



2025-26 Australian Government Pre-Budget Submission

The City of Whittlesea is located
20 kilometres north
of Melbourne's Central Business District.

Covering some 490km²,
the City of Whittlesea is

**one of Melbourne's
largest municipalities.**

A city of diverse suburbs and places –
including established neighbourhoods,
extensive residential growth corridors,
and rural areas.

**It is expected the
City's population will
increase 50% to 360,692
by 2040.**

With the City of Whittlesea's
Gross Regional Product exceeding
\$10.4 billion in 2022,
and growing 7.3%
since the previous year,
additional investment by the Federal
Government could further unlock the
prosperity and liveability of the region.



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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Introduction

This pre-budget submission seeks the Federal Government's co-investment in seven projects in the City of Whittlesea:

- 1 Social and affordable housing allocations**
- 2 Homelessness support services**
- 3 Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH)**
- 4 Mobile and broadband coverage**
- 5 A Dedicated Youth Hub**
- 6 Electric Vehicle Transition**
- 7 Active travel infrastructure.**

Co-investment in these partnership opportunities will help deliver a stronger and more secure economy into the future envisioned by the Federal Government in its 2024-25 Budget.¹

It will help unlock the potential in our high-growth region and:

- deliver world-class infrastructure
- deliver more social and affordable housing and housing support
- invest in a stronger, sustainable and more secure economy
- grow the economy and local jobs
- enhance living standards
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It will advance the *Australian Infrastructure Plan 2021* and progress *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051*.^{2,3}

Developed by the independent advisory body Infrastructure Victoria, this strategy recommends:

- prioritising infrastructure delivery in growing communities
- fostering healthy, safe and inclusive communities
- developing affordable and social housing
- expanding and upgrading Melbourne's outer suburban road networks
- improving access to digital technology.

¹ Australian Government Budget 2024 – 25

² Australian Infrastructure Plan 2021

³ Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051

⁴ KPMG, 2021, The widening divide in Melbourne: how COVID-19's transmission through the city increased the existing inequality.

⁵ City of Whittlesea, 2023, Community Insights Study

⁶ Profile.ID.com.au/Whittlesea

These projects are also critical to our region's future prosperity. The City of Whittlesea is the second most disadvantaged northern municipality and fifth most disadvantaged metropolitan municipality in Victoria.⁴

This disadvantage is compounded by:

- limited access to community infrastructure, health services and educational opportunities
- long commutes and traffic congestion
- poor digital connectivity
- social isolation
- unemployment and insecure employment
- financial vulnerability, including rental and mortgage stress.

These challenges have a material impact on the health and wellbeing and the quality of life of our residents. Our 2023 Community Insights Study revealed:⁵

- 20% did not feel part of the local community
- 52% were dissatisfied with the ease of travelling from work at the end of the working day
- 32% were dissatisfied with travelling to primary schools and 40% were dissatisfied with travelling to secondary schools
- 15.3% of mortgaged households and 30.4% of renting households are experiencing housing related financial stress.

Further, the unemployment rate in the City is now at 5% – higher than Victoria and Australia at 4% and 3.9% respectively.⁶

To optimise the potential of our diverse and growing region, it is imperative that the Federal and State Governments work with Council to address these challenges.

Co-investment in the seven projects outlined here will deliver infrastructure and services to:

- support local businesses and create employment opportunities
- create community connections and social cohesion
- enable better access to education and work
- increase community participation and improve quality of life
- reduce rental and mortgage stress
- generate social and economic prosperity for the state and the nation.

We look forward to your support.

Summary of partnership opportunities



PROJECT	OPPORTUNITY	INVESTMENT SOUGHT
1 Social and affordable housing allocations		
<p>This project seeks Federal Government investment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the delivery of at least 50 social and affordable homes on council owned land in strategic locations in partnership with the Community Housing Sector Allocate Federal Budget measures for housing reform 	<p>Through Federal Budget measures, partner with Council and local community housing and homelessness service providers to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the City of Whittlesea and help alleviate the impacts of the housing crisis.</p>	<p>\$10M to be allocated to facilitate delivery of at least 50 social and affordable homes on council owned land.</p> <p>Allocate budget towards a dedicated 'growth area' funding round under the <i>Housing Australia Future Fund</i>.</p>
2 Homelessness support service		
<p>This project is seeking Federal Government investment and provision of local homelessness services in the City of Whittlesea.</p>	<p>Engage a leading homelessness support organisation and provider in the City of Whittlesea to respond to the diverse needs of rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>Allocate Federal Budget funds for a dedicated Homelessness Access Point in the City of Whittlesea.</p> <p>\$1.5M to invest over three years for a comprehensive assertive outreach service for people sleeping rough in the City of Whittlesea.</p>

PROJECT	OPPORTUNITY	INVESTMENT SOUGHT
3 Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH)		
<p>This project aims to deliver an agri-food and beverage hub in the City of Whittlesea connecting industry, research and innovation, logistics and support local jobs.</p>	<p>Fund the development of MFIH as a transformational project for the Victorian and the Australian food and beverage industry.</p>	<p>Invest in the development of this transformational project for the Australian food and beverage industry.</p>
4 Mobile and broadband coverage		
<p>This project seeks Federal Government funding to fix seven broadband blackspots in the City of Whittlesea and connect six growth areas to the National Broadband Network (NBN).</p>	<p>Fix seven broadband blackspots and provide connectivity for six growth areas (Cooper Street West, Donnybrook/Woodstock Precinct, Wollert Precinct, Mernda Town Centre, Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, Northern Quarries/Craigieburn South) in the City of Whittlesea.</p>	<p>Allocate Federal Budget investments for improved broadband connectivity to keep ahead of demand.</p>
5 Dedicated Youth Hub		
<p>This project seeks Federal Government funding for the establishment of a new purpose-built Youth Hub.</p>	<p>Establish a Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea to enable delivery of a 'hub and spoke' service model to run ongoing youth programs throughout all of the City of Whittlesea with a prevention-based approach.</p>	<p>Federal Budget funding for construction of the primary hub to deliver the 'hub and spoke' service model, developing and running key programs that will then utilise existing 'spoke' facilities to extend the reach of services throughout the City of Whittlesea.</p>
6 Electric Vehicle Transition		
<p>This project seeks to reduce transport related emissions by supporting Council and our community to rapidly transition to Electric Vehicles.</p>	<p>Provide funding to support the delivery of the Northern Council Alliance community wide Electric Vehicle transition plan, enabling the EV transition for Melbourne's north. Develop Federal Programs that facilitate importation of heavy fleet vehicles that support Council and community needs.</p>	<p>\$1M investment to support Council transition to Electric Heavy Fleet.</p> <p>\$500k to support Councils to develop fleet transition plans and provide seed funding to support the transition.</p>
7 Active travel infrastructure		
<p>This project seeks Federal Government support to help Council deliver new paths for walking and riding in the municipality to increase participation in active travel.</p>	<p>Partner with Council to deliver active travel infrastructure projects from Council's Walking and Cycling Plan and the Northern Trails Strategy.</p>	<p>\$20M to invest in High Street Shared Path between Keon Park Station and Epping Station.</p> <p>\$20M in the Whittlesea Mernda Shared Path.</p> <p>\$5M towards the Yan Yean Pipe Track between Childs Road and Bush Boulevard in Mill Park.</p>

About the City of Whittlesea⁷

50%

population increase by 2040

38%

residents born overseas

27%

under the age of 20

41%

of households couples with children

13%

of households one-parent families

LOCATION

- Located over 490km² in Melbourne's north and about 20 kilometres from the CBD, the City of Whittlesea is one of Melbourne's largest local government areas (LGAs).
- It spans the Federal electorates of Scullin and McEwen.

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 270,998 residents in 2025.
- This is expected to increase to 360,692 residents by 2040 – a 50% increase over 20 years – with more than 8,000 new residents settling each year and more than 60 babies born each week.^{8,9}

LOCALITIES

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

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.¹⁰
- These established areas, and the new suburbs of Mernda, Doreen, South Morang, Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook, are expanding rapidly.

INDUSTRY



The City of Whittlesea's Gross Regional Product was \$10.40 billion in the year ending June 2022, growing 7.3% since the previous year.

In 2022, there were 21,617 local businesses and 77,935 local jobs in the City of Whittlesea.

The four largest industry employers are healthcare and social assistance; construction; retail trade; and manufacturing. Major employment precincts in Epping Central, New Epping, Cooper Street and O'Herns Road, Cooper Street West and South East, Thomastown Industrial Area, Plenty Valley Town Centre and University Hill.^{11,12}

In addition, the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP) will connect the industrial north to the National Inland Rail and create 20,000 associated jobs. When fully operational in 2028-29, the BIP is expected to contribute \$3.5 billion annually to the economy.

PEOPLE



- The City of Whittlesea has the third largest population of First Nations communities in metropolitan Melbourne.¹³
- It is also home to vibrant migrant communities, with more than 37.6% of residents born overseas – 30% in Victoria and 27.7% in Australia.¹⁴
- More than 45.1% of household speak a language other than English at home – compared to 27.6% in Victoria 22.3% and across Australia.¹⁵
- 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 34 years – compared to 38 for both Victoria and Australia.
- Almost 27% of the population is under 20 years – compared to 23.6% for Victoria and 23.9% in Australia.
- Around 18% of the population is over 60 years – compared to 22.4% for Victoria 23% in Australia.

GENDER



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

- 50.4% females – compared to 50.8% in Victoria and 50.7% in Australia.
- 49.6% males – compared to 49.2% in Victoria and 49.3% in Australia.

HOUSEHOLDS



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

- couples with children comprising 41.2% of all households – compared to 30.9% in Victoria and 29.7% in Australia.
- couples without children comprising 21.3% of all households – compared to 24.6% in Victoria and 29.7% in Australia.
- one-parent families comprising 12.6% of all households – compared to 10.2% in Victoria and 10.5% in Australia.

SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE



- The City of Whittlesea is the fifth most socioeconomically disadvantaged of Victoria's³⁰ metropolitan local governments.¹⁶
- 19.1% of households in the municipality fall within the lowest income range – \$0 to \$799 per week.¹⁷

EDUCATION



- Almost 20% of children in the City were vulnerable on one or more childhood development domains.¹⁸
- 51.2% of residents aged over 15 years held educational qualification at certificate level or above – compared to 55.7% in Victoria and 54.8% in Australia.
- Only 23.4% had a Bachelor or higher degree – compared to 29.2% in Victoria and 26.3% in Australia.
- 17.5 had vocational qualifications – compared to 16.7% in Victoria and 19.1% in Australia.

EMPLOYMENT



- 63% of residents were in the labour force – compared to 62.4% in Victoria and 61.1% in Australia.¹⁹
- Of residents in the labour force:
 - 56.3% were employed full-time – compared to 56.2% for Victoria and 55.9% in Australia.
 - 31.5% were employed part-time – compared to 32.3% for Victoria and 31.2% in Australia.
 - 28.8% were employed as professionals or managers – compared to 39% in Victoria and 37.7% in Australia.²⁰
 - 4.2% were unemployed – compared to 3.7% in Victoria and 3.5% in Australia.²¹

⁷ Unless stated otherwise, the data in this section is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Census Data

⁸ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Population Forecast <https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>

⁹ City of Whittlesea (2022), Community Plan 2022-2025

¹⁰ City of Whittlesea (2023), Our Suburbs and Residents

¹¹ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Employment by Industry. <https://economy.id.com.au/whittlesea/employment-by-industry>

¹² City of Whittlesea (2022), Investment Prospectus 2022

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), Victoria: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Summary <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/victoria-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary>

¹⁴ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023), City of Whittlesea – Birthplace <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/birthplace>

¹⁵ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023), City of Whittlesea – Language used at home <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/language>

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

¹⁷ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Household Income <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/household-income>

¹⁸ Australian Early Development Census (2021) Data Explorer

¹⁹ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Employment Status <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/employment-status>

²⁰ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Occupations <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/occupations>

²¹ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – Unemployment June 2023 <https://economy.id.com.au/whittlesea/unemployment>

Partnership opportunity:

Social and affordable housing allocations

1



Project

Council welcomes the Federal Government’s social and affordable housing agenda,²² including measures from the 2023-24 Federal Budget, such as:²³

- Establishing the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund to increase housing supply, including 20,000 social and 10,000 affordable homes in the first five years
- Expanding the *National Housing Infrastructure Facility* to invest up to \$575 million in concessional loans and grants for social and affordable housing, in addition to the \$1 billion funding to support social housing
- Initiating the *National Housing Accord* to support the delivery of an additional 10,000 affordable homes over five years from 2024
- Setting up the *National Housing Supply and Affordability Council* for independent advice on improving housing supply and affordability
- Formulating the *National Housing and Homelessness Plan* as a 10-year national strategy to inform housing and homelessness policy
- Launching the \$2 billion *Social Housing Accelerator* to deliver new social homes across the country.

Through these initiatives, Council seeks to partner with the Federal Government to increase the supply of social and affordable housing on Government and private land.

Partnership opportunity 1: Social and affordable housing allocations

OPPORTUNITY

Through Federal Budget measures, partner with Council and local community housing providers to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the City of Whittlesea and help alleviate the impacts of the housing crisis.

BENEFITS

- Accelerated delivery of social and affordable housing across the City of Whittlesea
- Reduced service costs by >\$15,000 per year for individuals living in stable and affordable housing instead of experiencing homelessness
- Improved access to social and affordable housing for vulnerable residents
- Reduced rental and mortgage stress
- Increased participation in and improved outcomes in employment, education, health care and community life
- Improved wellbeing.

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

- Allocate **\$10M** to facilitate delivery of at least 50 social and affordable homes on council owned land in strategic locations in partnership with the Community Housing Sector
- Allocate Federal Budget measures for housing reform to the City of Whittlesea
- Allocate budget towards a dedicated ‘growth area’ funding round under the *Housing Australia Future Fund* to increase social and affordable housing in the northern growth corridors of the City of Whittlesea.

²² Australian Treasury (2023), Factsheet – Delivering Social and Affordable Housing <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/c2023-458116-fs.pdf>

²³ Australian Treasury (2023), Housing Policy <https://treasury.gov.au/housing-policy>

continued

Partnership opportunity 1:

Social and affordable housing allocations

19.1%

fall within low income range
\$0 to \$799 per week

56%

fall within medium
income range
\$800 to \$2999
per week

Rationale

The City of Whittlesea has a housing crisis, with 32.7% of renting households and 18.2% of mortgage households – more than 12,000 households in total – experiencing housing related stress.²⁴

Demand for rentals affordable to low income groups exceeds supply, with more than 4,400 households having a need for affordable housing.²⁵ There is a waitlist of over 12,400 applications for social housing with preferences in the north-eastern region.²⁶

19.1% of households in the municipality fall within the lowest income range – \$0 to \$799 per week. More than 56% fall within the medium income range – \$800 to \$2999 per week.²⁷

The City's stock of new rental housing that is affordable to these lower income households declined from above 42.9% in September 2003 to only 5% in June 2023.²⁸ ABS data show the City of Whittlesea had fewer social housing households (1.1%) compared with Greater Melbourne (2.3%).²⁹

Return on investment

Additional affordable and social housing will provide long-term accommodation for families and individuals who cannot afford to rent in the private rental market. The housing will be allocated to eligible households with low to moderate incomes. It will benefit:

- vulnerable populations at risk of homelessness, including elderly people, people who need assistance and people experiencing family violence
- lower income-earning essential workers, including child-care, health care, aged care, hospitality, retail, service and delivery industry workers
- one parent families.

Improving access to social and affordable housing brings benefits for the community, including vulnerable groups, by:

- reducing rental and mortgage stress and associated poor health
- supporting social inclusion, participation and economic productivity
- reducing the number of young people sleeping rough
- breaking the cycle of homelessness
- relieving pressures on local homelessness services
- increasing participation in employment, education and health care
- improving overall health, safety, wellbeing and sense of empowerment.

Social housing is particularly effective at reducing homelessness: it's affordable, because rents are typically set at around 25% of income. There is housing security due to the availability of long-term and life-time leases.

Research shows that investing in long-term social housing can also deliver significant cost savings to government through reduced expenditure in health, justice and welfare services. An ACT study estimated that:³⁰

- 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
- government will recoup 57 cents for every dollar it spends on new, low-cost housing through welfare offsets.



²⁴ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2021), City of Whittlesea-Social Atlas <https://atlas.id.com.au/whittlesea> Rental and mortgage stress refers to households spending 30% of its income on rent and mortgage costs respectively

²⁵ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023), City of Whittlesea – Housing Monitor <https://housing.id.com.au/whittlesea>

²⁶ Homes Australia (2023), Applications for Victoria Housing Register (VHR) <https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202309/VHR%20location%20preferences%20-%2030%20June%202023.xlsx>

²⁷ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2021) City of Whittlesea- Household Income <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/household-income>

²⁸ Home Victoria (2023), Rental Report-Quarterly: Affordable Lettings by LGA <https://discover.data.vic.gov.au/dataset/rental-report-quarterly-affordable-lettings-by-lga>

²⁹ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2021) City of Whittlesea- Housing Tenure <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/tenure>

³⁰ Davison, J, Brackertz, N. & Alves, T. (2021), *Return on investment in social housing in the ACT*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Partnership opportunity:

Homelessness support services

2



Project

The City of Whittlesea is seeking Federal Government investment and provision of local homelessness services in the City of Whittlesea, including:

- Delivering a designated Homelessness Access point
- Funding Assertive Outreach services for vulnerable people experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough.

Partnership opportunity 2: Homelessness support services

OPPORTUNITY	INVESTMENT SOUGHT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage a leading homelessness support organisation and provider in the City of Whittlesea to respond to the diverse needs of rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness.• Utilise culturally safe processes, escalation pathways and care coordination plan in a client-centric approach that is inclusive of the broader community, including First Nations people, refugee and asylum seekers, women experiencing family violence and people with disability.• Provide outreach and short-term case management to rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness to help them find pathways out of homelessness.• Provide a local Access Point for people experiencing homelessness.• Aim for a 'Functional Zero' model - achieved when the number of people sleeping rough and accessing homelessness services is less than the number of people no longer requiring these services by securing housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate Federal Budget funds for a dedicated Homelessness Access Point in the City of Whittlesea• Invest \$1.5M over three years for a comprehensive assertive outreach service for people sleeping rough in the City of Whittlesea.
BENEFITS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an essential service to the most vulnerable members of our community• Measure and evaluate services responding to people who are experiencing homelessness and track if they are keeping pace with the number of people experiencing homelessness• Reduced number of people sleeping rough• Reduce pressure on homelessness services outside the municipality• Increased participation and improved outcomes in employment, education, health care and community life• Improved wellbeing and safety.	

continued

Partnership opportunity 2:

Homelessness support service

42%

of people accessing homelessness support services reported escaping domestic and family violence

80%

of people being turned away from homelessness services are women and children

Rationale

Ending homelessness starts with early interventions involving both universal and targeted preventions. Homelessness systems in the City of Whittlesea are in crisis. **Since 2006, homelessness in the City has grown by 150%**⁷. The City needs a Homeless Access point, supported by a coordinated outreach service to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. This is particularly pertinent for growth area councils like the City of Whittlesea, who will be responsible for accommodating most of Australia's housing growth over the coming decades. In the current structure, the City will face a disproportionate share of the consequences of a poorly functioning housing system in community experience of sleeping rough and homelessness.

Experiences of homelessness are varied in the City of Whittlesea and a substantial portion of the homeless cohort are 'invisible.' Haven Home Safe, the access point provider for the community, is located in Preston at least 45 kilometres from the rural north of the municipality. This creates barriers to access that place our community at further risk. Funding a local assertive outreach service and access point in the City of Whittlesea will bridge this gap.

The City of Whittlesea experiences the twelfth highest levels of homelessness in Victoria. There were 854 people experiencing homelessness in the municipality during the 2021 Census. Qualitative data from homelessness services indicates this figure is underscored significantly, with the experience of homelessness in the City being much higher and more visible. A substantial portion of the homeless cohort is provisionally accommodated.

Homelessness affects a wide range of people from different regions, ages and diverse cultural backgrounds. Risk of homelessness may be increased by poor physical or mental health, and homelessness exacerbates and complicates access to health services, employment and vulnerability to crime and personal attacks. The City of Whittlesea has the third highest rate of family violence amongst northern municipalities- with 1,228 incidents per 100,000 population. 42% of people accessing homelessness support services reported escaping domestic and family violence.³¹

When local governments do get involved in the problem of homelessness, it is often too late. They are reacting when homelessness has reached crisis point, instead of working to prevent it. Further, local councils have limited resourcing, capacity or impact to influence long lasting changes in this space. At this stage of the crisis, success is dependent on all other levels of government supporting any Council led homelessness response.

Homelessness services are overwhelmed. Nationally, 295 people a day are turned away. 80% of those being turned away are women and children, many of whom are fleeing family violence.³²

The higher cost of living including rising rents and the lack of affordable housing are key factors leading to housing stress and higher rates of homelessness. In the northern region, there is no crisis accommodation, particularly for families escaping family violence. The closest access point Haven Home Safe receives limited funding and does not have capacity to meet the housing and emergency and crisis accommodation needs of rough sleepers in the area. Rough sleepers who present at the closest access point seeking emergency or crisis accommodation are often turned away. This can be because there is no availability in hotels, motels, or rooming houses; there is no funding available; or the person is not considered a priority against other clients.

Return on investment

Assertive outreach and Functional Zero models provide a real time count of individuals experiencing homelessness. This approach benefits from evidence already established across Council and by support agencies. Testing Assertive Outreach and Functional Zero models would provide the best value of funding to reduce the impact of homelessness and sleeping rough in the community.

The Framework is based on four interconnected tiers developed by Launch Housing. Investment provides backbone resources to enable collaboration with LGAs and other partners. Each tier connects the broad range of community partners and existing local service responses which are outlined below:

Hot Spots - Brings together Council, community members and services to develop an understanding of homelessness and share intelligence about the location and prevalence of homelessness 'hot spots.'

Service Coordination - provides efficient coordination of housing and support resources around developing the tool, data collection and the development of a personalised list of rough sleepers, their personal situation and needs and ensure nobody is missed.

Improvement Working Group - provides a central communication and action point between the person-centred activities of service coordination and the external facing, resource focused activities of the Executive and Hot Spots Group. It brings a Continuous Quality Improvement perspective and provides escalation support for service coordination.

Executive - Responsible for strategic direction, the creation of an authorising environment, securing resources and the mobilisation of a community response.

³¹ Crime Statistics Agency, 2024

³² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, AIHW 16th biennial welfare report, 2023

Partnership opportunity:

Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH)

3



Project

This project aims to deliver an Agri-Food and Beverage hub in the City of Whittlesea connecting industry, research and innovation, logistics and support local jobs.

MFIH will establish the northern region as a world-class precinct for food, beverages and innovation enabling the region to be a major player in the agri-food and beverage market.

Partnership opportunity 3: Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH)

OPPORTUNITY

- Fund the development of MFIH as a transformational project for the Australian food and beverage industry.
- Provide incentives for a major industry player to relocate to Epping as an anchor tenant to attract other food and beverage export businesses and encourage innovation.
- Bring together government agencies, business support and incubation, marketing, manufacturing, education, processing, packaging, logistics, innovation and distribution.
- Facilitate growth in the food and beverage industry.

BENEFITS

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

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

- Invest in the development of this transformational project for the Australian food and beverage industry.

continued

Partnership opportunity 3:

Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH)

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.³³

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 and beverage sector develop into an industry cluster of tertiary institutions, freight and logistics networks, and a burgeoning skilled workforce.

Leveraging on its proximity to the Melbourne Market, MFIH will be developed as a global agri-food and beverage hub. The City of Whittlesea's Agri-Food Plan 2023-2026 identifies MFIH as a key initiative to grow and attract food and beverage businesses in Melbourne's north. MFIH 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.³⁴

NORTH Link's Melbourne's North Investment Attraction Strategy identifies MFIH as a key investment to secure food-related jobs for Victoria, with Melbourne's north expected to increase its output to \$5 billion.³⁵

Return on investment

Developing a 50-hectare land parcel adjoining the Melbourne Market into MFIH will optimise the market's assets and deliver lasting infrastructure and job opportunities for the region. Modelling shows MFIH will:³⁶

- 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)
- encourage new ancillary businesses.

Comprising approximately 120 hectares including the Melbourne Markets, MFIH 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.³⁷



³³ Melbourne Market, 2021, *Overview - Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable & Flower Market*.

³⁴ City of Whittlesea, 2023, *Agri-Food Plan 2023-2026*

³⁵ NORTH Link-Urban Enterprise, 2023, *Melbourne's North Investment Attraction Strategy*

³⁶ Melbourne Market Authority, 2018, *The Melbourne Food Hub at Epping*.

³⁷ Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 2020, *Victorian Food and Fibre Export Performance Report 2019-20.pdf*, p2.

Partnership opportunity:

Mobile and broadband coverage

4

Project

This project seeks to fix seven broadband blackspots in the City of Whittlesea and connect six growth areas to the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The blackspots are:

1. Cooper Street business precinct
2. University Hill
3. Olivine Estate and Kinbrook Estate
4. Thomastown
5. Aurora Estate
6. Whittlesea Township
7. Beveridge, Merriang and Glenvale

The future growth areas:

1. Cooper Street West, Epping
2. Donnybrook/Woodstock Precinct
3. Wollert Precinct
4. Mernda Town Centre
5. Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP)
6. Northern Quarries/Craigieburn South

The announcement by the National Intermodal that the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP) will be partially operational in 2025 and fully operational in 2028-29 raises the urgency for improving broadband connectivity in our growth areas.

Partnership opportunity 4: Mobile and broadband coverage

OPPORTUNITY

Fix seven broadband blackspots and provide connectivity for six growth areas in the City of Whittlesea.

BENEFITS

- Improved access to key services, employment, education and business opportunities
- Improved community response and safety in emergency events and natural disasters due to climate change
- Provides social and economic benefits.

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

- Allocate Federal Budget investments for improved broadband connectivity.

continued

Partnership opportunity 4:

Mobile and broadband coverage

Rationale

Fast and reliable broadband connectivity is critical for relaying information and staying connected in emergencies. It is also integral to ensuring resident safety and wellbeing.

Blackspots and gaps must also be remedied because they have a direct impact on the social determinants of health, including access to health care, educational, employment and business opportunities. This is particularly the case in areas experiencing social disadvantage.

Residents in our identified blackspots experience:

- disrupted employment seeking activities
- disrupted business operations, including home based businesses
- increased business costs as their businesses need to seek alternative coverage
- reduced business and employment income
- reduced family and community connection
- disrupted education, including home schooling
- disrupted library services
- disrupted emergency services and community safety information.

Return on investment

Fast and reliable broadband services will allow residents and businesses to enjoy the benefits of connectivity that other urban residents and businesses take for granted. In the era of working from home and distance education becoming increasingly common, the dependence on telecommunications infrastructure that is fast and reliable is increasing.

The benefits will extend to rural areas of our municipality.

Better broadband connectivity in the municipality will advance the *Better Connectivity for Regional and Rural Australia Plan* through:

- ▶ **enhancing community safety, particularly during emergencies**
- ▶ **improving social connection**
- ▶ **increasing access and participation in education, employment and health services**
- ▶ **supporting education and business success.**

This is consistent with the Federal Government's commitment to the NBN which recognises the importance of internet coverage for connection, access to services and business operations and growth.³⁸

Progress

Council has recently convened an independent study on mobile coverage to identify blackspots across the municipality, particularly in growth areas. The study found:

- 41% of the combined mobile coverage is either fair or poor and 10% is unusable signal for network quality
- 13% of emergency markers had poor or unusable signal, although at least one carrier had fair or better quality coverage for triple zero calls
- 36% of 2,093 road segments tested had unusable or null coverage.³⁹

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 and Yan Yean, and broadband solutions in Doreen and Mill Park.⁴⁰

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.

³⁸ Australian Government, 2022, *A stronger, more resilient economy*, Budget, October 2022-23.

³⁹ Independent study for City of Whittlesea by Cart GIS. July 2024

⁴⁰ Connecting Victoria, 2022, *Projects near City of Whittlesea* Projects near you | Connecting Victoria | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (djsir.vic.gov.au)

Partnership opportunity:

a Dedicated Youth Hub

5



Project

The City of Whittlesea is seeking Federal Government funding for the establishment of a new purpose-built Youth Hub.

The Youth Hub would respond to the needs of a significantly growing youth population, with 27% of the current population in the City of Whittlesea under 20, by:

- working with a broader population of young people than would typically interact with intervention services
- engaging with young people, building their capacity and connection and delivering improved health and wellbeing outcomes with a prevention-based approach.

Partnership opportunity 5: a Dedicated Youth Hub

OPPORTUNITY	INVESTMENT SOUGHT
<p>Establish a Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea to enable delivery of a ‘hub and spoke’ service model to run ongoing youth program throughout all of the City of Whittlesea with a prevention-based approach. The Youth Hub will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new facility incorporating flexible design principles identified during extensive community consultation • A kitchen and activity space, foyer, multi-purpose meeting, consulting and quiet rooms, pod cast recording equipment, outdoor space, office space, and gender-neutral amenity spaces • Access via public transport • Dedicated staffing for key activities and services. <p>BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly increase the number of young people that can access youth programs and services • Engage a broad range of young people in prevention activities, resulting in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better physical and mental health • Success at school and lower rates of school refusal • Better employment outcomes • Social cohesion including a sense of solidarity and respect for others and control of negative behaviours in community • Taking up community leadership and increased civic participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a dedicated youth hub to deliver the ‘hub and spoke’ service model, developing and running key programs that will then utilise existing ‘spoke’ facilities to extend the reach of services throughout the City of Whittlesea.

continued
Partnership opportunity 5:
a Dedicated Youth Hub

\$1.3M
*social benefits anticipated
from delivery of a
dedicated youth hub*

\$15.3M
*in economic benefits
anticipated from delivery
of a dedicated youth hub*

Rationale

The need for a dedicated Youth Hub in the City of Whittlesea is an issue that has been raised by young people, their families and local service providers for a long time and through various community engagements.

According to local service providers, there are four major issues currently impacting young people in the City of Whittlesea. These include:

- 1. Social isolation and loneliness**
- 2. Ill mental health** ranging from relatively minor anxieties to serious conditions such as disordered eating and self-harm.
- 3. Disengagement from school** including reported school refusal and behavioural issues in school
- 4. Higher family violence rates** leading to a range of other issues for young people such as homelessness.

These factors are further compounded in many parts of the LGA where community members experience high levels of disadvantage. Agencies and organisations that work with young people in the City of Whittlesea have reported that social isolation, alongside remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, meant young people were developing fewer social cues, having trouble finding their “tribe” and building networks, and despite being busy, experiencing loneliness.

There are many barriers prohibiting young people accessing services that respond to the issues identified. These include:

- Overwhelmed existing services that need more staff and facilities to properly address current and growing needs
- A lack of preventive measures and recreational activities for young people, including drop-in facilities and programs. Many existing centres are oriented towards young families or are primarily service focused which concentrates on mental health services.
- Parental concern around the types of places young people can go, with concerns around safety in the design and access of these spaces.
- Access, with a lack of transport options in the area. Young people travel into the city, Collingwood or Seymour to use youth hubs they can access by train.
- A lack of services overall.

The establishment of a new purpose-built Youth Hub will enable new opportunities to work with an increased number of young people before they require service intervention. The Youth Hub will provide a dedicated asset from which to run youth programming, with a focus on engaging young people in activities that can aid in the prevention of issues that negatively affect them. A focus on prevention would have the biggest impact on the largest number of young people in Whittlesea.

Return on investment

Social impacts

The Youth Hub will support the health and wellbeing of young people in the City of Whittlesea, by:

- improving service access
- increasing the capacity of youth support services
- expanding programming to reach a wider audience and, informed by community consultation, better tailoring of the site and programs to reflect the needs of young people
- boosting participation of young people in public life
- reducing social isolation
- improving wellbeing outcomes.

The Youth Hub will engage more young people that are at risk and provide early intervention to prevent issues from arising or worsening. In effect, this service can redirect vulnerable young people who might have otherwise required more intensive intervention. In promoting social inclusion, this is expected to result in a better overall quality of life for individuals. As a result, this is likely to reduce crime and hospitalisation rates that are associated with low wellbeing, carrying not only social but also economic benefits.

Social impacts were assessed in the form of improvement in participants’ mental health, estimated at \$2,271 benefit per young person that is materially and positively impacted by the Youth Hub. With this calculation, it is expected that the Youth Hub will generate an estimated social benefit of \$1.3 million in present day terms.

Economic impacts

The Youth Hub will enable the participation of young people in society through tailored programming and expanded service access. By providing ongoing support that meets modern needs, this can lift the confidence and ability of young people and encourage them to fulfil their potential across work and study.

This leads to improved economic outcomes for these participants, including:

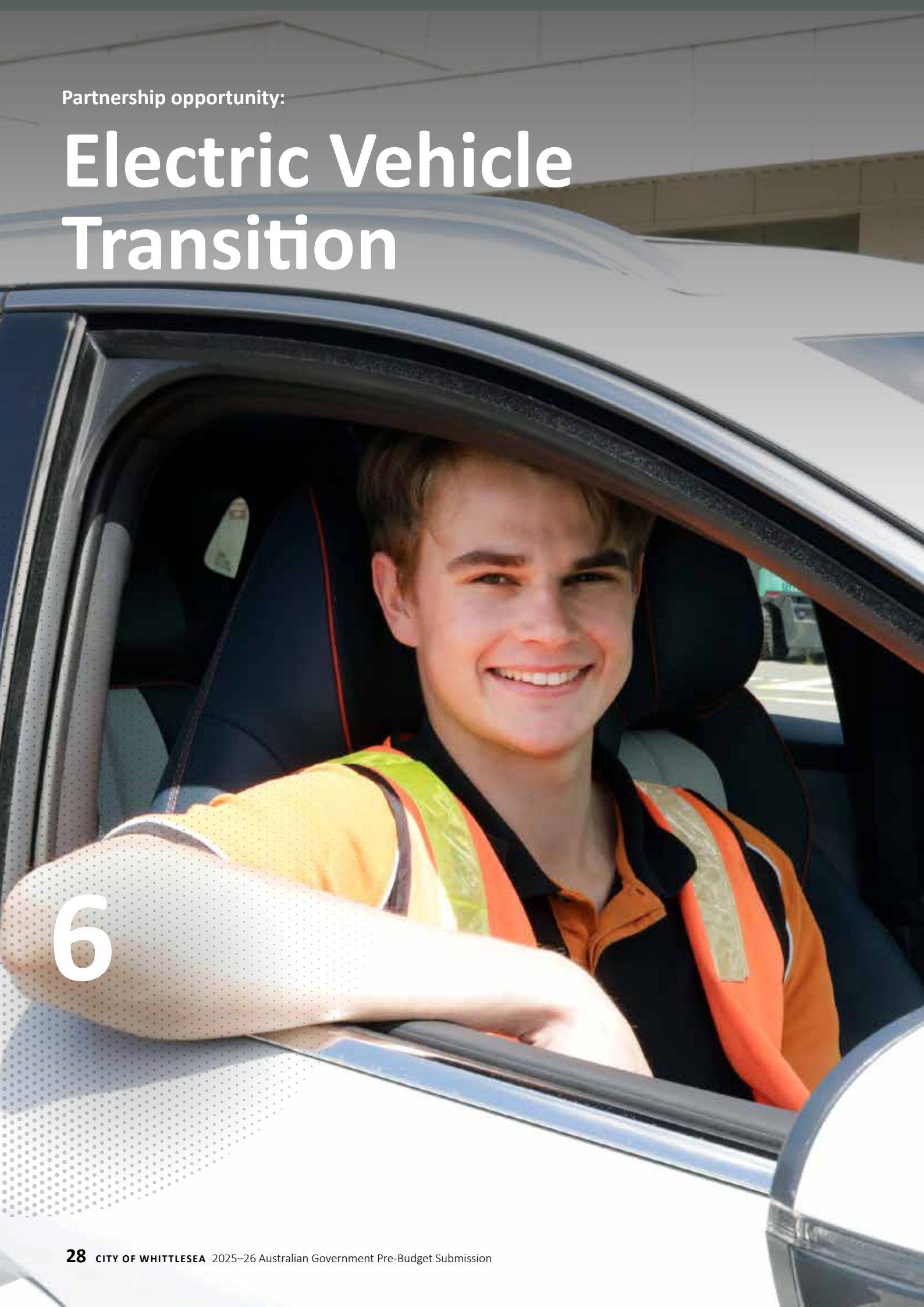
- reduced unemployment
- increased productivity
- higher educational achievements than might have otherwise been achieved.

The improved economic outcomes have been quantified in terms of accelerated employment and increased lifetime earnings for young people associated with improved educational attainment. By assisting young people with job searching and early engagement in the labour market, this is likely to generate a benefit of \$12,059 to \$43,344 per young person at risk of un/underemployment that is materially and positively impacted. It is therefore likely that the Youth Hub will generate an estimated economic benefit of \$15.3 million in present day terms.

Partnership opportunity:

Electric Vehicle Transition

6



Project

This project aims to reduce transport related emissions by supporting Council and the broader community to rapidly transition to Electric Vehicles.

Partnership opportunity 6: Electric Vehicle Transition

OPPORTUNITY

Provide funding to support the delivery of the Northern Council Alliance's community wide Electric Vehicle transition plan, enabling the EV transition for Melbourne's north

Utilise Federal purchasing power and influence to procure and improve market availability of EVs

BENEFITS

- Reduction in carbon emissions - transport accounts for a significant part of Council's emission profile
- Reduction in transport pollution and noise levels on local communities
- Reducing the operational cost to move transports, goods and people.

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

- Invest **\$1M** to support Council's heavy vehicle contractors transition to Electric Heavy Fleet
- Invest **\$500k** to support Councils to partner with local business to develop fleet transition plans and provide seed funding to support the transition
- Develop Federal Programs that facilitate importation of heavy fleet vehicles that support Council and community needs.

continued
Partnership opportunity 6:
**Electric Vehicle
Transition**

Rationale

The Federal Government has a significant role to play in supporting the lowering of local government vehicle emissions nationwide. *The Commonwealth Fleet Vehicle Selection Policy* has set a target of 75% low or zero emission vehicles by 2025. Currently, it's more affordable for Council's and large fleet users to purchase internal combustion or hybrid vehicle within their fleet, particularly for heavy fleet.

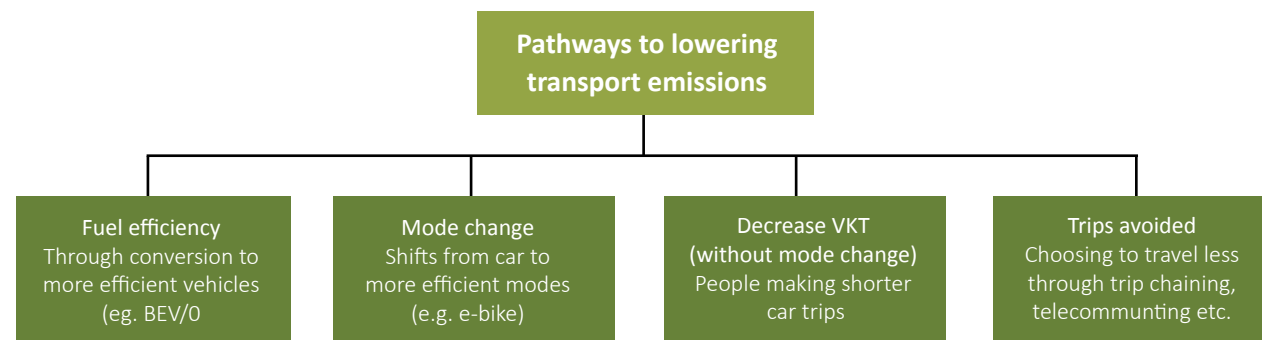
Providing co-funding to support Council's heavy fleet transition, and funding to enable local government to support local businesses with heavy vehicle fleet transition, will ensure faster reductions in carbon emissions from these sources. By establishing a Federal Program to reduce importation barriers of EVs, local government will be able to access a greater array of tools to support the decarbonisation of the transport sector.

Return on investment

By reducing the barriers to EV transition, including capital cost barriers, knowledge barriers and vehicle availability, the Federal Government can support the rapid EV transition reducing transport related emissions and helping meet Australia's Climate Targets.

Beginning with the City of Whittlesea as a pilot for heavy vehicle EV implementation will pave the way for councils nationwide. Leveraging local government will mean that the private sector will be able to follow the path to transition, further accelerating change.

Australian transport emissions have risen by 60% since 1990. The average emissions of new vehicles today are higher than those sold in 2016. There are four methods to reduce emissions: ⁴¹



⁴¹ Northern Council's Alliance, 2022, Community wide EV transition Report, Insitute of Sensible Transport



Partnership opportunity:

Active travel infrastructure

7



Project

This project seeks Federal Government support to help Council deliver new paths for walking and riding in the municipality to increase participation in active travel.

Partnership opportunity 7: Active travel infrastructure

OPPORTUNITY	INVESTMENT SOUGHT
<p>Partner with Council to deliver active travel infrastructure projects from Council's Walking and Cycling Plan and the Northern Trails Strategy,^{42,43} including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Street Shared Path between Keon Park Station and Epping Station • Whittlesea-Mernda Shared Path • Yan Yan Pipe Track between Childs Road and Bush Boulevard, Mill Park <p>Investment in behaviour change programs to support our community to walk and cycle more.</p> <p>BENEFITS Allow a growing population improved and safer access to local services, facilities and recreational opportunities, which will result in:</p> <p>Better health outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling can contribute to minimising risks of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers and osteoporosis.⁴⁴ 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. <p>Reduced traffic Congestion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active travel can reduce traffic congestion by substituting trips made by car to active travel modes, resulting in lower transport related emissions and lower costs to remaining road users.⁴⁵ <p>Economic benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including increased public transport usage, reduced vehicle operating costs, reduced health costs and potential for changes in land use planning to cater for more public spaces. <p>Environmental benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. It also reduces parking requirements with space and cost savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest \$20M in the High Street Shared Path between Keon Park Station and Epping Station • Invest \$20M in the Whittlesea Mernda Shared Path • A \$5M investment towards the Yan Yan Pipe Track between Childs Road and Bush Boulevard in Mill Park.

continued

Partnership opportunity 7:

Active travel infrastructure

Rationale

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 recently endorsed a Walking and Cycling Plan, improved walking and cycling infrastructure and connections around the catchment of key public transport nodes and interchanges. Along with other members of the Northern Councils Alliance, Council also endorsed the Northern Trails Strategy. Both documents set out a list of priority projects to improve conditions and increase walking and cycling participation.

By 2041, the City of Whittlesea's population is forecast to increase to approximately 360,692, an increase of almost 50%.⁹ 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.

The Federal Government has committed under the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30 to improve road safety outcomes for bicyclists and pedestrians. The Federal Government has also committed to reduce transport emissions and support active and liveable communities.

Return on investment

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

- increase levels of walking and cycling participation and the share of transport trips undertaken by these modes
- improve health outcomes for the community
- increase pedestrian and cyclist safety
- deliver a 13:1 benefit to cost ratio of investment in walking infrastructure
- reduce congestion at peak times by promoting walking—time spent in traffic is estimated to cost \$10.2B in Melbourne by 2030⁴⁵ and
- reduce health care costs – 10% reduction in physical inactivity would result in \$96M in annual health care savings.

⁴² City of Whittlesea, Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

⁴³ Northern Council's Alliance, Northern Trails Strategy 2022

⁴⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Health Survey 2017-2018

⁴⁵ Victoria Walks, 2018, *The Economic Case for Investment in Walking*





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