><li>• Gymnasium, group fitness, program rooms</li><li>• Health consulting and wellness suites</li><li>• Six indoor sports courts (including show court) and eight outdoor floodlit netball courts</li></ul>
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## 5.2 Liveable Neighborhoods

### 5.2.1 2022-19 Drainage Maintenance and Reinstatement

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Infrastructure & Environment
<b>Author</b>	Samuel Beshai, Senior Infrastructure Engineer
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samuel Beshai, Senior Infrastructure Engineer

#### Attachments

1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - 2022-19 Drainage Maintenance and Reinstatement Evaluation Summary [5.2.1.1 - 5 pages]
2. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Awarded Schedule of Rates [5.2.1.2 - 2 pages]

These attachments have been designated as confidential by the Director Infrastructure & Environment, under delegation from the Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with Rule 53 of the Governance Rules 2021 and sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that they contain private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—

- (i) relates to trade secrets; or
- (ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

In particular the attachments contain information regarding tender amounts submitted by tenderers and tender evaluation scoring prepared by Council Officers. They also contain details of credit and reference checks about the tenderers provided to Council in confidence. The release of this information could reasonably be expected to prejudice the commercial positions of the persons who supplied the information or to confer a commercial advantage on a third party.

#### Purpose

It is proposed that contract number **2022-19** for Drainage Maintenance and Reinstatement is awarded to the following panel of providers:

- ELS Environmental Location Systems for Separable Portion A (Street Sweeping)
- Environmental Services Group Pty Ltd (TDG) for Separable Portion B (Drainage Maintenance)



## Brief Overview

The tender evaluation panel advises that:

- 6 tenders were received.
- 2 tenderers are recommended.
- The recommended tenderers were the highest ranked.
- Consideration was given to collaboration with other Councils and public bodies or utilising collaborative procurement arrangements.
- Collaborative tendering was not undertaken in relation to this procurement because it is not listed in the Northern Councils Alliance consolidated contract register and other identified opportunities for collaboration were considered unlikely to achieve an advantageous value for money outcome for the Council.

## Recommendation

**That Council:**

- 1. Accept the tenders submitted by ELS Environmental Location Systems for Separable Portion A (Street Sweeping) and Environmental Services Group Pty Ltd (TDG) for Separable Portion B (Drainage Maintenance) for the following contract:**  
**Number: 2022-19**  
**Title: Drainage Maintenance and Reinstatement**  
**Cost: The accepted schedule of rates is detailed in the confidential attachment. Total expenditure is limited to \$2,925,000 (excluding GST) unless otherwise approved by Council.**  
**Term: 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2025**  
**Options: Term extensions for any period up to 31 July 2027**  
**subject to the following conditions:**
  - a) Tenderer to provide proof of currency of insurance cover as required in the tender documents.**
  - b) Price variations to be in accordance with the provisions as set out in the tender documents.**
- 2. Approve the funding arrangements detailed in the confidential attachment.**

## Key Information

The City of Whittlesea owns and maintains a road network over 1,200km long and a drainage network nearly 2,000km long including 70,000 pits and 200 GPTs and does so through internal resources and external service providers.

The purpose of this contract is to enable the procurement of external sweeping and drainage services which are required to streamline maintenance delivery and address the gaps with internal capabilities and capacities.

Tenders for the contract closed on 31 May 2022. The tendered prices and a summary of the evaluation are detailed in the confidential attachment.

No member of the Tender Evaluation Panel declared any conflict of interest in relation to this tender evaluation.

A Tender Probity and Evaluation Plan was designed specifically for this tender process, and it was authorised prior to this tender being advertised. All tenders received were evaluated in accordance with that plan. The evaluation involved scoring of conforming and competitive tenders according to the following pre-determined criteria and weightings:

<b>Separable Portion A:</b>		<b>Separable Portion B:</b>	
Price	60 %	Price	50 %
Capability	15 %	Capability	20 %
Capacity	15 %	Capacity	20 %
Sustainability	10 %	Sustainability	10 %

The weightings reflect the relative importance of each element to this particular contract. They were determined as being most appropriate after considering numerous factors including (but not restricted to) the time, quality, risk and contract management requirements which were likely to have the most impact on the achievement of best value.

Only tenders that were conforming and competitive were fully scored. Tender submissions that were evaluated as non-conforming or not sufficiently competitive were set aside from further evaluation. In cases where this occurred the reasons for that outcome are detailed in the confidential attachment.

The evaluation outcome was as follows:

#### Separable Portion A

<b>Tenderer</b>	<b>Conforming</b>	<b>Competitive</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
ELS Environmental Location Systems	Yes	Yes	93.2	1
Tenderer B	Yes	Yes	91.8	2

## Separable Portion B

Tenderer	Conforming	Competitive	Score	Rank
Environmental Services Group Pty Ltd (TDG)	Yes	Yes	98.9	1
Tenderer B	Yes	Yes	95.9	2
Tenderer C	Yes	Yes	93.6	3
Tenderer D	Yes	Yes	89.6	4
Tenderer E	Yes	Yes	89.5	5
Tenderer F	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

Refer to the confidential attachment for further details of the evaluation of all tenders.

### Community Consultation and Engagement

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, consideration was given as to whether there were any opportunities to collaborate with other Councils and public bodies or to use any existing collaborative procurement arrangements. The outcome was as follows:

- Collaborative tendering was not undertaken in relation to this procurement because it is not listed in the Northern Councils Alliance consolidated contract register and other identified opportunities for collaboration were considered unlikely to achieve an advantageous value for money outcome for the Council.

Community consultation and engagement was not required in relation to the subject matter of this report as it relates to commercial arrangements and contractual obligations that are confidential.

### Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### Liveable neighbourhoods

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

#### Sustainable environment

We prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green space and address climate change

Council will be able to streamline the service delivery of street sweeping and drainage maintenance throughout the municipality.

## Considerations

### Environmental

Tenderers were required to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmentally sustainable work practices.

### Social, Cultural and Health

No implications

### Economic

No implications

### Financial Implications

Sufficient funding for this contract is available in the budget for drainage maintenance and various capital delivery projects.

## Link to Strategic Risk

**Strategic Risk** *Emergency Management - Failure to manage and respond to emergency events which may be detrimental to community health and wellbeing*

**Strategic Risk** *Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing*

**Strategic Risk** *Life Cycle Asset Management - Failure to effectively plan for the construction, on-going maintenance and renewal of Council's assets*

By establishing a contract for street sweeping and drainage maintenance, Council will be able to streamline the delivery of these services through external providers.

## Implementation Strategy

### Communication

There is no requirement to communicate the decision of this report to the community. However individual items of work may require information to be provided to the community.

### Critical Dates

The Initial contract term will commence on 1 August 2022 and end on 31 July 2025.

Options exist to extend the contract up to 31 July 2027. A separate report requesting Council approval will be presented before the exercise of any optional extension which results in an increase in limit of the contract sum.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

### Conclusion

The tenders from ELS Environmental Location Systems and Environmental Services Group Pty Ltd (TDG) were determined to provide best value and it is considered that these companies can perform the contract to the required standards.

## 5.2.2 Bindts Road Discontinuance Harvest Home Road to Lehmanns Road

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Infrastructure & Environment
<b>Author</b>	Paul Diffey, Project Manager
<b>In Attendance</b>	Arashdeep Singh, Manager Urban Design & Transport Paul Diffey, Project Manager

### Attachments

1. Locality Plan [5.2.2.1 - 1 page]
2. DOT Letter Bindts Road [5.2.2.2 - 1 page]
3. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Bindts Road closure Response summary [5.2.2.3 - 3 pages]

Attachment *Bindts Road closure Response summary* has been designated as confidential by the Director Infrastructure and Environment, under delegation from the Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with Rule 53 of the Governance Rules 2021 and sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs. In particular the attachment contains information regarding formal responses to the proposal by members of the public with identifying information.

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to resolve road discontinuance of Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road in Wollert

### Brief Overview

At its meeting on 8 November 2021, Council resolved to commence the formal consultation for the permanent discontinuance of Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road, in Wollert, in accordance with Section 12 of the Road Management Act (2004).

The Quarry Hills PSP (Precinct Structure Plan) identifies that Bindts Road is not required as a local access road and will eventually be combined into the E6 Freeway road reserve. Also, if Bindts Road is not closed, to ensure safety and operational access, the current extension of Whitebark Street across Bindts Road, as part of Riverhills Development, requires the construction of a crossroad intersection.

There have been two fatal crashes and several casualty crashes on Bindts Road in recent years. The road closure proposal has significant potential to improve road safety risks and also reduce maintenance obligations to Council.

The consultation was carried out between November 2021 and April 2022 with the community, adjoining landowners, local residents, emergency services, utility service providers, local public transport providers, the Department of Transport and other interested parties invited to respond.

Located in Wollert, Bindts Road is a local rural access road with spray seal surface that runs north-south between Bridge Inn Road and Harvest Home Road. This road was previously an access road for rural properties along its frontage however has been identified to be discontinued and combined into the E6 corridor. As such it is to be closed as part of the approved Quarry Hills development plan. A locality plan is provided in attachment 2. Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road is currently closed due to the approved traffic management plan for the Riverhills Estate. It is proposed to make this closure permanent.

The closure of the road is not considered to have any effect on local traffic as all abutting properties are now undergoing development and no longer require access and the construction of Saltlake Boulevard provides alternative north-south access between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road.

### Recommendation

#### That Council:

- 1. Note that public submissions on the proposed permanent closure of Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road were invited in accordance with section 12 of the Road Management Act 2004 and that three public submissions were received at the close of the submission period.**
- 2. Proceed to permanently discontinue Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road by installing road closure measures after the 1 August 2022.**
- 3. Notify emergency service authorities of the proposed permanent road discontinuance date; and**
- 4. Write to all parties who made formal submissions as part of the consultation, adjoining property owners and occupiers advising them of Council's decision and the expected timeframe to complete the road discontinuance.**

### Key Information

Bindts Road runs north-south between Bridge Inn Road and Harvest Home Road, Wollert. Bindts Road is constructed to a rural standard, with gravel surface between Bridge Inn Road and Lehmanns Road, and light sealed sections between Lehmanns Road and Harvest Home Road. The local PSP's and long-term strategy call for Bindts Road to be decommissioned as a local road once all accesses to it have been altered by the construction of the E6 Freeway or other localised urban development. Bindts Road between Lehmanns Road and Harvest Home Road will eventually be subsumed by the E6 Freeway road reservation.



The City of Whittlesea has completed its required consultation under the Road Management Act to discontinue Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehman's Road.

Council has received supportive responses from Victoria Police, utility services providers Ausnet, Melbourne Water, NBN and Telstra, and residents in the immediate vicinity of Bindts Road.

No response was received from the CFA, Ambulance Victoria, or SES. Council officers took all reasonable measures to get a response including extending the deadline, calling contacts, and emailing officials however no response was received.

There is a section of the wider community that want to reopen the closed section of Bindts Road as an alternative to Epping Road and Saltlake Boulevard.

### Community Consultation and Engagement

Following the Council resolution to commence the consultation process on the proposed road discontinuance of Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road the City of Whittlesea has carried out a consultation process as per Section 12 of the Road Management Act for the discontinuance.

#### Statutory process

Notices were sent to adjoining property owners and occupiers on 9 November 2021 notifying them of the proposed road closure and inviting submissions to be made. Notices of the proposed road closure were also placed in the Whittlesea Review. An additional letter was sent to each emergency service organisation on 16 November 2021.

Under Schedule 12 of the Road Management Act 2004, Council must consider a report from VicRoads (now Department of Transport (DOT)) on the proposed road closure. The Department of Transport was consulted on the proposal and provided a Report that states DOT does not object to the proposal. (See Attachment 3).

#### Community Feedback

The proposal has been endorsed by Victoria Police, including all local stations and the Greensborough Highway Patrol, as they have safety and operational concerns with the road.

The proposal has been endorsed by AusNet, Telstra, NBN and Melbourne Water under the condition that they retain maintenance access to the land to service any infrastructure still in the road reservation. This will be done by providing keys to the locks on gates at both ends of the closure.

Council officers have not received feedback from the CFA, SES or Ambulance Victoria on the proposal. Council officers had extended the due date and followed up with the emergency services regional offices via phone and email seeking comments however none have been forthcoming.

Council received three written responses from the community, two in favour and one against. Note that the two in favour are residents of the area and the one against is a resident of Kinglake West. All three respondents have been formally contacted and given an opportunity to speak in support of their submission at the Council meeting.

Engage Whittlesea consultation received 121 responses, of which 53 live within 500m of Bindts Road and supported the proposal with 70% in favour and 30% against. There were 22 residents of the Epping North and Wollert area who live further away from the road who opposed the proposal unanimously. There were also an additional 46 responses from people who live outside the Epping North and Wollert area, of which 7% supported the proposal and 93% opposed the proposal.

The general feedback from the responses on Council's Engage Whittlesea Platform were that these residents want to reopen Bindts Road as an alternative route and short cut to Epping Road. Considering the recent completion of Saltlake Boulevard, cost of maintaining and upgrading Bindts Road to a satisfactory level of service and the crash rate prior to the closure, Council officers advise against reopening Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road.

### **Formal Responses**

Under Section 12 of the Road Management Act (2004) any person who has made a written submission to Council is entitled to appear in person or by a person appearing on their behalf to speak in support of their submission at the meeting that the decision is to be determined.

Victoria Police and utility services authorities have already advised that they do not wish to speak at this meeting.

Please refer to Attachment 4 for the list of formal submissions with summary of their submission.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

### Liveable neighbourhoods

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

As per the reasons outlined in the discussion above, Bindts Road is no longer required as an access road. This discontinuance is identified in Council's Quarry Hills PSP and E6 strategy. Due to ongoing maintenance expenses, development in the area and most importantly road safety it is recommended to commence the discontinuance of Bindts Road in the section described above.

## Considerations

### Environmental

Existing Bindts Road carriageway will be decommissioned with the asphalt surface removed and regeneration of native grassland allowed to take place. The land can be revegetated as a wildlife corridor and walking track.

### Social, Cultural and Health

The proposal to close Bindts Road is supported by the majority of the residents in the immediate vicinity to Bindts Road and the Victoria Police.

### Economic

No implications

### Financial Implications

Road maintenance costs on Bindts Road are approximately \$52,000 per annum for the full length of Bindts Road. By closing the southern section, the potential reduction will be from \$52,000 to under \$30,000.

The cost to administer the road closure is estimated around \$10,000. This will be sourced from identified savings in the new works program.

### Link to Strategic Risk

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

Council has engaged in a level of community and stakeholder consultation that exceeds its obligations under section 12 of the Road Management Act (2004).

Closing Bindts Road is identified in several Council strategic documents and local development plans. This was discussed further in the original Council report.

### Implementation Strategy

#### Communication

The local community and identified stakeholders were notified about the opportunity to have their say during the consultation period.

#### Critical Dates

Report to Council Meeting – 18 July 2022

Notice of closure – 1 August 2022

Date of permanent closure – 30 September 2022

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

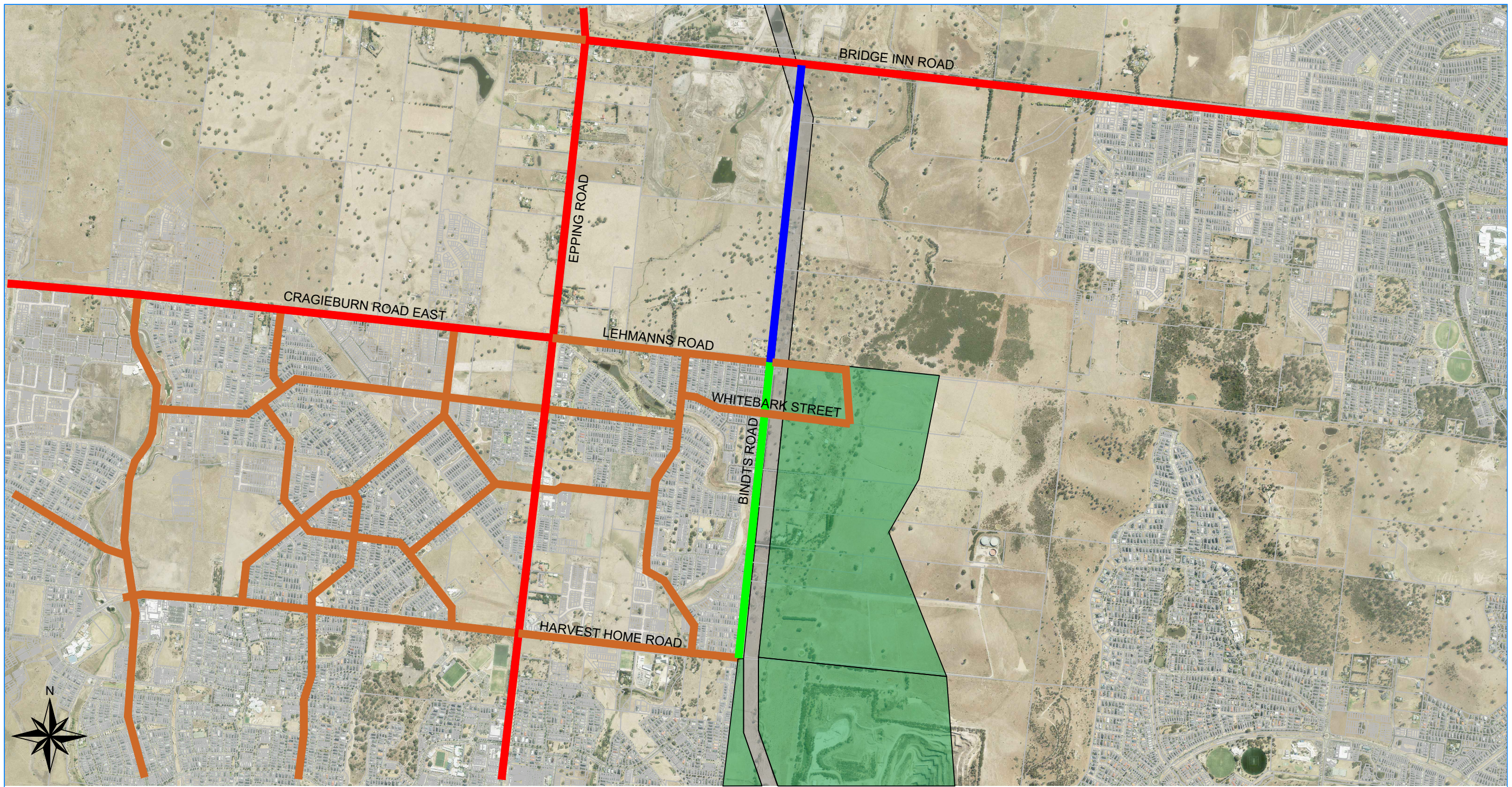
Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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







### Conclusion

Council officers have completed the required stakeholder consultation to discontinue Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road. Based on feedback received it is recommended that Council proceed with the permanent closure of Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmanns Road.





**LEGEND**

-  BINDTS ROAD - TO REMAIN OPEN FOR NOW
-  BINDTS ROAD - PROPOSED DISCONTINUANCE
-  ARTERIAL ROAD
-  COLLECTOR ROAD
-  FUTURE E6
-  QUARRY HILLS PSP



BINDTS ROAD, WOLLERT  
 ROAD CLOSURE  
 ATTACHMENT 1  
 LOCALITY PLAN

AERIAL - MAY 2018  
 SCALE - 1:20,000 AT A3  
 DRAWN - JULY 2021





## Department of Transport

Greater Metro Region  
12 Clarke Street  
SUNSHINE VIC 3020

Mr Paul Diffey  
Project Manager – Capital Delivery  
City of Whittlesea  
Locked Bag 1  
**BUNDOORA MDC VIC 3083**  
Paul.Diffey@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Diffey

### **PROPOSED PERMANENT CLOSURE OF BINDTS ROAD BETWEEN HARVEST HOME ROAD AND LEHMANN'S ROAD, WOLLERT**

Thank you for your email of 31 March 2022 requesting our office consider Council's proposal to permanently close Bindts Road between Harvest Home Road and Lehmann's Road in Wollert. It is understood that:

- Bindts Road is classified as a local road under the care and management of the City of Whittlesea.
- Council has implemented an "interim" closure (and this is still in place) of this section of Bindts Road since 2021 and has since observed impacts and engaged with stakeholders to identify any concerns.
- Based on Council observations, displaced traffic and property access has been accommodated safely and within the capacity of the surrounding local road network.
- The permanent closure is consistent with the road network planned under the Quarry Hills Precinct Structure Plan (PSP). Existing local roads constructed in compliance with the Quarry Hills PSP and nearby land redevelopment to occur in the future will further accommodate traffic movements in lieu of Bindts Road.
- The permanent closure is not expected to cause long-term or significant impact to the movement of people or goods through the area, including along nearby roads such as Harvest Home Road and Lehmann's Road. Furthermore, it is noted that public transport services do not operate along Bindts Road.
- Your office has undertaken an appropriate level of community engagement (including via [www.engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/bindts-road](http://www.engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/bindts-road)) and accommodated the needs of affected stakeholders, including landowners, utility service providers and emergency services.

Considering the above, our office has no objection to the proposed permanent closure of Bindts Road. Should you have any queries, Mr Cris Caldeira, Senior Engineer (Tel: 9313 1172), would be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely

**ALEX GREEN**  
Executive Director – Greater Metro Region

10/05/2022

### 5.2.3 74A Church Street Whittlesea - Demolition in Heritage Overlay

**Responsible Officer** Director Planning & Development

**Author** Lachlan Yuill, Planning Officer

**In Attendance** Lachlan Yuill, Planning Officer

#### Attachments

1. Locality Maps [5.2.3.1 - 2 pages]
2. Architectural Plans [5.2.3.2 - 6 pages]

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>City of Whittlesea</b>
<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Public Use Zone 7 – Other Public Use</b>
<b>Overlay</b>	<b>Heritage Overlay Schedule 34</b>
<b>Referral</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Objections</b>	<b>One objection</b>

#### Purpose

The City of Whittlesea Infrastructure and Environment Department is the applicant for this planning permit and the proposal involves the demolition of an existing toilet facility under a heritage overlay and the construction of a self-cleaning automated toilet as a replacement to the existing toilet block.

The existing toilet facility is being removed to allow for an upgraded facility with the expectation to enhance maintenance efficiency, improve community safety, hygiene, water consumption and reduce vandalism. The proposed building is a prefabricated automated toilet facility named the Jupiter model Exeloo system. It will be enclosed by a shell constructed of brick materials and incorporate a gabled roof form constructed of Colourbond steel to improve the integration with existing heritage structures on site. The proposed brick and roof colours have not been determined.

The new toilet facility is proposed to have dimensions of 6.5 metres by 5 metres with a total floor area of 32.5 sqm. The new facility will be located 3.45 metres from Beech Street and 3.95 metres from the closest boundary to the east. It will be located approximately 15 metres from the Courthouse heritage building.

The existing pathway around the existing facility is to be removed and replaced to allow for the placement of the new structure with appropriate access. The new pavement will match the existing sections of pavements. Additional landscaping is proposed in the location of the existing facility between the Whittlesea Court House and new facility, along the street frontage including new seating and bicycle racks. The existing white picket fence is to be retained.



## Brief Overview

The proposal is a City of Whittlesea initiated project for the demolition of a toilet facility and the construction of a new automated toilet facility within a Heritage Overlay.

Notification of the application was undertaken and one objection was received. The grounds of objection relate to the proposed operational hours of the upgraded facility. The hours have since been clarified and objection has been withdrawn.

The proposal is consistent with the objectives of the relevant Whittlesea Planning Policy and Heritage Overlay and approval of the proposal is recommended.

## Recommendation

**THAT Council approve Planning Application No PLN-38040 and issue a Permit for the demolition of a building and the construction of an amenity facility within a heritage overlay in accordance with the endorsed plans and subject to the following conditions:**

### Plans Required

1. **Before the development starts, amended plans to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority must be submitted to and approved by the Responsible Authority. When approved, the plans will be endorsed and will then form part of this permit. The plans must be generally in accordance with the plans dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and prepared by Architecture and Access (Aust) Pty Ltd but modified to show:**
  - a. **Colour and material schedule to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.**

### Layout Not Altered

2. **The development allowed by this permit and shown on the plans and/or schedules endorsed to accompany this permit shall not be amended for any reason without the consent of the Responsible Authority.**
3. **Once the development has started it must be continued and completed to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority. Should the development cease for a period of more than two years, all buildings and works shall be removed from the site at the written direction of the Responsible Authority.**
4. **No native vegetation, other than that shown on the endorsed plan, shall be destroyed, felled, lopped, ring barked or uprooted, without the consent of the Responsible Authority.**
5. **All batters resulting from excavation or filling shall be properly stabilised and vegetated to prevent erosion.**

6. **Outdoor lighting must be designed, baffled and located to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority to prevent any adverse effect to adjoining land.**
7. **Before the development (including demolition) starts, fencing must be erected between the heritage buildings and works to the satisfaction of the Responsible authority. The fencing must not be removed or replaced at any time during demolition and construction without the prior written consent of the Responsible Authority.**
8. **The operational hours of the toilet facility are restricted to the following hours:**
  - a. **Monday – Sunday: 6:00am – 8:00pm**
9. **Upon completion of all buildings and works authorised by this permit the permit holder must notify the Responsible Authority of the satisfactory completion of the development and compliance with all relevant conditions.**
10. **Any litter generated by building activities on the site shall be collected and stored in an appropriate enclosure, which complies with Council’s Code of Practice for building/development sites. The enclosures shall be regularly emptied and maintained such that no litter overflows onto adjoining land. Prior to occupation and/or use of the building, all litter shall be completely removed from the site.**

#### **Permit Expiry**

11. **In accordance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987 a permit for the use and development expires if:**
  - (a) **the development is not commenced within two years after the issue of the permit; or**
  - (b) **the development is not completed within four years after the issue of the permit**

**The responsible authority may extend the periods referred to above if a request is made in writing. This request must be made before or within 6 months after the permit expiry date where the development has not yet started and within 12 months after the permit expiry date where the development allowed by the permit has lawfully started before the permit expires.**

### Site and Surrounding Area

The subject site has an area of 1291 m<sup>2</sup> and is located on 74 Church Street Whittlesea. The existing toilet facility is located within the site under a separate address of 74A Church Street. The Whittlesea Court House is the predominant building on site and is protected by the Heritage Overlay pursuant to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. This heritage building is also protected under the National Trust Heritage Register.

The Whittlesea Courthouse was constructed in 1864 and is one of the oldest functional buildings in the municipality. It is a brick building with a slate roof constructed on bluestone footings. Court hearings and meetings of the Whittlesea Roads Board were held at the site after its construction. The building has continued to operate after being restored in 1996 currently operating as the visitor information centre. A single cell lockup constructed in 1859 built to serve the Yan Yean area is located on site and is registered on the Victorian Heritage Database.

The site immediately east is also covered by Heritage Overlay Schedule 131. This heritage building is a federation residence constructed at the beginning of the 20th Century. Other heritage buildings include the Whittlesea House, opposite the subject site, and the Masonic Hall further along Beech Street.

The surrounding area is characterised by varying uses. The north, east and west is dominated by single storey dwellings which incorporate hipped roof forms and consistently contain moderate front setbacks with generous rear setbacks. The Whittlesea Town Centre is located to the south along Church Street and contains numerous commercial and office uses.

### Restrictions and Easements

The Certificate of Title for the property shows that the site is not affected by any encumbrances or restrictions. There are no easements on the site.

### Public Notification

The application was advertised by the way of letters to adjoining property owners and a sign placed on site for a period of 14 days. Advertising of the application has resulted in one objection being received. The grounds of objection can be summarised as follows:

1. Clarification on proposed hours of operation.

The proposed operational hours have since been provided and will be imposed as a permit condition, the objector is satisfied with the hours and has withdrawn the objection.

## Community Consultation and Engagement

The community was notified of the proposal via a sign placed on site during the advertising period. The sign and letters to adjoining property owners invited the community to view and comment on the proposal.

The objector was contacted once a response from the applicant clarifying the operational hours was received. The objector was advised of the hours and was satisfied that the upgraded facility would have no further impact. The objector has since withdrawn their objection.

The City of Whittlesea Infrastructure and Environment Department has also consulted with members of the Whittlesea Courthouse Association to ensure that the proposal will not impact the heritage value of the site.

## Planning Controls and Assessment

The following State Planning Policies, Local Planning Policies and particular provisions of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (the Scheme) are considered relevant to this application.

### Planning Policy Framework

#### Clause 15.03-1S – Heritage Conservation

The strategies of this state policy are to identify buildings and structures of historical significance and ensure the protection and enhancement through their inclusion within the Planning Scheme.

The site is covered by the Schedule 34 to the Heritage Overlay which is implemented to enforce protection of the Whittlesea Court House. The Court House holds significance within the local area which has served the community for over a century, however, the toilet block was constructed at a far later date and is not considered significant relative to the history of the site.

#### Clause 15.03-1L - Heritage conservation in Heritage Overlay areas

The strategy of this local policy is to enhance the protection of heritage elements through the control of signage, vegetation, fences and demolition within a Heritage Overlay.

The proposal is consistent with the objectives and strategies of the policy as it has no immediate impact on the heritage value of the heritage structure. The construction of the toilet facility does not involve any alterations or changes to the Whittlesea Court House. Additionally, the application proposes the retention of the existing fence along Church Street which contributes to the significance of a heritage place.

There is a strong emphasis on avoiding the demolition of a heritage building within the overlay. As discussed later in this report, the existing toilet facility is not considered a building of heritage value, therefore the guidelines are not relevant to the proposal.

### **Zoning and Overlay Provisions**

#### **The land is within the following zones:**

##### Public Use Zone

The purpose of this zone is:

- *To recognise public land use for public utility and community services and facilities*
- *To provide for associated uses that are consistent with the intent of the public land reservation or purpose.*

Pursuant to Clause 36.01-1 a permit *is required Construct a building or construct or carry out works for any use in Section 2 of Clause 36.01-1.* The construction of service and utility undertaken by the Public Land Manager (City of Whittlesea) is listed under a Section 1 use. Therefore, a planning permit is not required under the zoning provision.

#### **The land is affected by the following overlays:**

##### Heritage Overlay – Schedule 34

The purpose of this overlay is:

- *To conserve and enhance heritage places of natural or cultural significance.*
- *To conserve and enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of heritage places.*
- *To ensure that development does not adversely affect the significance of heritage places*
- *To conserve specified heritage places by allowing a use that would otherwise be prohibited if this will demonstrably assist with the conservation of the significance of the heritage place.*

Pursuant to Clause 43.01-1 a permit is required *to demolish or remove a building and Construct a building or construct and carry out works.*

Schedule 34 to this overlay relates specifically to the Whittlesea Court House. The Whittlesea Court House is listed in the National Heritage Trust Register while the single cell lockup also located on site is listed the within Victorian Heritage Database. There is no mention of the existing toilet facility within any heritage register and it does not hold any significance relative to the Court House. It was constructed sometime after 1972 and is inspired by architectural design of the 1960s and 70s reflecting the standard architecture of government amenity blocks constructed throughout Australia in the 50s and 60s.

The toilet facility has no clear association with any events, period or process within the municipality's history. Additionally, a heritage consultant valued the building and concluded that the structure holds no historical significance relative to the site and surrounding areas when assessed against the criteria within Planning Practice Note 1 – *Applying the Heritage Overlay*. There is minimal historical association with existing toilet facility, therefore, the removal of it is unlikely to be of detriment to the historical significance of the site.

While it is important the new toilet facility does not imitate the heritage building, it must also not be striking in its appearance. It is proposed to construct the building using face brickwork with a Colourbond roof, providing a shell for an automated Exeloo Box beneath the eastern pitch of the roof, with a verandah beneath the western pitch. Materials, roof form and the small size of the amenities building provides context with the existing heritage buildings while allowing for clear interpretation of a new built form.

The new toilet facility covers a total area of 32.5sqm as opposed to the 40sqm currently occupied by the existing facility. Additionally, of this area 14sqm is open verandah and the new facility has been reorientated not to detract from the single cell lock up.

The new toilet facility is located further to the east improving views onto the courthouse from the streetscape and its modern design is unlikely to detract from the building. The facility is to be appropriately screened, with landscaping, located in the place of the existing facility further lowering its visibility from the streetscape, neighbouring properties and within the site. Additionally, the building has been sited with appropriate setbacks, so it does not impact on adjoining buildings.

The automated toilet facility will enhance maintenance efficiency, improve community safety, hygiene, and water consumption. The facility reduces vandalism through its durable galvanised heavy duty steel construction which incorporates high-grade stainless steel components along with improved lighting promoting passive surveillance. Furthermore, the new facility will improve community amenity with the inclusion of two public seating areas and two stainless steel bicycle racks.

The facility is proposed to operate during the hours of 6:00am – 8:00pm throughout the week, consistent with the current dawn to dusk operating hours.

Given there is no historical significance associated with the existing toilet facility, the location, scale and design of the new facility is considered appropriate when assessed against the relevant decision guidelines of Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

### Referral

The application was referred to Council's Contract Heritage Advisor to assess the accuracy of the submitted Heritage Report. Council's Contract Heritage Advisor confirmed the information contained within the report was factually correct and supported the approval of the proposal.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

### Conclusion

On balance, it is considered that the proposal to demolish the existing toilet facility and construct a new toilet facility is consistent with the Heritage Overlay, the relevant Particular Provisions, and the decision guidelines of Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The proposed new self-cleaning automated toilet will ultimately improve the site and facility, while respecting the heritage elements within the site.

A recommendation for approval is based on the above assessment of the application against the relevant requirements of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. It is therefore recommended that a Planning Permit be issued.



## PLANNING APPLICATION NO. PLN-38040



 **Subject Land**



**City of  
Whittlesea**

### BUILDING & PLANNING REPORT

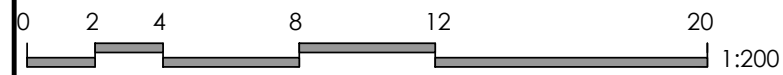
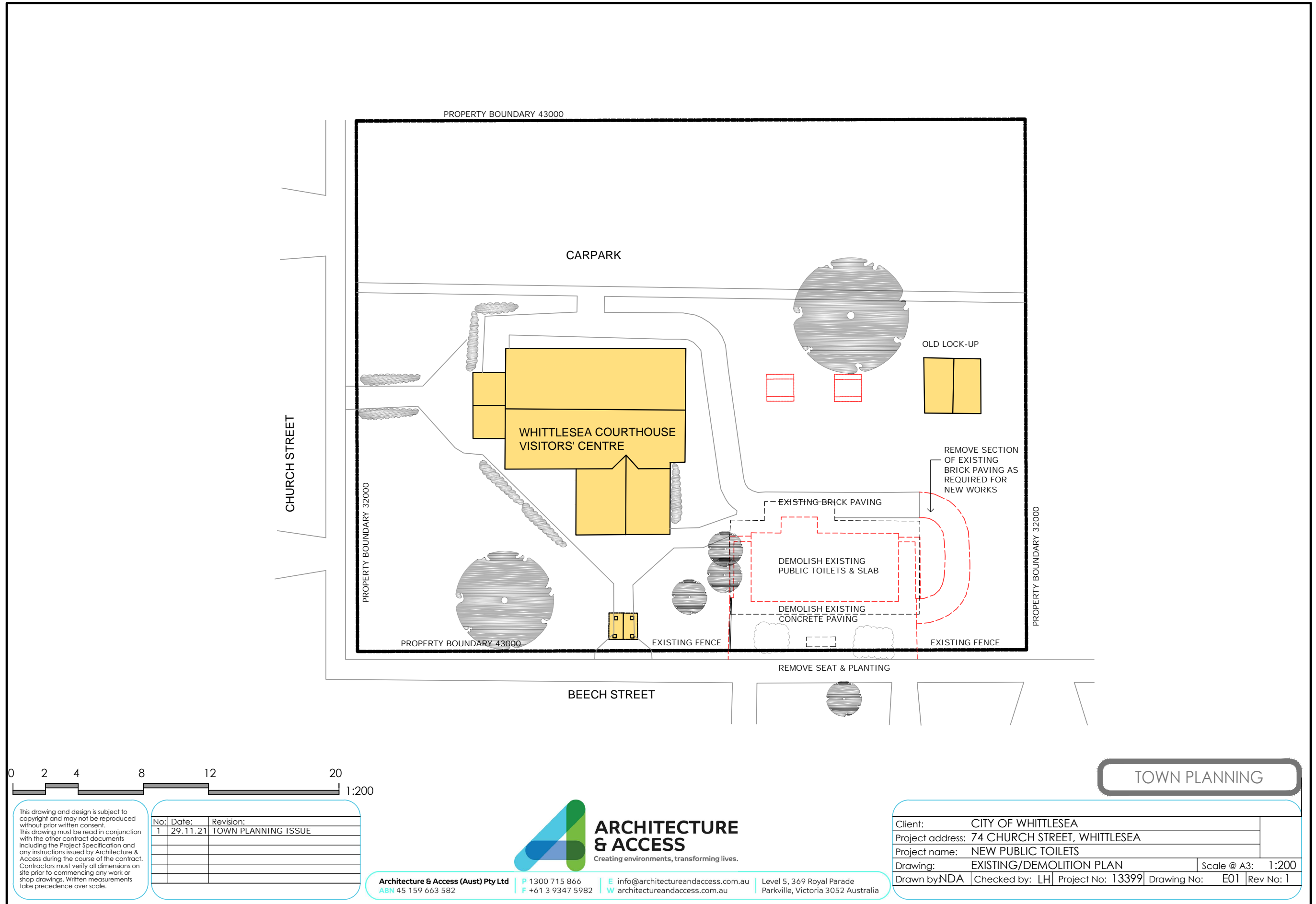
## PLANNING APPLICATION NO. PLN-38040



 Subject Land



## BUILDING & PLANNING REPORT



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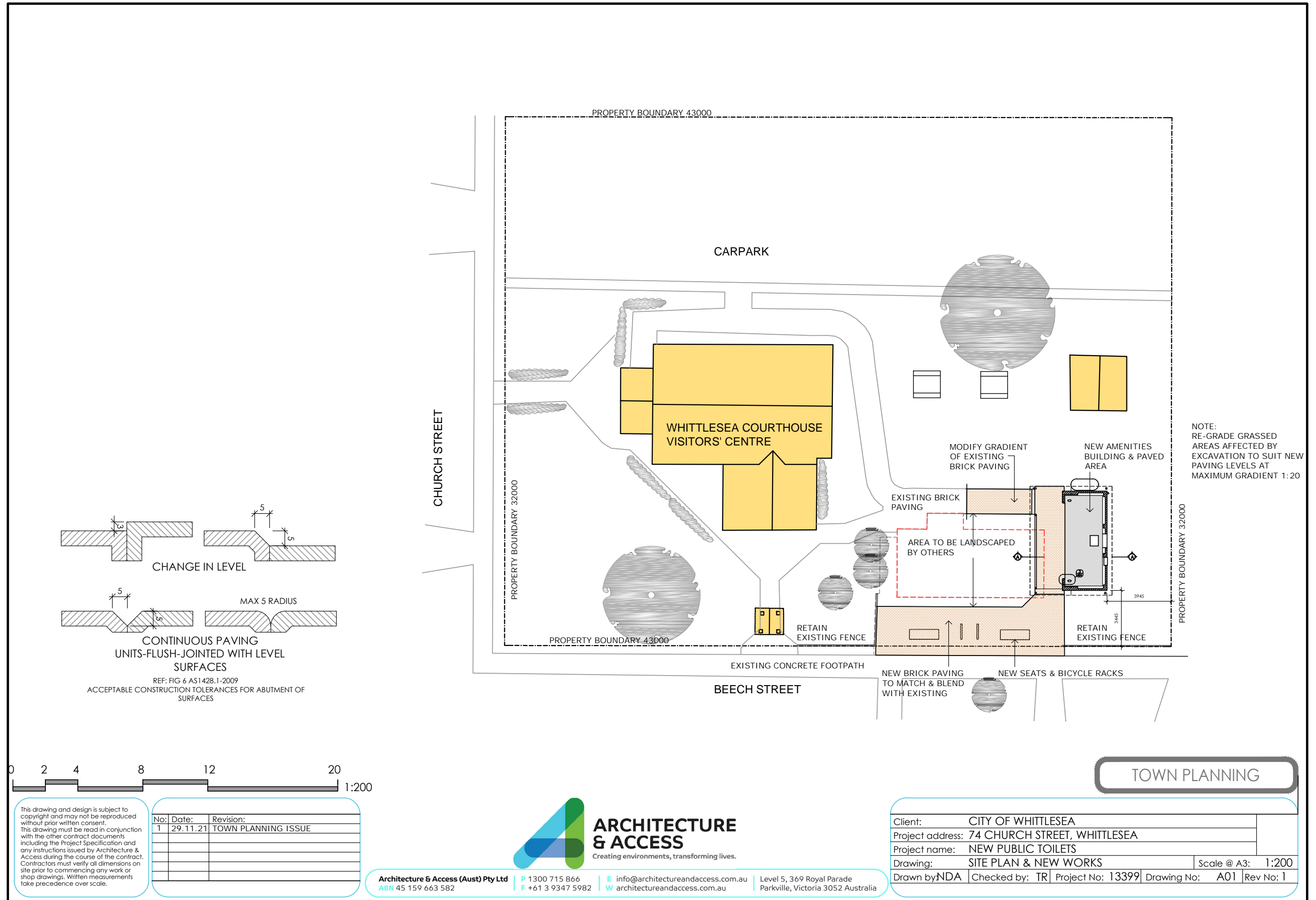
P 1300 715 866  
F +61 3 9347 5982

E info@architectureandaccess.com.au  
W architectureandaccess.com.au

Level 5, 369 Royal Parade  
Parkville, Victoria 3052 Australia

Client:	CITY OF WHITTLESEA		
Project address:	74 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEA		
Project name:	NEW PUBLIC TOILETS		
Drawing:	EXISTING/DEMOLITION PLAN	Scale @ A3:	1:200
Drawn by:	NDA	Checked by:	LH
Project No:	13399	Drawing No:	E01
Rev No:	1		





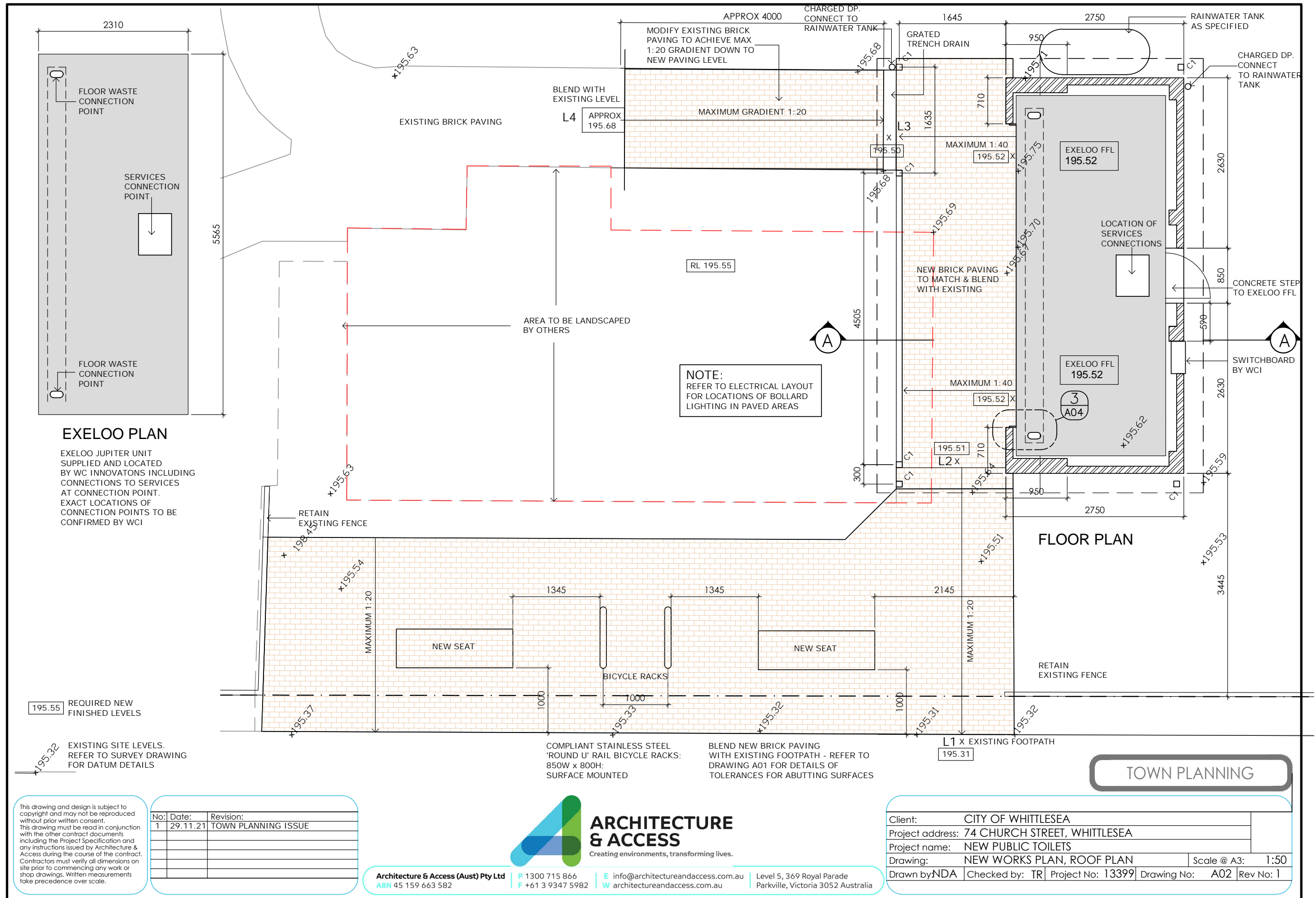
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Client: CITY OF WHITTLESEA	
Project address: 74 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEA	
Project name: NEW PUBLIC TOILETS	
Drawing: SITE PLAN & NEW WORKS	Scale @ A3: 1:200
Drawn by: NDA	Checked by: TR   Project No: 13399   Drawing No: A01   Rev No: 1



**EXELOO PLAN**

EXELOO JUPITER UNIT SUPPLIED AND LOCATED BY WC INNOVATIONS INCLUDING CONNECTIONS TO SERVICES AT CONNECTION POINT. EXACT LOCATIONS OF CONNECTION POINTS TO BE CONFIRMED BY WCI

**FLOOR PLAN**

195.55 REQUIRED NEW FINISHED LEVELS

+195.32 EXISTING SITE LEVELS. REFER TO SURVEY DRAWING FOR DATUM DETAILS

COMPLIANT STAINLESS STEEL 'ROUND U' RAIL BICYCLE RACKS: 850W x 800H: SURFACE MOUNTED

BLEND NEW BRICK PAVING WITH EXISTING FOOTPATH - REFER TO DRAWING A01 FOR DETAILS OF TOLERANCES FOR ABUTTING SURFACES

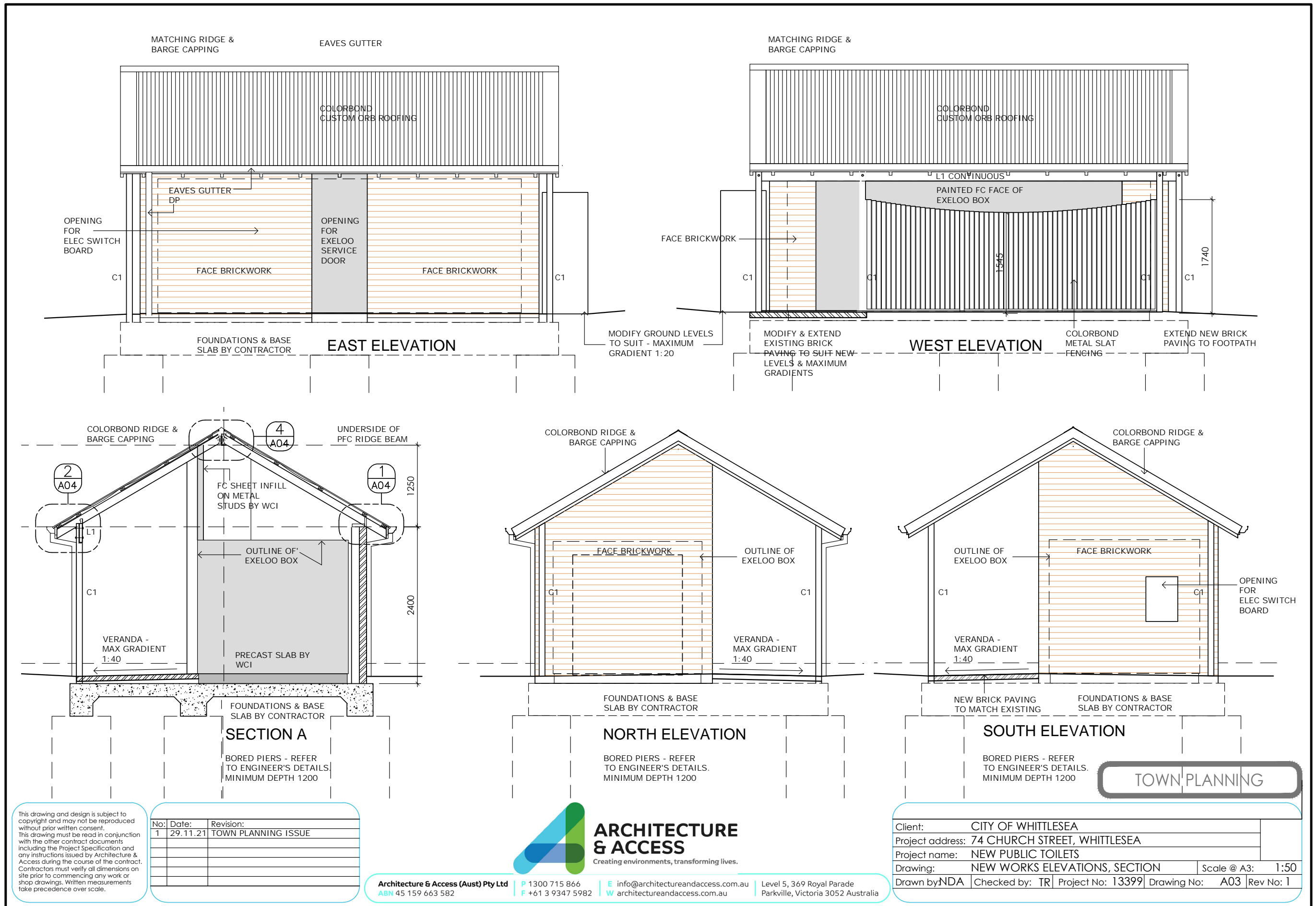
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 ABN 45 159 663 582  
 P 1300 715 866  
 F +61 3 9347 5982  
 E info@architectureandaccess.com.au  
 W architectureandaccess.com.au  
 Level 5, 369 Royal Parade  
 Parkville, Victoria 3052 Australia

Client:	CITY OF WHITTLESEA
Project address:	74 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEA
Project name:	NEW PUBLIC TOILETS
Drawing:	NEW WORKS PLAN, ROOF PLAN
Scale @ A3:	1:50
Drawn by:	NDA
Checked by:	TR
Project No:	13399
Drawing No:	A02
Rev No:	1



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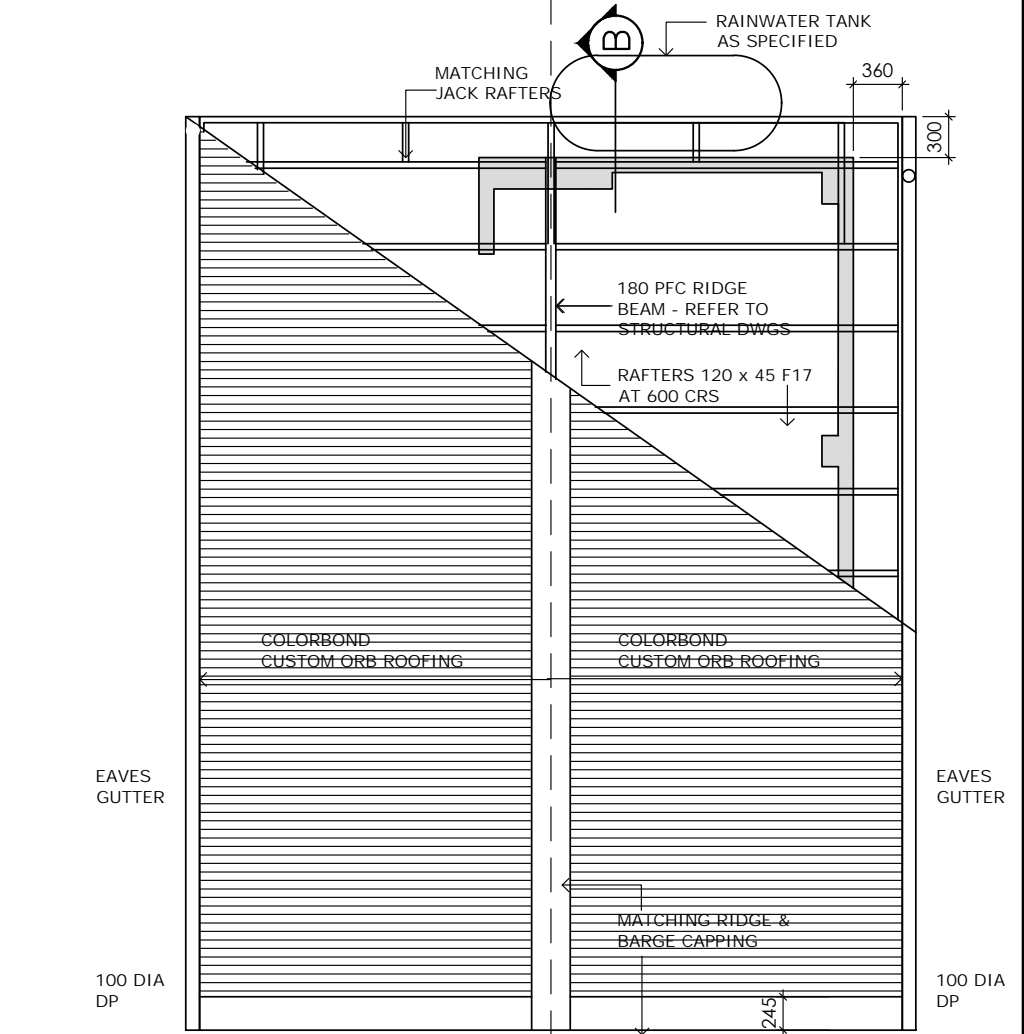
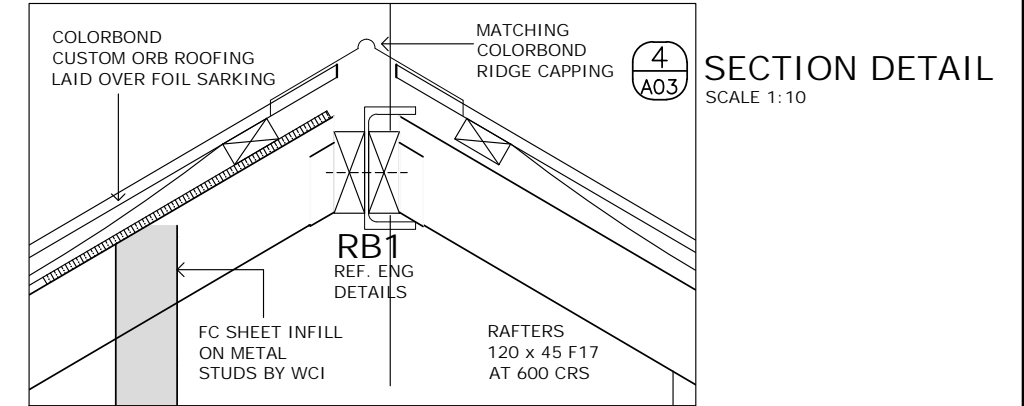
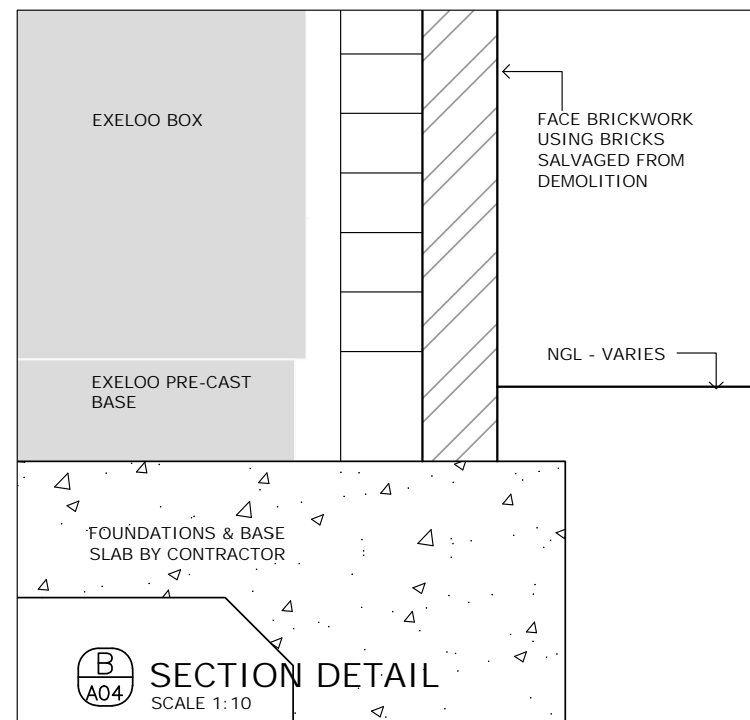
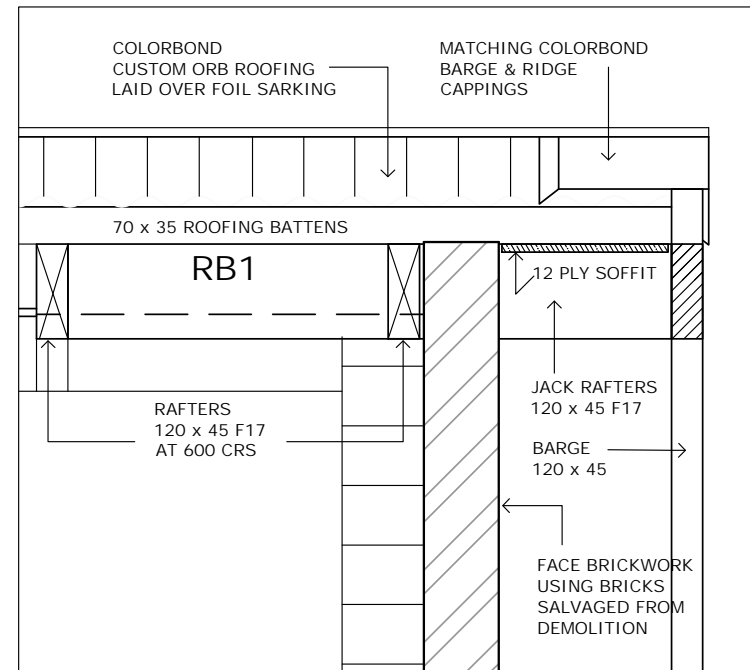
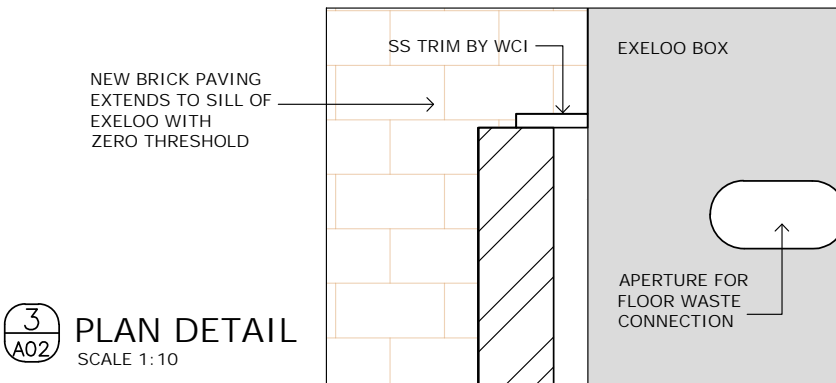
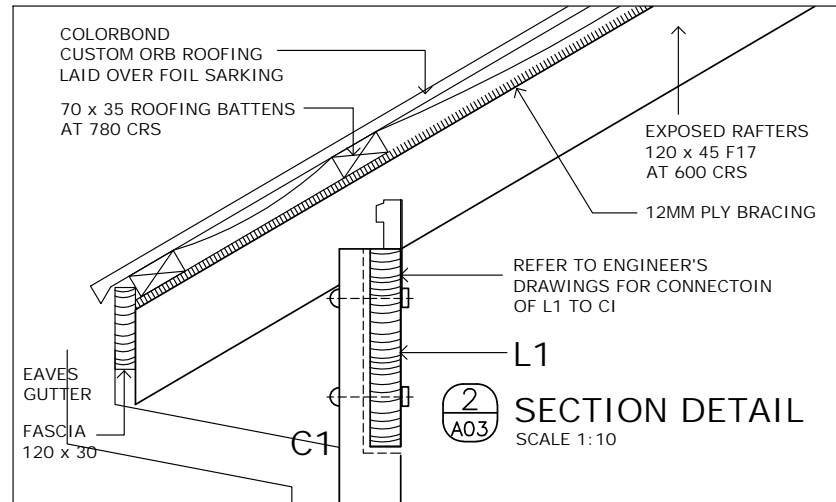
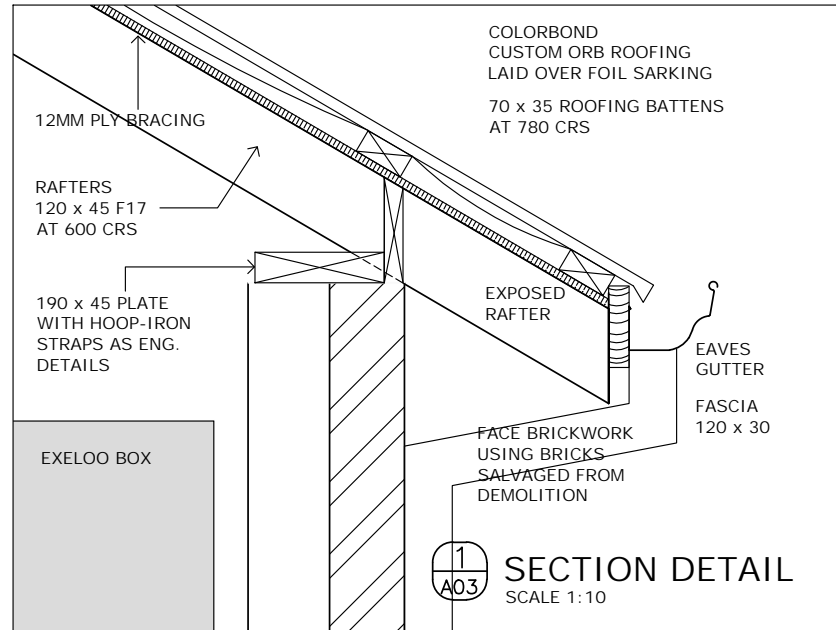
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 ABN 45 159 663 582 F +61 3 9347 5982 W architectureandaccess.com.au Parkville, Victoria 3052 Australia

Client:	CITY OF WHITTLESEA
Project address:	74 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEA
Project name:	NEW PUBLIC TOILETS
Drawing:	NEW WORKS ELEVATIONS, SECTION
Scale @ A3:	1:50
Drawn by:	NDA
Checked by:	TR
Project No:	13399
Drawing No:	A03
Rev No:	1



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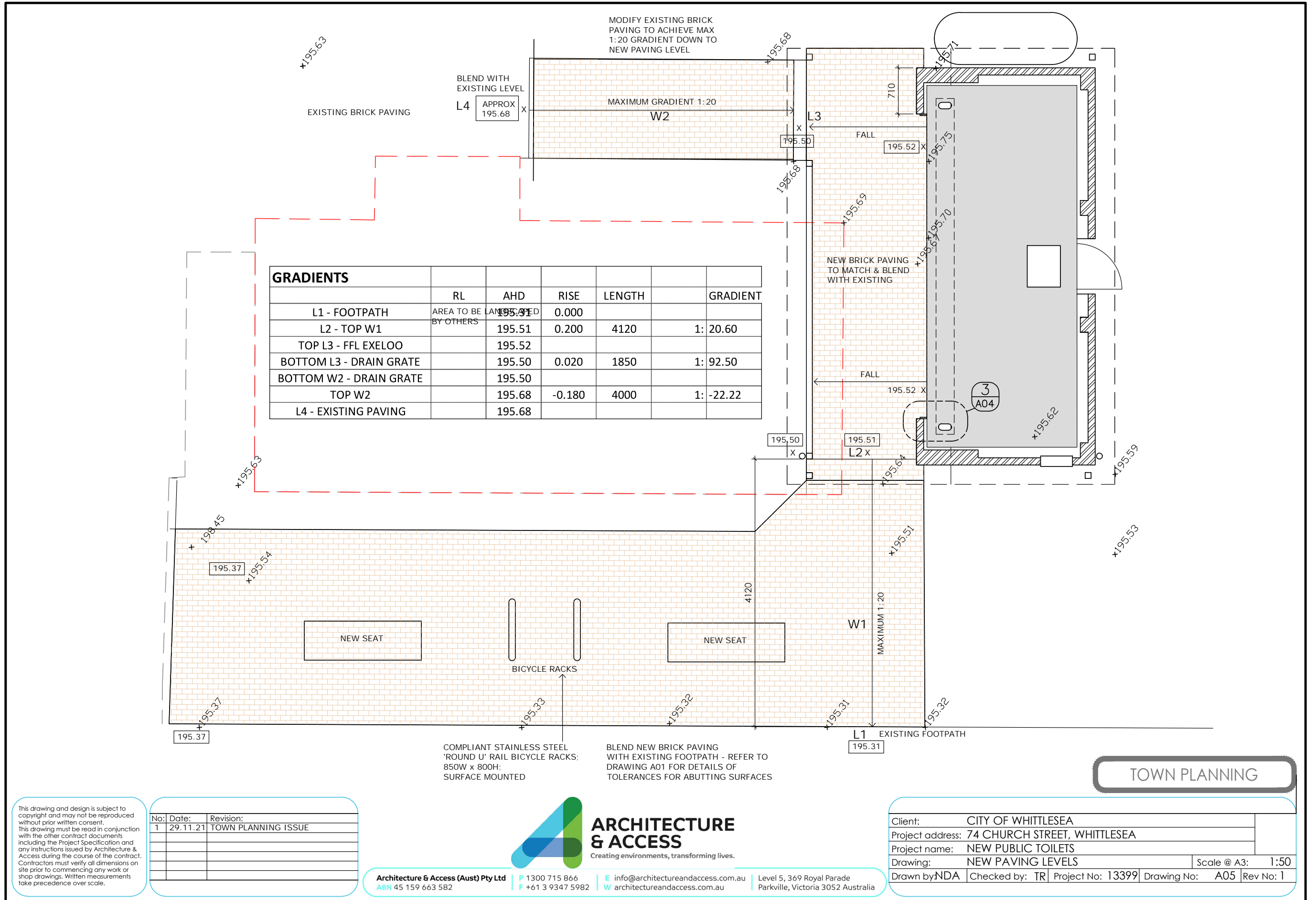
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Client:	CITY OF WHITTLESEA
Project address:	74 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEA
Project name:	NEW PUBLIC TOILETS
Drawing:	NEW WORKS DETAILS
Scale @ A3:	1:50
Drawn by:	NDA
Checked by:	TR
Project No:	13399
Drawing No:	A04
Rev No:	1





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 P 1300 715 866 F +61 3 9347 5982  
 E info@architectureandaccess.com.au W architectureandaccess.com.au  
 Level 5, 369 Royal Parade Parkville, Victoria 3052 Australia

Client:	CITY OF WHITTLESEA
Project address:	74 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEA
Project name:	NEW PUBLIC TOILETS
Drawing:	NEW PAVING LEVELS
Scale @ A3:	1:50
Drawn by:	NDA
Checked by:	TR
Project No:	13399
Drawing No:	A05
Rev No:	1

## 5.2.4 Proposed Planning Scheme Amendment: Application of Specific Controls Overlay at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Planning & Development
<b>Author</b>	George Saisanas, Manager Strategic Futures
<b>In Attendance</b>	Liam Wilkinson, Coordinator Strategic Planning & Economic Development

### Attachments

1. Precinct Plan- 105 Hunters Road, South Morang [5.2.4.1 - 1 page]
2. Proposed Special Control Overlay [5.2.4.2 - 1 page]

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to commence a Planning Scheme Amendment process to facilitate the Aboriginal Gathering Place (AGP) in the Quarry Hills Regional Park. The proposed Amendment will apply a Specific Controls Overlay to the site at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang to permit the land to be used and developed as a gathering place.

### Brief Overview

The delivery of an Aboriginal Gathering Place (AGP) is an important project for the City of Whittlesea and the Aboriginal community. The preferred location for the AGP has been identified at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang in the Quarry Hills Regional Park.

An amendment to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme Amendment is required to facilitate the project on the preferred site. It is proposed to apply a Special Controls Overlay (SCO) to the subject land which will permit use and development of the site for the AGP.

It is recommended that Council requests that the Minister for Planning expedite the Amendment process and prepare and approve the Amendment under section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, which is considered a 'fast track' process. This will remove the need for formal statutory notice being given on the Amendment and enable the controls to be implemented early to provide certainty in respect to the planning for the AGP and application to Federal and State Governments for funding in respect to the facility. It is noted that Council is planning to undertake communications and engagement with the local community on the proposed design of the AGP and service delivery at this location.

Should the Minister elect not to approve the Amendment under section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 its recommended that Council request authorisation from the Minister to prepare the Amendment.

## Recommendation

### That Council:

- 1. Write to the Minister for Planning to request that the Minister prepare and approve an Amendment to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme pursuant to section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, to apply a Specific Controls Overlay to part of the land at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang to facilitate the use and development of the site for an Aboriginal Gathering Place;**
- 2. In the circumstance that the Minister for Planning does not agree to prepare an Amendment to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, that Council request authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare an Amendment to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme and;**
  - a) request an exemption to the notice requirements under section 20(2) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.**
  - b) should the Minister for Planning not grant an exemption to the notice requirements under section 20(2), that Council exhibit the Amendment in accordance with section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.**

## Key Information

### Background

With a growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within the City of Whittlesea, a vital need for culturally appropriate services has been identified. The City of Whittlesea has the second largest population of Aboriginal residents in metropolitan Melbourne which has more than doubled in the last ten years.

After significant investigation and consultation, the provision of an AGP has been identified as integral to improving the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal community.

The AGP project is an important project for Council and the community. The project scope for the AGP, includes the facility, car park and external spaces. A range of services will be delivered from the facility. After the review of multiple potential sites for the new Aboriginal Gathering Place, 105 Hunters Road, South Morang (also known as Quarry Hills Regional Parkland) has been endorsed as the preferred site for the AGP by Council.

The site is part of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland which is zoned Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ) in part due to areas of significant environmental and landscape values. Under the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, the AGP is defined as a 'place of assembly' which is not a permissible land use in the RCZ. To facilitate the delivery of this project the AGP an amendment to the Planning Scheme is required to allow the project to proceed.

### Site Context

The subject land at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang and proposed location for the AGP is shown in Attachment 1. The site is part of the Quarry Hills Regional Park which is a large park that encompasses the Quarry Hills and contains areas of environmental and cultural value.

The subject property is owned by Council and currently has an existing disused residential dwelling. The nearby shed within the park, known as 'Habitat House' is used as an environmental education centre and is a staging place for environmental programs. There is also an existing Yarra Valley water storage facility in proximity to the site.

The part of the land where the proposed AGP will be located (as shown in Attachment 1) is on an elevated plateau and benefits from its connection to the natural environment, surrounding views, opportunities for privacy and access to surrounding outdoor places that could support activities for a Gathering Place. This area is also considered suitable for a future facility due to its already disturbed ground and siting within the park. The existing gravel road will also need to be upgraded / widened to support vehicle access and services provided to the site.

There are some constraints to the subject site. The ultimate development of the AGP project may result in the removal of some existing vegetation and the site is also located within a bushfire prone area. These issues will be addressed as part of the detailed design and planning for the facility on the site.

### Planning Context

The site at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang is currently affected by the following planning controls:

- Rural Conservation Zone – Schedule 1
- Heritage Overlay (HO124 and HO188)
- Significant Landscape Overlay – Schedule 2

The subject site is additionally affected by:

- A section 173 Agreement (which facilitated the land be transferred to Council as part of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland)
- Designated bushfire prone area
- Part of the land is within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

Under the Victorian Planning Provisions Schedule 73.03 the AGP is characterised as a “Place of Assembly” and is defined as “land where people congregate for religious, spiritual or cultural activities, entertainment, or meetings”. A “Place of Assembly” is not permitted on the site under the existing controls. Therefore, either the land is required to be rezoned or a Special Control Overlay (SCO) applied to the site/part of the site to facilitate the project.

### **Planning Scheme Amendment Proposal**

The proposed Amendment is to apply the Special Control Overlay (SCO) to part of the land at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang to the area indicatively shown in Attachment 2. The SCO is a bespoke planning tool that can be used to permit use and development on a site in extraordinary circumstances.

The SCO is considered the most appropriate tool in this circumstance as the existing Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ) is considered to be an appropriate zone given the surrounding context of the site and therefore rezoning is not preferred.

The preparation for the Amendment will include the drafting of an Incorporated Document by Council officers which will state the AGP is permitted on the subject land without the need for a planning permit. The Incorporated Document may also outline conditions to be complied with in respect to the proposed use and development.

A planning permit may be required for future buildings, works or native vegetation removal on the site (unless there is an exemption under the Whittlesea Planning Scheme or the under Incorporated Document).

In order to expedite the process, it is recommended that Council request that the Minister for Planning exercises powers on this matter and prepares and approves the Amendment under section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act*. This would significantly ‘fast track’ the Amendment process by avoiding the need to give formal notice of the proposed Amendment. This would also provide greater certainty for the planning of the project and mitigate risks of delays.

The Minister has the ability to exercise powers on matters of state and regional significance. Given, the significance of the project to the broader Aboriginal community and the importance of facilitating its timely delivery (including applications for funding), it is considered that the project can meet this threshold.

Should the Minister choose not to exercise powers, it is recommended that Council request authorisation from the Minister to prepare and exhibit the Amendment either through a normal Planning Scheme Amendment process or with restricted notice under s20(2) of the Planning and Environment Act. It is noted that the community will be engaged as part of the AGP project regardless of whether formal notice is given.

### Community Consultation and Engagement

There has been significant engagement with the local Aboriginal Community on the proposed AGP including through the preparation of the feasibility study and various governance and advisory groups which have overseen the project.

A Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) which includes members of the local Aboriginal community, was established in 2021 to work in partnership with Council on this project including the intent to use the land for an AGP.

A comprehensive multi-phased communications and engagement approach that informs, consults and involves the Whittlesea community, WAGPAG and key stakeholders has been developed to enable the provision of feedback on design principles and the service delivery model of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.

Given community engagement processes undertaken and proposed in respect to the project and the existing Council resolution to support the Aboriginal Gathering Place at the Quarry Hills Park, it is considered that formal notice as part of this Amendment process is not necessary. Therefore, it is recommended that Council request a 'fast track' Amendment process which exempts formal notice being given as part of the Amendment noting the community engagement to be undertaken on the planning and design for the facility.

### Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### Connected communities

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported

The Planning Scheme Amendment aligns with the directions of Whittlesea 2040. The amendment will help facilitate the AGP which implements Councils Reconciliation Action Plan and will assist with fostering an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community.

## Considerations

### Planning Assessment

#### Whittlesea Planning Policy

The Amendment is consistent with and implements the following planning policy:

- Clause 02.03-9 – Infrastructure – Community Facilities “Council aims to: Enhance community wellbeing through building social and physical infrastructure that facilitated community connections, [and] generates social capital.”

Comment: The facility will enhance social wellbeing particularly for the Aboriginal community.

- Clause 13.02-1 – Bushfire planning “to strengthen community resilience to bushfire and grassfire and protect environmental and cultural values.”

Comment: The site is in a Bushfire Prone Area. A bushfire management plan will be required to be prepared as part of the design phase to manage bushfire risk.

#### Ministerial Directions

The Amendment will be prepared considering the following ministerial directions:

- Ministerial Direction: The Form and Content of Planning Schemes
- Direction No. 11: Strategic Assessment of Amendment

#### Planning Practice notes

The Amendment documents will be prepared considering the following practice notes:

- PPN29: Ministerial Powers of Intervention in Planning and Heritage Matters
- PPN46: Strategic Assessment Guidelines

#### A Practitioner’s Guide to Victoria’s Planning Schemes

The Amendment controls will be drafted with reference to this guide.

#### City of Whittlesea Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (2017-2020)

The Amendment supports the Action Plan item 1.11 – Gathering Place, which involves completing models of delivery and establishment of an Aboriginal Gathering Place.

#### Quarry Hills Bushland Park Master Plan

The subject site is located within the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland and the plans for the development will consider the Quarry Hills Bushland Park Master Plan. This includes consideration of the bushfire risks and native vegetation on site.

### Social and Environmental Impacts

The Amendment will facilitate the AGP which will have significant social benefits particularly for the local Aboriginal community.



Environmental considerations including native vegetation, environmental sustainable design (ESD), bushfire risk will be considered in more detail as part of the design of the facility.

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is also under preparation for the project.

### **Discussion**

This Amendment seeks to facilitate the development of the AGP project in the most effective and timely manner.

The application of a SCO is considered the best tool to facilitate the project. The SCO is a flexible planning tool that can be used to permit use and/or development without the need for a planning permit. This done via the drafting of an Incorporated Document.

The proposed Incorporated Document which is to accompany the SCO in this circumstance will allow the use and development of the site for the AGP without the need for a planning permit. This will streamline the approval process and provide greater certainty for the project post the Planning Scheme Amendment process.

The use of the SCO also avoids the need to rezone the site and ensures that it can be retained in the RCZ consistent with the environmental and landscape values of the site and the broader Quarry Hills Parklands.

In respect to Planning Scheme Amendments pathways, the request for the Minister to exercise powers under section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act is recommended as it is the best option to expedite the approval of the Amendment. It is considered that the projects meets the criteria for the Minister to exercise powers given the regional significance of the project.

Whilst, this process will avoid formal notice being given, the decision on the preferred location has already been endorsed by Council and consultation with the community is proposed as part of preparing plans for the proposed facility.

### **Financial Implications**

The cost of preparing and resourcing the Amendment is covered in the current budget.

## Link to Strategic Risk

**Strategic Risk Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing**

The Planning Scheme Amendment is necessary to facilitate the AGP project. The AGP will be an important facility for the community and for community wellbeing.

**Strategic Risk Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction**

Whilst formal notice is not proposed to be given as part of this Amendment process, broader communication and more direct consultation with residents and stakeholders will be undertaken as part of the AGP project. There has been significant engagement undertaken to date with key stakeholders in respect to the project and the location of the AGP.

## Implementation Strategy

### Communication

Given this is a statutory process communication will be in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Planning and Environment Act, should the Amendment be prepared and approved by Minister for Planning under 20(4) Planning and Environment Act there will be no formal notice given.

Communication to the community and stakeholders will be conducted by the project team in accordance with the Communication and Engagement Plan for the AGP project.

### Next Steps

- Prepare Planning Scheme Amendment documentation including Incorporated Document.
- Submit proposed Planning Scheme Amendment documentation to Minister for Planning with request to prepare and approved Amendment under 20(4) Planning and Environment Act. Should a 20(4) 'fast track' Amendment not be supported, request authorisation from the Minister for Planning for Council to prepare the Amendment
- Whilst the Planning Scheme Amendment is underway continue to progress the planning and design for the AGP facility, including engagement with the community and key stakeholders.
- Finalisation and approval of plans / permits (if required) for buildings and works for proposed AGP facility, following completion of community engagement.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

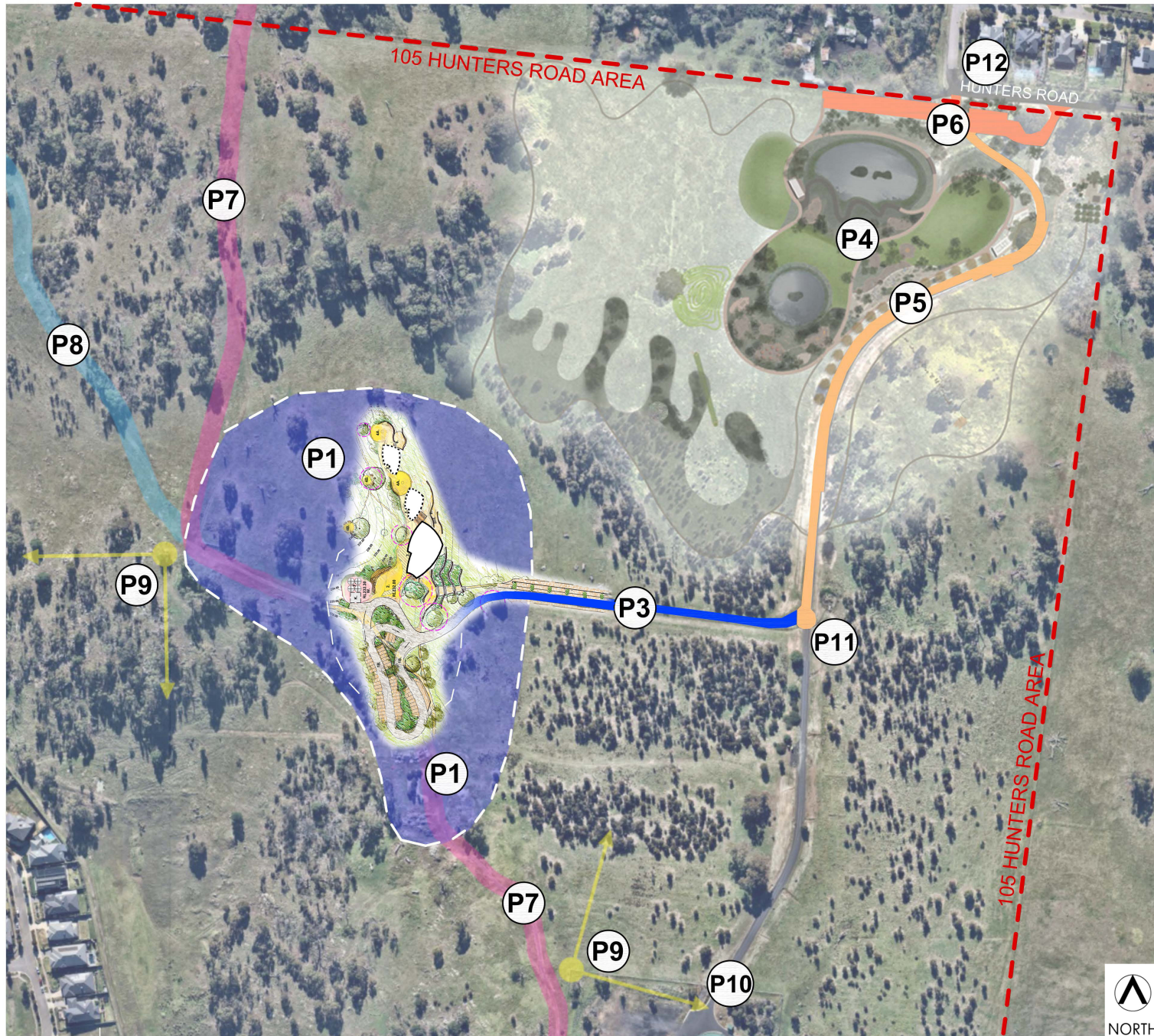
### Conclusion

The AGP is an important project that will support the local and regional Aboriginal community. The proposed site for the facility is located in the Quarry Hills Regional Park at 105 Hunters Road, South Morang.

A planning scheme amendment is required to facilitate the project at this site. It is proposed to apply a Special Controls Overlay to the site (refer to Attachment 2) to permit the use and development of the site for an AGP.

Given the regional significance of the project and the need to provide certainty in respect to its location, it is recommended that Council request the Amendment be approved by the Minister for Planning via a 'fast track' process. This would limit formal notice as part of the Amendment noting that there will be community engagement as part of the planning and design for the facility.





**LEGEND**

- P1** Proposed location of Aboriginal Gathering Place facility and support spaces, including carparking and external gathering spaces.
- P3** Upgrade of existing road for Aboriginal Gathering Place vehicle and pedestrian access.
- P4** Future location of Granite Hills Major Community Park.
- P5** Upgrade of existing infrastructure P11 (road and services) for park use.
- P6** New site entrance and carpark.
- P7- P9** Proposed locations of trails & rest stops for the Quarry Hills Regional Parklands Connecting Trails Project.
- P10** Existing Yarra Valley Water storage facility.
- P12** Authority service (utility) main lines to connect to site entry.



# WHITTLESEA PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION AMENDMENT C261wsea

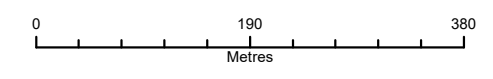


**LEGEND**

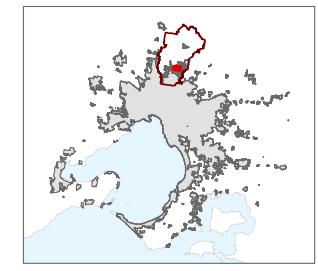
- SCO - Specific Controls Overlay
- Local Government Area
- Urban Growth Boundary

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Planning Group  
 Print Date: 7/8/2022  
 Amendment Version: 2



## 5.2.5 Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025: Implementation of Cat Management Actions

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Planning & Development
<b>Author</b>	Debbie Blandford, Manager Compliance & Environmental Health
<b>In Attendance</b>	Debbie Blandford, Manager Compliance & Environmental Health Ben Durant, Unit Manager Animal Management

### Attachments

1. FINAL Cat Orders 20220712 (1) [5.2.5.1 - 1 page]
2. Cat Management Engagement Findings Report FINAL 20220701 Council [5.2.5.2 - 64 pages]

### Purpose

To present recommendations in relation to introducing cat confinement laws (a “cat curfew”) and mandatory cat desexing for newly registered cats.

### Brief Overview

As an action arising from the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025, Council is considering the introduction of two key cat management initiatives:

1. Cat confinement laws (a “cat curfew”)
2. Mandatory cat desexing for newly registered cats.

This report presents recommendations in relation to both cat confinement laws and mandatory cat desexing. Proposed new laws are attached at Attachment 1.

The recommendations are based on consideration of cat welfare, environmental impact, feedback from recent community engagement, industry stakeholder feedback, benchmarking with other councils and Council’s ability to enforce the laws.

If either initiative is introduced, it is proposed that they come into effect on 1 August 2023 to allow sufficient time for Council to transition cat owners to the new requirements.

## Recommendation

### That Council:

1. Write to participants to thank them for their submission on the cat management initiatives and advise of the outcome.
2. Make an Order under Section 25 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to introduce 24 hour cat confinement laws (a “cat curfew”) within the City of Whittlesea, taking effect from 1 August 2023 (in accordance with Attachment 5.2.5.1).
3. Under Section 10A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, resolve that all cats being registered for the first time (new registrations) must be desexed, taking effect from 1 August 2023. Exemptions include any cat registered with the City of Whittlesea before 31 July 2023 and animals exempt under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (in accordance with Attachment 5.2.5.1).
4. Develop and implement a 12 month transition plan to support the community to transition to the cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing on 1 August 2023.

## Key Information

Over the past 12 months, Council has undertaken benchmarking and significant community consultation relating to dogs and cats to help inform its Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025.

An action arising from the Domestic Animal Management Plan was for Council to conduct specific community engagement regarding the potential introduction of two key cat management initiatives:

1. Cat confinement laws (a “cat curfew”)
2. Mandatory desexing for all newly registered cats.

Extensive community engagement was undertaken from March to May 2022 to obtain community feedback in relation to each of these proposals. More information about the engagement program is outlined further in this report.

### Cats in Whittlesea

Since October 2017, 16,859 cats have been brought into the Epping Animal Welfare Facility. Of these, 8,810 (52%) have come from the City of Whittlesea, with the remaining 48% coming from two other council areas (Moreland and Darebin).

This compares to 6,688 dogs brought into the Facility in the same period, with 3,888 (58%) of these from the City of Whittlesea.

These figures indicate a significant issue with an overpopulation of cats within the City of Whittlesea.



Mandatory cat desexing and a cat curfew would complement the work already being undertaken by Council to address this issue, including:

- Offering subsidised cat desexing, including to pensioners and health care card holders
- A free cat trapping program
- An excess animal permit system to manage the number of cats per property, including assisting with cat hoarding issues.

### **Cat Welfare and Impacts**

According to '[Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife](#)', a joint initiative of Zoos Victoria and RSPCA Victoria, one undesexed female cat and her female offspring can have over 2,000 kittens in two years.

Undesexed male cats can mate with multiple females and can be responsible for an even higher number of kittens in the same period.

With 60% of the City of Whittlesea comprising green wedge and rural areas, and an abundance of wildlife native to our municipality, it is timely for Council to consider introducing cat management initiatives to protect the welfare of both cats and local wildlife.

Keeping cats confined reduces the risk of cats:

- Sustaining traumatic injuries from cars and other animals
- Contracting common cat diseases such as cat flu, ringworm and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)
- Being accidentally poisoned by toxic plants, pesticides or being bitten by snakes or spiders
- Getting lost
- Being exposed to extreme weather.

In addition to protecting our cats, there are also benefits for local wildlife. Around 46% of Australia's endangered wildlife can be found in towns and cities (Ives et al. 2015), so it is important to consider wildlife in both an urban and rural context.

The City of Whittlesea is home to several species of wildlife which cats prey upon as natural hunters.

Some of the more common local wildlife at risk from cats include marsupials such as ringtail possums, sugar gliders and brush-tailed phascogales; reptiles such as lizards and skinks; and native birds.

'Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife' states that many unwanted cats and kittens are abandoned, which is a poor cat welfare outcome and also increases the threat to wildlife.

Introducing mandatory desexing in combination with cat confinement laws will result in fewer unwanted litters, which is a positive outcome for both cats and the local ecosystem.

### **Community Engagement**

Throughout the community engagement process it was important to inform community members about how each of these proposed initiatives would work in practice if they were introduced so that their opinion was informed.

A total of 1,833 people participated in the engagement program. The full findings report is attached at Attachment 2.

### ***Cat Curfew***

Over 80% of participants supported the introduction of some form of cat curfew, including:

- 44.9% in favour of a 24 hour curfew
- 35.6% in favour of a dusk to dawn curfew
- 16.6% opposed a curfew.

A cat curfew would not require cats to be kept solely indoors but would require cat owners to keep their cats contained to their property or under effective control whilst outside their property, such as in a cat carrier/backpack, cat pram or on a leash. This is consistent with current rules related to dogs.

### ***Mandatory Cat Desexing***

Over 82% of respondents supported the introduction of mandatory cat desexing for newly registered cats, including:

- 64.1% supporting mandatory desexing
- 18.5% supporting mandatory desexing if the cost was subsidised
- 10.6% opposed mandatory cat desexing.

It is important to note that if mandatory desexing rules were implemented, these would not apply to cats already registered in the City of Whittlesea, but require newly registered cats to be desexed.

### ***Industry Expert Stakeholders***

Ten industry expert stakeholders were also surveyed to help inform Council to make its decision and balance industry expertise with community sentiment.

The industry stakeholders who participated in our interviews were:

- Cat Protection Society
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Maneki Neko Cat Rescue
- Wildlife Victoria
- Brunswick Communities for Nature
- Bundoora/Mill Park Vets
- RSPCA
- Westside Community Desexing
- Second Chance Animal Rescue
- Darebin Creek Management Committee.

The interviews undertaken will also help inform Moreland City Council's current cat consultation, hence some Moreland-based stakeholders were also interviewed.

A mix of veterinary practitioners, animal welfare and rescue groups, wildlife groups and environmental committees were chosen to ensure various perspectives and priorities were captured.

Industry stakeholders focussed on the need for long-term, community-wide solutions, along with measures that educate and support the community to be responsible pet owners and to transition to any new laws that may be introduced.

Stakeholders agreed that cat confinement laws would help to reduce the cat population to a manageable level and removing cats from native ecosystems is a positive step. They also provided feedback that whilst the proposed laws would assist in reducing impacts on native wildlife and natural areas, to fully protect native wildlife, council also needs to implement cat trapping programs in parkland areas.

### **Benchmarking**

In addition to community engagement, benchmarking was also undertaken with each of the 79 Victorian councils, which found that:

- 10 councils have a 24 hour cat curfew
- 27 councils have a sunset to sunrise cat curfew
- 17 councils are considering introducing a cat curfew
- 25 councils do not have plans to introduce a curfew
- 24 councils have mandatory cat desexing.

It is noted that when the majority of these councils introduced cat confinement laws, euthanasia rates decreased, some by as much as 13%.

Of the 27 councils that currently have a sunset to sunrise curfew in place, 10 are currently considering extending their existing confinement laws to a 24 hour curfew.

Most recently, in early July 2022, Bass Coast Shire Council in Gippsland announced that they would transition from a sunset to sunrise curfew to a 24 hour curfew from 1 July 2023.

This decision was made as they have found that sunset to sunrise curfews are ineffective at addressing cat welfare, wildlife and nuisance concerns (such as trespassing cats and noise from cat fights) as these issues occur around the clock and are not exclusive to the night.

### **Other Considerations**

Whilst there was more support for a 24 hour cat curfew, there was also significant support from our community for a sunset to sunrise curfew.

Introducing a sunset to sunrise curfew was considered, however as demonstrated by other councils, overnight curfews are ineffective at addressing cat and wildlife welfare issues and common nuisance complaints from the community.

A sunset to sunrise curfew would place additional operational burden on both Council officers and community members who report cats at large. For example, if a resident captured a cat in a Council cat trap, it is very difficult to prove whether the cat was captured before or after sunrise, particularly as the seasons change and daylight hours vary.

This additional complexity has proven to result in very unsatisfactory outcomes for residents in other council areas who are seeking action on cat issues.

The implementation of a 24 hour curfew would introduce consistent requirements for both dog and cat owners in that their pets must be securely confined to their property or under effective control when outside the owner's property.

### **Options and Impacts**

The following summarises the options, and the impacts of each option:

## **Cat Curfew**

### ***Option 1 – No Curfew***

This option would retain the current status.

Under this model, it is expected that over 1,600 cats from the City of Whittlesea would continue to be impounded each year, with only 6 to 8% of these cats being reclaimed by their owners.

Over the past five years, over 5,300 cats (60%) impounded from the City of Whittlesea have needed to be rehomed, and over 2,300 cats (27%) were euthanised. The remaining cats were sent to foster carers or rescue groups. This model would continue to require Council to find a new homes for a large number of cats.

This model does not meet the expectations of the community, where 80% of people supported some type of cat curfew being introduced.

Cats would also continue to have their current impact on local wildlife.

### ***Option 2 – Sunset to Sunrise Cat Curfew***

It is expected that this model would introduce some improvement to the number of cats impounded and the impact cats have on native wildlife. A reduction in the number of cats impounded is also expected to result in a decrease in the number of cats euthanised in accordance with the experience of other councils that have introduced cat confinement laws.

However, as experienced by other councils, this model is extremely difficult to administer effectively, and could lead to further community frustration, and an additional operational burden. This is because proving the time of day when cats are at large is difficult and the two sets of rules for night and day often confuses the community.

This model maintains different responsibilities for dog and cat owners.

This was the community's second preference behind a 24 hour cat curfew.

***Option 3 – 24 Hour Cat Curfew***

This model would have the biggest impact on both cat welfare and reducing the detrimental impacts cats can have on wildlife. This model would have a greater improvement than the dusk to dawn curfew option to the number of cats impounded and the impact cats have on native wildlife. A greater reduction in the number of cats impounded is also expected to result in a decrease in the number of cats euthanised in accordance with the experience of other councils that have introduced cat confinement laws.

It is a simpler, clearer model for the community to follow and avoids ambiguity when Council is trying to resolve nuisance cat issues.

Under this model, cats can still be outside either contained to the owner's property, or outside the owner's property if they are under effective control, such as on a cat harness, pram or backpack.

This model would introduce the same responsibilities for dog and cat owners in relation to securely confining pets.

**Mandatory Cat Desexing for New Registrations*****Option 1 – No Change***

As per retaining the current status in regards to a cat curfew, this option would also result in over 1,600 cats from the City of Whittlesea being impounded each year, with very low reclaim rates.

The current overpopulation problem would not be resolved and it is expected the City would see an ever increasing number of semi-owned and feral cats.

The increasing number of cats would have a significant impact on local wildlife.

This model does not meet the expectations of the community, where 82% of people supported mandatory cat desexing being introduced.

***Option 2 – Mandatory Desexing for all Newly Registered Cats***

This model would have the biggest impact on the overpopulation of cats in the City of Whittlesea as it would limit the number of cats able to breed.

Currently, 95% of cats registered in the City of Whittlesea are desexed.

Mandatory cat desexing would complement the work already being done by Council to offer subsidised cat desexing, with a focus on lower socio-economic areas and areas where there is an abundance of 'semi-owned' cats to encourage the people feeding them to take full responsibility as pet owners.

In accordance with the State Government Domestic Animals Act 1994, there are exemptions to mandatory cat desexing that cannot be amended by Council and would remain in place if mandatory cat desexing is introduced. These are:

- A cat that is owned by a registered domestic animal business where the cat is used for breeding purposes in connection with that business.
- A cat that is the subject of written veterinary advice that the health of the cat is liable to be significantly impacted if it is desexed.
- A cat that is owned by a person who is a current member of an "applicable organisation" as determined by the State Government. Both the cat's owner and cat must be members of an applicable organisation.

### **Transitioning to New Laws**

If the proposal to introduce new cat management laws is adopted by Council, it is proposed that these are introduced from 1 August 2023.

This will enable a 12 month transition plan to be implemented which would include:

- A robust communications plan, including using information from Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife and sharing information and practical tips for how to transition cats to a confined lifestyle
- Promoting Council's subsidised cat desexing program
- Exploring partnerships with community groups such as men's sheds to produce do-it-yourself cat enclosure workshops
- Producing videos with practical tips and advice from Council's Animal Management Unit
- An educational approach to introducing the new laws rather than an enforcement approach.



## Community Consultation and Engagement

In addition to the feedback obtained through the Domestic Animal Management Plan engagement, an extensive community engagement program was undertaken from March to May 2022 specifically relating to cat curfews and mandatory cat desexing, which included:

- Ten community pop-up stalls (344 participants), including:
  - South Morang Farmers Market, South Morang
  - March Council Meeting, Whittlesea township
  - Whittlesea Community Festival, South Morang
  - Westfield Plenty Valley, Mill Park
  - Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, Epping
  - Laurimar Town Centre, Doreen
  - Bundoora Square, Bundoora
  - May Road Shopping Centre, Lalor
  - The Stables Shopping Centre, Mill Park
  - Aurora Village, Epping North
- Ten industry stakeholder interviews, including with veterinary practitioners, animal welfare and rescue groups, wildlife groups and environmental committees
- An online survey (1,459 participants)
- An online question and answer session (20 participants).

Approximately 80 per cent of participants chose to engage via the online survey. Google Translate was added to the Engage Whittlesea platform to ensure that residents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities could participate in their preferred language.

Based on postcode data collected from participants, the majority of responses came from residents of Doreen and Mernda (572 participants), followed by South Morang (231), Mill Park (224), Epping (200), Whittlesea, Kinglake West and Eden Park (119), Lalor (83), Thomastown and Wollert (73) and Bundoora (66).

The 45-59 year age group had the highest rate of participation with 538 participants (31%), followed by the 35-44 year age group with 489 participants (28%).

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

### High performing organisation

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

The cat management community engagement program was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy and in response to feedback obtained from the community whilst developing the Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025.

## Considerations

### Environmental

If a cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing are introduced, it is anticipated to have a positive impact on the environment by helping to reduce the local overpopulation of cats and reducing the harm caused to wildlife as cats are natural hunters.

### Social, Cultural and Health

If a cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing are introduced, it is anticipated that nuisance complaints from the community will decrease. The most common nuisance complaints Council receives regarding cats include trespassing cats, noise from cats fighting, roaming cats upsetting household pets and cat faeces being left in yards.

### Economic

No implications

### Financial Implications

The Cities of Whittlesea and Moreland jointly appointed Conversation Caravan to drive this engagement program. The total cost is \$44,000, of which half will be borne by the City of Whittlesea.

Council currently offers subsidised cat desexing to encourage people to take ownership of 'community' cats that are often fed but not medically cared for. This program will continue in 2022/23, with a budget allocation of \$24,000 which will allow for up to 240 cats to be desexed.

These costs have been included in the current budget.

Grant funding opportunities are also regularly available through the Victorian Government's Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program to allow for increased subsidised desexing and Council will continue to apply for relevant government grants as they become available.

In addition to current subsidised cat desexing in the 2022/23 council budget, it is proposed to consider further subsidies as part of the preparation of the 2023/24 council budget.

### Link to Strategic Risk

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

Whilst there are varying views on cat curfews and mandatory cat desexing, Council has given the community two opportunities to engage and provide feedback about these proposals.

Appointing engagement specialists to assist officers to run this engagement and analyse the feedback has assisted Council to effectively engage with our community on these issues.

### Implementation Strategy

#### Communication

The outcomes of this decision will be communicated through Council's Engage City of Whittlesea platform, directly to participants via email and through a variety of Council's communication channels.

#### Critical Dates

- Throughout 2021 – Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation
- November 2021 – Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 adopted
- March to May 2022 – cat management community engagement pop-up stalls, online survey, online question and answer session and industry stakeholder interviews are undertaken
- July 2022 – Council to determine whether to proceed with a cat curfew and/or mandatory cat desexing
- July/August 2022 – outcome to be shared with participants and the broader community
- July 2022 to July 2023 – deliver a transition plan to assist cat owners to adjust to the new laws if adopted
- 1 August 2023 – the new laws will come into effect if either proposal is adopted

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

### Conclusion

Whilst varying views on both the cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing exist within our community, the overwhelming majority support both of these initiatives being introduced.

There are several advantages to introducing both initiatives, including:

- Reducing the number of unwanted litters of kittens
- Protecting cats from harm from other cats, animals and traffic accidents
- Reducing the spread of feline disease
- Decreasing nuisance complaints regarding cats
- Protecting our local wildlife.

It is acknowledged that a strong plan would be needed to assist our community to transition their cats to any new laws. If the new laws are introduced, a 12 month transition plan would be implemented including a robust communications plan and practical support for cat owners.



## Domestic Animals Act 1994 Council Orders

### **Cat Curfew**

At its meeting on 18 July 2022, Whittlesea City Council resolved to make the following Order under Section 25(2) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

This Order is effective from 1 August 2023.

1. All cats within the municipal district of Whittlesea City Council must be securely confined to the owner's premises at all times.
2. If a cat is found at large outside the owner's premises or not securely confined to the owner's premises, the owner is guilty of an offence.

Meaning of the words in this Order:

- a. Owner has the same meaning as in the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

### **Mandatory Cat Desexing**

At its meeting on 18 July 2022, Whittlesea City Council resolved the following under Section 10A(1) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Effective from 1 August 2023, all cats being registered for the first time (new registrations) must be desexed. Council will not accept new registrations for cats that are not desexed after this date unless an exemption applies. Exemptions include any cat registered with the City of Whittlesea before 31 July 2023 and animals exempt under the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Meaning of the words:

- b. Owner has the same meaning as in the Domestic Animals Act 1994
- c. First time registration means an application to register a cat that is not currently registered with the Whittlesea City Council or any other municipal district in accordance with Section 10 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994
- d. Exemption is defined under Section 10B (1) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.



# Cat Consultation

## Engagement Summary Report

July 2022

*A place for all*





## Executive Summary

### Overview

From February to May 2022, the City of Whittlesea (Council) engaged Conversation Co to design and support the delivery of a community engagement program to understand community perspectives on the proposed cat confinement and mandatory desexing rules.

Council is considering cat confinement and mandatory cat desexing due to feedback provided during the recent Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation in 2021, which called for stronger cat management. Council will use this information to develop a cat management strategy to enhance the welfare and safety of cats, respond to reports about nuisance cats, reduce environmental impacts of cats and attacks on wildlife.

This report summarises the engagement activities and outcomes from the cat management consultation. It will provide Council with an understanding of community sentiment towards introducing a cat curfew, mandatory desexing of newly registered cats and the support required by the community, should these rules be introduced.

### Methodology

Engagement activities consisted of an online survey hosted on Council's engagement portal, 10 place-based community pop-ups, 10 key stakeholder interviews and an online information session.

### Key Findings

A total of 1833 people who live, work or visit the City of Whittlesea participated in the engagement consultation, participating in various engagement activities. The engagement plan sought to gather informed community feedback and found majority support for Council's proposed actions.

#### Community support for a cat curfew

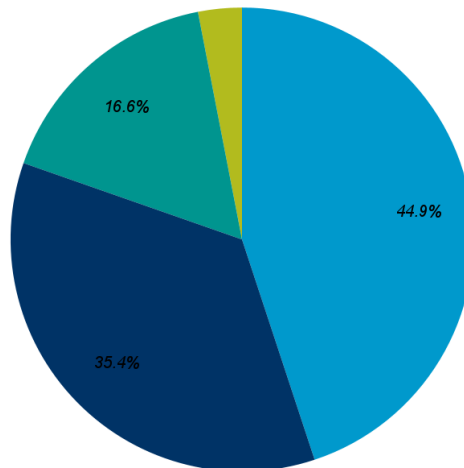
A total of 80.3% of participants supported some form of curfew, including 44.9% in favour of a 24 hour curfew and 35.6% in favour of a dusk to dawn curfew. Those opposed to a curfew made up 16.6%. Figure 1 demonstrates this level of support.





**Figure 1: Level of community support to the proposed cat curfew**

- I support a 24-hour cat curfew
- I support a dusk-to-dawn cat curfew
- I oppose any kind of cat curfew
- I'm not sure / I don't have an opinion about this

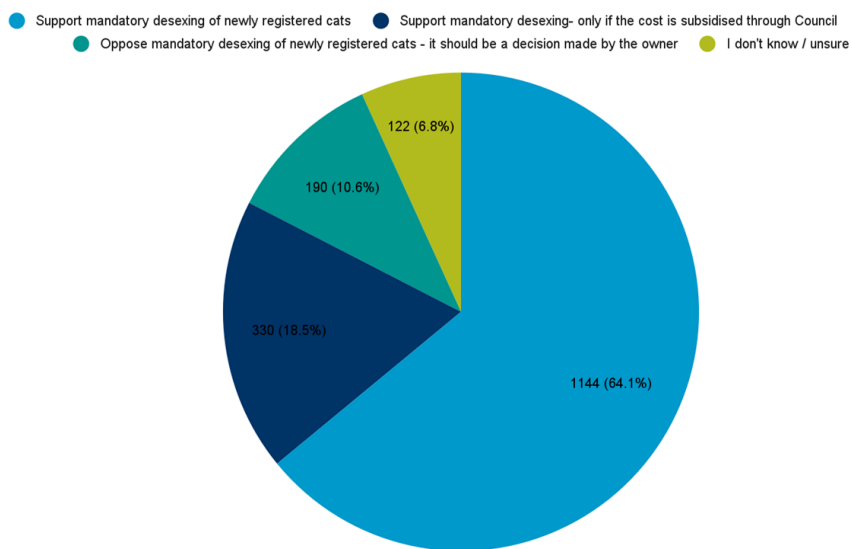


**Community support for mandatory desexing of newly registered cats**

There was strong community support for mandatory desexing of cats with 64.1% supporting and 18.5% supporting if the cost is subsidised. Those opposed to mandatory desexing made up 10.6%. Figure 2 demonstrates this level of support.



**Figure 2: Level of community support to desexing newly registered cats**



**Support needed by the community to transition to new cat management rules**

Participants felt they needed support to understand the changes required and practical advice on preparing their home to transition their unconfined cat to a confined lifestyle, along with material resources and financial support and time to adjust.

Participants identified a need for clear and accessible communication that reaches all cat owners including those who do not use social media or who do not speak English at home.

**Industry Stakeholder Findings**

Stakeholders focussed on the need for long-term, community-wide solutions. Stakeholders highlighted the need for measures that educate and support the community to be responsible pet owners and transform the perception of cats as a low-maintenance pet. Participants expressed that these benefits would come from long-term community compliance, not enforcement. Stakeholders stressed the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between Council and residents and supporting cat owners to make change. Stakeholders saw the benefits of cat confinement as reducing the cat population to a manageable level, however did not see the proposed rules as addressing the impact of cats on wildlife and natural areas.



## Key recommendations

### Transition to a 24 hour cat curfew

The findings of this report support the introduction of 24 hour curfew in the City of Whittlesea in line with consultation with the community and key stakeholders. The transition to a 24 hour cat curfew will require considerations and support from Council as well as time for cat owners to prepare for the change.

### Transition to mandatory desexing

The findings of this report support the introduction of mandatory cat desexing for new cat registrations in the City of Whittlesea. We recommend supporting households by subsidising desexing for low-income households.



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## Introduction

Conversation Co was engaged by the City of Whittlesea (Council) to design and support the delivery of a community engagement program about proposed cat confinement and mandatory desexing rules. Participants were provided with information about the limitations of curfews, and the role community members play to elicit more informed responses.

## Project Context

Late last year, Council adopted a new Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25, that outlines how Council will manage cats and dogs in the local community. The plan was informed by more than 3,000 pieces of feedback and balances community and environmental needs. During this consultation period a significant amount of feedback was received asking for more investigation around management of cats.

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires that all dogs be confined to their owner's property unless under effective control (i.e. on a leash) or in a designated off-leash area. However, the Act does not require the same confinement of cats. Research demonstrates a lack of confinement contributes to nuisance complaints, maimed wildlife, injuries from cat fights and traffic incidents, the spread of feline diseases and overpopulation.

It is up to individual councils to decide whether to introduce a Domestic Animals Order requiring cats to be confined to their owner's property. Councils can also introduce an Order requiring dogs or cats to be desexed before accepting registration.

Council is considering cat confinement and mandatory cat desexing of new registrations due to the following factors:

- Feedback provided at the recent Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation and reports about nuisance cats.
- To enhance the welfare and safety of cats.
- To reduce attacks on wildlife.

The results of this engagement project will assist Council to decide whether to introduce a cat curfew, whether to introduce mandatory desexing of new registrations and how Council can support residents and cat owners.



Figure 3: City of Whittlesea Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025



### Benchmarking

The City of Whittlesea undertook a benchmarking exercise across 79 Councils in Victoria to understand how many Councils had cat curfews or mandatory cat desexing in place.

This benchmarking exercise demonstrated that:

- 10 Councils have a 24 hour cat curfew
- 27 Councils have a sunset to sunrise cat curfew
- 17 Councils are considering introducing a cat curfew
- 25 Councils do not have plans to introduce a curfew
- 24 Councils have mandatory cat desexing.



## Engagement Purpose

The purpose of this engagement was to:

- Determine if there is informed support for the introduction of a cat curfew.
- Understand why people are or are not supportive of introducing a cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing.
- Understand community preferences for either a dusk to dawn or 24-hour curfew.
- Determine the level of support for mandatory cat desexing for new registrations.
- Understand what resources and support residents would need to transition to a cat curfew if introduced.

## Communication

In this project communication was used to:

- Promote the project to encourage participation in all engagement activities.
- Provide evidence-based information about the impact of curfews and desexing on cats and surrounding ecosystems.
- Inform people regarding the practicalities of introducing a cat curfew i.e. capturing roaming cats in cat cages.
- Provide education about the management of 'semi-owned' cats.
- Manage expectations of the limitations of a cat curfew.





## Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to conduct the engagement for this project. Conversation Co employed a range of different methods to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from a representative cross-section of the Whittlesea community.

### Mixed method approach

This project used a variety of engagement methods to reach a greater number of participants, method used:

- Community pop-ups (intercept surveys held at public events across Whittlesea).
- An online survey hosted on Engage Whittlesea.
- Q&A online session.
- Telephone Interviews with industry stakeholders.

### Community pop-ups

In partnership, Conversation Co and Council's Animal Management Officers facilitated 10 place-based community pop-ups held across Whittlesea at different locations and times. The following locations were chosen because of their community appeal:

- South Morang Farmers Market, South Morang.
- March Council Meeting, Whittlesea Township.
- Whittlesea Community Festival, South Morang.
- Westfield Plenty Valley, Mill Park.
- Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, Epping.
- \*Laurimar Town Centre, Doreen
- \*Bundoora Square, Bundoora.
- \*May Road, Lalor.
- \*Mill Park Stables, Mill Park.
- \*Aurora Village, Epping North.

\* Delivered by City of Whittlesea

Participants were asked to respond to five questions, and conversation facilitators scribed their responses into an online version of the survey:

- What is your response to the proposal of a cat curfew in your local area?
- Why do you support or oppose a cat curfew?
- If a cat curfew is introduced by Council in the future, what should they do to support residents?
- What is your response to the idea of mandatory desexing of newly registered cats?
- Why do you support or oppose mandatory desexing of newly registered cats?



Survey and online respondents were asked to provide demographic information including: age, postcode and household structure, affiliation with special interest groups as well as if they owned or regularly fed cat/s or dog/s.

**Figure 4: Images of community pop-ups and materials**



**Online Survey**

A survey was provided online and promoted via the project page. The survey was open from 10 March to 2 May 2022. The survey focused on the key engagement questions outlined above.

**Online Q&A session**

Council’s Animal Management team hosted an online information session on Thursday 28 April 2022 to discuss the proposed cat confinement and mandatory desexing of newly registered cats and answered questions submitted by community members.



## Key Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of issues and consider the benefits and limitations of different options. The interviews undertaken will also help inform Moreland City Council's upcoming cat consultation, hence some Moreland-based stakeholders were interviewed. Interviews were focused on the stakeholder's area of expertise to better understand how cat management impacts their work and to understand the opportunities, limitations and challenges associated with the proposed changes.

Interviews were guided by the following questions:

- In your experience, what are the main concerns with the management of cats?
- What do you see as the benefits of the introduction of a cat curfew?
- Do you think a dusk until dawn curfew or a 24 hour curfew is the most effective? Why?
- What services and support could Council provide for the community if a cat curfew was introduced?
- What services and support could Council provide for the community if mandatory cat desexing was introduced for new registrations?
- What education could be provided to the community regarding the benefits of cat curfews?
- What education could be provided to the community regarding the benefits of cat desexing?
- In your experience, what do you see as the main barriers to community members desexing their cats?
- How can the Council support the community to take responsibility for 'semi-owned' cats beyond feeding them?
- Understanding that a cat curfew won't address the community's concerns with stray cats, how can the Council address this issue?
- Are there any partnership opportunities to support the introduction of mandatory cat desexing for new registrations?
- Are there any partnership opportunities to support the introduction of a cat curfew if it is introduced?



Phone interviews were conducted with the following key stakeholders:

- Cat Protection Society
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Maneki Neko Cat Rescue
- Wildlife Victoria
- Brunswick Communities for Nature
- Bundoora/Mill Park Vets
- RSPCA
- Westside Community Desexing
- Second Chance Animal Rescue
- Darebin Creek Management Committee.

## Timeframe

10 March to 2 May 2022

## Strategies to support participation

Community participation was supported through the following initiatives:

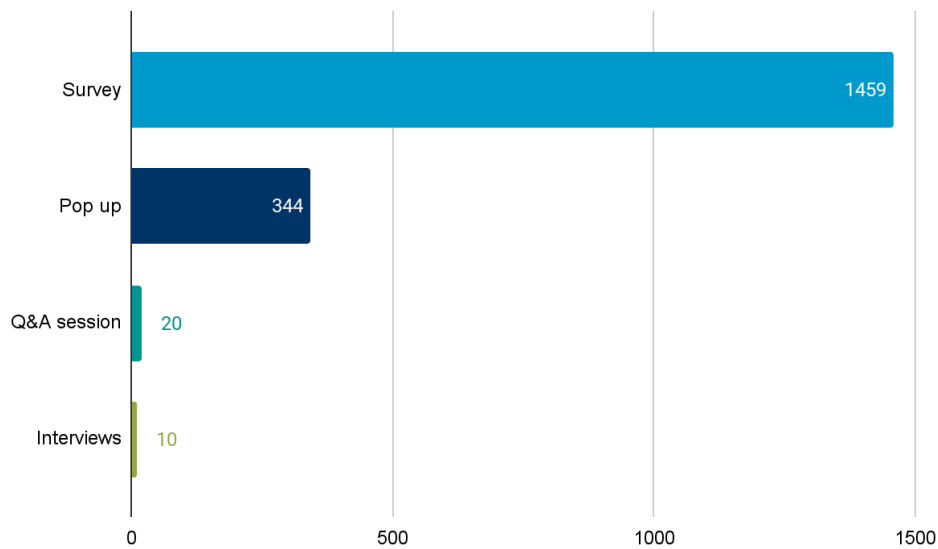
- **Communications Campaign:** This included promotion on Council's corporate channels (image right), and social media, an email to all residents on the pet registration database, as well as signage in customer service centres, and community events.
- **Engagement Portal:** A project page was created and hosted on the Council's community engagement portal, Engage Whittlesea. Engagement portals provide a consistent location for the community to access information about the project and upcoming pop-ups, and to participate via the online survey. The page content can also be translated to 109 languages.
- **Leveraging Council's Connections:** Council Officer connections and existing networks were used to increase uptake and participation in the project. Council Officers attended community pop-ups to increase presence and support of the project.
- **Incentivisation:** Incentives were used at the pop-ups in the form of a showbag for participants completing the pop-up questions. Showbags contained information about cat ownership and a cat toy.
- **Going to where people enjoy gathering:** Pop ups were held at locations across Whittlesea that typically attract foot traffic and a cross-section of the community.



## Who Participated?

The engagement program attracted participation from 1833 respondents. This included 1459 online surveys, 344 participants at pop-up events, 20 participants at a Q&A session and 10 stakeholder interviews: including four nature conservation groups, four cat rescue groups and two cat desexing providers. Figure 5 and Table 1 show this breakdown across engagement activity.

**Figure 5: Participation across engagement methods**



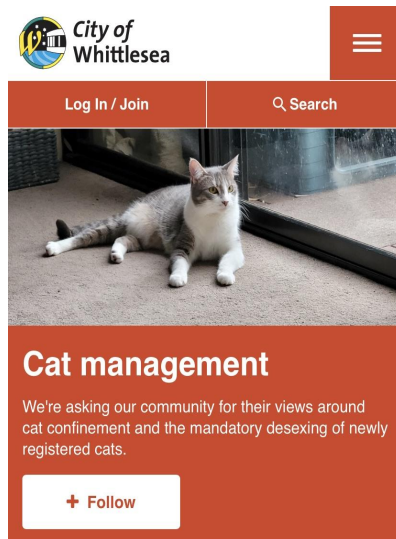
**Table 1: Participation across all methods**

Location or method	No. engaged	Level of participation
Online survey	1459	2,662 visitors to the page, with 168 followers of the project.
Stakeholder interviews	10	Interviews lasted around 30 minutes each and were completed by phone or video conference (zoom)
South Morang Farmers Market pop-up March 19	124	4 hours of facilitated conversation time
Before Council Meeting March 21	13	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Whittlesea Community Festival pop-up March 26	72	6 hours of facilitated conversation time (2hrs by CC)
Westfield Plenty Valley pop-up April 6	65	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Epping Pacific Shopping Centre pop-up April 6	49	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Laurimar Town Centre pop-up April 8	2	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Bundoora Square pop-up April 19	1	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
May Road, Lalor pop-up April 21	6	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Mill Park Stables pop up April 26	8	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Aurora Village, Epping North pop-up April 28	4	2 hours of facilitated conversation time
Online Community Information Session April 28	49 registrations, 20 attended, responded to 70 questions	1 hour online with facilitated questions, run by the Animal Management Team





Figure 6: Engage Whittlesea cat management page



## Demographic Identifiers

Participants at community pop-ups and of the online survey were asked a series of demographic questions:

- if they own or regularly mind cats or dogs
- what Council area they live in
- home postcode
- age group
- connections with animal businesses or organisations
- household structure.

Interviewees and Q&A session attendees were not asked for demographic information.

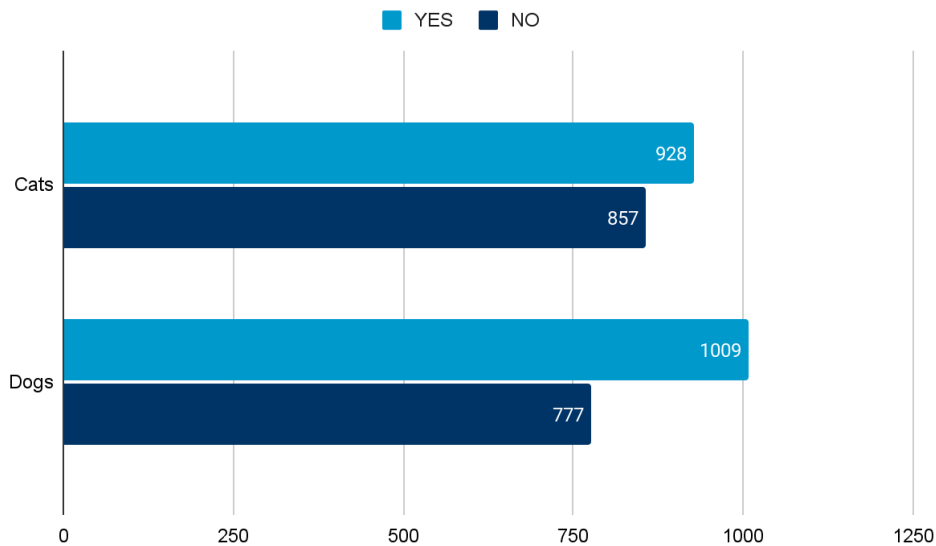
## Cat and dog ownership

A total of 928 participants owned or regularly minded a cat, with 857 reporting they did not. A larger total of 1009 participants reported owning or regularly minding a dog, with 777 reporting they did not. Figure 7 shows this breakdown.





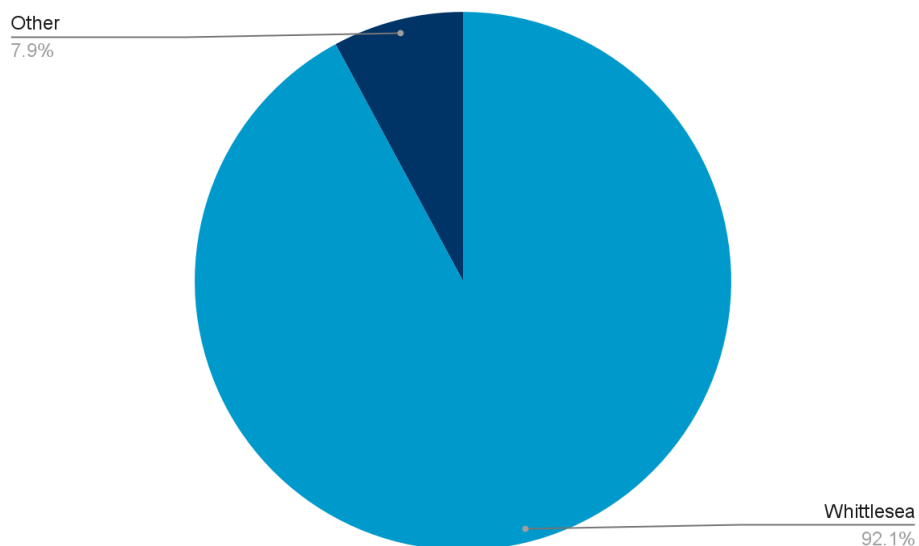
**Figure 7: Number of households who own or regularly mind cat(s) or dog(s).**



**Local government area lived in**

Majority of participants (92%) lived in Whittlesea, with (8%) residing in other local government areas, most commonly: Hume, Darebin, Nillumbik and Banyule. Figure 8 shows this breakdown.

**Figure 8: Participants by local government area**





## Home postcode

Residents of Doreen and Mernda had the highest rate of engagement with 572 participants, followed by South Morang with 231 participants. In the suburban centres of Mill Park and Epping there were 224 and 200 participants, respectively. There were 119 participants from the rural northern area of Whittlesea, Kinglake and Eden Park, followed by evenly spread participation rates across Lalor, Thomastown, Wollert and Bundoora. Table 2 shows this breakdown.

**Table 2: Participant's postcodes**

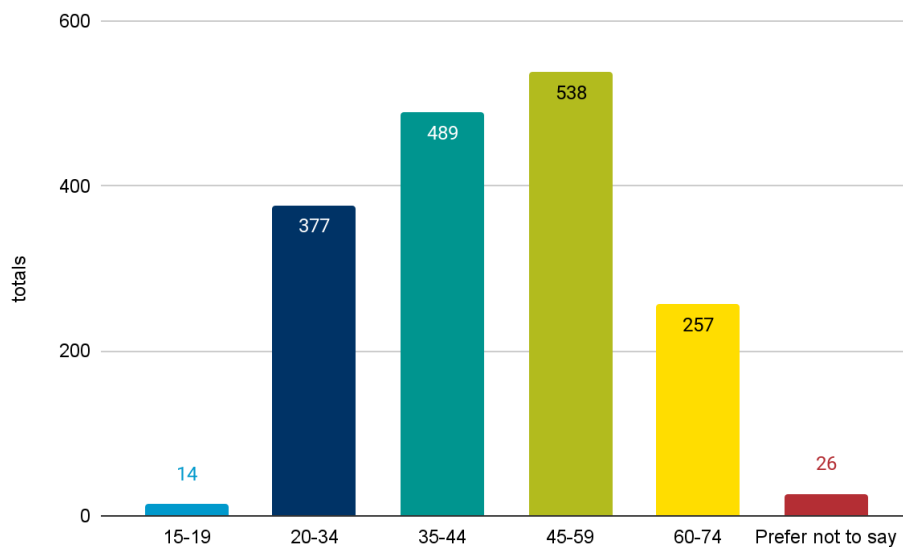
	Postcode	Number of participants
Doreen; Mernda	3754	572
South Morang	3752	231
Mill Park	3082	224
Epping	3076	200
Eden Park, Humevale, Kinglake West, Pheasant Creek, Whittlesea	3757	119
Lalor	3075	83
Thomastown; Wollert	3074, 3750	73
Bundoora	3083	66
Craigieburn; Donnybrook; Kalkallo; Mickleham; Roxburgh Park	3064	20
Beveridge	3753	6
Reservoir	3073	5
Briar Hill, Greensborough; St Helena	3088	4
Woodstock; Wattle Glen	3751, 3096	3
Other	3058, 3059, 3071, 3012, 3057, 3095, 3106, 3523, 3658, 3759, 3761, 4064, 3570	3
Prefer not to say		23



## Age

Most online survey and pop-up participants provided their age, with a small number of participants preferring not to answer. This representation can be seen in Figure 9. The 45-59 years age group in this engagement had the highest rate of participation with 538 participants (31%), followed by the 35-44 age group with 489 participants (28%). Participants aged between 15-19 years had the lowest representation with 14 participants (1%). A small number of children under 15 years participated and their ages were not recorded due to the limitations of the survey.

**Figure 9: Number of participants in each age group**

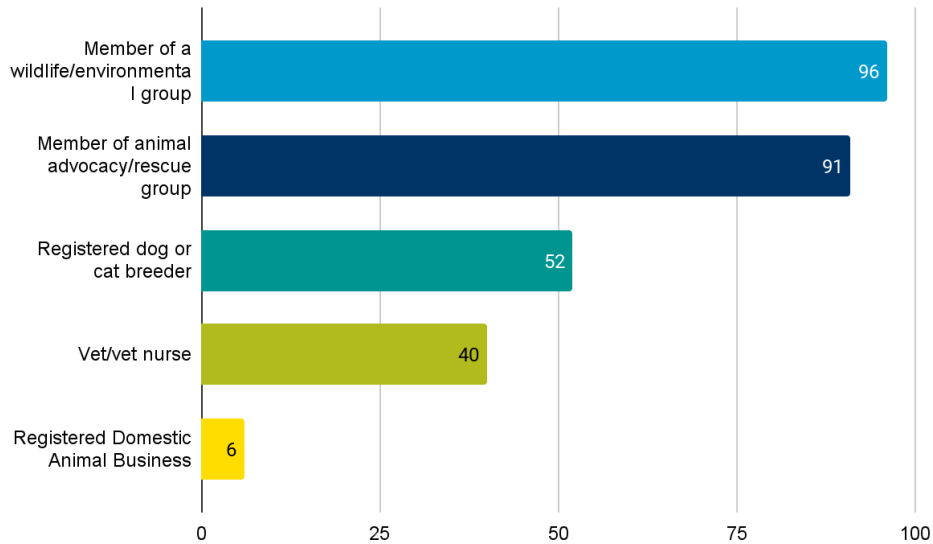


## Connections with animal businesses or organisations

Figure 10 shows the number of participants with a connection to a special interest group. The most common affiliation was member of a wildlife/environmental group (96 participants), followed by member of an animal advocacy/rescue group (91 participants) and registered dog or cat breeder (52 participants).



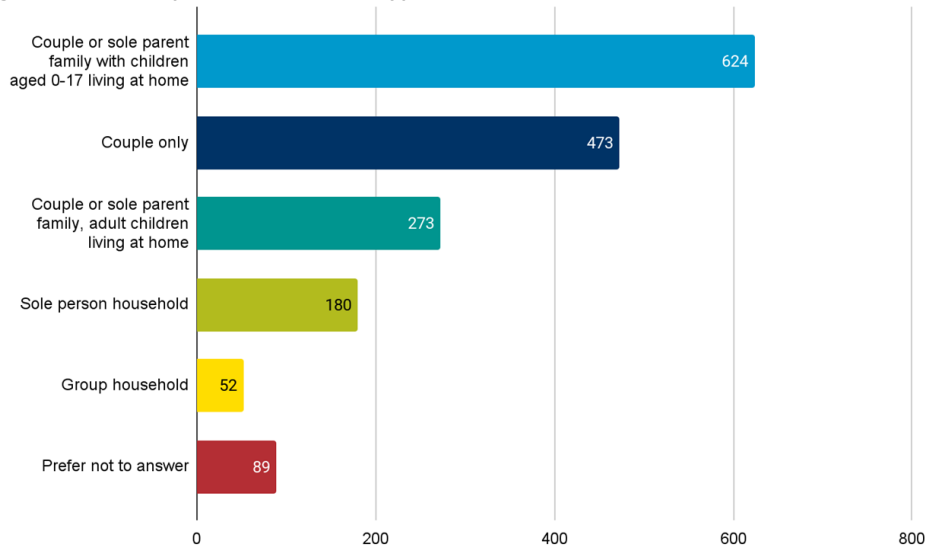
**Figure 10: Participants connections to animal businesses or organisations**



### Household type

Figure 11 shows the number of participants per household type. Couple or sole parent family with children aged 0-17 years was the most common household type with 624 (36%), followed by a couple only household with 473 (27%) and Couple or sole parent family with adult children living at home with 273 (15%).

**Figure 11: Participants' household types**





## Data Analysis

Data from the pop ups and survey were analysed together. Open ended feedback was analysed using a coding process to identify key themes. Stakeholder interviews were analysed separately.

### Sentiment observed by facilitators

Facilitated pop up engagement and longer stakeholder interviews provide an opportunity to explore the reasons, feelings and dilemmas participants consider when responding. Our facilitators noticed some general trends among participants:

- Wishing to promote “responsible pet ownership” more broadly. Specifically, that the proposed cat management measures should be considered a normal part of responsible pet ownership.
- A desire for alignment between rules for dogs and cats. “If dogs have to be confined, then cats should be too.” This sentiment was challenged by industry stakeholders, who highlighted that dogs and cats have widely differing needs and abilities and require tailored management plans.
- Participants shared experiences of cats negatively impacting other pets in their own backyards, including upsetting or attacking pet dogs and cats.
- A strong concern for the welfare of native wildlife, particularly birdlife. Interestingly, participants at pop-ups who were informed about the limitations of curfews often went on to say protects native wildlife was their primary reason for supporting a curfew.
- Concern that adding more cat management rules would negatively affect relationships between neighbours, could reinforce a punitive perception of Council and could create additional financial burden through the use of infringements.
- That industry stakeholders were not aware of an evidence base or case study that demonstrates cat curfews have been effective at reducing cat populations or improving wildlife outcomes in other areas.

### Community response to Cat Confinement

This section will present the community response to proposed cat confinement rules. Participants who attended a pop-up were asked to consider some information about cat curfews before responding. This information included:

- That enforcement of a cat curfew would only occur on private property through the supply of a cat cage for returning captured cats to their owners or taking them to the pound.
- Due to the limited level of enforcement, any introduced cat curfew is unlikely to have a significant short term impact on local wildlife or local stray cat populations.



Participants who completed the online survey were given this information and a more detailed list of Frequently Asked Questions (see Appendix 1). Following this information, participants were asked '*How do you feel about the proposal for a cat curfew in your local area?*' and were provided with the following options to choose from:

- I support a 24 hour cat curfew
- I support a dusk-to-dawn cat curfew
- I oppose any kind of cat curfew
- I am not sure/ do not have an opinion about this.

There were a total of 1801 responses to this question. Figure 12 shows a 24-hour cat curfew was the most supported option with 809 selections, followed by a dusk-to-dawn curfew with 638 selections. There were 299 people who said they opposed any form of cat curfew and 55 people that were unsure or did not have an opinion.

Based on demographic data collected from online surveys and at community pop ups, we know that of the 929 participants with a connection to cats (owner, minder, feeder):

- 28% supported a 24 hour curfew
- 43% supported a dusk to dawn curfew
- 26% are opposed cat curfews
- 3% are unsure.

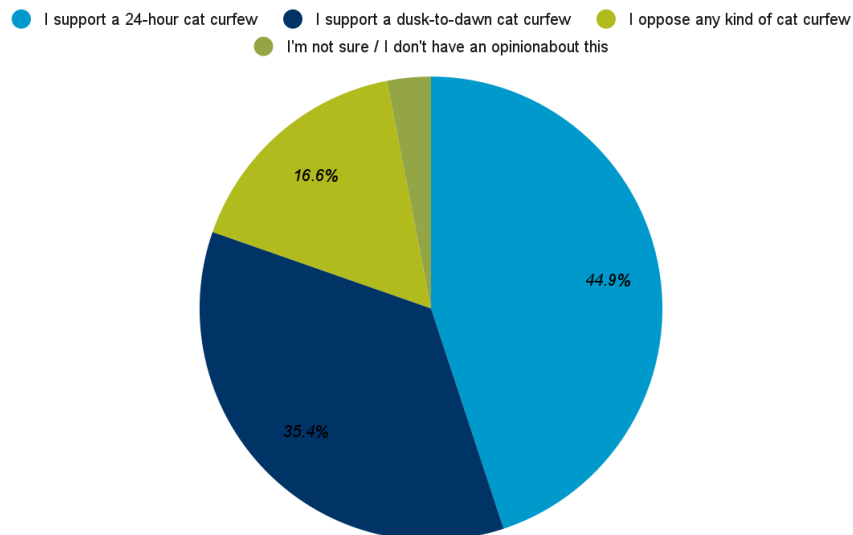
Based on demographic data collected from online surveys and at community pop ups, we know that of the 1009 participants with a connection to dogs (owner, minder, feeder):

- 48% supported a 24 hour curfew
- 36% supported a dusk to dawn curfew
- 15% are opposed to cat curfews
- 1% are unsure

Analysing these statistics alongside feedback, we can assume that higher support for a curfew by dog owners is due to night time cat encounters (on roofs, fighting) and the impacts of cats on dogs (dogs barking, neighbour complaints). Lower levels of support for a 24 hour curfew, and higher levels of feeling unsure amongst cat owners, can be traced to concerns about being able to adapt to change or challenging the need for any curfew. The higher levels of comfort with a dusk to dawn curfew shown by cat owners align with the fact that many have already adopted this routine or feel it is more achievable.



**Figure 12: Community response to the proposal of a cat curfew**



### Support for cat confinement in Whittlesea

This section outlines community responses that support cat confinement in Whittlesea. Participants were asked to provide a reason for their response to a proposed cat curfew. When asked why they support a cat curfew, respondents were provided with the following options to select:

- Protects local wildlife.
- Reduces noise in our neighbourhood (cats howling or fighting).
- Don't like cat faeces or cats digging in our garden.
- Don't like cats coming onto our property.
- Protects cats from being lost, or injured by cars.
- Other (free text).

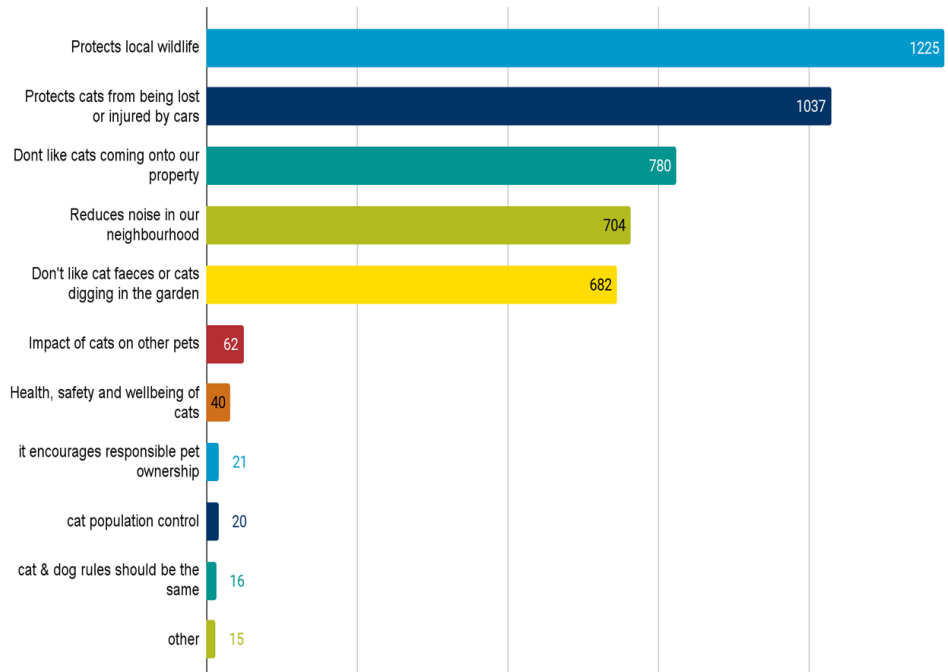
Participants were able to choose one or multiple responses including an 'other' option to provide an open-ended response. Where possible, open-ended responses were coded to align to the options provided and later added to those categories. There were 1447 respondents that supported some form of cat curfew.

Figure 13 shows the reasons participants gave to support a cat curfew. The most selected option was *Protects local wildlife* with 1225 selections. This was followed by *Protects cats from being lost or injured by cars* with 994 selections.





**Figure 13: Reasons participants support a cat curfew (from options)**



There were a number of other categories that emerged from coding the free text comments provided by participants. Responses were organised into three themes:

- Impacts of cats on human health and wellbeing (9 comments).
- Comparing options (3 comments).
- Relationships with neighbours (2 comments).



### Profile of those in support of a cat curfew

Presented in table 3 are demographic profiles of people that participated in the online survey and community pop ups. We can see that the dusk to dawn cat curfew is most supported by cat owners (63%, 400); whereas a 24 hour curfew is more supported by dog owners (59%, 480). Most household types had higher levels of support for a 24 hour cat curfew, with the exception of couple or sole parent households with children under 17, suggesting that this group faces barriers. Support for any curfew (refer to table 3 & 5) was lowest among group households and households with adult children living at home. Though subjective, we could assume from our conversations and higher SEIFA Index (Profile Id, 2022) across parts of the municipality that this could be in part due to:

- time available to care for a cat inside (working multiple jobs)
- disposable income available for investment in cat infrastructure (cat run, securing backyard)
- number of people living in a household and pressure if animals are to be kept inside also.

Not surprisingly, the introduction of a curfew was supported by those with a connection to animal welfare. Support for a 24 hour curfew, over dusk to dawn was at least 33% higher across all animal management categories.

**Table 3: Demographics of those in support of a curfew**

Demographic identifier	Dusk to Dawn Curfew (638)	24 Hour Curfew (809)
<b>Cat ownership status</b>		
Owens or regularly minds a cat	400	260
Owens or regularly minds a dog	360	480
<b>Housing type/tenure</b>		
Sole person household	24	85
Couple only household	159	239
Couple or sole parent family, children aged 0-17 living at home	401	281
Couple or sole parent family, adult children living at home	98	99
Extended or multiple families	15	17
Group household	12	22
Prefer not to answer	32	42
Location within City of Whittlesea	611 (12 prefer not to say, 7 outside of CoW)	785 (10 prefer not to say, 14 outside of CoW)
<b>Age</b>		
15-19 years	7	5
20-34 years	126	22
35-44 years	169	246
45-59 years	203	202
60-74 years	99	119
75 years and over	10	15
Prefer not to say	11	14



Connection to animal management		
Veterinarian/Vet Nurse	11	15
Member of an animal advocacy/rescue group	28	43
Member of a wildlife/environmental group	29	50
Registered dog or cat breeder	18	25
Registered Domestic Animal Business	0	5

Following is a detailed analysis of findings presented by coded themes.

#### Protecting Local Wildlife

A total of 1225 mentions supported a cat curfew to assist in protecting local wildlife in Whittlesea. In pop ups and the online survey, participants described cats as a threat to native species such as birds, lizards and possums. Other participants spoke about the importance of protecting wildlife corridors, parks and green spaces in their neighbourhoods or suggested cat confinement would bring more wildlife back into their gardens. Other comments discussed the impact of cats on ecosystems and native vegetation. As part of the communication exercise, participants were briefed on the uncertainty of a cat curfew improving outcomes for local native wildlife but selected this option anyway. Conversations revealed that participants felt any step to remove cats from local wildlife areas would have some benefit, which aligns with sentiments expressed in stakeholder interviews.

*"...if we don't we risk losing the little wildlife we still have in our area. We have planted a bird attracting garden which puts birds at risk due to wandering cats"*

#### Reducing cat population

A further 20 mentions understood a cat curfew as having a positive impact on managing high cat populations in Whittlesea. Participants saw a curfew as useful to identify and manage stray or feral cat populations, reducing the number of unwanted litters of kittens and unowned cats.



### Protecting cats

Participants felt that cat confinement would *protect cats from being lost or injured by cars* with a total of 1037 selections. Responses described the importance of keeping cats confined to the property to reduce road accidents, protecting cats from other people and animals, and protecting cats from being lost or stolen. Other comments supported a curfew because they felt it would improve the health, safety and wellbeing of cats in other ways, like preventing unwanted litters, cat abandonment, reducing feline HIV and other diseases or injuries from cat fights.

*"It also protects the cats from being hunted: owls (in S. Vermont we had one that culled cats) and foxes, etc."*

*"My friends' cats that stay inside are very healthy and happy. I've had a cat get hit by a car"*

*"Indoor cats live twice as long as outdoor cats on average"*

### Cats causing a nuisance in neighbourhoods

Introducing a cat curfew was considered a way to manage some of the neighbourhood and household nuisance, including:

- Stopping cats coming onto the property.
- Impact of cats on other pets.
- Reduce noise in the neighbourhood.
- Cat faeces and digging on private property.

Following is a detailed analysis of findings presented by coded themes.

### Stopping cats coming onto their property

There were 773 comments that supported cat confinement because they *did not like cats coming onto the property*. Common feedback in this category mentioned cats triggering sensor lights at night, disturbing children or residents who did not want animals, disturbing dogs, cats and other pets, entering residents' homes, spraying and causing damage to property or having unwanted litters or leaving dead animals on residents' properties.

*"Don't like neighbours cats killing rabbits and leaving their bits and pieces in our back yard for our kids to see"*



### Impacts of cats on other pets

A further 60 comments specifically supported a curfew because they felt it could *minimise the impact of cats on other pets*. Participants reported cats coming into their property and being a threat to other pets, including smaller pets such as rabbits and chickens. While these comments were not as numerous as other options, they represented higher levels of distress due to the personal nature of the impact.

*"It protects my smaller pets - rabbits and chickens from being attacked by cats"*

*"Cats have come into our yard and attacked my dog. He almost lost his eye".*

### Reduces noise in the neighbourhood

Participants felt cat confinement would reduce neighbourhood noise, as shown by 700 selections. Comments in this category described nuisance cats climbing on roofs and fighting, disturbing residents' sleep and risking injury. Noise was noted typically as a night time complaint, with 6 of free text responses noting night time noise.

*"...We get woken at all times when they howl and bang on the window..."*

### Don't like cat faeces or cats digging in our garden

Participants did not like cat faeces or cats digging in the garden, demonstrated by 682 selections, with general comments surrounding offensive odours, damage to property, gardens and plants.

*"I do not own pets but the cats coming to my property at all times, pooping and digging the garden. I am unable to do regular gardening and maintain due to the same"*

### Changing community attitudes and behaviours

Introduction of a cat curfew was seen as a way to educate cat owners on responsible pet ownership, narrowing the gap between what responsible pet owners already see themselves doing. Another advantage of cat curfews was aligning policy to existing domestic dog rules and regulations.



### A curfew would support responsible pet ownership

Participants felt the introduction of curfew (21 mentions) was a positive step towards improving responsible pet ownership. The mentions in this section described a cat curfew as something that responsible pet owners already adhere to. This sentiment was echoed during conversations at pop ups. Residents felt that introducing a curfew would make it fairer for pet owners who are doing the right thing with their animals, preventing neighbourly disputes. The comments provided described it as unfair that residents had to deal with issues like breeding, cat health and property damage caused by cats owned by other people.

*"It's unfair that those of us who actually keep our cats safe & inside are subjected to cats roaming outside our property riling up our cats & leaving their stench around our houses"*

### Dog and cat rules should be the same

A further 16 comments felt the introduction of a curfew would make the rules fairer between cats and dogs with mentions stating the rules or management strategies should be consistent for both.

*"If our dogs are required to be confined to the home/property boundaries, then I feel cats should be as well"*

### Other comments

Three themes were analysed from the 'other comments':

- Three mentions reflecting on the different curfew options and enforcement or relating a cat curfew to mandatory desexing.
- Nine comments citing the impacts of cats on human health and wellbeing regarding health effects of cat urine, faeces, vicious cats and cat allergies.
- Two comments in support of a cat curfew as helping to manage neighbourly disputes.

*"Desexed cats shouldn't need a curfew"*

*"Cats in the area keep trying to get under my house and have kittens, has happened before and they are pests"*

*"I as choose not to own a cat due to cat allergy but am forced to endure the presence of a neighbour's cat on my property causing allergy flare"*





### **Unsure sentiment about Cat Curfews in Whittlesea**

The following section presents community responses from participants who were unsure about the introduction of cat curfews in Whittlesea. Presented in table 4 are demographic profiles of people that participated in the online survey and community pop ups, as participants needed to provide their demographics alongside data.

Though not comparable to demographics for those in support or opposed to a cat curfew, the percentage of those unsure with a connection to cats is 3% (27) from a sample of 929.

Couple or sole parent family with children aged 0 - 17 living at home is 19. Though a small number comparably, we know that families (couple or sole parent) with children aged 0 - 17 have the highest poverty rates (Australian Council of Social Services, 2022). Again, the concern shown could be around the investment in infrastructure needed to create a secure environment for a cat.

**Table 4: Demographics of those in unsure about curfew**

Demographic identifier	Unsure (55)
<b>Cat ownership status</b>	
Owns or regularly minds a cat	27
Owns or regularly minds a dog	15
<b>Housing type/tenure</b>	
Sole person household	4
Couple only household	9
Couple or sole parent family, children aged 0-17 living at home	19
Couple or sole parent family, adult children living at home	9
Extended or multiple families	0
Group household	3
Prefer not to answer	1
Location within City of Whittlesea	45 (remaining 7: no response)
<b>Age</b>	
15-19 years	1
20-34 years	7
35-44 years	7
45-59 years	10
60-74 years	1
75 years and over	1
Prefer not to say	0
<b>Connection to animal management</b>	



Veterinarian/Vet Nurse	1
Member of an animal advocacy/rescue group	2
Member of a wildlife/environmental group	2
Registered dog or cat breeder	0
Registered Domestic Animal Business	0

### Opposition for Cat Curfew in Whittlesea

The following section presents community responses that oppose the introduction of any cat curfew. When asked why they oppose a cat curfew, participants were provided with the following options to select:

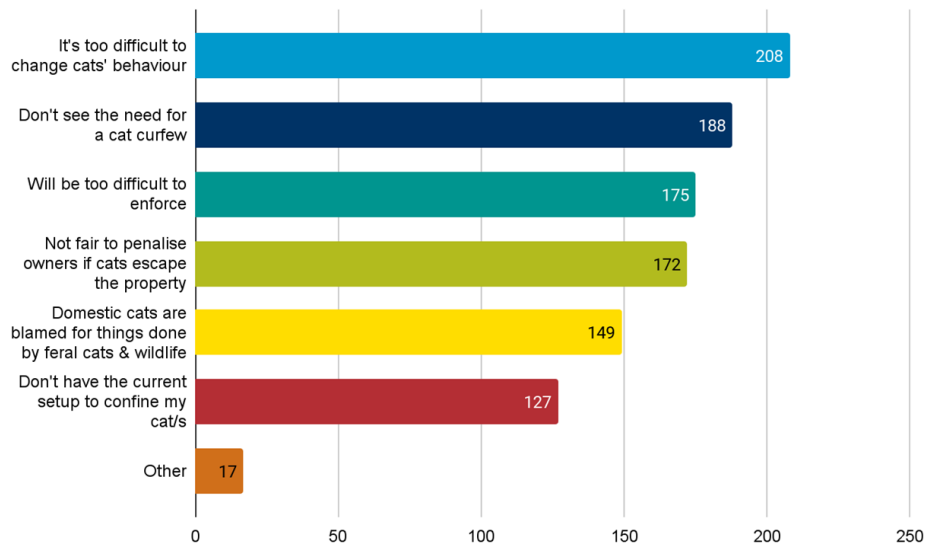
- Don't see the need for a cat curfew.
- Will be too difficult to enforce.
- It's too difficult to change cats' behaviour.
- Domestic cats are blamed for things done by feral cats.
- Don't have the current setup to confine my cat(s).
- Not fair to penalise owners if cats escape the property.
- Other (free text).

Participants could select multiple responses including an 'other' option with an open-ended response. Where possible, open-ended responses were coded to align to the options provided and were added to those categories. There were 299 respondents who opposed any form of cat curfew.

Figure 14 shows the 855 responses to why participants were opposed to a cat curfew in Whittlesea. The most common response was that *It is too difficult to change a cats' behaviour* with 208 selections. This was followed by participants who *do not see the need for a cat curfew* with 188 selections.



**Figure 14: Reasons participants oppose a cat curfew**



The other category received 17 free text comments. mentions. This data has been organised into the following themes:

- Overpopulation of other species (6 comments).
- Too many/strict rules (6 comments).
- Distrust of council (3 comments).
- Impacts on neighbours (2 comments).

#### **Profile of those opposed to a cat curfew**

Presented in table 5 are demographic profiles of participants from the online survey and community pop ups who were opposed to the introduction of any cat curfew. Of the 299 participants who opposed cat curfews of any type in the City of Whittlesea 80% were cat owners and 51% were dog owners. Of the 40 participants who identified as a veterinarian or vet nurse 30% (12) opposed the introduction of a cat curfew, compared to 20% (18) of members of an animal advocacy or rescue group and 16% (16) of members from a wildlife or environmental group.

**Table 5: Demographics of those opposed to any cat curfew**

Demographic identifier	In opposition to a cat curfew (299)
<b>Cat ownership status</b>	
Owns or regularly minds a cat	242
Owns or regularly minds a dog	154
<b>Housing type/tenure</b>	
Sole person household	21
Couple only household	66
Couple or sole parent family, children aged 0-17 living at home	92
Couple or sole parent family, adult children living at home	67
Extended or multiple families	7
Group household	15
Prefer not to answer	17
Location within City of Whittlesea	283 (13 prefer not to answer, 3 outside of CoW)
<b>Age</b>	
15-19 years	1
20-34 years	61
35-44 years	58
45-59 years	118
60-74 years	37
75 years and over	4
Prefer not to say	8



Connection to animal management	
Veterinarian/Vet Nurse	12
Member of an animal advocacy/rescue group	18
Member of a wildlife/environmental group	16
Registered dog or cat breeder	9
Registered Domestic Animal Business	1

Following is a detailed analysis of findings presented by coded themes.

**Adaptation issues**

The most commonly cited concerns were connected to the ability of the owner and animal to adapt to a change in conditions, and steps needed to be taken if the cat curfew was introduced.

**It’s too difficult to change change cat behaviour**

Participants felt it was too difficult to change a cats’ behaviour, shown by 208 selections, suggesting that participants (and their cats) were unable or unwilling to adapt to a cat curfew. Comments in this section described roaming outside or beyond property boundaries as being good for cats, part of a cat’s nature and impossible to stop. There were general comments about cat freedom, the importance of having a cat as a companion and that a curfew might discourage cat ownership. Further mentions specifically understood cat confinement to be detrimental to cat health and wellbeing. Key stakeholder interviews challenged some of these ideas by indicating that cats can live happy enriched lives while confined to property, that confined cats are healthier and live longer, and that most cats can be trained to return home at night within a few weeks.

*“...it's impossible to stop the cat from jumping over the fence and wandering outside the property”*

*“I think people regularly forget cats are in their natural habitat outdoors, not indoors. It’s cruel to have a curfew. It’s even more cruel to try and “convert” an outdoor cat to indoor cat”.*



### **Don't have the set up to confine my cat**

There were 127 mentions that expressed participants were not prepared or did not have the resources to confine their cats. Mentions in this section described the task of cat confinement as impractical, costly or difficult for renters or low-income groups. A number of mentions specifically talked about the precarity of cat ownership and rental agreements if a curfew was introduced. Others suggested a subsidy or help to purchase confinement materials. Further comments discussed the cost of enclosures and potential fines may dissuade cat owners from registering their animals. Conversation facilitators at pop up events noticed a trend of participants selecting a dusk to dawn curfew rather than the 24-hour option to avoid the need for home modifications, showing that this type of concern was also relevant for those who support the introduction of a curfew.

*'Properties are very small these days and people don't have yard space to erect enclosure and confine cats'*

*"Renovations to property are expensive and renters are not able to make alterations to property".*

### **Don't see the need for a cat curfew**

The second most common reason given for opposing a cat curfew was that participants *do not see the need for a cat curfew*. Comments in this section discussed whether it was appropriate to have a cat curfew in terms of its impact on; local wildlife, wild cat populations, numbers in pounds or rescue organisations. Others compared the treatment of cats to dogs or suggested that each cat is unique so a blanket rule could not apply. Others discussed the lack of wildlife in their area and the cost or practicalities of enforcing a cat curfew.

*"Doreen has become built up now so we don't have many rural areas containing native wildlife anymore.... I don't see the need to enforce restrictions on cats providing they have not been repeat offenders or caused any damage to anyone or anything"*

### **It's unfair to penalise owners if cats escape**

There were 172 mentions that described a cat curfew as unfair to *'penalise owners if cats escape the property'*. Comments in this section discussed a willingness of participants to manage their cats but stressed they were unable to supervise them all the time.

*"Some nights I can't get them in till very very late or not at all. Is not fair to issue a fine to owners. You tell me how I can catch the cats in this instance".*





### Governance and administration

A common concern of participants was the administration required to enforce a cat curfew by Council and the cost implications for doing so.

#### A cat curfew would be too difficult to enforce

There were 175 mentions that described how a cat curfew *would be too difficult to enforce*. Mentions in this section explored the cost in terms of efficiency, affordability and return on investment. Other comments suggested a curfew would reduce cat registrations and therefore the accountability of cat owners. Some comments focussed on the difficulty of managing the various groups involved in catching cats and impoundment. Key stakeholders also identified that enforcement can be difficult and costly, and suggested that communicating the benefits of cat confinement is more cost efficient and impactful for community behaviour change than the enforcement of curfews.

*“WCC will end up penalising those responsible owners that register their pets. Irresponsible ‘owners’ do not register or control their pets, this will encourage non-registration”.*

*“Council works on a theory that everyone who owns/ semi-owns a cat will pay to get it out the pound if it is impounded, this is not the reality of the situation. Cat management will still cost a fortune to Council because the real issue is with overpopulation and desexing is a greater investment”*

#### Domestic cats are blamed for issues caused by feral cats and other wildlife

Other participants reflected that a cat curfew would result in *domestic cats being blamed for issues caused by feral cats or other wildlife* with 149 mentions. The comments in this section reported foxes and possums were responsible for perceived cat issues.

*“Cats get blamed for wildlife attacks actually committed by possums”*

#### Other

Three themes were analysed from the ‘other’ comments:

- 6 comments felt that there just were too many rules on an individual's behaviour.
- 6 comments celebrated the fact that cats helped to deal with pests.
- 3 comments felt the introduction of a cat curfew and therefore fining people was an excuse for Council to raise revenue.
- 2 comments felt having a curfew would create neighbourly disputes.



## Support and resources required

The following section presents community responses on support Council could provide in the first few years, should a cat curfew be introduced. Participants were provided the following options to select:

- Promote ways to keep cats inside the property boundary (outdoor enclosures, special fences, nets) using social media and printed brochures.
- Provide information about helping your “outside” cat to become an “inside cat” using social media and printed brochures.
- Promote what residents should do to report a nuisance cat on their property using social media and printed brochures.
- Consider issuing warnings only (no fines) to cat owners as they gradually adapt to the new cat curfew law.
- Other suggestions, please specify (free text).

Participants were able to choose one or multiple responses including an ‘other’ option with an open-ended response. Where possible, open-ended responses were coded to align to the options provided and were added to those categories. There was a total of 4,513 responses to this question as many respondents provided more than one selection, with many selecting all four options.

Support required was:

- Promote ways to keep cats inside the property boundary (outdoor enclosures, special fences, nets) using social media and printed brochures with 1304 selections (29%).
- Provide information about helping your “outside” cat to become an “inside cat” using social media and printed brochures 1217 selections (27%).
- Consider issuing warnings only (no fines) to cat owners as they gradually adapt to the new cat curfew law 1027 selections (23%).
- Promote what residents should do to report a nuisance cat on their property using social media and printed brochures 837 selections (18.5%).

With 129 comments for other support required.

There were a number of other categories that emerged from coding the free text comments provided by participants. Responses were organised into four themes:

- Financial or material assistance (60 comments).
- Issue fines in a consistent way (45 comments).
- Community education (17 comments).
- Other comments (66 comments)



### Financial or material assistance

The need to provide financial or material assistance for confining a cat to a property was mentioned 60 times, which is significant given that this option was not provided within the survey. Participants reported the need for support beyond education to make the transition, including rebates and subsidies for cat enclosures, cat leashes, as well as a discount on registration fees for residents obeying the cat curfew. Stakeholder interview responses echoed this sentiment, with several interviewees suggesting that providing financial or material support would improve sentiment about the cost of cat registration by demonstrating a tangible value for cat owners.

*"Offer incentives for responsible cat management - rebates on equipment such as cat leashes or yard enclosures."*

*"Providing monetary support to cat owners to support the transition. i.e. partner with a cat enclosure building company."*

*"Temporary discount to pet registration for people obeying the curfew."*

*"Provide low cost items to transition outdoor cats to indoor like council subsidised cat runs or other equipment."*

### Issue fines in a consistent way

A total of 45 mentions used the 'other' option to respond saying they feel fines should be issued for a number of reasons; to be consistent with dogs at large incurring fines, to enforce compliance and change current behaviour, and because warnings do not work. One key stakeholder endorsed an early and firm approach to issuing infringements as a way to hasten compliance.

*"I think owners should be fined, as I would be if my dog went on a property of others."*

*"Fine people straight away it's the only way they'll learn."*

*"Fine them as they will not change their behaviour otherwise"*

### Community education

Community education was mentioned 17 times, covering the need to provide facts and figures on the impacts of roaming pets, illustrating the walking of cats on leashes and tips to encourage cats to come home at dusk such as making that feeding time. Stakeholder interviews provided detailed guidance on effective community education which is detailed in the Stakeholder Interview Findings section of this report.



*“Promote ways to habituate cats to come home before curfew. E.g. feeding or treat time.”*

*“Push facts and figures about the negatives of free roaming pets - how many are being hit by cars, spreading FIV, adding to the amount of unwanted kittens etc.”*

*“Show cats being walked.”*

#### **Other comments**

The ‘other’ option was used by participants to express actual or perceived difficulties with keeping cats indoors or transitioning cats from being outdoors to indoor cats, to support harsher and/or consistent rules for cats and dogs, or to reaffirm their opposition to introducing a cat curfew.



## Community response to mandatory desexing of newly registered cats

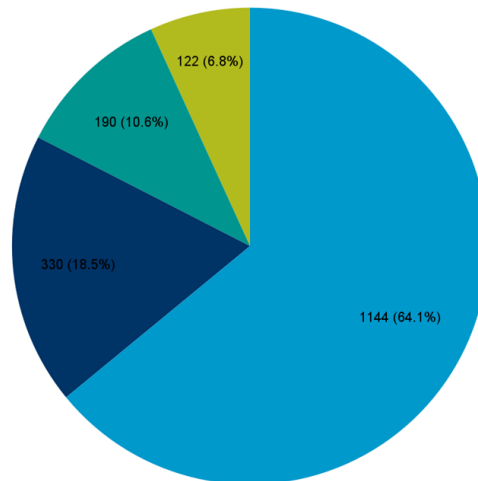
The following section outlines the community response to proposed mandatory desexing in Whittlesea. Participants at pop ups were asked to consider some information about mandatory desexing before responding to questions. Facts provided included:

- There is a significant overpopulation of cats including domestic, stray and feral cats.
- Mandatory desexing would not be enforced retroactively; cats that are already registered would be exempt from the new law.
- There will be logical exceptions and postponements from desexing, such as for registered breeding animals, animals with relevant medical conditions or animals that need more time to mature.

Participants were then asked *How do you feel about the proposal for mandatory desexing of newly registered cats?* Figure 15 shows the vast majority of participants supported mandatory desexing with 1144 selections, followed by support for mandatory desexing if it is subsidised by Council with 330 selections. Pop up facilitators noted that participants were most interested in Council providing subsidies for low-income households, rather than expecting universal access to subsidies for everyone.

**Figure 15: Response to mandatory desexing of newly registered cats**

- Support mandatory desexing of newly registered cats
- Support mandatory desexing- only if the cost is subsidised through Council
- Oppose mandatory desexing of newly registered cats - it should be a decision made by the owner
- I don't know / unsure



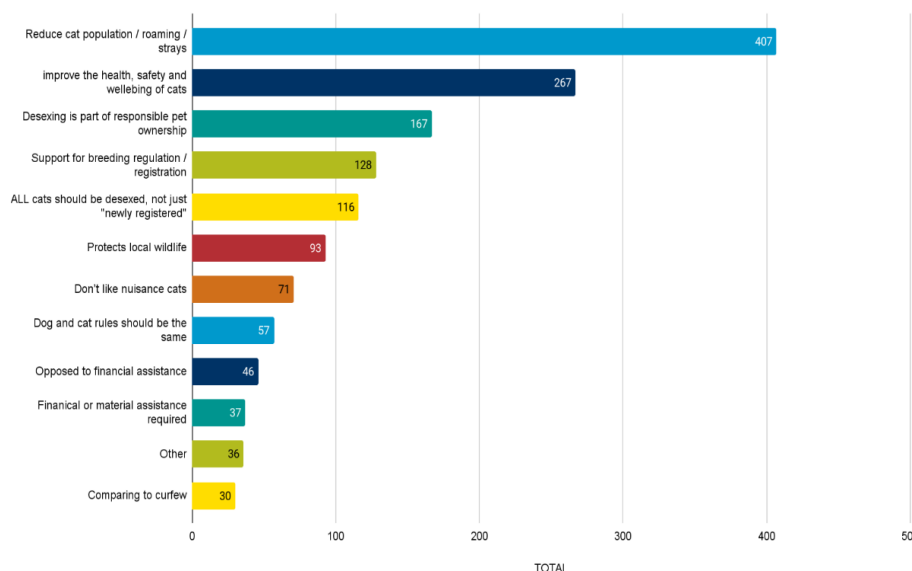


### Support for mandatory desexing of newly registered cats

Participants in the surveys and pop-ups were asked to provide their reasons why they supported mandatory desexing for newly registered cats in Whittlesea. This was an open-ended question and participants were able to fill in a free-text response. A wide range of common themes emerged from the feedback data which are presented in Figure 16. There were 780 respondents to this question.

The most common reason given was to *reduce the cat population* with 407 comments. This was followed by 267 comments that saw mandatory desexing as a way to *improve the health, safety and wellbeing of cats*. An additional 167 comments outlined desexing as *part of responsible cat ownership* and 128 comments focussed on desexing as a way to support *breeding regulation and registration*.

**Figure 16: Reasons for supporting mandatory desexing**



Following is a detailed analysis of findings presented by coded themes.



### Reduce cat population

The most common reason for supporting mandatory desexing was that this would reduce the cat population (407 mentions). Mentions in this category focussed on the need to bring the cat population and numbers of feral or roaming cats down. Comments in this section focused on the high number of unwanted cats that become stray or wild and the impacts of this on local neighbourhoods, wildlife and cats themselves. Participants also mentioned the reduced capacity of organisations and community members to care for or manage the current number of cats in Whittlesea. Others mentioned that it was 'easy enough' or 'no need not to' to desex cats and it should be the norm with the exception of cat breeders.

Key stakeholder interview responses support these sentiments, reinforcing that all cat populations need to be better managed, including domestic, unowned and feral. Cat rescue stakeholders also strongly advocated for medical and behavioural solutions for domestic cats to reduce euthanasia rates.

*"I work as a vet nurse in a shelter and see way too many un desexed cats. There is no need for the general public to own entire cats, they should all be desexed. This is to help decrease the feral population and decreasing the amount of homeless cats".*

### Improve the health safety and wellbeing of cats

A total of 267 mentions related mandatory desexing to the *health, safety and wellbeing of cats*. Respondents expressed their support for desexing as it might reduce: the number of lost, stolen or dumped cats. Others felt desexing may prevent unwanted litters and the resulting health effects on mother cats and abandoned kittens. Further mentions criticised the capacity of animal shelters and euthanasia of unclaimed cats. Others saw desexing as a positive way to manage the spread of cat diseases or unwanted cat behaviours resulting in injuries like fighting or wandering on roads.

*"Having worked in the shelter of a large organisation and witnessing the overwhelming number of unwanted cats which continue to be brought in, I feel the time is right for all cats to be desexed. People need to be educated about the sadness of this issue..."*





### Desexing is part of responsible pet ownership

Many participants understood desexing as central to being a responsible pet owner (167 mentions). Participants in this section wanted accountability for cat owners and cited the negative impacts to wildlife and cat wellbeing as reasons for owners to “step up” to the task of desexing. Comments in this section made concessions for breeders and discussed making desexing more affordable for low-income groups however, others felt that desexing should not be subsidised for pet owners. Key stakeholders reinforced that cat desexing should be promoted by Council as a normal and expected part of responsible pet ownership.

*“It’s incredibly important to desex pets, it reduces strays and stops shelters from overflowing. I wish it was a legal requirement when adopting/owning a pet...”*

### Support for breeding regulation

A total of 130 mentions related to breeding regulation. The majority showed general support for mandatory desexing of cats with the exception of licensed breeders. Other mentions supported stronger regulation of breeders including restrictions on the number of registered breeders within each council area and the number of cats allowed to be bred, and which breeds should be exempt from desexing. Participants commented on reducing the number of backyard breeders or the selling of cats on social media. Others suggested strict confinement rules for un desexed breeding cats. Further mentions described desexing of cats to be the job of the breeder and the price of desexing to be incorporated in the cost of buying a new cat.

Key stakeholders built on this sentiment to explain that widespread cat desexing tends to increase the cost of kitten adoption and the perceived value of cat ownership. While increased prices will make kitten ownership less accessible, stakeholders who work with cats felt that higher kitten adoption costs correlate with higher levels of investment into the animal’s care over its lifetime. They also indicated that the cost and availability of adult cat adoption is not likely to be significantly impacted by mandatory cat desexing.

*“All pet cats should be desexed. The only reason not to is for registered breeders. The price of desexing should be built into the cost of buying a cat...”*

*“All cats should be desexed unless they’re specifically for pedigree breeding”.*

*“Too many kittens being sold on social media not desexed contributing to the problem”.*



### All cats should be desexed not just newly registered

A total of 119 mentions suggested that all cats should be desexed and that any introduced desexing rule should be enforced retrospectively. Participants in this section outlined the issues surrounding the breeding of stray cats and wild cats in Whittlesea. Participants mentioned the number of unregistered or partially owned cats still able to breed as the main cause of problems or felt that focussing on newly registered cats only, would not combat the issues surrounding high cat populations. Other mentions focussed on the benefits of desexing on cat behaviour, health outcomes and life span as applying to all cats not just newly registered ones.

### Protects local wildlife

There were 93 mentions surrounding wildlife protection as the reason for supporting mandatory desexing. Comments in this section were similar to those in response to cat curfew questions but understood desexing as crucial to managing wild cat populations which were seen as the biggest threat to wildlife and native ecosystems. Many mentions described the impacts of undesexed cats or wild cats as a big issue in peri-urban Whittlesea and protected areas such as Plenty Gorge and Serle Wetlands.

*"I see so many cats in parks and bushland / walking paths. We need to stop feral cats. They kill [our] wildlife and annoy home owners. We need to be respectful of native wildlife and plants ..."*

### Don't like nuisance cats

There were 71 mentions that supported desexing as a way to reduce cat population and therefore unwanted cat behaviour or nuisance in the neighbourhood. Participants suggested mandatory desexing may diminish the instance of cats coming onto their property, damaging their gardens and belongings and reduce noise in the neighbourhood. Many participants felt that undesexed cats were more likely to have disagreeable tendencies and were mainly responsible for nuisance.

*"there are many health benefits, it reduces the amount of feral cats and also discourages wandering. It would also stop my neighbour's cat from meowing all night for weeks every time she is on heat"*

### Dog and cat rules should be the same

Some participants expressed support for cat desexing because they felt that cat management should be more consistent with dog management (57 mentions). Many comments expressed the wish that cats were well cared for in the same way that dogs were, or that cat owners should take the same amount of responsibility for their animals as dog owners. Many mentions in this section were opposed to Council subsidised desexing of cats or felt it should reflect the subsidy given for dogs.

*"If Dog owners have to register and keep dogs confined to your own property, so should cat owners."*



### Financial assistance for desexing

Participants who mentioned financial assistance were quite evenly split over Council funded assistance for desexing; 46 mentions were in opposition with 37 mentions in support. Those opposed felt it was not the responsibility of Council to support cat owners in desexing, as they should do so at their own expense. Other comments expressed it should be the responsibility of breeders to desex animals, or the cost of desexing should be built into purchasing or registering a cat.

Those in support felt, if it was a mandatory, it would be necessary to subsidise desexing for low-income groups. Many pointed out the benefits of owning a pet, and companionship and that should be accessible to everyone. Others suggested partnering with local vets to establish a system or subsidy to encourage cat owners to opt in.

During the pop ups we found that those initially opposed subsidies were supportive of subsidies, where it assisted low income groups and pensioners.

*“Shows commitment to maintaining the pet. If you can't afford the cost, should you have the animal?”*

*“Council should help Low income and pensioners to subsidise costs”.*

### Comparing to curfew

There were 30 mentions comparing the mandatory desexing to cat confinement. Most mentions felt it necessary to have both with many comments seeing desexing as a “safe bet” if cats do escape. However, some participants felt if a 24 hour curfew was introduced mandatory desexing may not be required.

### Other Comments

A total of 36 mentions were grouped as ‘Other’. In this group a few common themes emerged: 20 mentions included general comments agreeing with mandatory desexing. Others outlined worries that mandatory desexing would be too difficult to enforce or monitor; that some cat owners would not follow the rules and get their cats desexed or refuse to register and microchip their cats (13 mentions). An additional 2 mentions suggested Council could consider allowing concessions for some cats or allowing cats to have one litter before being desexed.

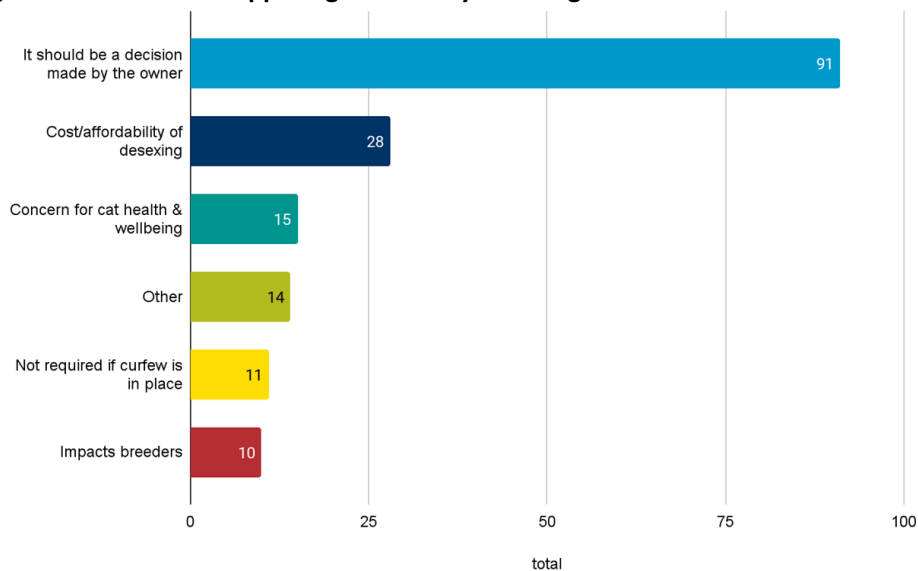


### Opposition to mandatory desexing

This section presents community response in opposition to mandatory desexing in Whittlesea. Participants in the surveys and pop-ups were asked to provide their reasons why they oppose mandatory desexing for newly registered cats in Whittlesea. This was an open-ended question and participants were able to fill in a free-text response. Some common themes emerged from the feedback which will be discussed in terms of the categories shown in Figure 17. There were 172 respondents to this question.

Of the 172 respondents to this question, the most common reason given was the belief that desexing *should be a decision made by the owner* with 91 comments. This was followed by 28 mentions opposing desexing because of the *cost/affordability of desexing*.

**Figure 17: Reasons for opposing mandatory desexing**



Following is a detailed analysis of findings presented by coded themes.



### It should be a decision made by the owner

The majority (91 mentions) of those opposed to mandatory desexing felt this decision should be made by the owner. Mentions in this section mostly agreed with cat desexing in general but felt the owner of the animal was best placed to decide if it were appropriate based on knowledge of the cat's health, behaviour and wellbeing. Others felt it was either not necessary, or the role of Council, to intervene with people and their pets' freedoms. Further mentions described the difficulty and cost of enforcing the proposed rule and felt this could be better invested elsewhere or felt the Council could educate, subsidise and support rather than mandate desexing. Others compared cat confinement to desexing and felt either one or the other should be mandated, not both.

*"I think a decision such as this should be left up to the owner, not a government department. However I believe the council should definitely try to encourage it by contributing or subsidising the fee to desex both cats and dogs"*

*"Unnecessary rules are a nuisance. You're already set enough limits already. The council should be spending its time on more important things instead of creating more work for itself to do which will lead to higher council rates. I'm strongly against this even though I always desex my pets. Educating people is much better than creating unenforceable rules."*

### Cost and affordability of desexing

There was a total of 28 mentions related to the cost of desexing. Many of these comments agreed with desexing in general but reflected that making desexing mandatory would exclude people on low incomes from having pets or registering their cats. Most mentions in this section suggested introducing a subsidy for desexing, microchipping or registration if desexing becomes mandated.

*"Registration fees act as a de facto incentive to desex. If you make it mandatory, some people may avoid registering pet"*

### Concern for cat health and wellbeing

There were 15 comments that understood mandatory desexing as detrimental to cat health or wellbeing. Comments in this section focused on impacts of early desexing on health, the rights of cats to reproduce, the natural instincts of cats should not be diminished or that cats should not be punished for having irresponsible owners.

*"If you wish to save wildlife, perhaps mandate that cats wear bells. Cats are as entitled to breed as you or I"*

### Not required if a curfew is in place

A total of 11 mentions suggested mandatory desexing should depend on cat confinement laws and was not needed if a curfew was in place. Some comments suggested that desexing should only be mandatory for problem/escaping cats and others



pointed out that desexing would only manage population but not the other issues like property damage, killing wildlife and was therefore not as essential as a cat curfew.

*"I support imposing a curfew on cats. If cats were kept inside the owner's property then it is up to the owner as to whether they are desexed".*

#### **Impacts breeders**

Mentions in this section mostly agreed with mandatory desexing on the condition that breeders were excepted from the rule. Other comments suggested you should not have to be a registered breeder to have a litter of kittens.

#### **Other**

There were 14 comments grouped into 'Other'. This included responses such as 'no' or 'not applicable' and responses that discussed cat confinement only. There were 5 mentions in this section suggesting dog and cat rules should be the same, a further 2 comments suggesting Council was interested in raising revenue from infringements and 1 comment suggesting that desexing should be handled by a different organisation.



## Key Stakeholder Interviews

This section synthesises the conversations, ideas and sentiments discussed during key stakeholder interviews. Telephone interviews were conducted with the representatives of 10 stakeholder groups. Interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of issues and consider the benefits and limitations of different options. The stakeholders included:

- Three nature conservation groups
- Four cat rescue groups
- Three cat desexing providers.

Interviews were focused on the stakeholder's area of expertise to better understand how cat management impacts their work and to understand the opportunities, limitations and challenges associated with the proposed changes. Ideas raised in earlier interviews were tested with participants of subsequent interviews to better understand the range of views. Interview responses are not quantified due to the total number conducted.

Following is a detailed analysis of interview findings presented by coded themes.

## Community wide impact

Stakeholders focussed on the need for long term community wide solutions.

- Support for measures that encourage responsible pet ownership and which raise community expectations of what responsible pet ownership means.
- A desire to improve community perceptions of cat ownership. Cats are often seen as low-cost low maintenance pets which correlates with the resources and finances owners are prepared to invest in their care. When people value cats and cat ownership more, they will be more willing to invest in their care.
- A desire to reduce cat populations to more manageable levels, this includes domestic, unowned and feral populations.
- That the benefit of introducing new cat management rules comes from widespread community compliance and long term behaviour change, not from enforcement.
- That additional cat management rules risks deteriorating the relationship between Council and cat owners, and between cat owners and their neighbours.
- That the proposed changes do not address the impact of cats entering natural areas such as parkland reserves.





## Cat curfews

### Benefits identified by interview participants

- Cats confined to their property live longer healthier lives, cause less disturbance to neighbouring properties and cause less disruption of natural ecosystems.
- Cat curfews encourage more consideration before choosing to adopt a new pet cat.
- Introducing cat curfews is one supporting action for long term behaviour change to promote responsible pet ownership.

### Risks identified by interview participants

- The cost of various confinement options is a concern for cat owners.
- The introduction of a cat curfew may dissuade residents from taking ownership of semi owned or stray cats as they can be difficult to safely confine with existing domesticated pets.
- “Working cats” programs which place cats who are not suitable for home adoption at worksites and rural properties to help manage rodent pests would no longer be able to operate.
- Introduction of new rules may increase the surrender of pet cats for a period of time following the change. This has been seen by cat rescue organisations when changes have been made in other areas.
- The introduction of a cat curfew may discourage some cat owners from registering their pets.
- Introducing rules and fines may negatively impact the relationship between Council and cat owners.
- Owners may be concerned about cat health and wellbeing if they live in high-density housing, with concerns about total living space available and the cat’s access to fresh air.

### Limitations identified by interview participants

- Stakeholder interviewees noted that a cat curfew is unlikely to have any significant impact on cat populations or natural ecosystems, but that removing cats from native ecosystems is a positive step.
- Cat owners may not have the resources to build enclosures or the ability to bring cats indoors, for example, those living in a share house or feel at risk of their rental agreement not being renewed if they keep a pet indoors.



### Opportunities identified by interview participants

- To improve community understanding of the benefit of safe confinement to the health and well-being of cats.
- There is an opportunity to add value to the cost of registration for cat owners through subsidised cat enclosures and community workshops about responsible cat ownership.
- Anecdotally, stakeholders reported that messaging which focuses on the health, safety and wellbeing of cats is more persuasive to cat owners than a discussion about the impact on local native ecosystems.
- The introduction of Council managed trapping in larger natural areas would assist with population numbers.
- Use of messaging that respects and values the individual personalities of each cat; not assuming all cats behave in the same way. For example, some cats love to cuddle and sunbake and others like their personal space or are very energetic.
- When speaking about the protection of native wildlife, messaging that focuses on native birds was recommended because birds are widely enjoyed and valued by residents.

## Mandatory cat desexing for new registrations

### Benefits identified by interview participants

- Cat desexing is a permanent effective way to manage population size and prevent unwanted litters of kittens being born.
- Mandatory cat desexing supports registered and regulated cat breeding. Registered breeders typically arrange for desexing, vaccinations, microchipping and registration which improves health outcomes for pet cats and encourages owners to continue with follow up vaccinations and health checks.
- A reduction in accidental or unregulated breeding is likely to improve the value of pet cats by increasing the cost of adoption.

### Barriers and Risks identified by interview participants

- The cost of desexing is an issue for many cat owners with prices varying widely
- Mandatory desexing is likely to drive up the cost of pet cats by reducing the rate of unregulated breeding, which in turn improves the community value of cats.
- Some cat owners perceive the ability to reproduce as an essential animal right they do not want to take away.

### Limitations identified by interview participants

- The inability to desex unowned community cats is an ongoing problem that is hindering progress to reduce cat populations.



#### Opportunities identified by interview participants

- To promote regulated cat adoption, which ensures adopted cats are desexed
- For Council to support behavioural and medical solutions to reduce rates of cat euthanasia.
- Subsidised desexing programs are offered across Victoria by many Councils and these programs tend to have very good uptake from communities.
- Subsidised desexing programs support low-income households to adopt pet cats and enjoy the benefits of pet ownership.

### Encouraging registration and ownership of cats

While cat registration was not a targeted area of discussion, it featured in many interviews as an interrelated area of discussion. Interviewees raised the following points

#### Barriers and Risks identified by interview participants

- Many cat owners do not perceive value for the cost of registration in the same way dog owners do (through the provision of parks, bag stations and walking tracks). This creates negative sentiment about cat registration and positions the relationship with Council as being unbalanced; where Council takes from cat owners and doesn't give anything back.
- A need to demonstrate the value of registering their cats to cat owners.
- Suggestions to demonstrate value including subsidised enclosures, subsidised or free desexing, and special interest community events for cat owners
- Stakeholders raised concerns that residents would be discouraged from formally adopting semi-owned and community cats if they would be expected to keep it confined with existing pets, noting that semi-owned cats may not be safe to keep confined with other pet cats.

#### Opportunities identified by interview participants

- To consider allowing a larger number of animals to be registered for each household to encourage ownership of semi-owned cats.
- To consider tiered registration pricing or lifetime registration of cats to encourage ownership of semi-owned cats.
- There is an opportunity for Council to advocate for aged care facilities to allow established pet cats to stay with their owners when they first move in. Moving into retirement housing or aged care is a key trigger for the surrender of animals.



## Other areas discussed

Protecting wildlife was seen as a key driver of support for a cat curfew, and stakeholders made suggestions for other ways the community can protect local wildlife in addition to confining their cats.

- Planting several indigenous species of plants near each other, rather than lining a street or fence line with one species of plant.
- Multi-storey native planting which includes tree canopy, mid-story planting and groundcover.

### Supporting a consistent approach to cat management

This was mentioned by several stakeholders including:

- Considering matching how other Councils manage domestic cats to improve consistency across municipal boundaries.
- Communicating with Councils who have introduced similar rules to learn what worked well and what needed refining.
- The state government has announced funding for a state-wide approach to cat management and the project team may want to consider how this may impact any current or future cat management rules.

### Community Education and Support

Interviewees provided some ideas and guidance on providing effective community education. This included suggested content, presentation of information and overall approach to the task of community behaviour change.

- Cat owners enjoy and value the unique personality of their pet cat, and communications should therefore avoid generalising cat behaviour. Messaging that respects cat owners' knowledge of their pet's individual character and abilities was recommended.
- Helping communities visualise the impact of cats on the local environment with infographics to show cat population growth, cat predation of other animals and average distances travelled by domestic cats. "It's hard to get a sense of the scale"
- When illustrating the impact of cats on wildlife, consider that native birds are widely enjoyed and valued and that many owners of unconfined cats have lived experience of their cat catching birds.



## Recommendations

Following are our recommendations based on conversations with community members and stakeholders. We acknowledge that our expertise lies in community and social research, not in the technical components of implementing domestic animal management policy.

### Introducing a cat curfew

There is strong community support (80.3%) for cat confinement in Whittlesea with more participants in favour of a 24 hour curfew (44.9%) than a dusk-to-dawn curfew (35.4%). The major reasons the community gave for supporting cat confinement were protecting wildlife, protecting cats and reducing nuisance cat behaviour.

In May 2022 the State Government announced funding for a state-wide cat management approach. Due to the very strong community support for a curfew and uncertainty on what the funded Plan may include and when it may be developed, this report supports action now.

#### R1: Transition to a 24/7 cat curfew

The findings of this report support the introduction of 24 hour curfew in the City of Whittlesea in line with consultation with the community and key stakeholders. The transition to a 24 hour cat curfew will require considerations and support from Council as well as time for cat owners to prepare for the change.

#### Supports needed to transition to new cat management rules:

- Leniency and time to adjust to new rules, with the acknowledgement that some groups will simply not be able to comply with new laws and ensuring penalties are appropriate to people's living situations.

#### R2: Raise community awareness for the change

As with any new change, Council will need to communicate the reason for the change (the why), what it means for the community (how) and when it will come into effect. The participants who engaged in this project understood the role of the Council to inform, educate and support. Participants felt support was most needed for cat owners and education and information must extend beyond social media communications to reach the broader community.

- Clear communication of the cat reporting and collection process and what this will look like in practice, including how and when penalties will apply. This could include a step-by-step guide of what to do to respond to a nuisance cat and case studies or examples that illustrate where enforcement will occur to reassure worried owners of their rights and responsibilities.
- Written communication in plain English and translated into key local languages. Printed material in larger font sizes.



#### **Raise awareness repeatedly, get buy in:**

- Targeted, mixed-methods communication: flyers, social media, workshops. Consider options for direct mail to all cat owners to announce and explain any changes.
- Use a community behaviour change approach to promote cat confinement as good for the health, safety and wellbeing of cats.
- Illustrate the impact of cats on their local environment with infographics, for example, the rate at which cats can reproduce, hunt and travel at night.
- Connect enforcement of the cat curfew to complaints about cats on private property, behaviour over a period of time.
- Consider proceeding with a behaviour change and community education approach while awaiting more information from the State Government about a future state-wide cat management plan.
- Public education about the benefits of cat confinement, helping people to understand the 'why' for these new laws: to understand the value of cats, to protect local wildlife, to minimise nuisance cat behaviour, to promote responsible pet ownership.

#### **Reduce fear, reiterate support:**

- Share examples of when enforcement is likely to occur, and examples of infringements to reduce fear in cat owners. For example, using phrasing like "repeated nuisance" or "after a number of complaints" to reassure cat owners that a cat who escapes once or twice is not likely to be impounded.
- Provide practical advice and information on how to retrofit their house and train their cat for confinement. Running community workshops or creating video content on how to prepare your home (single, multi storey).

#### **Recognise the nuanced circumstances:**

- Create materials for cat owners that respond to people's unique situations and unique cat personalities. By circulating friendly, personalised messaging, owners can identify their situation and understand what changes they need to make, avoiding a one size fits all approach.
- Avoid generalising all cat behaviour as being the same.

### **R3: Give cat rescue and rehoming services ample notice**

Work with cat rescue and rehoming services prior to any curfew being announced as the introduction of curfews is likely to trigger a short term increase in cats being surrendered and services will benefit from having some preparation time. Industry stakeholders have advised that rates of cat surrendering increase when cat management laws are brought in.

We recommend that Council work alongside these groups to plan the timeframe, community education and rollout so that they are prepared and can play a meaningful role in the transition.



#### **R4: Explore financially supporting low income households**

Community members sought support to transition to new rules, particularly for low income groups, who face barriers to cat confinement and desexing. Low income groups; pensioners, students, renters, households experiencing time poverty or sharing space with large households have less access to retrofitting options or retraining cats and would be disproportionately affected by enforcement or fines. These groups need considerable support to be able to comply. We recommend that Council work with these groups to lower barriers by:

- Working with tenants and landlords to find affordable, outdoor and temporary options for cat confinement, to lower risk of housing insecurity.
- Investigating opportunities to demonstrate the value of cat registration through subsidised cat enclosures or netting.
- Consider subsidised desexing, to prevent surrenders or non-registration.

#### **R5: Carry out additional research**

While there are high levels of support for the introduction of a cat curfew, we believe any decision needs to be contextualised to the conditions of the Whittlesea social and demographic profile. We suggest doing additional research and a comparison of the impacts on:

- change to animal registrations levels
- change to voluntary surrender rates
- change to illegal animal dumping.

Three metro Councils (Knox City, Casey, Cardinia) have had a 24 hour cat curfew in place for greater than a year, it would be advantageous to understand any changes in the impacts listed above.





## Introducing mandatory desexing

Statistically, there was overwhelming community support for mandatory cat desexing in Whittlesea with 82.6% in favour. The discussions surrounding this topic grew into 'how' the City of Whittlesea might implement this new law, with many (18.5%) of the participants stating if this law was introduced it must include subsidies to avoid financial hardship, cat surrendering and a decline in cat registration.

### R1: Transition to the introduction of mandatory desexing

The findings of this report support the introduction of mandatory cat desexing in the City of Whittlesea. It also supports the provision of subsidised desexing for low-income households.

Consider proceeding with the introduction of mandatory cat desexing of new registrations while awaiting more information about the proposed State Government Cat management plan.

#### Breeders exempt from the policy:

- Mandatory cat desexing should not apply to registered breeders for animals they intend to breed or intend to sell to another registered breeder, but should apply to all animals offered for adoption to prospective pet owners.

#### Incentivise desexing, by offsetting costs:

- Consider a time limited subsidised desexing program when first announcing the changes.
- Consider ongoing or seasonal subsidised desexing programs for low income households.

#### Communicate the change widely:

- Explain the health benefits of desexing pet cats, the expected recovery time, and typical costs.
- Reinforce desexing as a normal and expected part of responsible pet ownership.
- Reinforce that there are logical exceptions and postponements for registered breeders, and cats with medical conditions or lack of maturity.



## Policy recommendations

The Victorian State Government has planned to introduce a Cat Management Strategy in 2022, to be introduced in the following years. This will be a 10-year cat management strategy for the state of Victoria including \$1.3 million in funding, education, campaigns and grants to encourage responsible cat ownership and cat containment. At this stage, it is unclear what this policy will include. It is important to demonstrate to communities that they are heard and the Council is taking action in the direction of their feedback.

### R1: Understand impacts on renters

Work with tenants and landlords to find a solution for cat confinement. Current Victorian tenancy rules allow for pets, but conversations from this engagement surrounding tenants' lived experience suggests having an indoor pet could result in discrimination in the rental market. Council could advocate on behalf of these groups and provide suitable assistance: rental friendly outdoor confinement options, low cost, temporary or removable confinement options.

### R2: Align this policy change to other causes

Protection of native wildlife was a clear priority for participants in this engagement program. Consider timing communications about how to protect and support native wildlife in urban areas to precede and coincide with the announcement of new cat management rules.

## Closing the loop

Keeping participants informed in engagement and the project is called 'closing the loop' - the information loop is currently open. Participants have shared their ideas and their feedback through the engagement process and are waiting to see what happens next.

A new requirement of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to share the information that has been collected and inform the community as to how this will shape thinking.

### R1 Keep people updated

Issue a statement from Council and update the Council project page thanking participants for participating in the project and for sharing their ideas. As we move into the next phase of the project we need to keep the wider community updated about the progress of this project.

### R2: Share the data

Consider ways you can share this data such as creating a snapshot of the engagement data, to bring the data to life with infographics to help participants digest the information in an easy form.



## Appendix

### Appendix 1

#### Cat Confinement Consultation

##### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Below is a list of pre-emptive questions that may be asked as part of this project.

This list will be updated as new questions are added.

	Questions	Answers
1	What is a cat curfew? (Dusk until dawn and 24 hours)	A cat curfew is a specified time when cats are not allowed outside of your property or in the case of a 24 hour curfew, are secured to your property at all times.
	Can I take my cat for a walk on a lead if there is a 24 hour curfew?	Yes, as long as you have effective control in a securely fitting harness or the cat is in a carrier
2	Why is council considering introducing a cat curfew?	Council are considering a cat curfew due to feedback provided at our recent Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation, reports about nuisance cats, reports of environmental impacts of cats in parks and reserves and reports of attacks on wildlife
3	How will it be enforced?	If a curfew is introduced, and residents have issues with cats trespassing during curfew, the resident can request a cat trap from their Council. If a cat is caught during curfew hours then enforcement action can be taken against the cat owner.
	Will cat owners be fined if their cat is caught off their property during the curfew hours?	Cat owners may be fined as part of any cat curfew if their cat is caught out during the hours of curfew. Officers will educate cat owners for a period of time as part of the introduction of any curfew.
4	What happens if my cat is caught outside during curfew?	If officers contain any cats during curfew then the cats will either be returned to the owners or taken to the EAWF. Once reclaimed, owners may face enforcement action as above and may be required to pay reclaim fees when collecting their cat from EAWF.
5	Will the introduction of a cat curfew manage 'semi-owned' or stray cats?	Cat curfews will not deal with the "semi-owned" cat population, but it may assist with these cats if they are deemed a nuisance by property owners and are able to be contained via cat traps.
6	How can I train my cat to stay	Resources will be available to assist in the transition to



	indoors?	acclimatizing your cat to an indoor (or in an outdoor enclosure) lifestyle, such as some simple methods such as: Feed your cat indoors. Instead of letting your cat back outside as soon as they're finished eating, keep them inside for increasing periods of time. If you're starting your cat's retraining during the winter, a warm, dry bed to snuggle in may be just the ticket to convince them to stay inside.
	Is my cat allowed outdoors on my property?	Yes, your cat is allowed outdoors, providing it remains on your property. Various forms of enclosures are available and we will have resources available for people to assist them.
7	How can I keep my cat active?	Enrichment activities such as cat towers, keeping plenty of cat toys for them to play with, taking your cat outside on a harness and leash. We will provide owners with other resources which will have more information about keeping your cat active.
8	How can you tell the difference between a pet, stray or feral cat?	It is often hard to tell the difference between a pet, stray or feral cat, as some pet cats will display different behaviours depending on their characteristics. Quite often stray and feral cats will disappear around people, unless they have built up trust with people. Cats are always given time to settle if taken to a shelter. It's important that pet cats are microchipped and registered so we can distinguish them from unowned cats.
9	Will I have to use a cat trap on my property to catch a nuisance cat?	If a cat is able to be contained without the use of a trap then officers will collect it, otherwise a trap will be provided and officers will collect any cats caught in council traps.
	How will cats on council property be caught? Who needs to catch them?	Generally cats will only be collected from private residences. In some circumstances Council officers will assist with the collection of cats on council property (parks), however this will be done under supervision.
10	Where will I have to take the captured cat?	Council officers will collect any cats from properties that are contained, however cats can also be taken to the Epping Animal Welfare Facility (ensuring the cat is transported in a safe way).
	Who do I contact if I suspect my cat has been trapped?	Council your local council
	Do cats get injured if they are captured in a cat trap?	It's important that cats are trapped only in approved traps issued by Council and that the instructions provided by Council are followed.
11	Will keeping my cat inside impact its mental health?	If a cat is kept active and given enrichment toys, then keeping your cat indoors will have little effect on its mental health.



		Some products are available if your cat has increased stress from being indoors. Indoor cats are less susceptible to disease and injury.
	What happens to cats that are captured?	If the cat is registered with Council we will reunite you with it. If a cat is unowned/stray/feral it will be transferred to the EAWF where it will undergo behavioural assessment to determine suitability for adoption.
	Is it legal for my neighbour or Council to trap my cat?	Yes, it is legal for someone to trap a trespassing cat.
12	What resources are there to keep our cats indoors?	Council will provide a range of resources for cats, including information from Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife, RSPCA and other organisations.
13	Will Council support costs associated with building a cat enclosure?	At this stage council will provide resources for owners to find the easiest and most cost effective way to contain cats to their property, and this may include workshops, but at this stage Council will not be subsidising enclosures.
14	Will a curfew make any difference to overall levels of predation or to the threat of wildlife?	Several reports indicate that cats are natural predators to native wildlife, whether or not they are owned or stray/feral. Containing your cat to your property (especially at a young age) will lower its natural predation and will assist in the protection of local wildlife.
	Do other Councils have a curfew?	Some but not many Councils have a cat curfew.  The City of Darebin introduced a night-time cat curfew (from 7pm to 7am) on 1 Jan 2021, Yarra Ranges has a 24/7 curfew and the Knox City Council 24-hour curfew comes into effect on 10 April 2022.  The Cities of Whittlesea and Moreland are both engaging their community on the possibility of introducing a cat curfew.
	If my cat is made to be indoors 24 hour a day will I still need to register them? Why?	Yes, all cats over the age of three months are required to be registered under state law. If your cat escapes your property then these fees will assist in returning your cat to you, and also assists in running the Epping Animal Facility, which cares for all cats that are brought into the facility, whether they are owned or not. Registering your pets helps Council reunite you with them as we will be able to quickly trace them back to you.
	If a curfew is introduced will the cost of cat registration be	At this stage no changes are being looked at in relation to registration fees, however we are looking at advocating to the



reduced?	state government for standard fees across all councils.
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### Mandatory Desexing

	Questions	Answers
1	What are the benefits of desexing my cat?	There are many health benefits of desexing your cat, as well as getting to the source of the overpopulation that we face in the City of Whittlesea.
2	How does desexing my cat benefit the community?	Desexing your cat will help to address the overpopulation of cats within the City of Whittlesea and will also assist in nuisance complaints as desexed are less likely to roam.
3	What does desexing involve?	Desexing involves the removal of reproductive organs.
4	What is the cost of desexing your cat?	Cat desexing starts from \$150, but does vary according to sex, age and other factors
5	Does the Council cover any of the costs?	Council may cover a portion of costs if funding is available at the time.
	What if I'm intending to breed my cat?	Need to be a registered breeder
	If I'm a registered breeder am I exempt from the mandatory desexing?	If you are a registered breed with an applicable organisation you are exempt from mandatory desexing.
	What age is it recommended that a cat is desexed?	The RSPCA recommends the desexing of cats at a young age (under 4 months) before they reach puberty.
	Is early desexing harmful to my cat?	No, reports suggest that the health benefits of early age desexing far outweigh any possible side effects of early age desexing.

### 5.3 Strong Local Economy

Nil reports

### 5.4 Sustainable Environment

Nil reports

### 5.5 High Performing Organisation

#### 5.5.1 Unconfirmed Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee Meeting

**Responsible Officer** Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

**Author** Nicole North-Vanner, Internal Assurance and Governance Advisor

#### Attachments

1. Audit\_\_ Risk Committee Meeting 26 May 2022 v 5 [5.5.1.1 - 27 pages]

#### Purpose

To enable Council to have oversight and understanding of the Audit & Risk Committee operations and as required under Council's Audit & Risk Committee Charter, this report presents the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 26 May 2022.

#### Recommendation

**That Council note the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 26 May 2022.**

#### Key Information

The Audit & Risk Committee is an independent advisory committee of Council and its role is to report to Council and provide appropriate advice and recommendations on matters presented to it. It acts in this capacity by monitoring, reviewing and advising on issues within its scope of responsibility and assisting Council's governance obligations to its community.

#### **Audit & Risk Committee Meeting 26 May 2022**

The Audit & Risk Committee considered several reports at the meeting held on 26 May 2022 (Attachment 1), as well as confirming minutes from the previous meeting held on 25 November 2021.



Main agenda items included:

- CEO's Update
- Corporate Performance Report for the Period Ended 31 March 2021
- Risk Management Update
- Internal Audit:
  - Internal Audit Status Report
  - Internal Audit Reviews
  - Outstanding Action Items from Internal and Compliance Audit Reports
  - Strategic Internal Audit Plan
- External Audit Interim Management Letter for the year ending 30 June 2022
- External Agency Examination of Business Continuity Planning
- Draft Asset Plans and Asset Management Plans

### Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### High performing organisation

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

The establishment of the Audit & Risk Committee and the reports it receives are reflective of Council's commitment to the implementation of good governance principles. The Committee provides advice to Council to assist in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities for the financial and non-financial reporting processes, internal controls, the audit process, risk management and Council's process for monitoring compliance with legislation and regulations and the Code of Conduct.

### Link to Strategic Risk

**Strategic Risk Governance - Ineffective governance of Council's operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach**

The Audit & Risk Committee assists Council in monitoring its governance requirements and provides advice to Council to assist with fulfilling its oversight responsibilities.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

### Conclusion

The Audit & Risk Committee met on 26 May 2022. The unconfirmed minutes of that meeting are attached to this report for noting by Council.



# Minutes

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Thursday 26 May 2022 at 2:30 pm

Council Chamber at Civic Centre,  
25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang 3752

## Attendance

### Present

#### Members

#### Independent

Geoff Harry, Chairperson

Theresa Glab

Jen Johanson

Bruce Potgieter

#### Administrators

Lydia Wilson (Chair of Council)

#### Officers

Craig Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer

Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

Marilyn Kearney, Interim Director Corporate & Shared Services

Justin O'Meara, Director Planning & Development

Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

Nicole North-Vanner, Internal Assurance & Governance Advisor

#### In attendance

Mahesh Silva, Senior Auditor, RSD

Lynda Cooper, Senior Manager, Crowe

#### Apologies

Chris Eddy, Administrator

Martin Thompson, Partner, Crowe

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement

The Chairperson, Mr Geoff Harry opened the meeting by reading the following Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement:

“On behalf of the City of Whittlesea I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional Owners of this place.”

## Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

The Chairperson asked those in attendance the following question: "Does any Officer have a conflict of interest in any matter on the agenda today?"

No declarations were made.

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15.1 Confirmation of Date of Next Meeting .....	30

## 1 In-Camera Discussion

### 1.1 In-Camera Discussion

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>In Attendance</b>	Craig Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>External In Attendance</b>	Geoff Harry, Chairperson Theresa Glab Jen Johanson Bruce Potgieter Lydia Wilson

#### **Matters discussed:**

- Internal audit contract with Crowe (extended to June 2023) and preparation for next contract.
- Update provided by CEO on integrity agency matters and recent investigations.
- Chair of Council provided update on Community Leadership Program and Administrator engagement with community.

#### ***Committee Chairperson's Introductory Comments***

Following the in-camera discussion, the Committee Chairperson commenced the open section of the meeting by welcoming all those in attendance. The Chairperson noted the quality and continued improvements to meeting agenda packs.

The Committee Chairperson also recognised that this would be Ms Glab's final meeting as a member of the Committee.



## 2 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

### 2.1 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Governance Officer
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

#### Purpose

To provide the Committee with the minutes from the previous meeting for review.

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

**Moved:** Theresa Glab  
**Seconded:** Jen Johansen

**That the Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting dated 24 February 2022 be confirmed as correct.**

**CARRIED**

### 3 Matters arising from Previous Meetings

#### 3.1 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Governance Officer
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

**Matters Discussed:**

The Matters Arising from Previous Meetings report was presented for review.

The Committee Chair noted the additional activities conducted since last Committee meeting:

- Attendance by the Committee Chair at the April Council Meeting to provide the six-monthly Audit and Risk Committee Update Report; and
- Members completed a survey to assess the performance of Internal Audit.

The Chairperson recommended that the following items from the Agenda be taken as read and noted:

- Item 3.1 – Matters Arising from Previous Meetings
- Item 4.1 – Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan
- Item 10.1 – Administrator Expense
- Item 10.2 –CEO / CEO Executive Assistant’s Corporate Credit Card Expenditure
- Item 11.2 – Quarterly Compliance Update – Monitoring Compliance with the Governance Principles

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the report on matters Arising from Previous Meetings.**

**NOTED**

## **4 Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan**

### **4.1 Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan**

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Governance Officer
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

#### **Matters Discussed:**

The Annual Work Plan was noted.

#### **COMMITTEE RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan.**

**NOTED**

## 5 CEO's Update

### 5.1 CEO Update

**Responsible Officer:** Chief Executive Officer

**Author:** EA to CEO

**In Attendance:** Craig Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer

**Matters Discussed:**

The Committee Chair thanked the CEO for the report and specifically noted the Executive Leadership Team's thoughtful and diligent completion of the CEO Questionnaire, which provided valuable data. However, the questionnaire may benefit from lessons learned by seeking feedback.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Seek feedback from ARC members for suggested enhancements to the questionnaire.	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the contents of the CEO's Update report.**

**NOTED**

## 6 Financial Report

### 6.1 Corporate Performance Report for the Quarter Ended 31 March 2022

**Responsible Officer** Interim Director Corporate & Shared Services

**Author** Unit Manager Financial Strategy

**In Attendance** Aaron Gerrard, Acting Chief Financial Officer

#### Matters Discussed:

The Committee discussed the Corporate Performance Report and observed:

- Concerns about the likely significant 'capital expenditure projects being carried forward' in the coming years. Mitigation strategies outlined include:
  - Phasing of design and build works;
  - Reducing pipeline for subsequent years to build capacity to complete existing projects;
  - Reducing completion target to 85%; and
  - Establishment of the ePMO.
- The importance of securing external funding for two flagship projects (Aboriginal Gathering Place, and the Regional Sports & Aquatic Facility) approved by Council.
- The importance of ensuring we recognise assets at the time of asset transfer from Developers to Council.
- The need to ensure discretionary and non-discretionary reserves are itemised, managed and reconciled.
- The DCP has historically been detailed, well managed and controlled and the ARC have been impressed with the controls. Council has also received funding to further enhance this process. ARC requested an update to the Committee of these processes in November 2022.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Review and update the Financial Reserves Policy.	Acting Chief Financial Officer
Provide an update on the DCP Management Process to ARC in November	Manager Strategic Futures

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

**That the Committee note the Corporate Performance Report for the period ending 31 March 2022 be noted.**

**NOTED**

## 7 Risk Management

### 7.1 Risk Management Report

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Coordinator Risk Management
<b>In Attendance</b>	Brett Davidson, Coordinator Risk Management

**Matters Discussed:**

The Committee noted the Risk Management report.

The Committed commended the report and acknowledged the transition back to 'business as usual' from the pandemic response. The Committee requested a focus on the operational/service risks at the next meeting and noted that the risk management framework is being reviewed.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Report on Service Risks at September 2022 ARC Meeting	Coordinator Risk Management

### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the details of the Risk Management report and risk management activities throughout the period.**

**NOTED**

## 8 Internal Audit

### 8.1 Internal Audit Status Report & Project MAPs

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Governance Officer
<b>External in Attendance</b>	Martin Thompson, Partner, Crowe, Lynda Cooper, Senior Manager, Crowe

#### Matters Discussed:

Ms Cooper from Crowe presented the Internal Audit Status report and responded to questions from the Committee. Ms Cooper reported that the School Crossings, Waste Services Charges, Incoming Grants and Follow-Up audits were completed, and the Business Continuity Plan and Cyber Security audits are still in progress.

The Committee sought clarification that the School Crossings and Waste Services audits were initiated by Council Officers based on incident data and risk profiles, which it was noted displayed great initiative.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Suggestion to indicate in the papers an indicator to clarify which audits are Council Officer initiated.	Internal Audit

#### COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the Internal Audit Status Report.**

**NOTED**



## 8.2 Internal Audit Reviews

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Interim Director Corporate & Shared Services, Director Infrastructure & Environment, Director Planning & Development
<b>Author</b>	Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>In Attendance</b>	Amanda Dodd, Manager Sustainable Environment, Aaron Gerrard, Acting Chief Financial Officer, Arashdeep Singh, Acting Director Infrastructure & Environment  Cameron Cahill, Manager Property & Projects, Marilyn Kearney, Interim Director Corporate & Shared Services  Arashdeep Singh, Acting Director Infrastructure & Environment Justin O'Meara, Director Planning & Development
<b>External in Attendance</b>	Lynda Cooper, Crowe

### Matters Discussed:

Ms Amanda Dodd and Mr Aaron Gerrard attended to discuss the Special Review of Waste Charge Report. Ms Dodd reported that internal audit was engaged to conduct this special review and was a valuable experience.

Ms Dodd confirmed the findings of the report that the:

- Waste levy has been used appropriately and exclusively for waste purposes; and
- Waste service charges earned were less than the cost of services incurred, therefore, Council will be better placed to achieve a cost recovery model in the future.

The Committee considered the findings of the report and noted:

- The extended target implementation dates due to the strategic decisions to be made; and
- No additional partnerships for Council with similar legacy contracts that need to be considered.

Mr Cameron Cahill attended to discuss the Incoming Grants Internal Audit. Mr Cahill noted that the implementation of the ePMO will mitigate many of the findings and many of the actions are already in progress.

Mr O'Meara and Mr Arashdeep Singh discussed the School Crossings Internal Audit and noted that it was a Council initiated review.

Overall discussion about Internal Audit and linking to the Governance Principles

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Embed the Local Government Act Governance Principles into the Internal Audit reporting template	Internal Audit
Distinguish between officer-initiated audits and those arising from the audit program in audit reports.	Internal Audit

**COMMITTEE RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the contents and findings of Crowe’s Internal Audit Reviews of Grants – Incoming, Management of Children’s Crossings and Administration of Waste Service Charge.**

**NOTED**

## 8.4 Follow up of internal and compliance audit actions

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Governance Officer
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>External in Attendance</b>	Lynda Cooper, Senior Manager, Crowe

### **Matters Discussed:**

The Outstanding Action Items Report was presented and Management responded to questions from the Committee.

The Executive Manager Governance & Strategy reported that Council is tracking action items in a new application (CAMMS), so reporting may look different going forward.

The CEO gave an update on the review and analysis of all outstanding actions and notified the Committee that Council will no longer be monitoring the progress of the low-risk or opportunity for improvement items. This change will enable staff to prioritise the delivery of actions to mitigate high and medium risks.

## **COMMITTEE RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note:**

- 1. The Follow-Up of Selected Higher and Medium Risk Matters Raised in Prior Internal Audit Reports report undertaken by Internal Audit**
- 2. The actions by Council to manage the items from prior Internal Audit and Internal Assurance activities.**

**NOTED**

## 8.5 Review of Strategic Internal Audit Plan

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author:</b>	Governance Officer
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>External in Attendance</b>	Lynda Cooper, Senior Manager, Crowe

### Matters Discussed:

Ms Boyle reported that Council is working with Crowe and Management to develop a process for Assurance Mapping. The Assurance Map will consider activity undertaken to provide assurance over:

- Strategic Risks;
- High and Extreme Service Risks;
- Governance Principles;
- Directorate activity; and
- Whittlesea 2040 activities.

It was also noted that the draft SIAP included preliminary projects as well as the Assurance Mapping exercise. The SIAP will be updated in consideration of the findings from the Assurance Mapping exercise.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Updated SIAP to be presented to the September ARC meeting	Nicole North-Vanner

## RESOLUTION

**That the Committee endorses the Strategic Internal Audit Plan July 2022 to July 2023.**

**CARRIED**

### 8.6 Review the Performance of the Internal Auditor

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

**Author:** Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

**In Attendance:** Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

**Matters discussed:**

The results of the Internal Audit Assessment of Performance 2022 questionnaire were discussed. Ms Boyle outlined feedback on the timeliness and quality of the reporting and discussion included:

- Consideration of KPIs in contract management process
- Use of standard Risk Management likelihood and consequence matrix to assist in streamlining the process
- Classification of findings as Opportunities for Improvement versus low rated items.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Provide a report back to ARC at August meeting to consider performance indicators.	Unit Manager Governance & Risk
Crowe to work with internal assurance to align Crowe’s rating matrix with Council’s risk matrix.	Internal Audit

**RESOLUTION**

**That the Committee note the performance of the Internal Auditor Crowe.**

**NOTED**

## 9 External Audit

### 9.1 Review the Interim Management Letter year ending 30 June 2022

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Interim Director Corporate & Shared Services
<b>Author</b>	Unit Manager Financial Strategy
<b>In Attendance</b>	Aaron Gerrard, Acting Chief Financial Officer
<b>External in Attendance</b>	Mahesh Silva - RSD Audit

#### Matters discussed:

Mahesh Silva, Senior Auditor, RSD, reported on the Interim Management Letter and indicated that the audit is progressing to schedule and they're on track to give a fuller view when we receive the financials in June 2022.

The Committee acknowledged the benefit of having the External Auditor in attendance.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
ARC to be provided with a briefing paper with any early changes to asset data	Acting CFO
Circulate to the ARC last year's Annual Financial Report.	Acting CFO

#### RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the Draft Interim Management Letter year ending 30 June 2022.**

**NOTED**

## **10 Systems of Internal Control**

### **10.1 Administrator Expenses**

**Responsible Officer** Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

**Author** Governance Officer

#### **Matters Discussed:**

The Committee noted the Administrator Expenses report.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the Administrator Expenses report.**

**NOTED**



## 10.2 CEO / CEO Executive Assistant's Corporate Credit Card Expenditure

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Interim Director Corporate & Shared Services
<b>Author</b>	Unit Manager Financial Strategy
<b>In Attendance</b>	Aaron Gerrard, Acting Chief Financial Officer,

### **Matters Discussed:**

The Committee noted the CEO and CEO Executive Assistant's Corporate Credit Card Expenditure report.

### **RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the CEO Executive Assistant's Corporate Credit Card Expenditure Report.**

**NOTED**

### 10.3 Asset Plan and Asset Management Plans

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Infrastructure & Environment
<b>Author</b>	Directorate Office Assistant
<b>In Attendance</b>	Michael Papathanasiou, Acting Manager Assets & Facilities

#### Matters Discussed:

Michael Papathanasiou, Acting Manager Assets & Facilities reported that the Asset Plan is currently out for community consultation and Council are seeking feedback from the Committee before the adoption of the plan by 30 June 2022.

The Committee provided the following feedback on the Asset Plan and Asset Management Plans:

- The improvements and focus on data quality are evident;
- The Plans were insightful and well compiled;
- The Plans were accessible, clear and enable good reporting against metrics;
- A greater emphasis is required on how the risk of climate change is measured and Council should leverage from the recent impact from extreme weather events;
- Council should highlight design and construction changes that reduce impact;
- The commentary on economic impact requires the addition of pandemic impacts;
- Council needs to clarify positive or negative impact on detailed service level plans;
- The need to understand where Council sits relative to other Council's and whether our positioning could influence funding for future asset plan actions;
- Consideration as to whether Council can build monitoring systems into the Plans for continuous improvement;
- The level of community engagement was pleasing and indicates community engagement about the plan;
- Council's maturity level was discussed and anecdotally noted to be more progressed than other Councils;
- Consider inclusion of supply risks into the plan; and
- Further build a linkage into the report, which connects the importance of the municipality's population growth to Melbourne's prosperity. Melbourne's growth may present opportunities for State and Federal funding of projects in Council's plan.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Consider inclusion of ARC feedback into Asset Plan submission to Council.	Acting Manager Assets & Facilities

**RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the draft Asset Plan & Asset Management Plan.  
NOTED**

## 10.4 External Agency Examination Report

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

### Matters Discussed:

Ms Boyle summarised the report and noted that Council considered the various activations of the BCP over the last two years to be sufficient testing. Ms Boyle noted that this contrasted with the views of the auditors. The Committee considered and concurred that the navigation of the pandemic environment was significant testing in a live environment. It was also noted that a review of the BCP (by staff and Internal Audit) is currently underway and will be presented to the September 2022 meeting.

### RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the External Agency Examinations report.**

**NOTED**

## 11 Compliance

### 11.1 Verbal Update on Internal Assurance Program

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

#### Matters Discussed:

Ms Boyle provided a verbal update on the Internal Assurance Program and reported that Nicole North-Vanner has commenced as Internal Assurance & Governance Advisor. Ms North-Vanner will be creating a framework to continue to develop assurance and governance programs.

#### RESOLUTION

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note the update to the Internal Assurance Program provided verbally by the Unit Manager, Governance & Risk.**

**NOTED**

## **11.2 Quarterly Compliance Update - Monitoring Compliance with the Governance Principles**

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance & Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Unit Manager Governance & Risk
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance & Risk

### **Matters Discussed:**

The Quarterly Compliance Update report was noted.

### **RESOLUTION**

**That the Audit & Risk Committee note on key strategies and policies and how they comply with the governance principles.**

**NOTED**

## **12 Other Responsibilities**

## **13 Correspondence**

## **14 General Business Items**

### **14.1 General Business**

#### **Matters Discussed:**

The Chair thanked Ms Theresa Glab for her hard work, participation and invaluable contributions to the work of the Audit & Risk Committee and the City of Whittlesea during her tenure. The Chair gave praise to her engagement and depth of knowledge across a whole range of topics. The

Administrators also acknowledged Ms Glab's significant contribution to the Committee's body of knowledge, her expertise, and the rigour she demonstrates at each meeting. Mr Joyce also thanked Theresa for her help and dedication.

In response, Theresa thanked the Committee and reflected on its achievements, thanking the management team for the quality of the papers over the years.



## **15 Confirmation of Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee will meet on the following dates:

- 18 August 2022
- 1 September 2022
- 24 November 2022

Next meeting 18 August 2022. Meeting closed at 4:57pm.

## 5.5.2 Governance Rules Review

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Executive Manager Governance and Strategy
<b>Author</b>	Nicole North-Vanner, Internal Assurance and Governance Advisor
<b>In Attendance</b>	Samantha Boyle, Unit Manager Governance and Risk

### Attachments

1. DRAFT Governance Rules REVIEW 2022 v2 [2.9.1 - 44 pages]

#### Purpose

The *Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2022* introduces new provisions into the *Local Government Act 2020* requiring Council Governance Rules (the Rules) to include procedures relating to virtual meetings. Accordingly, the Rules were reviewed to include rules enabling virtual meetings, and in addition, they were refreshed to make them easier to understand.

#### Brief Overview

The *Governance Rules* detail the way in which Council Meetings are conducted, decisions are made and communicated and elections of Mayor and Deputy Mayor are managed.

The current *Governance Rules 2021* were approved by Council on 1 June 2021 and commenced operation on 2 June 2021. At the time of endorsement Council also confirmed that a review of the Governance Rules would be conducted by July 2022. This review enabled the opportunity to create an entirely new 'user friendly' document. The reviewed rules increase access and understanding for all stakeholders including community, Council Officers and Councillors (in preparation for the 2024 general election).

Plain English and gender-neutral language has been used to demystify Council Meeting procedures, and incorporates:

- The addition of reasonable adjustments to enable participation for Councillors and community members
- Provisions to accommodate virtual meetings, including the process for Council to request and record attendance virtually
- Acknowledgement of traditional owners
- A diversity governance statement in line with Council's vision: A place for all, (this will be stated instead of the prayer)
- Non gender specific references
- Rules detailing the process for the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor including direction on how to determine the elected candidate when two or more candidates have equal votes.

## Recommendation

### That Council:

1. **Endorse the updated Governance Rules for community consultation from 25 July 2022 until 21 August 2022.**
2. **Consider the feedback from the community consultation on the revised Governance Rules for adoption in September 2022.**

## Key Information

The Governance Rules detail Council decision-making processes including, how Council Meetings are conducted, how decisions are made and communicated, and how the elections of Mayor and Deputy Mayor are managed.

The Governance Rules in Attachment 1, have been revised to include:

- Non gender specific references
- The addition of reasonable adjustments to enable participation to ensure all our Community have fair and equal access to participate in Council processes. This includes making reasonable adjustments for Council participation, where required, as well as for the Community. Assistance may include physical assistance and/or translation services. The Governance Rules will be supported by internal Protocols to support access and engagement.
- Clearer language for better community understanding and practices
- A commitment to review the Rules within 12 months following a general election
- Acknowledgement of traditional owners and diversity governance statement. Previous versions of the Rules included that minutes would record if a prayer, good governance pledge or reconciliation statement was read at the Meeting. Past practice has been that the Chair reads an acknowledgement of traditional owners statement and a religious prayer is read by the CEO, praying for blessing to make informed and good decisions. The new version proposes to embed the following:
  - o Acknowledgement of traditional owners
  - o A diversity governance statement in line with Council's vision: A place for all.
- Rules to detail the process for the Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor (if any)
- Provisions for virtual meetings, including:
  - o Voting methods
  - o Provision for the CEO to change the meeting to a virtual platform when deemed necessary
  - o Process for Councillors to request attendance via a virtual platform
  - o Method for approval of Councillor attendance at a Council Meeting virtually
- Public Question Time
  - o Provision for the CEO to read a public question when the person who has submitted the question is unable to

- Allowance for public question time to be extended (at the discretion of Council) for up to 30 minutes
- Public statements as well as public questions being able to be read at a Council Meeting.
- Priority given to questions received by 12pm on the day of a meeting (adjusted from up until the start of the meeting). This will allow time for Council Officers to provide appropriate background information
- Procedures for accommodating more than two questions or statements per person
- Questions to be dealt with on an On Notice basis only where the entire question and appropriate contact details have been provided in writing. Incomplete questions will not to be prioritised during public question time.
- Petitions and Joint Letters
  - Ability for the CEO and Chairperson to reject Petitions and Joint Letters that are matters outside Council jurisdiction
  - Ability to address petitions in conjunction with a related Agenda Item;
  - Direction that no motion is to be made on a petition, or joint letter until (at least) the next Council meeting after that at which it was presented – with the exception of those that Council agrees to consider in conjunction with a current, relevant Agenda item
- Definitions of Meeting Roles to assist the community and new Councillors to understand the role of participants at the Council Meeting
- Method for documenting apologies and absences in the Council Meeting minutes to ensure that Councillor attendance is recorded accurately.

### Community Consultation and Engagement

There was significant community consultation undertaken in early 2021 which was considered prior to endorsing the *Governance Rules 2021*.

The Whittlesea Interfaith Network was consulted on 22 June 2022 to obtain their feedback on moving from stating a prayer to stating a diversity statement at Council Meetings. The Whittlesea Interfaith Network supported the proposal of a governance and diversity statement with inclusion of reference to diverse cultures, faiths and beliefs. The Whittlesea Interfaith Network will be consulted again on the proposed wording during the community consultation period.

The community will be invited to provide feedback on the Governance Rules during a four-week period commencing in late July. The Community will have the opportunity to have their say via Council's communication channels.

In addition to the consultation outlined above, various community groups; including the Whittlesea Disability Network, Whittlesea Multicultural Network and the Youth Advisory Group will be consulted to promote engagement and participation in Council decision making processes.

### Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### High performing organisation

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

Clear *Governance Rules* promote effective management of Council Meetings and decision-making processes and de-mystify proceedings, enabling community participation.

### Considerations

#### Environmental

No implications

#### Social, Cultural and Health

The amended Rules will facilitate Council Meetings and improve community access and understanding.

#### Economic

No implications

#### Financial Implications

Any costs associated with amending the *Governance Rules* are covered in the existing Council operating budget.

### Link to Strategic Risk

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council's operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

The efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making processes, especially during Council Meetings would be affected if Council fails to regularly review the Governance Rules. Council may be found in breach of legislative requirements if it fails to regularly review for changes in legislation that relate to the Governance Rules.

## Implementation Strategy

### Communication

If endorsed, community consultation will be undertaken on the Governance Rules, including the key changes to embedding the diversity statement, additional adjustments to improve access to Council for the community and consideration of processes for virtual meetings.

Council's communication channels will be used and community groups including the Whittlesea Disability Network, Whittlesea Interfaith Network, Whittlesea Multicultural Network and Youth Advisory Group; will be engaged to obtain feedback during the consultation period.

### Critical Dates

If endorsed by Council, community consultation will be undertaken for the period 25 July 2022 until 21 August 2022.

Following the consultation period and consideration of community feedback, it is planned for a final updated version of the Governance Rules to be brought to the 19 September 2022 Council Meeting for adoption.

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Rule 47 of the Governance Rules 2021, officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

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

## Conclusion

It is recommended that Council endorse the updated *Governance Rules* as contained in Attachment 1 for community consultation.





# Governance Rules

July 2022

*A place for all*





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## 1. Purpose of Council Meetings

**R100** The City of Whittlesea's Governance Rules (**Governance Rules**) provide a decision-making framework to achieve best community outcomes. The Governance Rules are based on the overarching governance principles (**Governance Principles**) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) (**Act**) that guide Council decisions so that they are lawful, sustainable, strategic, innovative, are considerate of regional, state and federal government plans, financially viable, and transparent.

## 2. Scope

**R200** The Governance Rules will be applied to the decision-making processes of:

1. Council, at a Council Meeting
2. A Delegated Committee, at a committee meeting
3. The Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) under delegation
4. A Council Officer with sub-delegation.

**R201** The decision-making process must demonstrate the application of the Strategic Planning Formula (Appendix 1) including the:

1. Overarching Governance Principles & Supporting Principles
2. Community Engagement Principles guided by the Community Engagement Policy
3. Strategic Planning Principles guided by the Community/Council Plan and Community Vision
4. Financial Management Principles guided by the Financial Policies
5. Service Performance Principles guided by the Complaints Policy
6. Public Transparency Principles guided by the Public Transparency Policy
7. Election Period Principles guided by the Election Period Policy (Appendix 3).

## 3. Commencement & Amendment

**R300** The Governance Rules commence on [insert date] and all others are revoked.

**R301** Governance Rules R440 to R448 relating to the nomination and election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor and R504 relating to Motion of Dissent are not applicable until after the 2024 General Election.

**R302** The Governance Rules may be amended by the CEO to reflect legislative or operational changes, as required, and will be notified to Council, Delegated Committees and Council Officers exercising a power or function under delegation; and if so, no community consultation will be required.



## 4. Council Decision Making

### Decisions Reserved Exclusively for Council Consideration

**R400** The council cannot delegate approval of the following:

- Election of Mayor or Deputy Mayor
- The CEO's appointment and employment
- Governance Rules
- Delegated Committees
- Council Vision
- Council Plan (Community Plan)
- Local Laws
- Community Engagement Policy
- Public Transparency Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Asset Plan
- Financial Plan
- Revenue & Rating Plan
- Financial Policies that give effect to the Act's financial principles
- Complaints Policy
- Annual Report
- Annual Budget
- Borrowing money

### Annual Schedule of Council Meetings – date, time, location and form

**R401** The CEO will consult with Council in November annually to plan the Annual Schedule of Council Meetings for the next calendar year. The Annual Schedule of Council Meetings will include the planned date, time, location and form of each Scheduled Council Meeting, which can be:

1. Physical:
  - a. At the Council Chambers in the Civic Centre, or
  - b. At another Council community venue within the Municipality (at least twice a year); or
2. Remote, using a web-based meeting application, or
3. Hybrid by holding the Council Meeting at the Civic Centre or another venue within the municipality, and enabling remote access to Councillors, the CEO, Council Officers, community members or third parties, with prior approval from the CEO.

**R402** The Annual Schedule of Council Meetings will be endorsed by the Council by or during December annually and will:

1. Be published on Council's website as soon as practical after Council's endorsement; and
2. Include at a minimum, two (2) Council Meetings at a venue which is not the Council Chambers.

**R403** The Annual Schedule of Council Meetings can be changed by Council resolution during the year, and will be republished.



- R404** Council Meetings will be open to public and all discussions and decision-making will be publicly available unless the Agenda item contains Confidential Information, and if so, the Chairperson will request:
1. Members of the public to Leave the Meeting for the duration of the Confidential Agenda items, discussions and decisions
  2. Council staff, except the CEO and Council Officer delegates, to Leave the Meeting for the duration of the Confidential discussions and decision.
- R405** The CEO can, in response to an emergency or another unexpected circumstance:
1. Change the Council Meeting location to an online web-based application meeting, or
  2. Adjourn, cancel or postpone a Council Meeting and will:
    - a. Give notice to Council and the public as soon as practical
    - b. Publish the relevant details on the Council website as soon as possible
    - c. Report on the circumstances of the emergency or unexpected circumstance at the next Council Meeting.
- R406** The Mayor can request the CEO, or delegate to approve an Additional Council Meeting by notice containing:
1. The proposed date, time, form and location for the Additional Council Meeting; and
  2. The reason that the business to be transacted at the Additional Council Meeting cannot be left to be considered at the next Scheduled Council Meeting.
- R407** A Councillor can request the CEO, or delegate to approve an Additional Council Meeting by notice containing:
1. Confirmation of the Agreement of at least one (1) other Councillors;
  2. The proposed date, time, form and location for the Additional Council Meeting; and
  3. The reason that the business to be transacted at the Additional Council Meeting cannot be left to be considered at the next Scheduled Council Meeting.
- R408** The CEO can declare an Additional Council Meeting and must disclose to Council:
1. The proposed date, time, form and location for the Additional Council Meeting; and
  2. The reason that the business to be transacted at the Additional Council Meeting cannot be left to be considered at the next Scheduled Council Meeting.
- R409** The CEO, or delegate, will either approve or refuse the request for an Additional Council Meeting within three (3) days of receiving the request.



**R410** The CEO will determine the location, date, time and form of the Additional Council Meeting, within three (3) days of receiving the request (where possible) and will:

1. Give notice to Council and the public as soon as practical
2. Publish the relevant details on the Council website before the planned meeting commencement time.

**R411** The business of Additional Council Meetings must be limited to:

1. Attendance and Apologies
2. Declarations of conflict of interest (where applicable)
3. The business listed in the Additional Council Meeting notice
4. Any other matter determined by the CEO or by Council resolution.

**R412** The council will ensure reasonable adjustments are made for Councillors and members to encourage participation at Council Meetings.

### **Approval of form attendance**

**R413** Councillor attendance at Council Meetings will be in person, so that Councillors can contribute to the discussion and debate and can vote by way of raising their hand, unless the meeting is held completely in virtual form or the Councillor has prior approval to attend virtually.

**R414** Councillors can request to attend Council Meetings virtually, however, attendance will only be recognised if they can contribute to the discussion and debate and vote by visibly physically raising their hand or raising their hand by electronic means.

**R415** Councillor requests to attend Council Meetings virtually, must:

1. Be submitted to the Chairperson as soon as practicable
2. Be approved by the Chairperson after consideration to whether the Councillor can:
  - a. Adequately contribute to discussion and debate
  - b. Be seen by participants so that they can see the raising of the Councillor's hand to vote
3. Be notified to the CEO allowing sufficient time for technical adjustments prior to the Council Meeting.



## Agenda preparation and publishing

- R416** The CEO will decide the form of the Agenda and requirements for Council Officer Reports to address the Strategic Planning Formula (see Appendix 1).
- R417** The CEO and/or delegate and the Mayor will meet to consider the Agenda prior to drafting.
- R418** The CEO will take into consideration any advice from the Mayor before developing the Council Meeting Agenda, including items for decision and noting.
- R419** The CEO will prepare the Agenda for publishing and distribute it at least three (3) days before the Council Meeting by:
1. Sending the published Agenda electronically to the Council, unless otherwise arranged in exceptional circumstances and in consideration of any reasonable adjustments required
  2. Notifying the public of the published Agenda on Council's website.
- R420** The CEO can, prior to the Council Meeting, seek the Chairperson's approval to withdraw an Agenda item, and if approved, will notify Council and the Community about the reasons for the withdrawal by:
1. Reporting the reasons for the withdrawal at the Council Meeting
  2. Publishing the change on the Council website if possible.
- R421** Councillors will engage with the community for feedback and can submit an item for discussion and decision to the CEO or delegate using the Notice of Motion Form (Appendix 4) for incorporation into the Agenda. Councillors will:
1. Consult with community members prior to the Council Meeting
  2. Be respectful of community views and Council Officer's recommendations on Agenda items
  3. Attend Council Meetings and participate in debate and discussion
  4. Demonstrate respect for the Chairperson's role and the duty of other Councillors to contribute to decision-making
  5. Apply the Strategic Planning Formula to decision making
  6. Act in accordance with the Councillor Code of Conduct.
- R422** The CEO will incorporate the Councillor's Agenda item if the Notice of Motion form is received at least seven (7) days prior to the intended Council Meeting. Otherwise, if the Notice of Motion form is received after that time, it will be incorporated into the next possible Scheduled Council Meeting.



- R423** The CEO can accept a Notice of Motion to Rescind or Amend a previous motion that:
1. Has not already been raised within the last three (3) months
  2. Has not already been acted on
  3. Is made either by:
    - a. A Notice of Motion or in a Council Officer Report, which is on the Agenda; or
    - b. Notice in writing to the CEO received before 12pm on the next business day after the Council Meeting that carried the resolution.

### **The Chairperson will chair the Council Meeting**

- R424** The CEO will Chair the first Council Meeting of a newly elected Council until the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (if any) are elected.
- R425** The Chairperson will be the Mayor once elected.
- R426** If the Mayor is absent from the Council Meeting, the Deputy Mayor will assume the role of Chairperson.
- R427** If both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are absent, then the Council will appoint a Chairperson by resolution. The CEO will chair the process for conducting the vote to elect the Chairperson.
- R428** The CEO, or delegate, may participate in the meeting to provide support to the Chairperson to help clarify the intent of any unclear motion to facilitate implementation; or assist with procedural issues that may arise.

### **Nominations and election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor (if any)**

- R429** If the Mayoral role is vacant, the CEO will decide the time, date, location and form for the election to be held, which must be at a Council Meeting open to the public and within one month of the Mayoral vacancy and/or Declaration of Result from the election.
- R430** Any Councillor is eligible for election or re-election to the role of Mayor or Deputy Mayor (if any).
- R431** Each Councillor is entitled to one (1) nomination and may nominate themselves for the role of Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor (if any).
- R432** A nominee that has not nominated themselves, must declare whether they accept or decline the nomination.





**R433** At the Council Meeting, the CEO will invite nominations for the Mayoral role and:

1. If only one (1) nomination is received, the CEO will declare the nominee Mayor; or
2. If more than one (1) nomination is received, invite the nominees (in order of nominations) to speak for up to three (3) minutes; and will:
  - a. Call for Councillors to vote on the nominates
  - b. Elect the Councillor who has an Absolute Majority of the total number of elected Councillors.

**R434** If the Deputy Mayoral role is vacant, the Council may resolve to establish a Deputy Mayor, and if resolved the Chairperson will invite nominations for the Deputy Mayoral role, and

1. If only one (1) nomination is received, the CEO will declare the nominee Deputy Mayor; or
2. If more than one (1) nomination is received, invite the nominees (in order of nominations) to speak for up to three (3) minutes each; and will:
  - a. Call for Councillors to vote on the nominates
  - b. Elect the Councillor who has an Absolute Majority.

**R435** Where an Absolute Majority cannot be obtained, the Council can hold an election for Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor (if required), at a time and date that is no later than five (5) business days from the resolution.

**R436** The election of the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor will be carried out by a show of hands or an electronic method (as determined by the CEO) that enables those observing to see who a Councillor has voted for at the time the vote is taken.

**R437** The Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor once elected can make a ceremonial speech to talk about Council/Community Plan priorities.

### **Addressing the Chairperson and referencing titles**

**R438** When addressing a Council Meeting a person must:

1. Do so through the Chairperson
2. Refer to the Mayor as "Mayor" and Deputy Mayor as "Deputy Mayor"
3. Refer to the CEO, after the general election and before a Mayor is elected, as "Chairperson" or "Chair"
4. Refer to a Councillor who has been appointed to the role of Chair at a Council Meeting as "Chairperson " or "Chair"



5. Refer to a Councillor as “Councillor [surname]”, and while Administrators are appointed “Administrator [surname]”
6. Refer to a Council Officer by their first and last names and position title when they are being introduced for the first time, and then subsequently all participants can refer to them by their first name.
7. Refer to any other person courteously and in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

### Opening the Council Meeting

**R439** The Chairperson will open the Council Meeting with:

1. A Statement to Acknowledge Traditional Owners; and
2. The Diversity Statement.

**R440** The Chairperson will run the Council Meeting and will guide the Council through the Agenda items unless they decide to make a Procedural Motion to change the Agenda’s order of business.

**R441** All apologies will be:

1. Submitted to the Chairperson in writing prior to the Council Meeting, or
2. Advised by another Councillor for submission at the meeting on their behalf; and the Chairperson will:
  - a. Confirm attendance; and
  - b. Note apologies.

**R442** A Councillor who is not In Attendance at a Council Meeting and has not submitted an apology or approved Leave of Absence will be recorded as absent and may cease to be a Councillor if absent for four (4) consecutive meetings without leave.



**R443** The Chairperson will ask Councillors to disclose any Conflict of Interest with any Agenda items and:

1. Councillors will disclose any Conflict of Interest, at the start of the meeting and when the Agenda item is read out, which will be discussed and noted in the Council Meeting Minutes; and will:
  - a. State the type of conflict either:
    - i. General
    - ii. Material:
  - b. Disclose the circumstances that gave rise to the Conflict of Interest; and
  - c. Leave the meeting prior to consideration and voting on the Agenda item for which they have a Conflict of Interest.
2. Councillors can seek policy advice from Council Officers to enable them to manage a Conflict of Interest.

**R444** The Chairperson will:

1. Ask Councillors to confirm the previous Council Meeting Minutes or raise any inaccuracy by referencing the Council Meeting Minutes and proposing an amendment for decision (Motion)
2. Ask for another Councillor to agree to put the amendment to a vote; and if so, the decision will be put to a vote (Second).

**R445** The Chair may seek advice from the CEO on matters related to the operation of the meeting procedure and/or Governance Rules during the Council Meeting, and may, if required, adjourn the meeting to do so.

## **Meeting debate and discussion**

**R446** Councillors must remain seated during debate and discussion.

**R447** The CEO can ask a Council Officer to give a verbal report on an Agenda item and the Council Officer:

1. Can only speak for five (5) minutes unless granted an extension to seven (7) minutes
2. Can only make comments that are relevant to the report's content
3. Cannot debate on the report.

**R448** Councillors will have the opportunity to ask questions to the CEO or delegate.

**R449** The Chairperson will:

1. Ask for a Councillor (Mover) to put forward an Agenda item for discussion and decision (Motion)
2. Ask for a Councillor to agree to the Agenda item (Seconded)
3. Invite discussion and debate on the Agenda item.
4. Invite Councillors to:
  - a. Vote on the decision (resolution); or
  - b. Propose:
    - i. An amendment to the Motion for agreement by the Mover and Seconded (if this is agreed, then this becomes the Motion); or
    - ii. An Alternate Motion; and if so, the Councillor will state the Alternate Motion to be seconded by another Councillor.
5. Any number of amendments to a Motion may be proposed, but only one (1) amendment may be accepted by the Chairperson, which must be dealt with before moving to a subsequent amendment or Alternate Motion.
6. At any time during debate, a Councillor may foreshadow a Motion to inform Council of their intention to move a Motion or Alternate Motion on an item in the Agenda at a later stage in the Meeting. A foreshadowed motion has no procedural standing (unless moved as an actual Motion) and merely assists the flow of the Meeting.

**R450** The Chairperson may adjourn the Council Meeting for the time required to prepare a Motion or an Alternate Motion, and:

1. A Motion or Alternate Motion which does not conform to the requirements of this rule can be rejected by the CEO
2. Will be read aloud by the proposer or can be written out by the proposer and given to the Chairperson to be read out  
Will be displayed so that all Councillors and community members can read it before a debate takes place, or a vote is taken.

**R451** The Chairperson will allow the following speaking times, unless the Council has decided on an extension of time to a maximum of two (2) additional minutes:

1. Five (5) minutes for the Councillor who put forward the Agenda item or amendment (mover of the motion)
2. Three (3) minutes for another Councillor to also present the Agenda item (seconded of the motion)



3. Each Councillor has the opportunity to ask questions of the Mover of the Motion or the CEO or delegate, for two (2) minutes
4. Two (2) minutes for the Mover to reply or conclude.
5. After the Mover has replied the Motion will be immediately put to a vote without any further discussion or debate.

**R452** The Chairperson can allow the CEO or Councillor to clarify a misrepresentation or misunderstanding or to respond to a request for more information.

### **Respectful debate and discussions**

**R453** A Councillor will listen and participate in discussion and debate respectfully in accordance with the Code of Conduct and will not:

1. Make any defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, or disorderly statement; and if requested by the Chairperson will unreservedly withdraw the statement
2. Interrupt others while speaking, however, the Chairperson can interrupt on a Point of Order.

**R454** Where discussion is adjourned by a resolution, the Councillor moving the adjournment has the right to speak first when the discussion is resumed.

**R455** When exercising a right of reply, a Councillor must not introduce new or additional matters.

**R456** The Chairperson can adjourn, postpone or cancel a Council Meeting, if order cannot be obtained and will report on the circumstances of the adjournment, postponement, or cancellation at the next Council Meeting.

### **Quorum**

**R457** A Council Meeting can be postponed in the absence of a majority of Councillors, by the CEO if a Quorum:

1. Is not present within 30 minutes after the Council Meeting's commencement; or
2. Cannot be formed during the meeting.

**R458** Where a Quorum cannot be reached because a majority of Councillors have declared a conflict of interest, Council can use an alternative decision-making method of either:

1. Splitting the matter into separate parts so that a Quorum might be reached for each part; or
2. Making decisions on component parts of a matter, which will be resolved when a Quorum can be reached at a future meeting; or



3. Establishing a Delegated Committee made up of the Councillors who are not conflicted and any other suitable people.
4. A decision made by a Delegated Committee in these circumstances will be reported to the next Council Meeting.

### Decisions and voting

**R459** Each Councillor:

1. Is entitled to one (1) vote and abstaining from the vote is considered a vote against the Agenda item for decision
2. Will indicate their vote by a show of hands unless Council decides on an alternative method if the method of voting is clearly visible to everyone at the Council Meeting.

**R460** Decisions require a majority of votes of those present at Meeting and eligible to vote to be approved (carried).

**R461** The Chairperson has the deciding vote if there is an equal number of votes on a decision.

**R462** A Councillor can call for a division immediately after a decision is approved (motion is carried) and before the Council Meeting has moved to the next Agenda item. If so, the Chairperson will:

1. Ask each Councillor who agrees with the motion to raise their hand; and
  - a. The Chair will call out the names of each Councillor with their hands raised
  - b. Results will be recorded in the Meeting Minutes.
2. Ask each Councillor who disagrees with the motion to raise their hand;
  - a. The Chair will call out the names of each Councillor with their hands raised
  - b. Results will be recorded in the Meeting Minutes.
3. Call out the names of Councillors who have abstained. These details will be recorded in the minutes.

**R463** A Councillor can question the Chairperson's ruling by calling a Motion of Dissent, and if so, the Chairperson will ask for a Secunder and if it's Seconded:

1. The Deputy Mayor will assume the role of Chairperson; and will
  - a. Put questions to the Mayor
  - b. Put questions to the mover of the Motion of Dissent
  - c. Invite debate on the Motion of Dissent
  - d. Put the Motion of Dissent to a vote to be decided by a majority vote.



2. The Mayor will then resume the role of Chairperson.

### **Rescission of previous resolution**

**R464** A Councillor can request the CEO to consider approving a Motion to be put to a Council Meeting to rescind a previous resolution of Council which will:

1. Be in writing by the proposing Councillor and seconded by another Councillor;
2. Indicate the reason for the request, either:
  - a. The previous resolution was made in error of law
  - b. The previous resolution was made in error of a material fact, or
  - c. There has been a significant change of circumstance since the resolution; and
3. Be received by the CEO by 12pm on the working day following the Council Meeting.
4. A Motion that would conflict with or have the effect of nullifying a previous resolution will not be considered unless submitted in accordance with this rule.

**R465** A motion to rescind or vary a previous resolution must be included on the Agenda for the Council Meeting at which it is to be considered and cannot be proposed as an item of Urgent Business.

**R466** Where a Notice of Motion to rescind a previous resolution of the Council has been considered and lost, a further motion to rescind or amend that previous resolution will not be considered by the Council until a period of three months has elapsed since the Notice of Motion was lost.

**R467** A Councillor may withdraw a Notice of Motion to rescind or amend a previous resolution.

### **Councillor/CEO Reports**

**R468** Councillors can provide a verbal or written report about their activities including representation on committees and participation in community events for up to three (3) minutes.

**R469** The Mayor can provide a verbal or written report about their activities including representation on committees and participation in community events for up to three (3) minutes.

**R470** The CEO can provide a verbal or written report about Council business and events for up to three (3) minutes.

### **Questions or discussions on the interpretation of the Governance Rules**

**R471** A Councillor can at any time during the meeting, ask the Chairperson to interpret the Governance Rules and make a ruling.





**R472** The Chairperson, on receiving a request to interpret the Governance Rules:

1. Will suspend any Agenda item discussions
2. Can consult with the CEO or CEO's delegate before giving a ruling
3. May adjourn the meeting to do so.

### Closing the meeting

**R473** A Council Meeting will conclude by 10:30pm unless extended by Council resolution to 11:00pm. If the business of the meeting is not concluded by 11:00pm the Chairperson can adjourn the meeting and will announce a date, time and place for the Council Meeting to continue, which must be within seven (7) days.

**R474** The Closure or the Adjournment of the Council Meeting will be recorded in the Council Meeting Minutes.

**R475** Council Meetings (or part of it) will be closed to the public for Confidential discussions and community members and Council Officer's not required will be asked to Leave the Meeting.

## 5. Community Participation

### Public Question Time

**R500** Community members are encouraged to provide input to the Council's decision-making process through Public Question Time, engagement forums or by contacting Councillors directly in advance of Council Meetings.

**R501** The Council will hold Public Question Time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting, to enable community members to ask questions, make statements or read out a Petition or Joint Letter to Council and will:

1. Accept a maximum of two (2) written questions or statements from each person or entity, which will be read out during Public Question Time if the Chairperson determines there is adequate time; and
2. The question or statement:
  - a. Is no more than 200 words in length per question or statement and
  - b. Contains the name, address and contact details of the person or entity submitting the question or statement

**R502** The Council can resolve to extend Public Question Time during a Council Meeting.

**R503** The Council will not hold Public Question Time during the election period.



- R504** Public Question Time will not be available during Meetings closed to the public.
- R505** The Council will ensure community members can make a submission to Public Question Time and will make reasonable adjustments to enable participation. Assistance may include physical assistance and/or translation services.
- R506** Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to Agenda items and those submitted prior to 12pm on the day of the Council Meeting. Any questions submitted after 12pm on the day may be read if there is sufficient time and otherwise, will be held-over until the next Council Meeting.

### **Hearing of Public Submissions**

- R507** Public submissions can be heard during public question time.
- R508** If there is insufficient time to hear all public submissions during Public Question Time:
1. Public question time can be extended, or
  2. The hearing of submissions can be deferred to later in the meeting, or
  3. The meeting adjourned to hear submissions and consider the relevant items at a later date.
- R509** The Chairperson will ensure each community member is given three (3) minutes (in total – not per question) to ask their question, make a statement, read a petition or joint letter, and the Chair may censure a person who:
1. Is discourteous or disrespectful of the Council and its processes, or
  2. Debates or joins Council discussions unless responding to a direct question from a Councillor; or
  3. Makes statements that may (or are intended to) prejudice, insult, or defame someone; or
  4. Exceeds the time limit.
- R510** The Chairperson will ask community members who interrupt or disturb the Council Meeting to stop the behavior, and if the behavior continues, will ask the person to leave the Council Meeting.
- R511** The submitter can ask the Chair or a delegate to read the prepared item during Public Question Time on behalf of the submitter.
- R512** Submissions, statements, or questions may be read by the Chair when the submitter is unable to read to the item.



## 6. Reasonable adjustments

**R600** The council will ensure reasonable adjustments are made to encourage community member participation at Council Meetings using Council's *Guide to Minimum Accessibility Requirements for Community Meetings, Consultations and Events*.

## 7. Recording of Council Decisions

### Minutes, footage and record keeping

**R700** The CEO will determine the form of Council Meeting Minutes, which will include:

1. Opening items of the Council Meeting as per Agenda preparation and publishing
2. Date, time and place of the Council Meeting, the time it commenced, ended and any times at which it was adjourned and/or resumed
3. Names of the Councillors and whether they were present, an apology or on leave of absence
4. Councillor arrival and departure times during the Council Meeting
5. Any actions taken in relation to Conflict of Interest
6. Name and title of Council Officer's presenting
7. Formal reports by Councillors appointed as a Council representative of another body/committee
8. Proposed motion or amendment
9. Names of Councillors who move and second any motion or amendment
10. Whether the proposed motion or amendment, which is seconded is carried or lost
11. Where a Division is called, the names of every Councillor, the way their vote was cast; and if they abstained
12. Name of a person who submitted a Petition or Joint Letter and the discussion topic
13. Details of questions or statements made during Public Question Time
14. Details of failure to achieve a Quorum
15. The reason for any adjournment and the time the Council Meeting was adjourned
16. Any other matter, which the CEO thinks should be:
  - a. Recorded to clarify the intention of the Council Meeting, or
  - b. Redacted to protect Council against any civil legal claim.

**R701** Once confirmed, the Minutes of a Council Meeting must be:

1. Endorsed by the Chairperson of the Council Meeting at which they are confirmed
2. Saved electronically and stored in accordance with Public Records Office Victoria standards.



- R702** The CEO will ensure the electronic confirmed Council Meeting Minutes are:
1. Provided to each Councillor at least three (3) days before the next Council Meeting
  2. Published on Council's website within two (2) weeks of the Council Meeting
  3. Available on Council's website for at least 12 months
  4. Recorded electronically by Council
  5. Recorded electronically and stored in accordance with Public Records Office Victoria standards.
- R703** The CEO can decide to publish footage of the Council Meeting on Council's website and any other electronic application determined by the CEO. If the footage is published:
1. It may be redacted to protect the Council against any civil legal claim
  2. It will be Copyright Protected.

## 8. Council decisions during Election Period

- R800** The council cannot make a Major Policy Decision during an Election Period.
- R801** The council can decide to apply to the Minister if there are extraordinary circumstances requiring a Major Policy Decision during the Election Period, and a decision cannot be made until Ministerial approval is granted.
- R802** A Major Policy Decision made during the Election Period without Ministerial approval is invalid.
- R803** The council will be insured, compensating anyone for loss or damage while acting in good faith of a Major Policy Decision, which is deemed invalid.

## 9. Compliance with the Governance Rules

- R900** The CEO or delegate can inform the Chairperson during the Council Meeting of any operational, financial or risk implications arising from a proposed resolution and any non-compliance with the Governance Rules, law or custom and the Chairperson:
1. Can ask the CEO or delegate to advise the Council on the implications or the non-compliance and guide how compliance can be achieved.
  2. Ensures the Meeting Minutes record accurate details.
- R901** The Councillor Code of Conduct applies to all Councillor conduct and behaviour, especially during Council Meetings, Delegated Committee Meetings, and Councillors will act with integrity in compliance with the Code.
- R902** The Staff Code of Conduct applies to the conduct and behaviour of Council Staff during the performance of their role.



## 10. Delegated Committee Meetings

**R1000** These rules apply to any Delegated Committee established by the Council and:

1. Any reference to “Chairperson” in these Governance Rules is to be read as the Chairperson of the Delegated Committee
2. Any reference to “Councillor” in these Governance Rules is to be read as Member.

**R1001** The Mayor can appoint a Councillor as the Chair of a Delegated Committee, which will replace any previous Council appointment if it is consistent with Council’s *Public Transparency Policy* and the Code of Conduct’s pledge to work together in the best interest of our community and to discharge responsibilities to the best of our ability and judgement.

**R1002** The Delegated Committee will establish a Terms of Reference or Charter, which can amend any of these Governance Rules for the purposes of that Committee, except for the rules in Section 6 - Recording of Council decisions.

**R1003** The established Terms of Reference or Charter must outline the processes for regularly informing the Council of decisions, outcomes and activities.

## 11. Decisions made by the CEO and Council Officers

**R1100** The CEO can make decisions on behalf of Council under delegation in the Instrument of Delegation, from Council using the Strategic Planning Formula to inform decision-making.

**R1101** Council Officers can make decisions on behalf of Council under sub-delegation in the Instrument of Delegations, using the Strategic Planning Formula to inform decision-making.

**R1102** Council Officers will manage conflicts of interest using the Staff Conflict of Interest Policy & Guidelines.



## 12. Definitions

**1200** In these Governance Rules, the following words and phrases mean:

Words	Meaning/Definition
Absolute Majority	The number of Councillors, which is greater than half the total number of elected Councillors/members of the delegated committee.
Act	<i>The Local Government Act 2020.</i>
Additional Council Meeting	An additional Council Meeting called by Councillors.
Agenda	A document containing the date, time, place and form of a Meeting and a list of business to be transacted at the Meeting.
Alternate Motion	A Motion that is different from the original Motion.
Authorised Officer	An Officer who is authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or Council under section 224 of the Act.
Chairperson	<p>The Councillor that has been appointed as Council's Chairperson or Delegated Committee Chairperson. The Councillor elected Mayor will be appointed as Council's Chairperson.</p> <p>The Chairperson plays a crucial role in providing an orderly, respectful, transparent and constructive meetings by ensuring all Councillors and members of Delegated Committees have the opportunity to be heard, matters are adequately discussed, meeting procedures are followed appropriately, and statutory requirements are adhered to.</p> <p>The Chairperson is an independent leader of meetings and generally does not participate in debate or move or second motions. The Mayor will act consistently with the adopted Councillor Code of Conduct and transparency commitments of the Council.</p> <p>Specific duties and discretions of the Chairperson are outlined throughout these Governance Rules.</p>
CEO	the Chief Executive Officer and includes an Acting CEO.
Conflict of Interest	Has the same meaning as section 126 (2) of the Act. A person has a conflict of interest if the person has a general conflict or a material conflict (see sections 127 and 128 of the Act).
Conflict of Interest Policy	Means the conflict of interest provisions of the Councillor Code of Conduct Policy or the Conflicts of Interests (Employee) Policy
Confidential Information	Has the same definition as in section 3(1) of the Act for example any information or decision making around tenders, security information, planning information that might encourage land speculation, law enforcement information, information that is legally privilege, personal information that is unreasonable to disclose, private commercial information.



Words	Meaning/Definition
Copyright Protected	A notice in place, which alerts a person that the footage or material is copyright protected.
Council	The Whittlesea City Council.
Council Meeting	Includes a Scheduled Council Meeting and an Additional Council Meeting.
Council Officer	A member of Council Staff.
Council Staff	A Council Officer but does not include a member of the Executive Leadership Team.
Councillor	A person who holds the office of Member of Council or a person appointed as an Administrator for City of Whittlesea under the Act. An Administrator performs the role of a Councillor for the purposes of section 28 of the Act. Reference to persons appointed as Administrators is a reference to persons elected as Councillors of Council, as the case may be. Councillors have a duty to participate in Council Meetings and provide good decision-making.
Councillor Code of Conduct	the code of conduct developed and adopted by Council under section 139 of the Act, which relates to the conduct of elected Councillors.
Declaration of Result	The result of the election in accordance with s.284 of the Act.
Delegate	Any Officer to whom powers, functions and duties have been delegated under the Act.
Delegated Committee	A delegated committee established under section 63 of the Act established by Council.
Delegated Committee Meeting	A meeting of a Delegated Committee.
Deputy Mayor	Has the same meaning as section 21 of the Act. The Deputy Mayor can exercise any powers of the Mayor if the Mayor is absent or unwell or the Mayoral role is vacant.
Diversity Statement	A statement to reflect the purpose of the governance process to ensure decision making is reflective of the diverse community and Council's vision: A Place for All. <i>"At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed good decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and in the future to support our community's vision of A Place For All."</i>
Division	A procedure to enable a Councillor to set aside a result of the vote announced by the chairperson, to be replaced by the outcome of a more conscious and transparent show of hands. A Division ensures the names of Councillors voting for and against are recorded in the Council Meeting Minutes.
Election Period	Starts 32 days before the Council general election and ends 6pm on election day (see also the Election Period Policy).





Words	Meaning/Definition
Foreshadowed Motion	A notification to inform Council of the Councillor's intention to raise a Motion at a later stage. It has no procedural standing.
In Attendance	A Councillor is able to participate in a Council Meeting. This includes being able to be seen by all participants, contribute to discussion and debate and are able to vote.
Instrument of Delegation	The instrument that is approved by Council, which gives the CEO the ability to do certain things, including spend up to a certain amount of money, enter into contracts and make decisions without Council approval.
Instrument of Sub-Delegation	The instrument that is approved by the CEO, which gives Council Officers, the ability to do certain things, including spend up to a certain amount of money, enter into contracts and make decisions without Council approval.
Joint Letter	Correspondence addressed to the Council, which is signed personally (or by a representative) by at least three (3) people from different addresses stating the address of each signatory; and explaining the matter and the remedy sought.
Leave of Absence	A request from a Councillor to be absent from a Council Meeting for more than four (4) Meetings with CEO approval (section 35(1)(e) of the Act).
Leave the Meeting	Request for Councillors, community member's and Council Officers to leave the meeting either by temporarily suspending online access or by physically leaving the Council Meeting location.
Major Policy Decision	Any decision that: (a) relates to the appointment or remuneration of the Chief Executive Officer but not to the appointment or remuneration of an Acting Chief Executive Officer; or (b) commits the Council to expenditure exceeding one per cent of the Council's income from general rates, municipal charges and service rates and charges in the preceding financial year; or (c) the Council considers could be reasonably deferred until the next Council is in place; or (d) the Council considers should not be made during an election period (section 69 of the Act)
Mayor	The Councillor elected to be the Mayor under section 25 of the Act.
Member	A Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee.
Motion of Dissent	A motion that seeks to correct what may have been a mistake of fact or interpretation by the Chairperson.
Mover	A Councillor who is moving a Motion.
Notice of Motion	A notice setting out the text of a motion, which a Councillor proposes to move at a Council Meeting.



Words	Meaning/Definition
Petition	A written statement addressed to the Council and: signed personally by not less than twelve persons of separate addresses, except that, in the case of illness or disability, it may be signed by a representative of a person; b) stating the address of each signatory; and setting forth the matter on which a remedy or relief is sought, excluding an online petition.
Point of Order	A point of order occurs when someone draws attention to a Governance Rules violation in a Council Meeting.
Procedural Motion	A procedural motion relates to how the meeting is conducted and can be used to change the sequence of the Agenda, accept minutes, stop discussions for an immediate decision, prevent a decision being made or to postpone a decision (see Procedural Motion Appendix 3).
Quorum	At a Council Meeting or Delegated Committee Meeting means an Absolute Majority of Councillors or Members of the Delegated Committee, as the case requires.
Secunder	A Councillor who is supporting the Motion.
Staff Code of Conduct	The code of conduct developed and adopted by Council under section 139 of the Act, which relates to the conduct of Council Officers.
Statement to Acknowledge Traditional Owners	<i>"On behalf of the City of Whittlesea I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional owners of this place. I would also like to personally acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging"</i>
Urgent Business	A matter that has arisen since distribution of the Agenda for a Meeting and cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next Meeting.



### Appendix 1 – Strategic Planning Formula

Must apply this column to decision-making for all decisions	Must apply these columns where relevant to decision-making				
Overarching Governance Principles	Community Engagement Principles	Strategic Planning Principles	Financial Management Principles	Service Performance Principles	Public Transparency Principles
<b>Lawful</b>	Any decision likely to affect human rights to be considered against the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2006 & the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.	In accordance with the Council / Community Plan.	Australian Standards & Legislation		Council decision making processes are transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential in accordance with <i>the Local Government Act 2020</i> or any other Act.
<b>Achieve best outcomes for the community into the future</b>	A community engagement plan clearly defines objectives and scope  The community engagement plan is implemented.	Addresses the community vision and demonstrates benefit. Monitors performance through reporting. Identifies and manages implementation risks.	Considers the financial impact to the community.	Services provided are accessible, equitable, diverse and represent community need. Fair and effective processes for considering and responding to service performance complaints.	Written record of a decision affecting the rights of a person will record the opportunity provided to the person to have their views considered.
<b>Economically, socially and environmentally sustainable</b>		Ensures sufficient finances and resources to implement the strategy.	Identifies, monitors and manages financial risks.  Financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances.	Quality and costs standards for services provide good value to the community.	Reported in the Annual Report and other Performance Reporting
<b>Community engagement in strategic planning &amp; decision making</b>	Managed in accordance with Council’s Community Engagement Policy.				Council information must be publicly available unless it’s confidential.  Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.
<b>Innovation &amp; continual improvement</b>		Strategies are informed with data		Performance is analysed for continual improvement.	
<b>Collaboration with other Councils/Govt /Stat bodies</b>	Networked to increase reach	Granting opportunities	Economy of scale		
<b>Financially viable</b>			Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions must be managed in accordance with financial policies and strategic plans		
<b>Consistent with regional, state &amp; national plans</b>					
<b>Transparent</b>	Community has access to objective, relevant & timely information to inform participation.  Participants are given reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.  Participants are informed how the community engagement will influence Council decision making.		Accounts and records that explain the financial operations & financial position are to be kept.		Managed in accordance with Council’s Public Transparency Policy.  Council information must be publicly available unless— (i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.  Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.



## Appendix 2 – Election Period Policy

### Policy statement

This Policy demonstrates Council's compliance with the election period provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020 (Act)* and demonstrates how we will:

- Responsibly and transparently continue Council business during the 'caretaker' period.
- Prevent the Council making any significant new policies or decisions that could unreasonably bind a future Council.
- Prevent any decisions from being made that affect voting in an election and ensures that public resources, including staff resources, are not used in election campaigning or in a way that may improperly influence the result of an election, or improperly advantage existing Councillors as candidates in the election.

### Objective

The objective of the Policy is to:

- Assist Council in continuing to make fair, transparent decisions during the Election Policy Period.
- Establish procedures to prevent Council from making Major Policy Decisions or using significant resources during the election period;
- Establishing procedures to ensure that access to information held by Council is made equally available and accessible to candidates during the election;
- Place limits on public consultation and the scheduling of Council events during the election period.

### Scope

This Policy relates to behaviour and decision making during the 'caretaker' period for all Councillors and Council Staff.

### Key linkages

All City of Whittlesea policies comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

This policy has clear linkages to section 69 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.



## Procedural Guidelines

### 1. Application of Policy

Council will function in accordance with this Policy during the election period commencing on **midnight on Tuesday 24 September 2024 and ending 6pm on Saturday 26 October 2024.**

While nominations for the general election will close at noon on 24 September 2024, the definition of the term “election period” in the Act indicates that the “election period” commences at the beginning of that day – that is, immediately after midnight.

#### 1.1 Role of Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Delegate will ensure as far as possible, that:

- All Councillors and Council Officers are aware of this policy, at least 30 days before the start of the election period; and
- Major policy decisions or significant decisions are resolved before the start of the election period, or deferred, where appropriate, for determination by the incoming Council.

### 2. Decisions by Council

#### 2.1 Major Policy Decisions

##### 2.1.1 Tender Decision

If Council accepts a tender prior to the election period, the contract documents can be executed during the election period as long as the contract documents have not been substantively changed since the Council’s decision to enter into the contract.

Council can continue to make town planning decisions under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* during the election period and they will still be processed in accordance with usual practices and statutory timelines.

##### 2.1.2 Prohibition on Council

Council or a Council Officer under delegation is unable to make Major Policy Decisions and any major policy decision made during the election period is deemed to be invalid under the Act and may be compensable.

##### 2.1.3 Extraordinary Circumstances

If Council considers that there are extraordinary circumstances which require the making of a major policy decision during the election period, Council may, by resolution, request an exemption from the Minister for Local Government.



## **2.2 Inappropriate Decisions**

Section 69 of the Act requires Council's election period policy to include procedures to prevent Council making inappropriate decisions during the election period.

Inappropriate decisions made by a Council during an election period include any of the following:

- Decisions that would affect voting in an election; and
- Decisions that could reasonably be made after the election.

The council acknowledges that it may not be reasonable to leave a decision to be made after the election if:

- a) the failure to make the decision would have a negative impact on Council, the municipality or the local community; and
- b) the disadvantages of not making the decision exceed the benefits of deferring the decision until after the election.

## **3. Public Consultation and Council Events**

### **3.1 Public Consultation**

Public consultation activities may be necessary during the election period to ensure that the community is continuing to be consulted in decision making processes. Where it is within Council's control to do so, Council will seek to avoid actions which will require Councillor public consultation during the election period. Councillors will not attend or be involved in public consultation.

Any public consultation will avoid express or implicit links to the election.

### **3.2 Council Events**

Council will ensure that any significant Council events are scheduled to occur outside the election period. Where a Council event must be held during the election period, Councillor involvement will be minimised.



#### **4. Council Publications**

##### **4.1 Prohibition on Publishing Material during the Election Period**

Public Affairs will only certify electoral advertisements and information about the election process.

A Councillor or Council Officer will not print, publish or distribute, or be involved in the printing, publishing or distribution of an electoral advertisement, handbill, pamphlet or notice during the election period if the electoral advertisement, handbill, pamphlet or notice has not been certified by Public Affairs.

##### **4.2 Certification of Publications**

Publications which require certification include:

- Brochures, pamphlets, handbills, flyers, magazines and books;
- Reports (other than Agenda papers and Minutes);
- Advertisements and notices, except newspaper notices of Meetings;
- New website material;
- Social media publications (which includes Facebook and Twitter posts and video footage);
- Emails with multiple addresses, used for broad communication with the community;
- Mass mail outs or identical letters sent to a large number of people by or on behalf of the Council;
- Media releases;
- Material to publicise a function or event; and
- Any publication or distribution of Councillor's speeches.

Application should be made to the Public Affairs Department who will seek certification of the publication of election advertisements.

Copies of all certified documents and applications will be retained for three (3) years by the City of Whittlesea.





#### **4.3 Prohibited Material**

'Electoral matter' is taken to be intended or likely to affect voting in an election if it contains an express or implicit reference to, or comment on:

- The election;
- A candidate in the election; or
- An issue submitted to, or otherwise before, the voters in connection with the election.

It's therefore likely that "electoral matter" will include material which:

- Publicises the strengths or weaknesses of a candidate;
- Advocates the policies of the Council or of a candidate;
- Responds to claims made by a candidate; or
- Publicises the achievements of the elected Council or particular Councillors.

#### **4.4 Council Publications Including Councillor Information**

Council publications printed, published or distributed during the election period will not include any reference to individual Councillors, unless Council is legally obliged to include any such reference.

#### **4.5 Website**

Councillor contact information will remain available on the website during the election period, but Councillors' profiles will be removed.

Any news published on Council's website during the election period must be certified by the Chief Executive Officer.

#### **4.6 Annual Report**

Council is required to produce and put on public display a copy of its Annual Report. The Annual Report may be published by the CEO, or delegate during the election period. The Annual Report will not contain any electioneering or material that could promote individual Councillors.

The Annual Report does not require certification by the CEO; however, any publication of an extract or summary of the Annual Report will require certification.

#### **4.7 Council and Committee Agendas and Minutes**

Agenda papers and Minutes of Council and Committee Meetings do not require certification by the CEO, or delegate, unless they are printed or published for wider distribution.



#### **4.8 Social Media**

Any publication on social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wiki pages during the election period must be certified by the CEO, or delegate.

Staff responsible for administering Council's social media sites will monitor them during the election period and use moderation features where available to ensure no electoral matter is posted.

#### **5. Council Resources**

##### **5.1 Application of Resources**

Council resources, including email addresses, photos, offices, vehicles, staff, hospitality, services, property (including intellectual property), equipment and stationery must be used exclusively for normal Council business during the election period and must not be used in connection with any election campaign or issue.

Any Councillor misusing their position to gain or attempt to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or any other person or to cause or attempt to cause detriment to Council or another person may breach section 76D of the Act. Circumstances involving the misuse of a position include using public funds or resources in a manner that is improper or unauthorised.

##### **5.2 Role of Executive Assistant to Mayor**

The Mayor's Executive Assistant can not be asked to undertake any tasks connected directly or indirectly with the election campaign of a Councillor standing for re-election.

##### **5.3 Use of Council Equipment by Councillors**

Councillors may continue to use Council equipment provided to them for normal Council duties, subject to existing protocols and terms of use. Councillors standing for re-election must not use Council equipment such as printers as a resource to assist with election campaigns.

##### **5.4 Councillors' Entitlement to Reimbursement**

Reimbursements of Councillors' out-of-pocket expenses during the election period will only apply to costs that have been incurred in the performance of normal Council duties and not for expenses that support or relate to a candidate's election campaign.

##### **5.5 Council Branding**

Council logos, letterheads, or other corporate branding or intellectual property must not be used for, or linked in any way to, a candidate's election campaign.

##### **5.6 Cessation of Ward Specific Publications**

Ward-specific publications or Councillor profiles and articles will not be published by Council during the election period.



## **5.7 Officers' Discretion**

Where the use of Council resources appears to relate to the election campaign of a Councillor standing for re-election, the matter must be referred to the CEO or Delegate.

## **6. Media Services**

### **6.1 Restriction on Services**

During the election period, the Council's Public Affairs and Customer Service Departments' services must not be used in any way that might promote a Councillor as an election candidate.

Council publicity during the election period will be restricted to communicating normal Council activities and initiatives and is subject to CEO, or delegate approval and certification.

### **6.2 Media Releases/Spokespersons**

Media releases will minimise references to specific Councillors and will not promote a Councillor as an election candidate. The CEO or Delegate will be referenced instead.

Media releases will require certification by the CEO or delegate.

### **6.3 Councillors**

Councillors will not use their position as elected representatives or their access to Council Officers and other Council resources to gain media attention in support of an election campaign.

### **6.4 Council Employees**

In accordance with the staff Code of Conduct, during the election period, no Council employee may make any public statement that relates to an election issue unless prior approval has been obtained from the CEO or Delegate.

## **7. Assistance to Candidates**

### **7.1 Role of Returning Officer**

All election related enquiries from candidates, whether sitting Councillors or not, will be directed to the Returning Officer or, where the matter is outside the responsibilities of the Returning Officer, to the CEO or Delegate.



## **7.2 Candidate Information**

Council will provide candidates with a Councillor Candidate Information Kit to assist them in running and nominating for Council.

Candidates will complete a Nomination Form, which will be available from the Returning Officer, accompanied by the prescribed nomination fee.

Candidates will complete and submit an Election Campaign Donation Return in the prescribed form within 40 days after election day. The return must contain details of any campaign donation or gift valued at more than the gift disclosure threshold (currently \$500 as at June 2022) which was received between the date 30 days after the previous election and the date 30 days after the current election.



## Definitions

Where terms used in this Policy are defined in the *Local Government Act 2020* (Act), their use in this Policy is consistent with the definitions in the Act.

Words	Meaning/Definition
Councillor	A person who holds the office of Member of Council or a person appointed as an Administrator for City of Whittlesea under the Act. An Administrator performs the role of a Councillor for the purposes of section 28 of the Act. Reference to persons appointed as Administrators is a reference to persons elected as Councillors of Council, as the case may be. Councillors have a duty to participate in Council Meetings and provide good decision-making.
Election period	Has the same meaning as 'election period' in section 3(1) of the Act and means the period that starts on the last day on which nominations for that election can be received and ends at 6pm on election day.
Inappropriate decisions	Includes any of the following: a) decisions that would affect voting in an election; or b) decisions that could reasonably be made after the election.
Public consultation	A process that involves an invitation or invitations to individuals, groups or organisations or the community generally to comment on an issue, proposed action or proposed policy, and includes discussion of that matter with the public.
Publish	By any means, including by publication on the Internet.
Major Policy Decision	Is defined by the Act to mean a decision a) Relating to the employment or remuneration of a CEO, other than a decision to appoint an acting CEO; b) To terminate the appointment of a CEO; To enter into a contract the total value of which exceeds 1% of Council's total revenue from rates and charges in the preceding financial year.
Significant decision	In the context of this policy, significant decisions include: a) decisions that may irrevocably commit the incoming Council to substantial expenditure or to other significant actions; and b) decisions that may have an irrevocable and significant impact on the municipality or a significant section of the community.



**Appendix 3 – Procedural Motions**

Procedural Motion	Form	Who can move or second	Is a seconder required?	Matter in respect of which motion may be moved	When is the motion prohibited	Effect if carried	Effect if lost
Adjournment of debate to later hour/date	That this matter be adjourned until _____	Any Councillor	Yes	Any matter	When another Councillor is speaking	Motion and amendments postponed to the stated time/date	Debate continues unaffected
Adjournment of debate indefinitely	That this matter be adjourned until further notice	Any Councillor	Yes	Any matter	When another Councillor is speaking	Motion and amendments postponed but may be resumed: (a) At the same Council Meeting upon resolution to resume (b) At any later Council Meeting if on the Agenda	Debate continues unaffected
Adjournment of Meeting to later hour/date	That the Meeting be adjourned until _____	Any Councillor	Yes	Any Meeting	When another Councillor is speaking	Council Meeting adjourns immediately until the proposed time (or date)	Council Meeting continues unaffected
Adjournment of Meeting indefinitely	That this Meeting be adjourned until further notice	Any Councillor	Yes	Any matter	When another Councillor is speaking	Council Meeting adjourns until further notice	Council Meeting continues unaffected
The Closure	That the question be now put	A Councillor who has not moved, seconded or spoken to the motion or any amendment of it	No	Any matter	(NB A closure motion shall not be accepted by the Chairperson unless the Chairperson considers there has been sufficient debate for and against the original motion or amendment)	Motion or amendment in respect of which the closure carried is put to the vote immediately	Debate continues unaffected
Laying the question on the table	That the matter lie on the table	A Councillor who has not moved, seconded or spoken to the motion or any amendment of it	Yes	Any matter	During the election of the Mayor/Deputy Mayor	Motion and amendments not further discussed or voted on until: (a) Council resolves to take the question from the table at the same Council Meeting (b) Matter is placed on an Agenda and the Council resolves to take the question from the table	Debate continues unaffected
Proceeding to the Next Business	That the Meeting proceed to the next business	A Councillor who has not moved, seconded or spoken to the matter to which the motion relates	Yes	Any matter		(a) If carried in respect of a motion, its effect is to remove that motion from consideration  (b) If carried in respect of an amendment, its effect is to dispose of the amendment and debate resumes upon the substantive motion	Debate resumed at point of interruption
Suspension of Standing Orders	That Standing Orders be suspended to ...' (reason must be provided)	Any Councillor	Yes	To allow full discussion or clarification of an issue		The rules of the meeting are temporarily suspended for the specific reason given in the motion  No debate or decision on any matter, other than a decision to resume Standing Orders, is permitted	The meeting continues unaffected
Resumption of Standing Orders	That Standing Orders be resumed	Any Councillor	Yes		When standing orders have not been suspended	The temporary suspension of the rules of the meeting is removed and the rules of the meeting resume	The meeting cannot continue
Alter the order of business	That the item listed at xx on the agenda be considered before/after the item listed as xy	Any Councillor	Yes	Any matter	(a) At a Meeting to elect the Mayor; or (b) During any debate	Alters the order of business for the meeting	Items are considered in the order as listed in the Agenda



## Appendix 4 – Notice of Motion Form

### NOTICE OF MOTION NO ##

<Title>

To All Administrators/Councillors

Please TAKE NOTICE that it is my intention to move at the Scheduled Meeting of Council to be held on <insert day>, <insert date> at <insert time>pm:

#### PREAMBLE

<If required enter preamble>

#### MOTION

That Council:

Administrator/ Cr <Name> .....

Date: <insert date>

Acknowledged by the CEO on .....  
(signature and date)





## Appendix 5 – Public Questions Form

### Questions to Council FORM

**REFER TO THE PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES ON THIS FORM FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Mobile no:**

**Email:**

You may submit one or two questions or make a public statement at any Meeting. If more than two questions are submitted, you will be required to nominate which two questions will be put to Council and the priority order.

Priority will be given to questions/statements that relate to matters listed on the Agenda.

Does your question(s)/statement relate to a matter listed on the Agenda?

Yes  (Item No.           ) No

**Question One** (maximum 200 words)

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**Question Two** (maximum 200 words)

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If you have any queries, please contact the Governance Team on 9217 2294.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Privacy Notification Statement**

Council is collecting your name and address to be able to provide you with a written response to your question. If you do not provide this information, Council will be unable to provide you with a written response. Your telephone number/email address are optional and may assist Council in seeking clarification from you on the information you are seeking. You may access or correct your personal information by contacting Council. Only your name will appear in the Council minutes along with details of your question(s) and Council's response. The other personal information on the form will only be disclosed to Administrators and Council Officers and will be retained on Council files until destroyed in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973*.



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## PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

These Procedural Guidelines provide guidance to members of the public wishing to submit a question to a scheduled Council meeting and contain procedures for administering Rule 530-535 of Council's Governance Rules relating to Public Question Time.

### Purpose of Public Question Time

The purpose of Public Question Time is to facilitate the asking and answering of questions by members of the public at scheduled Council meetings. Priority will be given to questions that relate to matters listed in the Agenda (including speaking to a Petition or Joint Letter).

If you wish to submit a question you are encouraged to submit it before 12 noon on the day of a scheduled Council meeting. This gives Council the opportunity to properly investigate the question and provide a meaningful response at the meeting.

Questions can be submitted via email ([info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au)), delivery to the Council Offices, Customer Service desk or via mail (Locked Bag 1, Bundoora MDC VIC 3083). The schedule of Council meeting dates and times is available on the City of Whittlesea website - <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

### Questions preferably in writing

If you would like to ask a question at a Council meeting, your question should be in writing and in English unless this unreasonably prevents or hinders you from participating.

If you are unable to provide your question in writing and/or in English and would like to make alternate arrangements, please contact the Council's Governance Team on 9217 2294 before the Council meeting to discuss the means by which you may submit your question to the Council meeting.

If you do not speak English, we offer various language services to help you communicate with us including VITS and LanguageLinks. If you have a hearing or speech impairment you may use the National Relay Service.

We recommend that your question is submitted on the form available on our website (<https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>) to ensure your record your contact details together with your question.

### Disallowed questions/statements

Prior to the Council meeting the CEO, in consultation with the Chairperson, may disallow a question or statement on the grounds outlined below. When disallowing a question, the CEO may receive advice from Executive Manager Governance and Strategy in relation to potential grounds for disallowing the question.

A question/statement may be disallowed by the Chairperson if they determine that it:

- relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
- is malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
- deals with a subject matter already answered;
- is aimed at embarrassing an Administrator/Councillor or a member of Council staff;



- may lead to a breach of Council's requirement to comply with its statutory obligations; or
- deals with a matter that should be or has been considered as a confidential matter.

The Executive Manager Governance and Strategy, or their delegate, must advise the person who submitted the question that the question has been disallowed prior to the scheduled Council meeting, and the reason or reasons for the question being disallowed.

Where time permits and where appropriate, the Executive Manager Governance and Strategy or their delegate may contact the person who submitted the question and work with them to revise their question to remove the ground or grounds for disallowing the question.

### **Notification of Questions Received**

The CEO must notify Council of any public questions received prior to the scheduled Council meeting, including any questions which are disallowed.

The Chairperson will advise the meeting of a question received that has been disallowed and will provide reasons to the meeting as to why it has been disallowed. Statements and opinions are not permitted during question time and will not be read at the meeting.

Where a question relates to a matter to be dealt with in the confidential section of the Agenda or is of a nature that would ordinarily be dealt with in the confidential section of the Agenda, the Chairperson may, without reading the question aloud, advise the person submitting the question that the question will not be dealt with during the meeting and a written response will be provided as soon as is practicable.

### **Reading out Questions**

A time is set aside for Questions to Council during scheduled meetings of Council when you will be given an opportunity to read out your question. A person may submit one or two questions at any Meeting. If more than two questions are submitted by a person, they will be required to nominate which two questions will be put to Council.

Each person will be allocated up to three (3) minutes in total (not per question) if they wish to address Council in relation to their questions. A person who may need additional support in presenting to Council due to an impairment or disability, will be afforded reasonable accommodations to do so.

### **Responding to Questions**

The Chairperson may nominate a Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer to respond to a question. Prior to responding the Chairperson may seek contextual information from the person submitting the question.

The Chairperson or Chief Executive Officer to whom the question has been directed may require a question to be put on notice. If a question is put on notice, the answer to it must be recorded in the minutes of Council. A written copy of the answer must be sent to the person who asked the question within 14 days with copies to be provided to all Administrators/Councillors.

The answer given at the Council Meeting is an interim reply only and the Council's official response will be provided by either an Administrator or a Council Officer, on behalf of the Council, generally within five (5) working days of the Council meeting. The response will be



provided in writing or any other reasonable form determined by Council or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

If you are not in attendance, we will read out your question (or a summary of your question) and provide a response at the meeting and also record your question and the interim response in the minutes of the meeting subject to it complying with the Governance Rules and these Guidelines.

If you are not in attendance, you may view the response to your question/s by accessing the livestream of the Council meeting. Where possible, live streamed Council meetings are also closed captioned.

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

Council plays a pivotal role in ensuring our residents have confidence and feel supported to participate and engage within the community and with Council.

Further information on additional support provided by Council can be obtained by referring to Council's '*Guide to Minimum Accessibility Requirements for Community Meetings, Consultations and Events*'. This Guide outlines the minimum accessibility requirements staff need to follow when facilitating or supporting community meetings including Council meetings to meet the needs of people with disabilities. (Please note that this guide is currently under production and will be published to Council's website when available.)

If you are unable to attend the Council meeting in person for any reason, including because of an 'attribute' as defined in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (e.g. a disability) you may nominate a representative to attend on your behalf.

### **Alternative ways to contact Council**

There are many other ways that you can contact Council to ask a question, receive a service or obtain information. You can contact us by telephone, by visiting the Council offices, by sending a letter or an email or by speaking with one of our staff out in the community. Questions to Administrators time at scheduled Council Meetings is but one method that residents and ratepayers can use to formally contribute to public debate or seek to input to, and obtain feedback from, Council.

You are also welcome to contact the Panel of Administrators by email via [panel@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:panel@whittlesea.vic.gov.au) or by telephone 9217 2500. The Administrators have been appointed to perform the roles, responsibilities and functions of a Councillor which includes representing residents and ratepayers of the City of Whittlesea and to make decisions on your behalf at Council meetings.

**6 Notices of Motion**

Nil Notices of Motion

**7 Urgent Business**

Nil Urgent Business

**8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update**

**9 Confidential Business**

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

**Recommendation**

**THAT the Chair of Council recommends that the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to the following confidential matters in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.**

**9.1 Confidential Connected Communities**

Nil Reports

**9.2 Confidential Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Nil Reports

**9.3 Confidential Strong Local Economy**

Nil Reports

**9.4 Confidential Sustainable Environment**

Nil Reports



## 9.5 Confidential High Performing Organisation

### 9.5.1 Contracts 2020-2 Facilities Variation Contract Update

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Director Infrastructure & Environment
<b>Author</b>	Jim Karabinis, Manager Assets & Facilities
<b>In Attendance</b>	Jim Karabinis, Manager Assets & Facilities

This report has been designated as confidential by the Director Infrastructure and Environment, under delegation from the Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with Rule 53 of the Governance Rules 2021 and sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—

- (i) relates to trade secrets; or
- (ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

In particular the report contains information regarding information classified as Commercial in Confidence as it includes contract pricing at time of tender.

**9.6 Confidential Notices of Motion**

Nil Confidential Notices of Motion

**12 Closure**