



City of  
Whittlesea

# Advocacy Prospectus

2023-25

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The City of Whittlesea is located in Melbourne's northern suburbs about

**20 kms from the CBD**

The Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea are

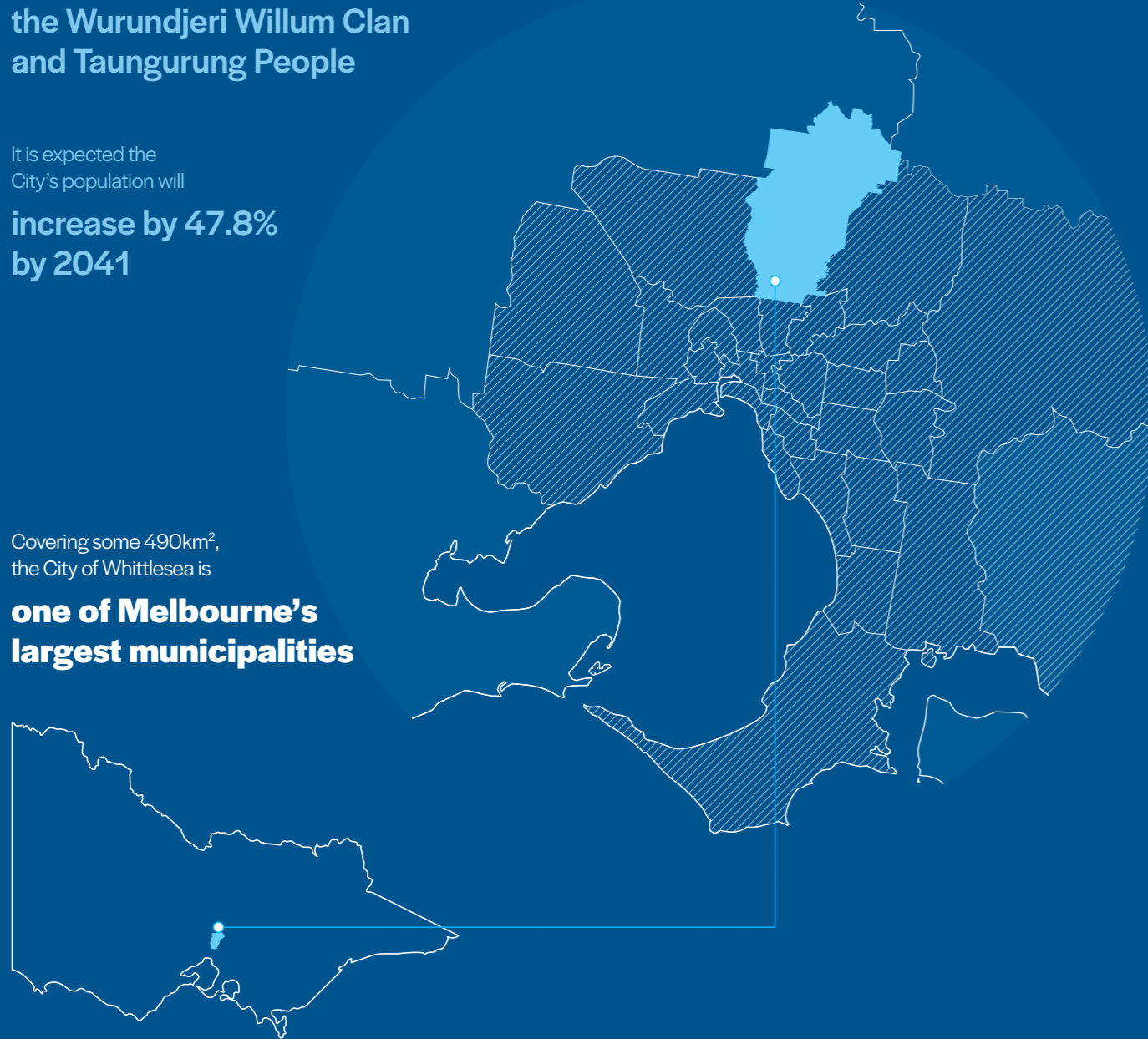
**the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People**

It is expected the City's population will

**increase by 47.8% by 2041**

Covering some 490km<sup>2</sup>, the City of Whittlesea is

**one of Melbourne's largest municipalities**



## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

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# A growing community that's shaping Victoria

**This advocacy prospectus seeks State and Federal Government co-investment in 18 key initiatives across seven integrated economic domains:**

- 01 Community services and infrastructure;**
- 02 Employment;**
- 03 Public transport;**
- 04 Health and wellbeing;**
- 05 Affordable housing;**
- 06 Roads; and**
- 07 Environmental sustainability.**

These domains interact to affect economic development, with investment in the initiatives in one domain also advancing outcomes in others. For example: investment in our public transport initiatives will increase local housing values by \$2.44 billion and deliver travel time savings of \$523 million by 2030.<sup>1</sup>

Investment in our community services and infrastructure initiatives will deliver more than \$4.5 million in improved health outcomes each year, create 800 jobs, and add more than \$719 million in economic value to the region.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, our investment initiatives work together to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability. This is essential for our residents now – and critical if we are to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population.

This integrated approach can also inform municipal development in other rapidly growing, outer suburban councils. By co-investing across all domains, Council and State and Federal governments can work together to develop a transparent, evidence-based model that sets meaningful benchmarks for future growth areas.

*“Our investment initiatives work together to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability. This is essential for our residents now – and critical if we are to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population.”*

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the state; projections show it will grow by nearly 50% by 2041.<sup>3</sup> This exceptional growth poses challenges and opportunities.

ABS figures show the City is the fifth most disadvantaged metropolitan municipality in Victoria. The pandemic has compounded this disadvantage. Unemployment in the City is now at 5.9% – higher than Greater Melbourne at 5.3% and Victoria and the nation at 5% and 5.1% respectively.

But initiatives such as the E6 Freeway and the Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH) will revive our region. The E6 will provide a key national-scale road corridor for NSW, ACT, Queensland, and Victoria and connect trade gateways and nationally significant manufacturing and distribution clusters.

The MFIH will create 3,500 construction jobs and 6,500 ongoing jobs. This will drive Victoria's food and fibre exports and help reboot the food services and distribution sectors, which experienced an 80% drop in income through the global pandemic.

All the initiatives in this prospectus are supported by our communities. They address our region's chief deficits and optimise our region's strengths.

Together they will:

- deliver world-class infrastructure and services;
- build a stronger, inclusive, and more resilient community;
- increase participation and reduce disadvantage;
- enhance health outcomes and living standards;
- reinvigorate our regional and state economies; and
- protect and enhance our environment.

Most importantly, they will transform Victoria, advancing the objectives of Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051 and generate social, economic, and environmental prosperity for our state.

We welcome your support.



**Lydia Wilson**  
Chair of the Panel  
of Administrators



**Craig Lloyd**  
Chief Executive Officer

<sup>1</sup> Public Transport Modeling Reports 2021, Independent study by Hale

<sup>2</sup> Deloitte Australia, 2022, *Regional Sports Centre at Mernda Business Case (Draft)*, pp25-26

<sup>3</sup> Unless stated otherwise, the data in this section is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Census and Informed Decisions (ID), 2023 City of Whittlesea profiles

# Summary of Partnership Opportunities

For more information on the City of Whittlesea advocacy priorities visit:

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

## COMMUNITY SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre

Co-invest in a state-of-the-art regional aquatic and sports centre in Mernda.



#### Aboriginal Gathering Place

Co-invest \$4M in a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place in Quarry Hills Regional Park, South Morang.



#### Mobile and Broadband Coverage

Investment to fix mobile and broadband blackspots in existing areas and provide connectivity for future growth areas.

## EMPLOYMENT

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub

Fund the development of MFI as a transformational project establishing the northern region of Melbourne and Victoria as a world-class agri-food industry and innovation precinct.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### Wollert Rail

Finance a feasibility study to progress the delivery of Wollert Rail.



#### Tram 86 Extension

Utilise existing land to extend Tram Route 86 (T86) to the Plenty Valley Town Centre.



#### Better Bus Services

Deliver better bus services, including improvements to existing services and establish new services for our growing community.



#### Wallan Electrification and Connection

Extension and electrification of the Upfield line to Wallan.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### Adolescent Mental Health Services

Commit \$1.036M pa in ongoing funding for the Youth Enhanced Service to support our young people.



#### Family Violence Prevention Programs

Invest \$200K year one (\$160K pa thereafter) to deliver locally tailored initiatives to prevent violence against women and to assist with family violence recovery.



#### Gambling Harm Minimisation

Expand the Libraries After Dark program to minimise gambling harm by investing \$240K pa.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### Social and Affordable Housing

Invest in social and affordable housing to break the cycle of homelessness, strengthen the connections to support systems, and reduce rental and mortgage stress.

## ROADS

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### E6 Freeway

Bring forward construction of the proposed E6 Freeway to 2027 to ensure it is complete by 2035.



#### Road Upgrades

Deliver key planned road upgrades for arterial roads across the City of Whittlesea.



#### Active Travel Infrastructure

Partner with Council to deliver active travel infrastructure projects to promote walking and cycling in our community.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### OPPORTUNITIES



#### Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands

Fulfil the 2009 commitment to establish a 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea.



#### Integrated Water Management

Invest \$200K to undertake a feasibility study into integrated water management.



#### Electric Vehicle (EV) transition plan

Co-invest to support Council's Electric Vehicle (EV) transition plan by 2025.

# About the City of Whittlesea<sup>1</sup>

47.8%

population increase by 2041

17%

of residents live in poverty

37.6%

of residents born overseas

27%

under 20 years

52.8%

of households are couples with children

16.6%

of households are one-parent families

## LOCATION

- Located over 490km<sup>2</sup> in Melbourne's northern suburbs and about 20 kilometres from the CBD, the City of Whittlesea is one of Melbourne's largest local government areas (LGAs).<sup>4</sup>
- It spans the Federal electorates of Scullin and McEwen, and the State electorates of Bundoora, Mill Park, Thomastown and Yan Yean.

## TRADITIONAL OWNERS

- The First Nations communities of Wurundjeri Willum and Taungurung people are the original inhabitants of the area and the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

## POPULATION

- The City is projected to be home to 244,124 residents in 2023.
- This is expected to increase to 360,692 residents by 2041 – a 47.7% increase – with more than 8,000 new residents settling each year and more than 60 babies born each week.<sup>5,6</sup>

## LOCALITIES

Beveridge	Epping	South Morang
Bruces Creek	Humevale	Thomastown
Bundoora	Kinglake West	Whittlesea
Donnybrook	Lalor	Wollert
Doreen	Mernda	Woodstock
Eden Park	Mill Park	Yan Yean

## COMMUNITIES

- More than 70% of the City of Whittlesea is rural but most residents live in the City's established suburbs: Bundoora, Epping, Lalor, Mill Park and Thomastown.
- These established areas, and the new suburbs of Mernda, Doreen, South Morang, Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook, are expanding rapidly.

<sup>4</sup> City of Whittlesea, 2021, Annual Report 2021-2022, p6.

<sup>5</sup> Informed Decisions (.ID), 2023, City of Whittlesea: Population forecasts.

<sup>6</sup> City of Whittlesea, 2022, Community Plan 2022-2025, p6.

## INDUSTRY



The City's four largest industry employers are healthcare and social assistance, construction, retail trade and manufacturing with key employment precincts located within Epping, Thomastown, Bundoora and South Morang.<sup>7</sup>

## PEOPLE



- The City of Whittlesea has the third largest population of First Nations communities in Metropolitan Melbourne.<sup>8</sup>
- It is also home to vibrant migrant communities, with more than 37.6% of residents born overseas – compared to 35.7% in Greater Melbourne and 30% in Victoria.
- More than 45% speak a language other than English at home – compared to 34.1% in Greater Melbourne and 27.6% in Victoria.
- The main languages spoken at home are Arabic (5.2%), Macedonian (4.3%), Punjabi (4.3%), Italian (3.6%) and Greek (3.1%).

## AGE



- The median age is 35 years – compared to 37 for Greater Melbourne and 38 for Victoria.
- Almost 27% of the population is under 20 – compared to 23.8% in Greater Melbourne and 23.6% for Victoria.
- Around 18% of the population is over 60 – compared to 20.2% in Greater Melbourne and 22.4% for Victoria.

## GENDER



The City has slightly fewer females and slightly more males than Greater Melbourne or Victoria, with:

- 50.4% females – compared to 50.8% for Greater Melbourne and 50.8% for Victoria; and
- 49.6% males – compared to 49.2% for Greater Melbourne and 49.2% for Victoria.

## HOUSEHOLDS



The City has more couples with children and more one-parent families than Greater Melbourne or Victoria, with:

- couples with children comprising 52.8% of all households – compared to 47.8% for Greater Melbourne and 45.5% for Victoria;
- couples without children comprising 29.1% of all households – compared to 35.4% for Greater Melbourne and 37.6% for Victoria; and
- one-parent families comprising 16.6% of all households – compared to 15% for Greater Melbourne and 15.2% for Victoria.

## SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE



The City of Whittlesea is the fifth most socioeconomically disadvantaged of Victoria's 31 metropolitan local governments.<sup>9</sup>

- 17% of residents live in poverty – compared to 12.6% in Greater Melbourne, 13.2% in Victoria and 13.1% in Australia.
- Almost 60% of people aged 15+ who are living in poverty are female.<sup>10</sup>

## EDUCATION



- Almost 20% of children in the City were vulnerable in one or more childhood development domains.<sup>11</sup>
- Only 51.2% of residents aged 15+ held educational qualifications at certificate level or above – compared to 57.6% in Greater Melbourne and 55.7% in Victoria.
- Only 23.4% had a Bachelor or higher degree – compared to 32.8% in Greater Melbourne and 29.2% in Victoria.
- 17.5% had vocational qualifications compared to 14.8% in Greater Melbourne and 16.7% in Victoria.

## EMPLOYMENT



63% of residents were in the labour force – compared to 64.1% in Greater Melbourne and 62.4% in Victoria.

Of residents in the labour force:

- 56.3% were employed full-time – compared to 56.9% in Greater Melbourne and 56.2% for Victoria;
- 31.5% were employed part-time – compared to 31.6% for Greater Melbourne and 32.2% for Victoria;
- 28.8% were employed as professionals or managers – compared to 40.6% for Greater Melbourne and 39% in Victoria; and
- 5.9% were unemployed – compared to 5.3% in Greater Melbourne and 5% in Victoria.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> City of Whittlesea, 2023, *Investment Prospectus 2023*

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Victoria: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Summary*.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, *Socioeconomic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) by Local Government Area*.

<sup>10</sup> Tanton, R, Peel, D & Vidyayamma, Y, 2018, *Every Suburb, Every Town: Poverty in Victoria*. Victorian Council of Social Services.

<sup>11</sup> Australian Early Development Census, 2021, *Data Explorer*.

<sup>12</sup> Informed Decisions (.ID), 2022, *City of Whittlesea: Unemployment*, June quarter.

Section 1

# Community services and infrastructure

Investment in our community services and infrastructure initiatives will provide opportunities for Aboriginal residents, deliver more than \$4.5 million in improved health outcomes each year, create 800 jobs, and add more than \$784 million in gross benefits to Victoria over 30 years.



## 01

## Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre

## INVESTMENT SOUGHT

## Future investment for remaining phases

Initiative	Electorates
Co-invest to construct a state-of-the-art aquatic and sports centre in Mernda	Yan Yean McEwen

The Centre will have:

- 6 indoor and 8 outdoor floodlit multipurpose courts;
- 50 metre multipurpose pool;
- warm water, teaching and leisure pools, spa, steam and sauna;
- gymnasium with group fitness rooms; and
- health consulting and wellness suites.

## Benefits

- Deliver \$784.3M in economic value and \$150.7M in social value to Victoria over 30 years
- Deliver \$4.52M in improved health outcomes each year
- Deliver \$135.6M in improved health outcomes over 30 years
- Create 800 jobs

## Rationale

Almost 45% of adults residing in the City of Whittlesea do insufficient physical activity – the second highest proportion in north-eastern Melbourne. The City also has:<sup>13</sup>

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

Increasing the rate of physical activity by just 10% can reduce disease and death related to physical inactivity by 13% and 15% per year respectively. More children participating in sports drives better health and educational outcomes for them and increases lifetime earnings by \$1.5 billion every year.<sup>14</sup>

Research shows significant benefits from investing in community sports and active recreation infrastructure, including the following health benefits:<sup>15</sup>

- reduced risk of chronic disease, dementia, and falls;
- improved mental health and wellbeing;
- improved education and employment outcomes;
- reduced anti-social behaviour; and
- increased connectedness and inclusion.

## Return on investment

Community engagement shows strong support for the centre – 72% of survey respondents rate the centre's importance at 7 out of 10 or higher and 45% rate it at 10 out of 10.<sup>16</sup>

Council estimates the centre will attract up to 550,000 visits per year and run at a profit when fully operational.<sup>16</sup> Modelling shows the centre will generate:

- \$784.3 million of economic value for Victoria over 30 years.
- Around 800 jobs, including 430 local jobs, comprising:
  - 135 direct jobs in the local building and construction sector;
  - 241 jobs in indirect intermediate industries; and
  - 54 jobs through indirect consumption impacts.

- \$4.52 million each year and \$135.6 million over 30 years in improved health outcomes including:<sup>17</sup>
  - \$2.3 million each year in acute benefits through improved mental health, increased productivity, and improved educational outcomes;
  - \$1.31 million each year in chronic benefits through reduced rates of cardiovascular disease, breast and bowel cancer, Type 2 diabetes, dementia, as well as health system savings; and
  - \$0.86 million each year through increased water safety education and reduced risk of drowning.

Our business case also identifies the following key benefits:

- increased participation in more non-physical activities;
- increased participation by women and girls in structured and unstructured physical activity; and
- improved job opportunities for women.

Additional multipurpose indoor and outdoor courts will increase participation in netball and basketball. This is particularly significant for women and girls who comprise 96% of the City's netball registrations and 28% of our basketball registrations.

In 2017, Netball Victoria identified that half of the 1,967 registered netballers within the Whittlesea local government area (LGA) played with associations outside the LGA. The new courts will allow almost 1,000 netballers to stay in the LGA to play.<sup>18</sup>

According to Royal Life Saving Australia, more than 70% of the 67,000 workers in the national aquatic industry are female.<sup>19</sup> Providing infrastructure that encourages and supports gender equity in physical activity will also create job opportunities for women in areas such as sports centre management and leadership, lifesaving, fitness and aquatic exercise instruction, and swimming and water safety instruction.

## Progress

City of Whittlesea welcomes the Victorian Government's \$20M investment towards phase two in delivering the sports stadium and eight outdoor courts. Council is seeking future investment in phase three for delivery of the aquatic centre.

<sup>13</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>14</sup> Boston Consulting Group, 2017, Intergenerational review of Australian sport, p37.

<sup>15</sup> KPMG, 2018, The value of community sport and active recreation infrastructure.

<sup>16</sup> Sport and Leisure Solutions, 2018, Mernda aquatic centre planning study, City of Whittlesea, p10.

<sup>17</sup> Deloitte Australia, 2022, Regional Sports Centre at Mernda Business Case (Draft), pp25-26

<sup>18</sup> City of Whittlesea, 2019, Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041.

<sup>19</sup> Royal Life Saving Australia, 2019, National Aquatic Workforce Profile.

## Aboriginal Gathering Place

### INVESTMENT SOUGHT

**\$4M**

### Initiative

Co-invest in an estimated \$12M purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place in Quarry Hills Regional Park, South Morang, to be completed by 2024.

### Electorates

Mill Park  
Scullin

### Benefits

- Advanced 'closing the gap' targets with improved health, education and employment outcomes for local First Nations residents
- Increased reconciliation between First Nations and non-First Nations residents

### Rationale

Victoria has 14 Aboriginal Gathering Places, but none in the City of Whittlesea, despite the City having one of the fastest growing First Nations population in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Research shows that Aboriginal Gathering Places have positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of First Nations people.<sup>20</sup> They:

- enhance physical health through improved attendance and participation in community health checks, chronic disease screening and specific health programs;
- boost social and emotional wellbeing through the development of social support networks and social connections;
- enhance pathways to education and employment;
- enrich cultural awareness and cultural identity through cultural activities and links to community networks; and
- empower community members through leadership development and mentoring.

Aboriginal Gathering Places also benefit the wider community by:

- optimising the contribution of First Nations' skills and knowledge across the community and economy;
- fostering mainstream awareness of, and respect for, First Nations culture; and
- creating opportunities for reconciliation between First Nations and non-First Nations people.

These outcomes reduce government and community costs associated with poor health and economic and social disadvantage. They are consistent with the goals of the Federal Government's *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031*, which recognises culture as a protective influence on physical, social, and emotional wellbeing.

### Return on investment

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, family and community, Country and place, cultural identity, and self determination are strongly associated with improved health and wellbeing outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

The Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will advance progress towards key 'closing the gap' targets through programs including:

- bush kinder programs that foster connection to Country and Indigenous culture;
- 'Welcome Baby to Country' ceremonies;
- leadership development and mentoring programs;
- men's and boy's programs;
- sustainability, land care and stewardship programs;
- job creation, with First Nations organisations and businesses providing programs and services at the centre; and
- primary and secondary school programs and additional programs for 'at risk' students, with approximately 300 students attending the centre each week for environmental and cultural programs.

The First Nations community and stakeholders will also help co-design the facility and deliver key components, including landscaping, fit-out, and artwork. These activities and outcomes will reduce individual and government costs associated with poor health and economic and social disadvantage.

### Progress

The local First Nations community has identified the Quarry Hills Regional Park in South Morang as the preferred site for the Gathering Place. One of the defining landscapes of the City of Whittlesea, this unique area is surrounded by natural habitat.

It provides easy access to connect with Country, space to balance private cultural ceremonies and community programs, and opportunities to facilitate connection across the broader regional park and wider community.

Council has also formed a Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) comprising of local Aboriginal Elders, local leaders and grassroots community members. The group has provided constructive advice to Council and architects to inform the concept plan.

<sup>20</sup> Indigenous Health Equity Unit University of Melbourne and Gathering Place Reference Group, 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 for the Department of Health and Human Services*, ppv-vi.

<sup>21</sup> Verbunt, E, Luke, J, Paradies, Y, et al, 2021, Cultural determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – a narrative overview of reviews. *Int. J. Equity Health* 20, p181.



## 03

Mobile and broadband  
coverage

## Initiative

## Electoralates

## Black spots

ALL

Fix eight mobile and broadband blackspots, including:

- Cooper Street business precinct;
- University Hill;
- Olivine Estate and Kinbrook Estate;
- Thomastown;
- Aurora Estate;
- Whittlesea Township;
- Beveridge, Merriang and Glenvale; and
- 100c Gorge Road, South Morang.

## New connections

Thomastown

Provide connectivity for six future growth areas, including:

- Cooper Street West, Epping;
- Donnybrook/Woodstock Precinct;
- Wollert Precinct;
- Mernda Town Centre;
- Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT); and
- Northern Quarries/Craigieburn South.

Yan Yean

McEwen

Scullin

## Benefits

- Ensure all residents and businesses are connected during emergency events
- Improve access to, and participation in, employment and education
- Improve social connection
- Eliminate disruption to local business
- Prepare for future demand

## Rationale

Mobile and broadband are essential infrastructure, they are critical for relaying information and staying connected in emergencies.

Blackspots have a direct impact on the social determinants of health, including access to health care and education, employment, and business opportunities.

Residents and businesses report that poor connectivity at home and work is having the following serious impacts:

- disrupting employment seeking activities;
- disrupting business operations;
- increasing business costs as businesses seek alternative coverage;
- affecting business and employment income;
- reducing family and community connection;
- disrupting education, including home schooling, homework, and other study;
- disrupting library services; and
- disrupting the delivery of emergency services and community safety information.

## Return on investment

Upgraded and improved mobile and broadband connectivity will reduce and remove these impacts. They will:

- enhance community safety, particularly during emergencies;
- improve social connection; and
- increase access to, and participation in, education, employment, and health services.

Providing services for planned developments will allow residents, businesses, and services immediate access to mobile and broadband and all the benefits of connectivity. This will help circumvent social problems that arise through isolation and reduced opportunities to connect and participate.

## Progress

The State Government's Connecting Victoria program recently announced projects covering the City of Whittlesea. These include mobile towers in Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Whittlesea, Wollert, Woodstock, Yan Yean and broadband solutions in Doreen and Mill Park.<sup>22</sup>

Council welcomes these mobile and broadband coverage upgrades, while calling for further investment for connectivity in our future growth areas of Cooper Street West, Donnybrook/Woodstock, Wollert, Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal, and Northern Quarries/Craigieburn South.

Council has been engaging closely with Connecting Victoria to identify priority areas for mobile and broadband investment to address current and future needs in our fast-growing municipality.

<sup>22</sup> Connecting Victoria, 2022, Projects near City of Whittlesea Projects near you | Connecting Victoria | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (djsir.vic.gov.au)

## Section 2

# Employment

Our employment initiatives will generate 10,000 ongoing jobs and add billions to the Victorian economy. This is crucial for our City's 'high population' future.



## MFIX – Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub

### Initiative

#### Infrastructure

Fund the development of MFIX as a transformational project for the northern region of Melbourne and Victoria.

#### Incentives

Provide incentives for a major industry player to relocate to Epping as an anchor tenant to attract other food and export businesses.

### Electorates

Thomastown  
Scullin

Thomastown  
Scullin

### Benefits

- Generate 3,500 construction jobs
- Generate 6,500 ongoing jobs
- Improve productivity, collaboration and exports in the food and beverage industry
- Unlock Melbourne's North as an international agri-food and beverage hub

### Rationale

Home to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable, and Flower Market (the Melbourne Market), Melbourne's north is already a food hub of national significance with produce worth \$2 billion passing through the market each year as more than 5,000 businesses buy and sell there.<sup>23</sup>

With around 120,000 square metres of warehouse space – the largest warehousing precinct of any central market in Australia – the Melbourne Market readily facilitates the integration of supply chain logistics. This unique capacity has already seen the local food production sector develop into an industry cluster of tertiary institutions, freight networks, and a burgeoning skilled workforce.

Leveraging on its proximity to Melbourne Market, MFIX will be developed as a global agri-food and beverage hub. MFIX will play a vital role in securing food and beverage industry investment and jobs in the region, and connect food industry stakeholders across the state and nationally.

### Return on investment

Developing a 50-hectare land parcel adjoining the Melbourne Market into MFIX will optimise the market's assets and deliver lasting infrastructure and job opportunities for the region. Modelling shows MFIX will:<sup>24</sup>

- create 3,500 construction jobs and 6,500 ongoing jobs;
- establish the northern region as a world-class agri-food industry and innovation precinct;
- provide a strategic platform to collaborate and innovate across Victoria's food and beverage industry ecosystem;
- double the food and beverage sector's annual turnover in 10 years (from \$2.6 billion to \$5 billion); and
- encourage new ancillary business.

Comprising approximately 120 hectares including the Melbourne Markets, MFIX will offer direct access to Melbourne's airport and extensive freeway network. This will deliver logistical advantages and reduce handling, transport, and labour costs. It will also:

- create opportunities for food and beverage processors, manufacturers, packaging specialists, cold-chain suppliers, and logistic and transport companies to co-locate, expand and grow; and
- drive Victoria's food and fibre exports (already 28% nationwide) and reboot income in the food services and distribution sectors after an 80% drop during the pandemic.<sup>25</sup>



<sup>23</sup> Melbourne Market, 2021, *Overview - Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable & Flower Market*.

<sup>24</sup> Melbourne Market Authority, 2018, *The Melbourne Food Hub at Epping*.

<sup>25</sup> Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 2020, *Victorian Food and Fibre Export Performance Report 2019-20*, p2.

Section 3

# Public Transport

Investment in our public transport initiatives will increase local housing values by \$2.44 billion and deliver travel time savings of \$523 million by 2030.



Investment Initiative

05

# Wollert Rail

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

**State Government to invest \$250k in FY 2023-24 for a feasibility study**

Scan the below QR code to hear from our community on why Wollert Rail matters



Initiative	Electorates
Construct the rail line to Wollert from the existing Lalor Station on the Mernda Line by 2030.	Thomastown Scullin

Benefits

- Connect the Wollert community to employment, education and health hubs
- Increase property values by \$2.44B
- Deliver travel time savings of \$523M and 500,000 hours
- Reduce congestion on local and arterial roads



Rationale

The 2002 Epping North Strategic Plan identified a planned public transport corridor. This influenced the decision of many residents to purchase property in these areas. The integration of a train line was a key feature of this transport corridor. It was to encourage high density development and activity centres around the proposed transport interchanges. Residents now expect the State Government to deliver the Wollert train line to improve the area’s liveability, support their housing investment and their livelihoods. Projections demonstrate that Wollert Rail will be well used, with approximately 15,000 daily trips from day one and 40,000 daily trips by 2040.<sup>26</sup>

*“If you're working part time in the city and looking at a four hour shift, you're spending four hours in transit... that is really hard on families. The community has expanded, there is a requirement for a train station.”*

*– Dixsha, local Wollert resident*

Return on investment

The population in the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor is projected to increase by 101% by 2041.<sup>27</sup> Wollert Rail will connect this growth corridor to jobs and opportunities in the Melbourne CBD and local precincts such as the Cooper Street employment area, the Northern Hospital, and Pacific Epping. It will remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability in one of Australia’s fastest growing areas. It will also:

- increase property values by \$2.44 billion by 2030;
- reduce congestion and generate approximately 500,000 hours and \$522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030;
- generate 2,000,000 hours and \$1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users each year by 2040;<sup>26</sup> and
- make it easier for staff and visitors to get to the Northern Hospital, which has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state, treating nearly 90,000 patients each year and employing around 3,000 people.

Progress

There is both State and Federal Government Commitment to undertake a feasibility study into Wollert Rail. In the 2022-23 Federal Budget, the Federal Government announced a \$250k investment to fund a feasibility study into Wollert Rail. However, this funding is contingent on the State Government matching this funding in order to complete this feasibility study. The State Government had earlier committed to this feasibility study as part of the Victorian Infrastructure Plan 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Informed Decisions (.ID), 2021, City of Whittlesea: Population forecasts  
<sup>27</sup> Epping – Wollert Rail Corridor Independent Study by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

## Tram 86 (T86) extension

### Initiative

Extend Tram Route 86 (T86) from the Plenty-McKimmies roads intersection to the Plenty Valley Town Centre.

### Electorates

Mill Park  
Bundoora  
Scullin

### Benefits

- Allow 15,000 residents to easily use South Morang station on the Mernda line for better access to education, employment, retail, and health services

### Rationale

The T86 was extended to RMIT Bundoora in 1993. In the 30 years since, residential growth has exploded along Plenty Road to South Morang and beyond.

Rapid population growth and new and expanded education and employment precincts such as University Hill and RMIT demand greater capacity and an expanded tram service in the area.

The existing T86 route and bus network between University Hill and Plenty Valley Town Centre require residents to transfer from a high-capacity tram and queue for a lower-capacity bus – this is very time-consuming and inconvenient. Residents have long called for the route to be extended.

Land has already been set aside to allow the T86 extension to be designed and delivered efficiently and without delay.

### Return on investment

Extending T86 to the Plenty Valley Town Centre will enhance the lives of 15,000 residents. It will:

- improve access to significant education, employment, and service hubs such as RMIT Bundoora, La Trobe University, La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster, University Hill, Mill Park Library, and the Plenty Valley Town Centre; and
- allow users of the Mernda train line to transfer at South Morang for university campuses, employment hubs, and health services across the expanded tram network.



## Better bus services

### Initiative

#### Improve existing services

Deliver extensions and improved frequencies to existing routes connecting Thomastown, Epping, Epping North and Wollert.

#### New service

Deliver a new frequent bus service connecting Epping Station to Wollert (via Edgars Road.)

Review existing bus service provisions for Donnybrook, including the introduction of on-demand bus service.

### Electorates

Thomastown  
McEwen  
Scullin

Thomastown  
McEwen  
Scullin

Yan Yean  
McEwen  
Scullin

### Benefits

- Allow more efficient commutes
- Reduce road congestion
- Improve access to employment, education, and health services

### Rationale

The three bus routes between Epping North and the Epping Central Activity Centre introduced by Public Transport Victoria in 2016 have led to a 25% increase in residents using bus services.

While still critical, these services no longer meet the needs of our communities in Epping North and Wollert: they operate on a low frequency – every 20 minutes, even during peak times – and demand will exceed capacity by 2025.

### Return on investment

The proposed changes will:

- help capacity keep pace with demand and remove barriers to participating in education, employment, and health services;
- give residents direct access to Epping Plaza, the Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping, and Epping Station, as well as to CBD employment and education opportunities; and
- enable residents to transfer from bus to rail at Epping Station for longer trips to the inner suburbs and Melbourne CBD – this is particularly helpful to residents in Epping North and Wollert working in skilled occupations in the CBD.





## Wallan electrification and connection

### Initiative

Extend and electrify the Upfield line to Wallan to support the rapidly growing residential, commercial and industrial development in the region.

### Electorates

Yan Yean  
McEwen

### Benefits

- Service the fast growing areas of the Northern Growth Corridor
- Improve access to employment, education and health services for current and future residents

### Rationale

Electrifying between Craigieburn and Wallan is fundamental to the success of the metropolitan growth strategy and to connecting residents in the Northern Growth Corridor (including Donnybrook) to employment, education, health and recreation.

Released in 2002, Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around Melbourne to manage outward expansion in a coordinated way.

The Northern Growth Corridor is projected to accommodate 30% of Melbourne's future growth over the coming decades, with the region becoming home to more than 1.5 million people.

Growth area communities experience a significant service deficit compared to established areas, particularly in respect of public transport services.

### Return on investment

New suburbs in the Northern Growth Corridor are currently serviced by infrequent V-Line services. Electrifying the metropolitan rail network through to Wallan will connect and integrate these suburbs and fast growing developments.

Donnybrook is forecast to experience major population growth over the next two decades. Therefore, connection into the metropolitan rail network will provide additional capacity and service frequency for the large growth in rail passengers.

Improved access to public transport services will also alleviate the health, wellbeing and other social issues our residents currently face through social isolation and poor access to education, employment and health services.

Extension and electrification of the Upfield line to Wallan will support the need for increased capacity at Wallan and Donnybrook stations.

Electrification will facilitate improved service frequencies for Donnybrook residents to connect to the CBD.



Section 4

# Health and wellbeing

The City of Whittlesea is an area of high need. Between 2023 and 2041, our population will grow by almost 50%, and we need urgent investment to expand our health services and community wellbeing programs.



Investment Initiative

09

# Adolescent mental health services

**INVESTMENT SOUGHT**

**\$1.036M pa**

Initiative	Electorates
<b>Youth Enhanced Service</b> Ongoing funding for the Youth Enhanced Service to provide psychological support for young people with moderate to high mental health care needs.	ALL

**Benefits**

- Reduce presentations to the Northern Hospital
- Reduce experiences of social isolation
- Reduce high risk taking and substance misuse
- Prevent suicide
- Reduce interruptions to education and employment
- Reduce associated long-term impacts of mental health issues



**Rationale**

In 2018, the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Care Network (EMPHN) identified the City of Whittlesea as ‘an area of high need’ with:<sup>28</sup>

- fewer adolescent mental health services than other municipalities in the region;
- the highest rate of high or very high psychological distress in the network catchment for people over 18; and
- the highest rate of emergency department presentations with anxiety in the network catchment.

Then came the pandemic:

- Almost 40% of young people aged 10 to 25 years in the City of Whittlesea reported experiencing hardship in the first lockdown – compared with 24% across the state; and
- More than 20% of young people aged between 18 and 24 reported experiencing high psychological distress – compared with 16% across the state.

Demand for mental health services continues to exceed availability. Services report:

- an increase in the number of young people seeking mental health support, with 15% experiencing a high level of psychological distress – higher than the state average of 13%;<sup>29</sup>
- an increase in the number of risk assessments conducted each week; and
- wait times of up to four weeks for an initial assessment and eight months for ongoing counselling.

Youth Enhances Service provider reports:

- an increase in the number of referrals from individuals and from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS);
- an increase in the complexity and risk in the referrals they receive; and
- an increase in the number of referrals they are unable to accept.

**Return on investment**

Youth Enhanced Service provides responsive and flexible support to young people 12-25 who have developed, or are at risk of developing, severe mental illness. It delivers recovery focused support with integrated clinical care to support young people who are hard to reach.

Expanding Youth Enhanced Service will help to:

- reduce the high number of presentations to the Northern Hospital emergency department;
- reduce experiences of social isolation;
- reduce high risk taking and substance misuse;
- prevent suicide; and
- reduce interruptions to education and employment and associated long term impacts.

These outcomes are consistent with Federal and State Government plans, including:

- the Federal Government’s Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan;
- the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, which aims to support the mental health of Australians during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Victoria’s infrastructure strategy 2021-2051, which recommends the delivery of infrastructure for a more responsive and integrated mental health system (recommendation 72).

**Progress**

In 2023, Headspace Plenty Valley have received uplift funding that will incrementally increase over the next three years. While this announcement falls short of a permanent and full headspace service in our municipality, this is a welcome and much needed positive step that will service part of the high demand in our community. While we acknowledge this, we continue to call for a full headspace service that can provide at risk young people with integrated health care in our municipality.

<sup>28</sup> Bell, T, Mendoza, J, Stretton, A, and Salvador-Carulla, L, 2018, *EMPHN integrated mental health and AOD service atlas (East and North East Melbourne) – Final report.*

<sup>29</sup> Whittlesea Community Futures, 2021, *Lockdown survey June 2021.*

Investment  
Initiative

10

## Family violence prevention programs

### INVESTMENT SOUGHT

**\$200k Year 1 + \$160k pa**

Initiative	Electoralates
Fund locally tailored initiatives to prevent violence against women and to assist with family violence recovery, including:	
Migrant women's driving program (\$100k pa)	ALL
CALD women's social groups (\$30k pa)	ALL
CALD women's recovery groups (\$70k Year 1 + \$30k pa)	ALL

### Benefits

- Prevent and reduce family violence
- Reduce mental and physical health consequences of family violence
- Improve family cohesion
- Build community understanding of gender equality and how to prevent family violence

### Rationale and return on investment

The City has the highest rate of family violence incidents in the North East Melbourne Region – a rate of 1,258 incidents reported per 100,000 of population in 2021-2022.

Over the past five years an average of 3,182 incidents were reported to police annually in the municipality.<sup>30</sup>

The City of Whittlesea has been working with community partners to prevent and respond to family violence. It is important to continue investing in family violence programs to sustain any gains made as our community continues to grow.

These locally tailored initiatives will help reduce the number of incidents and support recovery.

*"I need my driving licence for my children and employment purposes, to gain my independence and freedom." – Sarah \**

<sup>30</sup> Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Family incident rate per 100,000 population by police region and local government area, July 2017 to June 2022

\* Names have been changed to protect individual identities

## Gambling harm minimisation

### INVESTMENT SOUGHT

**\$240K per annum**

### Initiative

#### Extend library operating hours to:

- provide a safe and welcoming alternative for community members at risk of social isolation, gambling harm, family violence;
- provide internet access for lower income households; and
- allow Council to expand prevention programs such as *Libraries After Dark*.

### Electorates

ALL

### Benefits

- Reduce social isolation – a risk factor for gambling
- Reduce rental and mortgage stress
- Reduce family violence
- Increase access to work and study friendly spaces for low-income households

### Rationale

Poker machines account for about 80% of all gambling addictions and are known to increase mortgage stress, family violence, crime, and family breakdown.<sup>31,32</sup>

The City of Whittlesea is ranked sixth in Victoria for money lost on poker machines. Residents lost more than \$97.5 million through gaming machines in 2021-22 financial year.<sup>33</sup>

In December 2022 alone, residents lost \$12.9 million - the third highest in Victoria behind Casey and Brimbank Councils – and equivalent to over \$416,000 per day.<sup>34</sup>

The State Government allowed a 25% increase in the number of poker machines in the municipality in 2017.<sup>35</sup>

Residents in our new communities are particularly vulnerable to gambling because they are geographically isolated and have limited access to leisure and recreation facilities.

Many households in Lalor, Mill Park, and Thomastown rely on libraries for internet access. Expanded hours will provide greater access for people who need it for study, work, and job seeking.

### Return on investment

The successful *Libraries After Dark* program gives communities a weekly alternative to gambling. Every Thursday evening, participating libraries extend their opening hours and become community lounges, where residents can relax and connect, instead of going to a gambling facility.

Recurrent government investment will allow the Yarra Plenty Regional Library branches at Mill Park and Thomastown to continue this valuable program one night per week and the Lalor, Mernda and Whittlesea branches to expand their opening hours to commence the program one night per week.

*“Being lonely and on my own I was easily led to gamble and in no time lost a lot of money. I then came along to the Thomastown Library and what a blessing... It is just so nice to share a meal with others and not be on my own.” – May\**

<sup>31</sup> Productivity Commission, 2010, Gambling. (No.50). Canberra: Australian Government. Retrieved from <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/gambling-2009/report>.

<sup>32</sup> Dowling, N, 2014, *The impact of gambling problems on families* (AGRC Discussion Paper No. 1). Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre.

<sup>33</sup> Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Reform, 2020, *Expenditure on Electronic Gaming Machines by Local Government Area*, City of Whittlesea data for FY 2021-2022 <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/resources/data-and-research>

<sup>34</sup> Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Reform, 2020, *Expenditure on Electronic Gaming Machines by Local Government Area*, City of Whittlesea data for Dec 2022 <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/resources/data-and-research>.

<sup>35</sup> Victoria Government Gazette, 2017, S 318, 20 September.

\* Names have been changed to protect individual identities

Section 5

# Affordable housing

Investment in social and affordable housing infrastructure benefits society and delivers significant cost savings to government by supporting social inclusion, participation, place making, and economic productivity.



## Social and affordable housing

Initiative	Electorates	Benefits
<b>Increase and improve stock</b>		
Introduce state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a state-wide minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments; and</li> <li>• measures to ensure developments are close to services and infrastructure.</li> </ul>	ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break the cycle of homelessness</li> <li>• Relieve pressure on local homelessness services</li> <li>• Reduce number of young people sleeping rough</li> <li>• Reduce rental and mortgage stress and improve wellbeing</li> <li>• Improve and increase participation in employment, education, and health care</li> <li>• Strengthen connections to support systems</li> <li>• Improve access to financial support</li> <li>• Reduce household energy usage and operational costs</li> </ul>
Invest in all types of affordable housing in the City of Whittlesea from crisis accommodation to affordable home ownership.	ALL	
Use surplus State land in the City of Whittlesea for affordable housing.	ALL	
Improve the thermal performance and energy efficiency of existing social and affordable housing.	ALL	
<b>Access point and outreach services</b>		
Establish specialised outreach homelessness services to support people across the municipality and break the cycle of homelessness.	ALL	

# Social and affordable housing

Continued

## Rationale

The City of Whittlesea has a housing crisis, with more than 15% of mortgaged households facing mortgage stress and over 30.4% of rental households facing rental stress.<sup>36</sup>

Demand for affordable housing exceeds supply, with urgent need for more than 3,300 additional affordable homes in the municipality.<sup>37</sup>

Housing may appear affordable when compared with other LGAs, but cost of living pressures compounded by poor public transport and access to local jobs make it out of reach for many.

More than 20% of households in the City fall within the lowest income range (\$0 to \$38,480); and almost 25% fall within the medium income range (\$38,352 to \$73,632).<sup>38</sup>

The City's stock of new rental housing that is affordable to lower income households declined from 65% in 2006 to 9% in 2018.<sup>39</sup>

ABS data shows the City of Whittlesea had fewer social housing households (1.1%) compared with Greater Melbourne (2.3%).<sup>40</sup>

In June 2022, over 12,800 applicants from the City of Whittlesea and neighbouring councils were waiting for social housing on the Victorian Housing Register for districts in north-eastern Melbourne. More than 60% had priority access application status.<sup>41</sup>

The City has the highest rate of family violence in the north-east Metropolitan region (3082 incidents, compared to an average of 1,149 for Victoria).<sup>42</sup>

More than 40% of people accessing homelessness support services reported experiencing domestic and family violence.<sup>42</sup>

The State Government's Big Housing Build will not meet the need in the City of Whittlesea.<sup>43</sup>

Established areas such as Epping, Lalor, Thomastown, South Morang, and Bundoora present excellent opportunities to deliver affordable housing for very-low-income households. These suburbs have more access to jobs, public transport, education, and community infrastructure than newer areas.

Council recently amended its local planning scheme to incorporate specific social and affordable housing measures. Regulatory action remains with the State and Federal Governments.

## Return on investment

Affordable and social housing infrastructure benefits society by supporting social inclusion, participation, place making, and economic productivity.

People living in affordable or social housing can experience improvements in their health, safety, and sense of empowerment once they are no longer at risk of homelessness.

Social housing is particularly effective at reducing homelessness: it's affordable, because rents are typically set at around 25% of income. It's more likely to be secure, because long-term and lifetime leases are available.

Housing security benefits individuals and communities. It also benefits government through savings in costs associated with health, justice, and welfare services.

Research shows investing in long-term social housing can deliver significant cost savings to government. An ACT study estimated that:<sup>44</sup>

- costs of service use for people in stable and affordable housing were around \$15,300 per person per year less than for people who were experiencing homelessness; and
- government will recoup 57 cents for every dollar it spends on a new, low-cost housing through welfare offsets.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>36</sup> .Informed Decisions (.ID) (2022). *Housing Stress & Need*, City of Whittlesea

<sup>37</sup> .Informed Decisions (.ID), 2022, Exploring the housing story for City of Whittlesea, <https://housing.id.com.au/whittlesea>

<sup>38</sup> Profile.id, City of Whittlesea *Household income quartiles*.

<sup>39</sup> Victoria Government, Data Vic, 2019, *Rental Report – Quarterly, Affordable lettings by local government area*.

<sup>40</sup> Economy.ID (2021), City of Whittlesea - Housing Tenure <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/tenure?BMID=20>

<sup>41</sup> Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services, 2022, *Victorian Housing Register*.

<sup>42</sup> Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), 2020, *Housing, homelessness and domestic and family violence*.

<sup>43</sup> Victorian Government, 2022, *Big housing build*.

<sup>44</sup> Davison, J, Brackertz, N and Alves, T, 2021, *Return on investment for social housing in the ACT*, report prepared for ACT Shelter, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.

## Section 6

# Roads

Targeted investment in our roads will increase capacity for industry and commuters. It will improve life for thousands of residents, save millions in travel hours, and make access to employment, education, and health services much easier. Investment in active travel infrastructure will result in better health outcomes for our community and reduce congestion on roads.





## E6 Freeway

### Initiative

Bring forward construction of the E6 Freeway to 2027 to ensure it is complete by 2035.

### Electorates

ALL

### Benefits

- Provide capacity for 80,000 vehicles per day
- Allow traffic to bypass Hume Freeway
- Relieve congestion on arterial roads
- Provide a designated route for heavy vehicles
- Service freight movements
- Cater for growing communities

### Rationale

The proposed E6 Freeway connecting the outdated and overused Hume Freeway to the M80 Ring Road will provide a much needed north-south corridor through the City of Whittlesea.

The Federal Government has already shown strong support for this project, announcing substantial funding in its 2021-22 Budget, matching the State Government's \$10 million allocation.

Projections suggest a 32% population increase for the City of Whittlesea alone by 2030. Neighbouring councils will also grow: the Mitchell Shire is expected to grow by almost 90% and Banyule is expected to grow by 10%.

This rapid growth makes it imperative that construction of the E6 is brought forward so the freeway is complete and traffic ready by 2035, including:

- a business case by 2023;
- detailed project planning by 2024;
- construction commenced by 2027; and
- construction completed by 2035.

Land along the designated route is already reserved and no known impediments to this timeline exist.

### Return on investment

The E6 is a freeway of national significance, providing a key national-scale road corridor for NSW, ACT, Queensland, and Victoria. Capable of carrying more than 80,000 vehicles each day, the E6 will:

- connect planned and existing trade gateways and national manufacturing and distribution clusters;
- connect established suburbs and growth areas and improve access to regional employment centres for residents from the outer north; and
- With land now secured for the development of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT), the E6 will facilitate increased capacity for future freight movements. Please refer to section 2 for more information about the BIFT.

At the local level, the E6 will:

- create more liveable communities by supporting the delivery of future passenger and freight rail services to Melbourne's north and west, reducing the freight network's overall impact on local communities and environments;
- increase the mobility and participation of residents by providing an essential north-south road connection along the Northern Growth Corridor, especially for residents of Epping North, Wollert, Donnybrook, Kalkallo, Beveridge, and Wallan;
- provide accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities for residents;
- streamline commuting by increasing road capacity; and
- reduce traffic congestion on arterial roads including Epping Road/High Street, Dalton Road, Edgars Road, Cooper Street, Plenty Road, and Yan Yean Road.

## Road upgrades

### Initiative

Deliver key planned road upgrades

### Electorates

Yan Yean  
Mill Park  
Thomastown

### Benefits

- Improved frequency and reliability of bus services
- Increase cyclist and pedestrian safety
- Reduce accidents
- Create time savings
- Improve access to employment, education, and services
- Continuous and separated walking and cycling paths connecting key destinations



# Road upgrades

Continued

## Rationale and return on investment

### Bridge Inn Road – Duplicate and urbanise between Plenty Road and Wellington Street, and urbanise the remaining section between Wellington Street and Epping Road by 2030

Bridge Inn Road is the main east-west road through the northern suburbs of the City of Whittlesea, connecting the growing suburbs of Mernda and Doreen with the rapidly developing Wollert area.

It is built to rural standards and is not suitable for high volume urban traffic. It currently carries 21,000 vehicles each day west of Plenty Road and modelling projects it will carry 32,000 vehicles per day by 2032. This poses serious safety risks to road users and to children going to and from school.

The Victorian Government is undertaking the duplication and urbanisation of Bridge Inn Road from Yan Yean Road to Plenty Road.

We now seek the commitment to extend this project from Plenty Road to Wellington Street. As well as addressing safety and congestion concerns, this will improve access to Mernda Town Centre and the train station.

### Craigieburn Road East – duplicate between Epping Road and the Hume Freeway by 2025

Craigieburn Road East will be the key east-west road connecting Epping North and Wollert residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west in the City of Hume. The current population of 39,000 in Wollert is set to increase to 91,000 by 2030.<sup>45</sup>

Traffic volumes are forecast to increase from 14,000 vehicles per day (at present) to around 32,000 vehicles per day by 2030.

Duplication will:

- provide \$295 million in travel time savings
- significantly increase road capacity to cater for future traffic demand
- Allow for increased frequency, reliability and punctuality of bus services to run along Craigieburn Road East, so residents can travel to local town centres, Craigieburn Town Centre, and their jobs in the west.
- Provide continuous separated footpath and bicycle paths to allow community access to key destinations and bus stops along Craigieburn Road East
- Provide high quality active travel infrastructure to facilitate greater levels of local walking and cycling trips.

### Epping Road – Duplicate between Craigieburn Road East and Bridge Inn Road and upgrade the Epping Road/Bridge Inn Road intersection as soon as possible

Epping Road is the main road servicing the fast-growing areas of Epping North and Wollert and one of two arterial roads providing access to the rapidly expanding Donnybrook community.

Population in Wollert is expected to increase from 39,000 (at present) to 91,000 by 2030. Donnybrook's population is set to increase to 34,000 by 2030. Traffic volumes are expected to increase from 22,900 (at present) to 30,000 vehicles per day by 2030.<sup>46</sup>

Victorian government has commenced the duplication of Epping Road from Memorial Avenue to Craigieburn Road East. We now seek the commitment to continue the duplication works to Bridge Inn Road/Boundary Road (another 1.6kms).

This will unlock a 2,900-lot residential subdivision that will inject \$225 million into the local economy and provide more than 1,000 jobs. Duplication will generate \$38 million of benefit in the form of travel time savings.<sup>47</sup>

### Findon Road – Declare and duplicate between Plenty Road and Epping Road by 2030

Findon Road crosses the City of Whittlesea and provides a link between the Hume Freeway and Plenty Road. It already carries 21,000 vehicles each day and modelling suggests it will carry 35,000 vehicles per day by 2031. Commensurate with the forecast population rise in Wollert from 39,999 (at present) to 91,000 by 2030.<sup>48</sup>

This project will ensure it becomes a continuous east-west link with significantly increased traffic capacity. This will reduce the volume of traffic on McDonalds Road, ease congestion, and make it easier for people to get to facilities and services such as the Plenty Valley Town Centre.

It will also make it possible to run more regular and reliable bus services on Findon and McDonalds roads.

Improved design will separate oncoming traffic, provide turning lanes, and restrict right turns. This will:

- Unlock \$422million in travel time savings<sup>49</sup>
- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce head on and rear end collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow.

### Donnybrook Road – Duplicate between Epping Road and the Merri Creek by 2025

Donnybrook Road will be the key east-west road connecting Donnybrook residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west and north west in Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire. The current population of 2,200 in Donnybrook is forecast to grow to 72,000 by 2041. Traffic volumes are forecast to rise from 10,000 to 46,000 vehicles per day by 2046.<sup>50</sup>

This project will increase road capacity and allow bus routes to run along Donnybrook Road so residents can get to Donnybrook Station, local town centres, and employment and activity centres to the west and north west.

Improved design will also separate oncoming traffic, provide turning lanes, and restrict right turns. This will:

- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce head on and rear end collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow
- Support the expansion, frequency and reliability of bus services in Donnybrook and the growing estates
- Provide continuous separated footpath and bicycle allowing the community access to access key destinations, including Donnybrook Train Station and bus stops along Donnybrook Road
- Deliver \$91 million in prospective travel time savings.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> City of Whittlesea Northern Group Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

<sup>46</sup> City of Whittlesea, Northern Growth Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

<sup>47</sup> Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, Prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

<sup>48</sup> City of Whittlesea, Northern Growth Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

<sup>49</sup> Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, Prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

<sup>50</sup> Our Community Needs Donnybrook Road Duplication', Advocacy Fact Sheet, September 2021

<sup>51</sup> Deliver 91 million! Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, Prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

## Active travel infrastructure

### Initiative

### Electorates

#### Infrastructure delivery

All

Partner with Council to deliver active travel infrastructure projects from Council's Walking and Cycling Plan and the Northern Trails Strategy.

#### Behaviour change

Investment in behaviour change programs to support our community to walk and cycle more.

### Benefits

Allow a growing population improved and safer access to local services, facilities and recreational opportunities which will result in:

- **Better health outcomes:**  
Walking and cycling can contribute to minimising risks of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers and osteoporosis according to the National health survey 2017-2018 Australia. This is an important factor in our municipality where 51 per cent of residents are overweight and 35.5 per cent do less than one hour of physical activity per week.<sup>52</sup>
- **Reduced traffic Congestion:**  
Active travel can reduce traffic congestion by decreasing the number of car users by substituting trips made by car to active travel modes, resulting in lower transport related emissions and lower costs to remaining road users. The decongestion cost is 0.207 to 0.258 AUD per km.<sup>53</sup>
- **Economic benefits:**  
Including increased public transport usage, reduced vehicle operating costs, reduced health costs and potential for changes to land use planning to cater for more public spaces.
- **Environmental benefits:**  
Walking and cycling as modes of transport have been identified as crucial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change in Victoria's Climate Change Strategy.<sup>54</sup> It also reduces parking requirements with space and cost savings.

### Rationale and return on investment

Many of our established areas are relatively walkable. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted our residents' normal habits and forced them to experience change. It demonstrated to our residents that walking and cycling were viable choices for undertaking local living and local trips. Post pandemic, our community are reverting back to undertaking short trips by private car.

In the municipality's growing suburbs, there is an incomplete pedestrian and bicycle network resulting in many missing links which act as impediments to undertaking walking or cycling. There is also a focus on increasing residential densities to support more walkable neighbourhoods.

Council has recently endorsed a Walking and Cycling Plan and along with other councils of the Northern Councils Alliance, endorsed the Northern Trails Strategy. Both documents set out a list of priority projects to improve conditions and increase walking and cycling participation.

The Movement and Place framework supports the notion of local streets performing a role focussed on reduced traffic speeds and a safer area for pedestrians and cyclists to visit. By 2041, the City of Whittlesea's population is forecast to increase to approximately 360,692, an increase of almost 48%.<sup>55</sup> This puts pressure on the existing road network, requiring the need to look at increasing active travel as a viable option for people in our community. There are particularly high levels of chronic disease, sedentary behaviour and social isolation in the City of Whittlesea.

The provision of high-quality infrastructure would provide better connections for walking and cycling and would be well-supported by targeted travel behaviour change initiatives.

The key advantage of initiating behaviour change is that these can be implemented much more quickly than infrastructure projects. Behaviour change initiatives would be helpful in delivering accessible information, facilities, programs and services that encourage people to build social connections and participate in community life and to make walking and cycling a viable, safe and enjoyable experience.

Funding for behaviour change programs for young people such as ride/walk to school initiatives, bike education, safety and skill development is sought from the State Government.

### Return on investment

Investing in active travel infrastructure and funding behaviour change programs will result in:

- increased levels of walking and cycling participation and a greater share of transport trips undertaken by these modes;
- improved health outcomes for the community;
- increased pedestrian and cyclist safety;
- investment in walking infrastructure has been found to deliver a 13:1 benefit cost ratio;
- promoting walking can also help reduce congestion at peak times – time spent in traffic is estimated to cost \$10.5B in Melbourne by 2030,<sup>56</sup> and
- a 10% reduction in physical inactivity would result in \$96M annually saved in health care costs.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> City of Whittlesea, Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

<sup>53</sup> Transport and Infrastructure Council, 2017, Australian Transport Assessment and Planning Guidelines (ATAP)

<sup>54</sup> Victoria Government: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, May 2021, Victoria's Climate Change Strategy

<sup>55</sup> Informed Decisions (.ID), 2023, City of Whittlesea Population summary

<sup>56</sup> Arup on behalf of Victoria Walks, 2018, The Economic Case for Investment in Walking

<sup>57</sup> Reference for 'A 10% reduction in physical inactivity would result in \$96m annually saved in health care costs.'

Section 7

# Environmental sustainability

Investment in conservation of our Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve and water management will preserve the City of Whittlesea as a unique urban environment with a rich biodiversity for generations to come.



Investment Initiative



# Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

**\$20M + 10-year funding plan**

Initiative	Electorates
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<p><b>Fulfil the 2009 commitment to establish a 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea. This includes a need to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a funding plan to secure the reserve by 2031; and</li> <li>• immediately invest \$20M to secure the first land holdings through voluntary negotiation with landowners, with similar investments made available thereafter until the land is secured.</li> </ul>	<p>Yan Yean Thomastown McEwen</p>
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**Benefits**

- Protection of the woodlands which are listed as critically endangered
- Protection of nationally threatened species:
  - Golden Sun Moth;
  - Striped Legless Lizard
- Prevent further loss and/or degradation of sites supporting Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands
- Protect and improve biodiversity
- Increase community connection to nature
- Safeguard and increase environmental amenity for the region
- Reduce threat of climate change on flora and fauna

**Rationale**

The City of Whittlesea has a unique urban/rural interface. It also has a burgeoning population. Combined, these two characteristics create environmental opportunities and challenges.

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands is made up of majestic Red River Gums that are the environmental hallmark of the municipality. They are also home to a variety of wildlife including woodland birds and possums as well as threatened species, such as the Golden Sun Moth, Striped Legless Lizard and threatened flora. Unfortunately, its existence is under threat.

The woodlands are endemic to Victoria and used to be widespread across the Victorian Volcanic Plain but have undergone severe decline and are now mostly reduced to small and degraded fragments. Less than five per cent of the original woodlands remains. Unfortunately, some land management practices associated with farming and agriculture, as well as urban development, have contributed to the significant destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of the woodlands.

In 2009, the State Government committed to establishing the 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands (GEW) Reserve by 2020. This reserve was to be established to offset the loss of native vegetation associated with extending the urban growth boundary. So far, no land within this reserve has been secured.

A June 2020 report by the office of the Victorian Auditor General found the State Government had failed to meet its commitments and that “delays in acquiring land, and continuing threats of degradation, pose significant risks to the ecological values of native vegetation within the reserves.”

Acquiring the land now will ensure that the important flora and fauna values of the reserve can be protected and maintained for current and future generations.

**Return on investment**

Investment will ensure the City of Whittlesea retains its hallmark majestic woodlands and remains a municipality with rich biodiversity and a healthy environment. Additionally, it will:

- improve health, life expectancy, and sustainability outcomes for the rare and threatened species that call the City of Whittlesea home;
- improve waterway health;
- Reduce urban heat island effects;
- Increase resilience to climate change risks;
- increase community participation in outdoor and environmental protection activities; and
- improve health and wellbeing for residents.

Investment Initiative

17

# Integrated water management

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$200k

Initiative	Electorates
Undertake a feasibility study in 2023-24 into integrated water management to provide rural areas access to alternative water supply within the cities of Whittlesea, Hume and Nillumbik.	ALL

### Benefits

- Build rural climate resilience
- Protect agricultural land in Melbourne’s peri-urban food bowl

### Rationale

Water is essential to our wellbeing and is imperative to the healthy function of our communities, our environment, and our agriculture and food industries. The overall need for water in our municipality will increase substantially as our population grows, from 15.2 gigalitres per year to 19.6 gigalitres per year in 2040. This increased usage will also create more wastewater. At the same time, our water supply is likely to decline as the climate changes. Reduced supply and increased demand could threaten the area’s future agricultural productivity, reducing economic growth and jobs. An effective water management plan is therefore essential, where all forms of water augmentation are explored.

### Return on investment

Facilitating integrated water management will:

- improve sustainable water access in rural areas;
- build rural climate resilience; and
- protect and support agriculture productivity uses in Melbourne’s peri-urban food bowl.



Investment Initiative

18

# Electric Vehicle (EV) transition plan

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$180k

Initiative

**Charging Infrastructure**

Co-investment to support the delivery of six new light fleet charging stations across Council depots and office facilities by 2025.  
Co-investment to support the delivery of fifteen new heavy fleet charging stations across Council depots and office facilities by 2025.

Electorates

All

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$2.1M

**Vehicle purchase subsidies**

Support the purchase of the following electric vehicles to support Council light fleet by 2025:

- two (2) community buses;
- seventeen (17) utes;
- thirty-two (32) passenger vehicles; and
- nine (9) vans.

All

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$1M

**Vehicle purchase subsidies**

Facilitate the trialling of heavy fleet replacement vehicles to support Council fleet transition priorities by 2025.

All

Benefits

- Expedite council fleet EV transition
- Support community awareness and knowledge of EVs
- Support the emerging second-hand EV market
- Reduce carbon footprint and emissions for environmental sustainability
- Lower long-term operational costs of Council's fleets

Rationale

Electric vehicles (EVs), including personal e-mobility devices, are important to help communities transition to lower carbon lifestyles. In 2021, the State Government released Victoria's Zero Emissions Vehicle Roadmap to drive uptake of EV infrastructure across the state. The Commonwealth Fleet Vehicle Selection Policy has set a target of 75% low or zero emission vehicles by 2025.<sup>58</sup> The State Government has reiterated its commitment to be a leader in the adoption of EVs in Australia.<sup>59</sup> Assisting councils to rapidly transition their fleet to net zero supports the delivery of Victoria climate change action. Currently it's still more affordable for Councils to purchase internal combustion or hybrid vehicle within their fleet, particularly for heavy fleet. Providing co-funding towards Councils fleet transition reduces this inequality and assists in building stronger business cases to rapidly transition and reduce Council's reliance on carbon offsetting to achieve climate goals. The two main areas where financial support can assist the City of Whittlesea is in the capital purchase of fleet vehicles and funding to install charging devices at Council facilities.

Return on investment

By reducing the barriers to the capital purchase, ongoing operational costs of EVs are less than traditional vehicles. This will reduce the cost of managing the fleet to the broader community. Council transitioning rapidly to EV fleet now will also generate more EV cars in the second-hand market over the next 3-4 years, further supporting community wide transition.

<sup>58</sup> Australian Government, 2022. Commonwealth Fleet Vehicle Selection Policy | Department of Finance

<sup>59</sup> Premier of Victoria, 2022., Driving Zero Emissions Vehicles | Premier of Victoria



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