



# Panel of Administrators Final Report 2020-2024



# 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.

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Good governance</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Responsible financial management</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Transforming organisational planning</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Customer service</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Community engagement</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Advocacy</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Representation</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Pandemic response</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Connected Community</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Liveable Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Strong Local Economy</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Sustainable Environment</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>High Performing Organisation</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Innovation and best practice</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Awards</b>	<b>40</b>

COVER IMAGE  
Aboriginal Gathering Place  
sod turn June 2023



# Executive Summary

**On 19 June 2020 the Acting Minister for Local Government appointed a Panel of Administrators for the City of Whittlesea following a report from Municipal Monitor Yehudi Blacher.**

Lydia Wilson was appointed Chair of the Panel of Administrators supported by Administrators Peita Duncan and The Hon Bruce Billson.

During the four-year term of Administrators there were a number of changes to the Panel; The Hon Bruce Billson resigned in March 2021 and was replaced by Chris Eddy who later resigned in December 2022 and was replaced in March 2023 by Christian Zahra AM.

The Panel appointed Craig Lloyd as the permanent CEO in October 2020.

Upon their appointment the Administrators immediately set an ambitious program of improvements to enhance the governance, strategic planning, responsible financial management and community engagement functions and practice of the Council. This program was documented in the Administrator Action Plan 2020-2024 (**Attachment 1**) and was subsequently embedded into the City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2021-2025 (**Attachment 2**).

The program was underpinned by a commitment to restoring the reputation of the Council with the community and within the sector and to providing much-needed stability to the organisation while fostering an effective working relationship with leadership and staff.

A busy and productive four years have seen the organisation transform with fit-for-purpose processes and technology that make it easier for the community to interact with Council including a new Customer Service Hub in Whittlesea township a comprehensive integrated planning framework, best practice governance, exemplary customer service and a comprehensive community engagement program.

Administrators and Council Senior Officers have worked collaboratively with a shared vision and purpose to support the growing community of the City of Whittlesea. Many initiatives have now become business as usual with a clear line of sight to long-term initiatives which are progressively being implemented.

The Panel is confident the organisation is well prepared to welcome back the return of elected officials in October 2024.



Clockwise: Administrator Peita Duncan, Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson, Administrator Christian Zahra AM, The Hon. Bruce Billson and Chris Eddy.



# Good governance

Administrators have focused on embedding good governance at the City of Whittlesea in accordance with the Municipal Monitor's report which recommended:

“Administrators develop, implement and publicly report on an action to embed good governance at the Council taking into account the reform opportunities of the Local Government Bill 2019.”

On 6 April 2021 the Administrators endorsed the Administrator Action Plan 2020-2024 (Action Plan) confirming actions and commitments to ensure continued good governance during their term. The Action Plan outlined priorities in line with Council's Community Vision, Whittlesea 2024: A Place for All, and the Community Plan 2021-2025. The Action Plan also considered the Local Government Act and needs of the community in responding and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure good governance in the best interests of the community and to provide transparency, six-monthly updates were publicly reported on the Action Plan on key strategic decisions and work undertaken by Council. From March 2022, as communicated to the former Minister for Local Government, The Hon. Shaun Leane, MP on 21 April 2022, priorities within the Action Plan were reported via Council's Community Plan and Financial quarterly performance reports, and through a six-monthly report outlining the Administrators keys achievements and Administrator engagement with the community. A copy of the Action Plan as of March 2022, is attached at Appendix 1 for information.

Administrators consistently supported a culture of good governance at the Council with all decision-making underpinned by rigorous due diligence and transparency. To continue the culture of good governance, a substantial amount of work has been completed establishing a roadmap for the newly elected Councillors' Induction Program.

In preparation for the return of elected Councillors, and to enhance good governance practices, all policies relating to Councillors were thoroughly reviewed, released for community consultation, and where required, adopted by Council.



The first Joint Council Meeting with City Of Whittlesea, Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire, September 2023



## Good governance

### Highlights

- Increased transparency of decision making with percentage of Council decisions in confidential meetings reducing from 13% as of 30 June 2020 to 6% as of 24 July 2024
- 598 open Council agenda items between 1 July 2020 to 24 July 24
- 36 closed confidential agenda items between 1 July 2020 to 24 July 24
- Attendance at scheduled and unscheduled Council meetings:
  - Chair of Council Lydia Wilson 50/53
  - Administrator Peita Duncan 52/53
  - Administrator Chris Eddy 18/21
  - Administrator The Honourable Bruce Wilson 10/10
  - Administrator Christian Zahra AM 16/18



- Updated Governance Rules, including an updated election period policy
- Review and update to Audit & Risk Committee Charter
- Recruitment process to appoint a new Independent Chair of the CEO Employment Matters Advisory Committee
- Updated CEO Employment Matters Policy incorporating CEO protocols

- Annual Reports
  - 2020-2021
  - 2021-2022
  - 2022-2023
  - 2023-2024 in progress
- All relevant policies and plans have been endorsed and implemented:
  - Community Engagement Policy
  - Hardship Policy and payment plans
  - Councillor Code of Conduct
  - Public Transparency policy
  - Councillor Gift policy
  - Borrowing Policy
  - Complaints Policy
  - Councillor Communications Policy
  - Public Interest Disclosure Procedures
  - Councillor Support and Expense Policy
  - Councillor Staff interaction Protocol
  - Staff Code of Conduct
- Embedded regular performance reporting to community including financials
- Recruitment of CEO
- The introduction of livestreaming of Council Meeting
- The introduction of community-based Council Meetings held in Mernda, Whittlesea and Lalor
- The introduction of a Diversity Statement at the start of every Council Meeting
- First Joint Council Meeting in Victoria with Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire Council
- Implementation of all requirements under the Local Government Act 2020
- Transition of the City of Whittlesea's Youth Advisory Committee to a Youth Council In February 2024.



Members of the City of Whittlesea Youth Council



# Responsible financial management

Fostering a culture of responsible financial management has enabled Council to continue to deliver 147 critical services for the community whilst continuing to invest in much-needed infrastructure and renewal.

Careful planning, allocation and monitoring of funds has strengthened accountability and ensured the City of Whittlesea's financial sustainability.

In the past four years the community has experienced economic challenges from the pandemic followed by increasing cost of living pressures.

Cognisant of these challenges, Council has made every effort to boost community resilience and reduce the financial burden including:

- Introduction of a COVID-19 Hardship Policy
- Broadening the scope of the Financial Hardship Policy in 2021 to include rates, fees and charges and widening eligibility to individuals, businesses and groups
- The creation of a dedicated Hardship Support Officer position
- Continued subsidisation of waste charges
- Minimal changes to fees and charges
- Membership of Thriving Partnerships program
- Keeping rates within the Fair Go Rating System
- \$2 million COVID-19 Community Recovery Fund
- Boosted funding to Community Grants program by 33% to \$2.6 million [2023-2024, 2024-2025]

Rigorous and responsible financial management has been a priority during the term.

## Highlights

- Development of the Long-Term Financial Plan 2021-2031
- Yearly Budget informed by comprehensive community engagement processes including hearings of public submissions



- 2021-2022
- 2022-2023
- 2023-2024
- 2024-2025
- Development of a new Investment Policy
- Development of a new Borrowings Policy
- Application of a conservative borrowing strategy in accordance with a revised Borrowings Policy
- Secured \$41.81 million in capital grant funding from the Federal and State Government
- Review and update of Council's Financial Reserves Policy
- VAGO provided each year an unqualified opinion for both financial statements and performance statement
- Review and update of Council Financial Delegations to the CEO and members of Council staff.

# Transforming organisational planning

Council's Community Plan 2021-2025 builds on and re-endorses the long-term community vision – Whittlesea 2040, A Place for All – and incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Disability Action Plan and Pandemic Recovery Plan actions into the one overarching document.

Developed following extensive community consultation, the Community Plan focuses on public safety, festivals, events, social connection and sports facilities as well as thriving town centres, new and upgraded parks and playgrounds, transport improvements, clean streets and road safety.

To support the implementation of the plan, yearly Community Plan Action Plans are developed that outline the key actions delivered each financial year

## Highlights

- Community Plan Action Plan 2021-2022  
**100%**  
of actions delivered
- Community Plan Action Plan 2022-2023  
**100%**  
of actions delivered
- Community Plan Action Plan 2023-2024  
**98%**  
of actions delivered
- Community Plan Action Plan 2024-2025  
**in progress**

## Integrated planning

During the term Council has focused on developing an integrated, long-term approach to strategic planning driven by extensive community engagement and an evidence-based outcomes framework.

This has transformed the way planning is undertaken at the City of Whittlesea and this innovative approach has been recognised by the sector in the 2024 LGPro Awards for Excellence when the City of Whittlesea was a finalist in the Innovation Management category.

A lean, well-defined strategic planning framework saw the development of seven core strategies aligned to each of the goal areas under the vision of A Place for All with an outcomes framework that supports and enhances extensive reporting mechanisms, articulating the impact on community.

These strategies are now embedded across the organisation driving organisational effort.

- Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033
- Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023-2033
- Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026
- Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032
- High Performing Organisation Strategy 2023-2028
- Long Term Community Infrastructure Strategy 2024-2033
- Aboriginal Action Plan 2024-2029

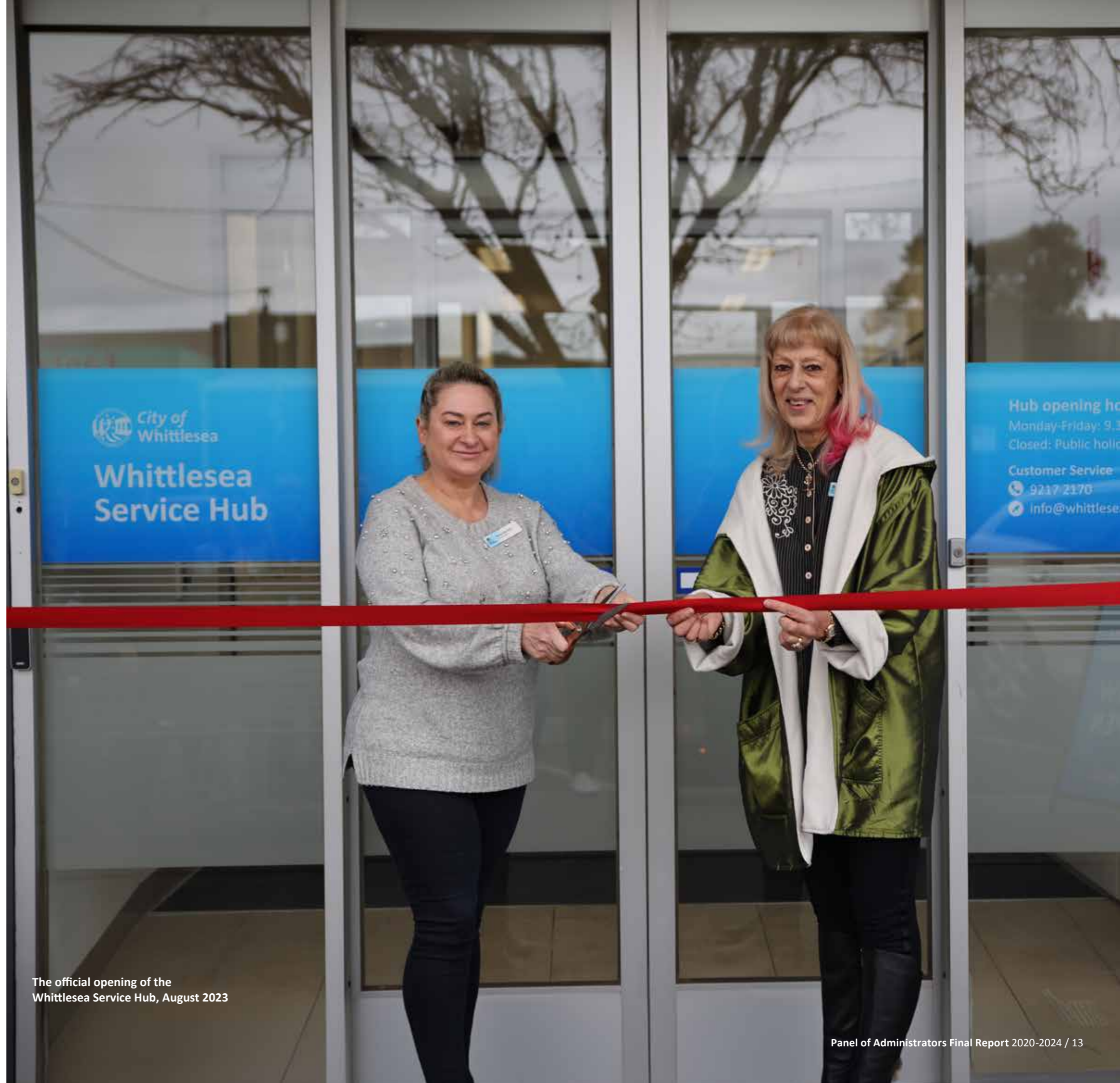
Council has also conducted a large-scale audit and review of the policy framework of the organisation to determine whether they are current, need to be updated to reflect current legislation, or are obsolete and able to be rescinded. This has consolidated policy positions, removed duplication, conflicts and ensured strategic alignment.

# Customer service

With a rapidly growing and diverse municipality, delivering excellence in customer service has been a focus of the past four years.

## Highlights

- The creation of a dedicated Customer Experience/Digital Experience program to transform the way our community interacts with us online
- The creation of the Whittlesea Service Hub; a dedicated customer service centre located in the heart of the Whittlesea township to better service the north of the municipality.
- The delivery of a contemporary new easy-to-use and intuitive website to make it easier for the community to find the information they need and to interact with Council online
- A comprehensive future-focused digital transformation program ensuring systems are fit-for-purpose to drive efficiency and deliver the best community outcomes
- The delivery of an online customer portal; where more transactions can be completed online such as requesting a bin, booking a hard waste collection, reporting an issue or paying a bill. It will be quick and easy on the portal which is easily accessible from Council's new website. Residents can sign in and view all their requests in the one place
- Council has introduced a new post-service delivery survey to monitor satisfaction levels with customer service; satisfaction scores have increased from 48% in November 2022 to 84% in July 2024
- A Customer Charter clearly articulates what customers can expect of their council to increase accountability and continuous improvement.



The official opening of the Whittlesea Service Hub, August 2023



# Community engagement

Council has invested significantly in rebuilding community trust through a comprehensive program of genuine community engagement to ensure the community's voice is considered during Council decision-making.


## Highlights

- Comprehensive community engagement far exceeding legislative requirements

 **136**  
Projects engaged on


 **323**  
Community-based pop-ups

 **5,704**  
Number of contributions in-person

 **17**  
Project based focus and reference groups

 **174,467** visits  
Engage Whittlesea platform

 **16,562**  
Online contributions

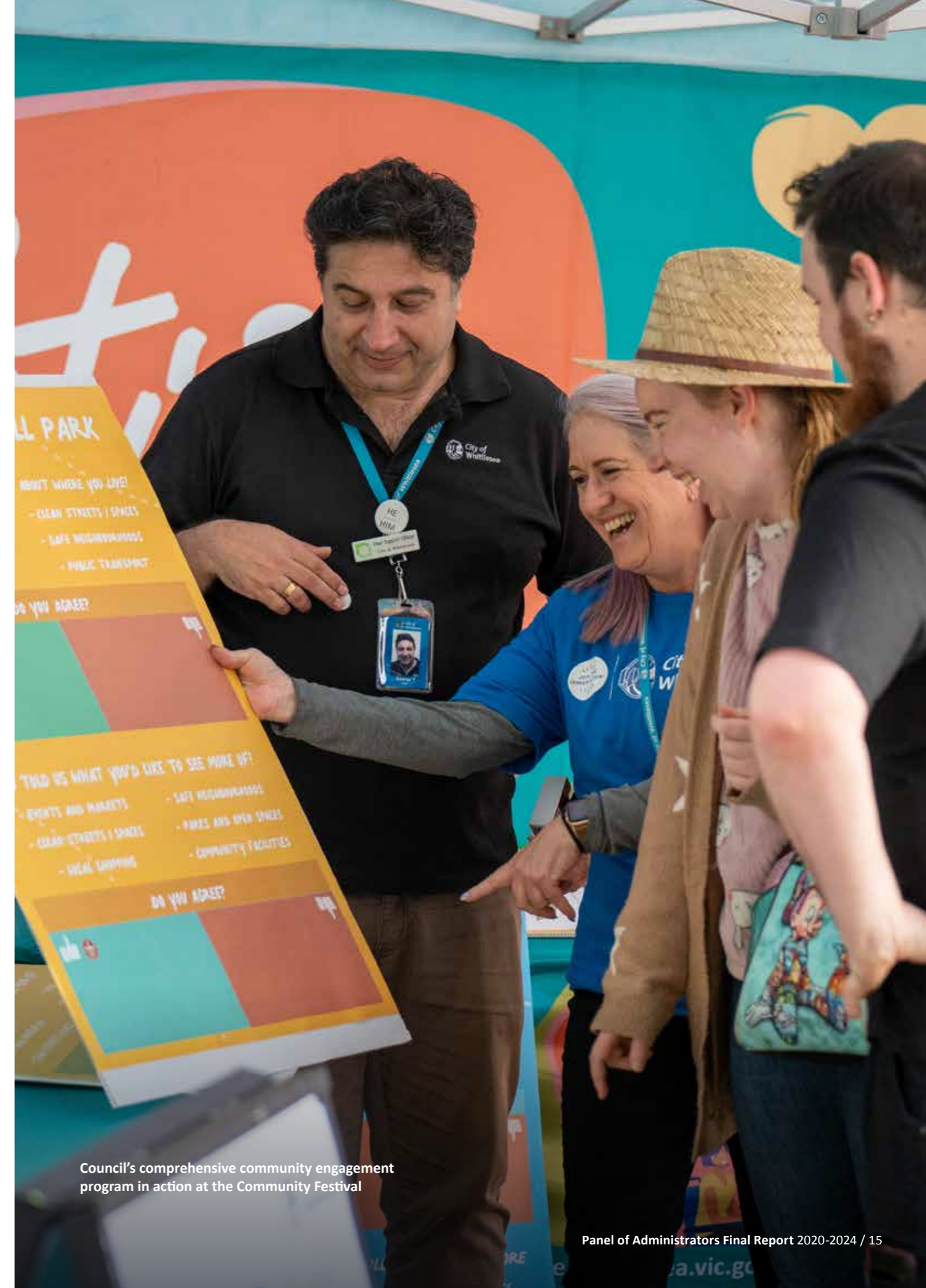
 **27**  
Informational/educational pop-ups

 **222**  
campaigns promoting opportunities for people to have their say on local issues sent to 84,298 recipients

- In December 2023 Council's Community Engagement Policy was revised strengthening Council's commitment to purposeful, genuine and meaningful engagement
- In 2022, Council began a monthly Coffee with Council drop-in session. Held at coffee shops around the municipality, the sessions gave unprecedented access for community to Administrators and senior leadership; 19 sessions have been held to date



- Community-based Council Meetings were enhanced with engaging community forums in Whittlesea Township, Mernda and in Lalor featuring stalls on local topics of interest, performances by local community groups and opportunity for networking with local community members and groups ahead of Council Meetings
- As part of a growing program of deliberative engagement, a group of community representatives helped shape Council's \$2 million investment into COVID-19 recovery initiatives to support residents, businesses and groups to thrive following the pandemic
- In December 2022, Council launched the Whittlesea Disability Network Hub – an online space where people with disability, their carers and support network can provide feedback to Council on what people with disability need to live independently and safely in the community.



Council's comprehensive community engagement program in action at the Community Festival





Strong advocacy resulted in a \$20 million election funding commitment for the regional sports precinct in Mernda.

# Advocacy

During the term of administration Council has taken a collaborative approach to work in partnership with other tiers of government and regional Local Government associations to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding population.

A strong advocacy program, compelling submissions and grant applications, strategic relationship-building and project preparedness have delivered pleasing results over the term.

## Highlights

- Development of the Advocacy Prospectus 2023-2025 highlighting 18 key initiatives seeking State and Federal Government co-investment across the following domains and in alignment with delivery of Council's goals and vision:



Community services and infrastructure



Affordable housing



Employment



Roads



Public transport



Environmental sustainability



Health and wellbeing

- The development and execution of the Advocacy Plan which sets out Council's approach to advocating to all levels of government, industry and the private sector to influence positive change and secure vital infrastructure required to meet our population growth rates
- A successful Advocacy Showcase held during the 2022 State Government election
- Strong advocacy efforts during the Victorian State Election resulted in over \$42 million in election commitments

- \$20 million in funding to support the delivery of a regional aquatic and sports precinct in Mernda
- Ongoing advocacy in partnership with Mitchell Shire and Hume Council to the Federal Government resulting in a commitment to deliver the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal; a \$1.8 billion project adding \$3.5 billion to the economy each year and generating nearly 20,000 local jobs
- Engaging and leveraging the power of collective, regional advocacy partnerships with the Northern Council's Alliance, National Growth Areas Alliance, Interface Councils and neighbouring Councils
- Successfully securing increased investment in mobile and broadband coverage across our municipality through the State Government's Connecting Victoria program, with mobile towers across 12 locations in the City of Whittlesea, and continuing to advocate for increased investment and awareness in this space through a Telecommunications Study and community storytelling
- Advocating for increased investment and funding in social and affordable housing across and homelessness support services across our municipality, including securing investment for Hope Street – a youth homelessness service provider in our municipality
- External funding contributions:
  - State Government Growing Suburbs Fund
  - State Government's Building Works Stimulus Package
  - State Government's Community Sports Infrastructure Stimulus Program
  - Federal Government's Housing Support Program
  - State Government's Growth Area Infrastructure
- Contributions Fund: secured \$10 million funding for Regional Sports Precinct Transport Infrastructure Project to deliver the enabling infrastructure for the precinct.



# Representation

During the Administrators term, representation was made on the following state-wide, metropolitan, regional, and Whittlesea-based organisations which enabled Council to further its advocacy and engagement goals, and to gather information about sector opportunities and emerging issues to inform decision-making:

- Australian Local Government Women's Association
- Community Awards Committee
- Whittlesea Reconciliation Group
- Business Advisory Panel
- Northern Councils Alliance
- Northern Growth Councils Alliance
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation (YPRL) Board
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) State Council Meeting Representative
- Business Assistance Grants program
- Victorian Local Governance Association
- Interface Councils group

The CEO Employment Matters Advisory Committee (CEMAC) consisted of an independent external chair and all three Administrators. The composition of CEMAC and the policy developed, and updated on several occasions, reinforced Council's commitment to good governance practices and provided a consistent, fair and transparent framework for employment matters relating to the Chief Executive Officer's recruitment, contract terms, performance monitoring and annual review.

Over the four-year term, Chair Administrator Wilson and one other Administrator were actively represented on Council's Audit and Risk Committee along with four independent external members and a highly-experienced Independent Chair to monitor Council's compliance with the overarching governance principles, financial sustainability, risk and fraud systems and controls, and Council's internal and external audit functions.



City of Whittlesea Business Advisory Panel



# Pandemic response

The City of Whittlesea played an important role in responding to and supporting local community recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A partnership approach with other levels of government, key community agencies including Northern Health, DPV Health and local community networks was paramount to boost local vaccination rates and ensure compliance with health directives.

Supporting immediate needs through lockdowns with food and material supplies was the initial priority which then shifted in focus towards recovery with initiatives to support our community to get back to doing what they love, from dining to leisure and social activities. Council collaborated with and listened to our community to help shape many of our plans and priorities and advocated on their behalf to other levels of government.

Throughout this time, business continuity was a focus and service delivery and good governance continued.

## Highlights

- Council endorsing the Municipal Pandemic Readiness and Recovery Plan on 2 February 2021, which contained 51 actions
- Supporting the Department of Health and local partners in establishing COVID-19 testing sites and mass vaccination venues at Council facilities



- A \$500,000 Emergency Relief Fund for local service providers supporting immediate local emergency relief needs
- A COVID-19 Hardship Policy provided residents, businesses, groups and clubs with relief from Council rates, fees and charges
- A \$2 million COVID-19 Community Recovery Fund shaped by local representatives
- A \$500,000 Business Assistance and Resilience Program included educational webinars, a business development program and shop local initiatives
- Securing more than \$500,000 through the State Government's Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package encouraged outdoor dining with additional table and chair installations across several local retail precincts
- Delivering more than 400 COVIDSafe bags and more than 210 infrared thermometers to support businesses operate in a COVIDSafe manner
- A business support and compliance program monitored and advised businesses on COVIDSafe operating requirements
- A COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund for Creative Communities, provided small grants of up to \$2,000 for projects that directly responded to the impact of COVID-19
- Supporting vulnerable people including with data SIM cards to access online MCH appointments; distraction packs for our local Aboriginal community focussing on mindfulness, mental health, family games and gardening; and an outreach program for isolated groups and individuals in partnership with local support agencies
- Establishing an International Student Wellbeing Hub to provide non-medical health and social connection opportunities to students studying at RMIT and La Trobe universities



Council's COVID information booths at local shopping centres helped people to navigate the vaccination booking system

- Employing more than 200 people through the Working for Victoria Program
- Fee subsidies for groups using community activity centres and sporting facilities
- \$500,000 waived in registration fees for 1180 local businesses
- Activating an Emergency Management Team included 137 staff from 23 departments. The team directly engaged with over 3,606 residents and supported 3,254 residents in isolation with food and material relief in 2021-22
- Providing COVID-19 emergency recovery grants to 17 community organisations who supported 3,272 families with emergency food relief and other essential items
- A mass vaccination hub at Council's Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre (PRACC). Operated by Northern Health, the centre opened in June 2021, when local vaccination rates were well below the state average, and closed on 5 December, as the City of Whittlesea double dose vaccination rates hit 90 per cent. During this time, 241,190 vaccines were administered. The vaccination hub reopened in 2022 for third doses
- A dedicated, children's vaccination centre at the Civic Centre on 10 January 2022
- Delivering the Multicultural Awareness of COVID Immunisations (MACI) program to increase culturally and linguistically diverse community members' accessibility and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination. This included pop-up vaccination sessions, which saw 7,561 vaccinations administered
- Free online Q&A "Vax Chat" with experts from Northern Health to answer community questions about vaccinations to help boost vaccination rates. This included sessions specifically on child vaccinations, vaccinations for seniors and a multilingual vax chat
- Information booths were set up at pop-up locations from mid-October 2021 until June 2022, to provide information and assist community members with bookings for vaccinations. This included in-language information packs and language aides from Whittlesea Community Connections to assist CALD community groups access information
- Supporting the community to understand changing health and pandemic information and regulations through regular communications, including audio-visual and in-language resources
- 7,933 business visits to support businesses to remain compliant to COVID-19 restrictions
- Implementation of Council's Financial Hardship Policy to support financially vulnerable residents and established a team to support this work
- Partnered with Whittlesea U3A to deliver free digital literacy classes for seniors
- Rollout of the Dine Out(side) campaign to encourage residents to support local food businesses
- Delivery of a 10-week Gardening Together Again program.





Council's Carols by Candlelight is a community favourite

# Connected Community

During the term Council has sought to foster an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

## Highlights

### Strategic planning

- Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 developed and implementation underway including yearly action plans. This plan articulates how Council will support a socially cohesive, healthy and safe and participating community
- Signing of a Kindergarten Infrastructure Service Plan and Building Blocks Partnership Agreement with the Victorian Government to plan, build, expand and improve early years infrastructure to ensure local families can continue to access great local kindergarten programs, no matter where they live
- Implemented the Victorian Government-funded 3-year-old kindergarten service together with the early childhood sector and delivered infrastructure projects at key sites
- Aboriginal Action Plan 2024-2029 developed in consultation with local Aboriginal community and implementation underway. This plan will guide Council's reconciliation efforts and focuses on improving cultural, health, education and employment outcomes
- Design and construction underway of an Aboriginal Gathering Place designed in partnership with local Aboriginal community who have been advocating for this for the past 20 years. The Aboriginal Gathering Place will be a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space where Aboriginal people can enjoy a sense of belonging, with access to programs and services that strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing
- Aboriginal Heritage Study conducted to inform Quarry Hills Future Directions Plan
- Advocating for more mental health services and prevention programs including for young people

### Ageing Well

- Ageing Well Expo delivered each year along with other programs to support older residents
- Council has committed to continuing as a provider of aged care services and recently endorsed becoming a provider of Home Care Packages. This expansion supports Council's commitment to supporting older residents to remain independent for as long as possible

### Community

- Annual City of Whittlesea Community Awards Program recognising a Citizen of the Year, Senior Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, Access and Inclusion Citizen of the Year and Sustainable Environment Citizen of the Year



- Community Grants Program launched with 355 applications across 12 programs. Since its inception, Council has allocated \$1.18m in grant funding
- Community Leadership Program developed and implemented with more than 100 participants to strengthen local leadership skills ahead of the return to a locally elected Council
- Comprehensive Dates of Significance Program highlighting local culturally important dates on the annual calendar



## Connected Community

- Conferred 9,621 (to July 2024) new citizens, with a very small waiting list of just over 100 people



- Execution of Love Where We Live campaign focussing on activating local areas with vibrant events, and developing community pride
- Supported and developed local advisory groups including for businesses, young people, people with a disability and Aboriginal communities
- Transitioned our Youth Advisory Committee to a Youth Council to empower our young people to contribute to the governance of the City. The Youth Council has 13 members aged between 12-22 years of age and meets monthly to provide valuable advice to Council on matters affecting young people, advocated for the interests, challenges and opportunities faced by young people and offer input and feedback on matters referred from the Council before formal decisions are made
- Management and operation of Ziebell's Farmhouse and Heritage Gardens moved to Council to further support local heritage
- Development and delivery of Young Women's Leadership Program to provide a structured approach to enhance young women's skills, confidence and leadership opportunities in a supportive peer learning environment

## Safety & Wellbeing

- Bolstered emergency and disaster resilience through increased access to information and education
- Worked with local service providers and the community to support family and gender-based violence prevention and response
- Improve perceptions of safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender diverse people
- Opened the Mernda Social Centre to assist older residents to improve their physical and mental health and provide day respite



- Established a headspace satellite service for youth mental health
- Community preparedness programs developed to support local people during and after an emergency
- Safe Routes to Schools approach implemented to improve road safety around pick up and drop off times, create safe walking, cycling and scooting routes to school to encourage active travel



Council's Love Where We Live campaign activated local areas to boost community pride and connection



## Connected Community

### Libraries

- Library Review conducted to help shape future service delivery for a growing and diverse community. While continuing to invest in traditional libraries, the review also explored innovative alternatives to suit new and emerging communities
- Innovative approach to library services with the establishment of a pop-up library at the Galada Community Centre and the Mernda Library mini-branch in a shop front in Mernda Town Centre with 30,000 visits in the first six months



- Refurbishment of the Mill Park, Thomastown and Lalor Library branches.

### Sport and recreation

- Vibrant program of local community events and festival including Christmas Carols, Community Festival, Super Kids Sunday, annual art exhibition, Walking Thomastown, Summer Series as well as activating local spaces
- Improved access to physical activity and social connection by providing accessible, multi-use sports infrastructure
- Fair Access Policy developed and endorsed to ensure equitable access to sporting facilities
- Endorsed the initial business case for a regional sports and aquatic precinct in Mernda to help meet the growing demand for quality sporting facilities across the region and to help improve the health and wellbeing of the community; approved the concept design for Stages 1 and 2 with early works underway



- New youth space at Norris Bank Reserve constructed to provide a place for young people to connect and have fun in their local community
- Whittlesea Swim Centre upgraded to support summer recreation in the north of the municipality
- A number of successful programs at Council's three aquatic and leisure facilities have resulted in significant growth in participation and financial performance since the COVID-19 pandemic.



Vibrant community forums ahead of community-based Council Meetings





New youth zone at Norris Bank Reserve in Bundoora

# Liveable Neighbourhoods

During the term Council has sought to ensure our City is well planned and that our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

## Highlights

### Strategic Planning

- Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023-2033 developed and implementation underway with yearly action plans focussing on a smart, connected transport network, well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres and housing for diverse needs
- Adopted the Whittlesea Township Plan to set the vision and direction for the planning and development of the area over the next 15-20 years
- Developed an online planning portal to help customers easily access and manage planning applications
- Co-signed a historic regional partnership with Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire for the development of the new city of Cloverton
- Progressed four significant Planning Amendments to facilitate the delivery of over 18,500 homes
- Adoption of five significant residential Development Plans which will deliver over 4,000 homes
- Adoption of updated Epping Central Structure Plan to guide the future development of the Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre
- Adoption of Green Wedge Management Plan 2023-2033 that outlines the vision, objectives and strategic directions for the Whittlesea Green Wedge
- Approval of a Development Plan for the Epping Renewal Site to deliver a mixed use precinct supporting over 2000 new homes including affordable housing, the New Epping Health Precinct, commercial development, open space and a neighbourhood activity centre
- Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into food security in Victoria
- Progressed Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes Study in partnership with Wurundjeri and Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- Dry Stone Wall history documented and toolkit developed to support local history preservation
- Following an extensive period of community consultation endorsed a new 10 Year Community

Local Law that strikes a balance between safety, personal freedom, and community responsibility to help people live harmoniously by addressing a wide range of important community issues including fire safety, animal welfare, property regulations, vehicle management, and public behaviour

- Integrated Transport Plan developed to improve transport outcomes in the municipality. This Plan will allow Council to strategically plan for, and respond to, future challenges and opportunities, inform advocacy for our transport needs and guide the development and expansion of the transport network
- Nature Strip Guidelines developed to promote biodiversity and community pride
- Neighbourhood Design Guidelines developed to set clear standards for future development and promote quality design
- Northern Regional Trails Strategy developed to identify the priority walking and cycling trails for Council to advocate for over the next 10 years
- Public Toilet Amenities Plan developed and implementation underway to ensure accessible and inclusive public toilets across the municipality
- Regional Affordable Housing Action Plan 2021-22 developed to guide our partnership in the planning, facilitation and advocacy for affordable housing across Whittlesea, Hume and Mitchell Councils
- Thomastown Lalor Place Framework developed to identify priority projects that improve streets, public spaces, community precincts and transport
- Urban Design Framework developed to ensure an integrated approach to sustainable planning, landscaping and engineering in new developments
- Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027 developed to improve walking and cycling conditions in the municipality, raise awareness about the opportunities for walking and cycling and increase the level of walking and cycling participation
- Joint operations with EPA and Vic Pol tackling non-compliance in building to improve local community amenity





Construction of an All Abilities Playspace in Mill Park has proved hugely popular

## Liveable Neighbourhoods

### Social & Affordable Housing

- Engaged Beyond Housing to fund, build and manage 27 social and affordable homes on Council land at 1F Ashline Street, Wollert to boost local affordable housing
- Supported the delivery of 151 new social and affordable homes a part of the New Epping development

### Playgrounds & Open Space

- Constructed and upgraded 35 playgrounds, including two major community parks – the popular All Abilities Playspace in Mill Park & Norris Bank Reserve in Bundoora
- Design and start construction of the Granite Hills Regional Playground at Quarry Hills in Mernda
- Open space development across the municipality through master plans:
  - Nick Ascenzo Reserve in Thomastown
  - Kelynack Reserve in Mill Park
  - Whittlesea Park in Whittlesea
  - Lalor Recreation Reserve in Lalor
  - VR Michael Reserve in Lalor
  - Work is underway on master plans for Lowalde Recreation Reserve in Epping, Mernda Recreation Reserve in Mernda, WA Smith Recreation Reserve in Lalor and Sycamore Reserve in Mill Park
- Development of the Parks and Open Space Asset Management Plan to ensure assets are maintained in a way that meets community expectations and are safe, effective and cost-efficient
- Quarry Hills Regional Park future directions plan developed in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Redevelopment of Whittlesea Public Gardens in Lalor delivering a new playground, a learn-to-ride area, a 100-metre-long street-style skate park, two half-court basketball courts, a rock-climbing wall and two large shelters with barbecues
- Increased the number of waste and recycling bins in public spaces and parks



The stunning redevelopment of the Whittlesea Public Gardens in Lalor



## Liveable Neighbourhoods

- Sportsfield upgrades including:
  - Mill Park Recreation Reserve – softball practice nets
  - AF Walker Reserve – new cricket nets
  - Barry Road Tennis Club – lighting upgrade to LED
  - Epping Rec Reserve – new car park and Scoreboard upgrade
  - Harvest Home Rec Reserve – synthetic pitch upgrade
  - HR Uren Reserve – new synthetic pitch and lighting, new Community pavilion
  - Laurimar Rec Reserve – new cricket nets
  - Main Street Rec Reserve Pavilion
  - Olivine Rec Reserve – 2 x ovals and Community Pavilion
  - Painted Hills Reserve – 2 x pitches and Community Pavilion
  - TH Hurrey Reserve – new pavilion and 2 x new courts
  - Waterview Rec Reserve – lighting upgrade
  - Harvest Home Recreation Reserve in Epping a new FIFA accredited soccer pitch



Off to kindergarten at the new Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert





257km of new pathways encouraging active travel

## Liveable Neighbourhoods



### Construction

- Construction of Community Centres & Kindergartens
  - Gambu Gulinj Community Centre in Epping North
  - Murnong Community Centre in Donnybrook
  - Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert
  - Mernda Social Support Centre constructed
  - Mernda Library constructed
  - McLeans Road Kindergarten in Bundoora
  - Spring Street Kindergarten in Thomastown
  - Riverside Community Centre and Reserve in South Morang upgraded
  - Whittlesea Community Centre upgrade works
  - Bubup Wilam Children and Family Centre extension and heating and cooling system upgrade
  - West Wollert Community Centre – design under way
  - Stables Kindergarten in Mill Park – planning for redevelopment under way
  - Dalton Road Preschool and Maternal Child and Health Centre in Thomastown – planning underway for redevelopment
  - Boori and Derby Meadows Family Children’s Centre in Epping – planning under way
  - Designed and upgraded local streetscapes and shopping precincts to make it easier to move about, celebrate local culture, heritage and character and connect people to the natural environment
  - Rochdale Square Shopping Centre, Lalor

- Station Street and May Road Lalor
- High Street Thomastown
- Gorge Road, South Morang scheduled for construction this financial year
- Alexander Avenue, Thomastown scheduled for construction this financial year
- Tramoo Street, Lalor scheduled for construction this financial year
- Mill Park Basketball Stadium \$2.8m redevelopment
- Mill Park Leisure \$25 million refurbishment



### Roads and footpaths

- Constructed the Edgars Road link to support local traffic flow
- Improved disability access to public transport with the installation of bus shelters
- Findon Road extension completed, delivering a critical new east-west link to ease congestion and cut down on travel times



- Approximately 89km of road has been reconstructed and approximately 4km of footpath has been reconstructed since 2020
- 160 km of new roads and 237km of pathways constructed



## Liveable Neighbourhoods

### Animals

- Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 developed following extensive community consultation and implementation underway. This Plan outlines Council services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, and Council's management of cat and dog issues in the community
- Dog parks constructed and upgraded across the municipality:
  - Delacombe Reserve Dog Park, South Morang, upgraded, 2023
  - Katandra Rise Dog Park, Doreen, developer build, 2020
  - Redleap Recreation Reserve, Mill Park, built 2020
  - Portofino Way, Wollert, developer build, 2021
  - Norris Bank Reserve, Bundoora, built 2020
  - Creek Park Dog Park, Mernda, built 2021
  - Allumba Park, Wollert, to be constructed this financial year
  - Whittlesea Public Gardens, Lalor, to be upgraded this financial year
- Following extensive community consultation, introduced a 24-hour cat containment and mandatory desexing of newly registered cats to create a safer and more harmonious environment for cats, wildlife, and their owners. Council undertook a comprehensive education program to support the community to prepare for the changes. Since the introduction of the new regulations complaints about cats have reduced by 70%
- Introduction of Annual Pet Expo to support responsible pet ownership
- wat djerring Animal Management Centre brought under City of Whittlesea management with a re-brand and upgrade; innovative partnership with Merri-Bek and Darebin Councils for service delivery
- Advocated for better public transport including rail, tram and bus infrastructure with the Northern Council's alliance
- Advocated for increased public transport and connected cycling and walking networks for the municipality
- Advocated for new or upgraded roads including Epping Road, Bridge Inn Road, E6, Yan Yean Road, Findon Road and Donnybrook Road
- Began consultation on Council new Asset Management Plan using deliberative engagement practices.



Construction of Creek Park  
Off-Leash Dog Park



# Strong Local Economy

During the term Council has sought to make our City a smart choice for innovation, business growth and industry investment as well as supporting local businesses to be successful, enabling opportunities for local work and education.

## Highlights

### Strategic Planning

- Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026 developed and implementation underway with yearly action plan. The strategy sets a vision for building a prosperous and inclusive local economy and priorities for action to achieve success
- Investment Attraction Plan 2021-2026 developed and implementation underway to create a strong and attractive investment environment for local businesses, organisations and residents to thrive
- Agri-Food Plan 2023-2026 developed and implementation underway to support the agri-food sector through increased awareness and demand for local agriculture and food products, targeted programs, advocacy and collaboration
- Approved a 140-hectare employment precinct on Vearings Road, Wollert
- Destination Plan 2023-2026 developed and implementation underway. The plan provides direction for tourism development and growth within the City of Whittlesea, with the primary objective of increasing tourism visitation, length of stay and spend
- Economic Participation Plan 2023-2026 developed and implementation underway. The plan champions equality of access to economic participation opportunities in the local community with a focus on vulnerable groups who face barriers to employment
- Supported the creation of employment precincts in collaboration with the Victorian Government and key stakeholders to progress planning for Epping Central, Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, Melbourne Food, Innovation & Export Hub and Vearings Road employment precinct
- Epping Central Structure Plan developed to play a role in guiding future development and ensuring the Activity Centre can respond to the needs of a growing and changing population
- Establishment of a Business Advisory Panel to provide a voice to Council from the business community. The panel has 12 members from local business and industries together with Administrator and senior Officer representation

- Launched the Explore Whittlesea website to showcase the recreational and tourism opportunities in the municipality
- Vacant to Vibrant shopfront activation program helping fill empty shops with short-term business rentals

### Business Support

- Business Concierge Service developed to support local business through the Council approval processes
- Business Relocation Growth Program grants launched to support existing and new businesses to relocate into the City of Whittlesea's commercial and industrial precincts which in turn will boost local employment
- Encouraged employment pathways and sustainable land management practices at the Whittlesea Community Farm and Food Collective
- Established the Whittlesea Business Network to help businesses to connect and grow; currently 400 plus members



- Establishment of the City of Whittlesea Business Awards to support and celebrate local businesses with awards for customer service, innovation and enterprise, sustainability and environment, community contribution, workplace diversity, home-based business and business of the year with over 130 applications received since the inaugural awards in 2023



- Establishment of Women in Business Network to support local women with networks and connections to help their businesses thrive
- Jobs Fair delivered to connect local job seekers with business and support local employment



- Local work, training and apprenticeships program developed with local partners to support people with barriers to employment
- Delivered 55 Shopfront Improvement Program grants to help businesses refresh their shops and attract and retain customers
- South Morang Farmers and Makers Market supported local makers and growers to sell to their local community
- Developed the Business Opportunity Explorer (BOE), an interactive web-based tool to provide prospective businesses the information they require to choose the City of Whittlesea as a place to locate their business and invest
- Support local campaign and incentive program launched during COVID recovery

### COVID recovery

- Business Relief and Resilience Program developed to support local business
- Dine Outside campaign delivered to support COVID recovery for business by promoting outside dining opportunities
- Facilitated connections and employment opportunities through the Local Jobs Program and Jobs Advocates Program during COVID.







Sustainability education is helping to deliver a greener Whittlesea

# Sustainable Environment

During the term Council has sought to prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green spaces and address climate change.

## Highlights

### Strategic Planning

- Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032 developed and implementation underway with yearly action plans. The strategy outlines the City of Whittlesea's contribution toward securing a sustainable, net zero emissions, and climate resilient future for all
- Advocated on behalf of the local community, on climate change, water security and quality, vulnerable flora and fauna, waste reduction and reuse
- Circular Economy Plan 2023 developed and implementation underway. The plan provides direction to transition to a circular economy by supporting and working with business and industry to reuse, recycle, resale and repair
- Climate Change Plan 2022-2032 developed and implementation underway. The plan outlines Council's role in minimising its own emissions, and supporting the community to take climate action to mitigate and adapt to climate change to 2032
- Extreme heat impacts analysis conducted to inform future planning
- Green Wedge Management Plan 2023-2033 developed and implementation underway. With more than 60 percent of land in the City of Whittlesea Green Wedge, the plan seeks to protect and enhance these areas for the local community to enjoy
- Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040 developed and implementation underway. This strategy sets out plans for the protection, growth and management of the City of Whittlesea's trees and green cover

- Established a partnership with the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's Narrap Rangers unit to share knowledge about traditional fire practices



- Rethinking Waste Plan 2021-2030 developed and implementation underway. The plan supports community to take on a leadership role in sustainable living and guide waste management and resource recovery services. It includes 34 actions to meet targets including reducing waste sent to landfill and reducing waste generated per person
- Whittlesea Water for All 2020-2030 developed and implementation underway. The plan outlines how Council will plan, use and manage water including stormwater, drinking water, wastewater, rainwater and the health of local waterways





We have rolled out food and organic waste recycling to the kerbside collection

## Sustainable Environment

### Energy

- Energy Efficient Street Lighting program developed and implementation underway to continue to reduce emissions
- EV charging station installed in Whittlesea township to support the transition to electric vehicles



- Installed solar system on community facilities to support energy savings

### Greening

- 72,000 trees have been planted in new subdivisions, Council capital works projects, and Greening Whittlesea Tree planting programs in streets, parks and conservation reserves including:
  - Main Roads and High-Profile Streetscapes Planting Program
  - Parks Tree and Major Facilities Planting Program
  - Residential Street Tree Renewal Planting Program
  - Conservation Reserves Tree Planting Program
  - Creek Corridor Planting Program
  - Tree Infill program



### Waste

- Endorsed the Environmental Upgrade Agreement which offers finance to local businesses to access to low-interest, long-term loans to undertake upgrades to become more sustainable
- Established a Litter Enforcement Team to tackle the challenge of dumped rubbish and promote responsible disposal of unwanted items
- FOGO – food and organic waste recycling program rolled out to the kerbside collection in the City of Whittlesea
- Glass recycling program rolled out in alignment with the Victorian Government’s requirements



- Introduced new local recycling drop off points to support community to recycle right and to reduce the amount of waste in landfill
- Repair cafés at Mernda and Donnybrook set up to support community to fix broken items and reduce the amount of goods ending up in landfill
- Zero Waste Rebates Program to incentivise people to choose environmentally friendly products

### Water

- Improved the quality and activation of local water networks, sourced more water from alternative water supplies and used less water through water efficiency upgrades
- Upgrade of Peter Hopper Lake to mitigate algae outbreaks and water quality issues.





Peter Hopper Lake upgrade





# High Performing Organisation

During the term Council has sought to ensure Council engages effectively with the community, delivers efficient and effective services and initiatives, makes decision in the best interest of the community and delivers value to the community.

## Highlights

### Strategic Planning

- High Performing Organisation Strategy 2023-2028 developed and implementation underway with yearly action plans to ensure that as an organisation we have the people, processes and systems in place to effectively deliver outstanding services to our community
- Community Plan 2021-25 developed outlining deliverables under the key Whittlesea 2040 goals of Connected Community, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Local Economy, Sustainable Environment and High Performing Organisation. The plan has a yearly action plan
- Financial Plan 2021-2031 developed and implementation underway. The plan provides an overview of Council's financial position and how it plans to responsibly invest in community services and infrastructure over the next decade
- Great Workplace for All Plan 2022-2026 developed and implemented to assist with attracting and retaining high quality staff
- Buildings and Facilities Asset Management Plan developed and implementation underway. The plan outlines how Council will manage its building portfolio to facilitate the delivery of services in a way that meets community expectations in a safe, effective and cost-effective manner
- Community Engagement Policy updated to strengthen focus on increasing deliberative engagement practice
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025 developed and implementation underway to ensure we create a diverse and inclusive workplace
- Public Affairs Plan developed and implementation underway to deliver best practice community engagement and communications, so our community feels informed and able to have their say on matters that are important to them
- Quarterly Reporting to support public transparency
- Revenue & Rating Plan 2021-2025 developed and implementation underway to provide a medium-term plan for how Council will generate income to deliver on the Council Plan, program and services and capital works commitments over a four-year period
- Transformed organisational planning to embed data-driven decision-making to ensure the best outcomes for community
- Transport Asset Management Plan developed and implementation underway. The plan outlines how Council will manage transport assets in a way that meets the community's expectations in a safe, effective, and cost-efficient manner
- Workforce Plan 2021-2025 developed and implementation underway to ensure we have the right people in the right jobs at the right time to deliver on our community vision
- Implemented Inclusive Employment Program supporting local people with barriers to employment to secure work experience with a target of ten placements per annum

The Inclusive Employment Program supports local people with barriers to employment to secure work experience



## High Performing Organisation



### Customer Focus

- Business improvements including introduction of cloud-based telephony
- Centralised research, analytics and reporting function
- Customer post transaction survey implemented to provide data and information to foster ongoing improvements to customer experience; satisfaction scores have increased from 48% in November 2022 to 84% in July 2024
- Customer charter developed to help manage customer expectations and ensure high standards of customer service
- Creation of the Customer Experience/Digital Experience (CX/DX) program to implement digital solutions to support community interaction with Council including a new customer request management system
- Implemented place planning to ensure Council responds to local needs
- Implemented technology initiatives to support efficiencies and best practice



### Communication

- Comprehensive multi-channel communications program ensuring our community and staff are well informed about initiatives, decisions, services, programs and events
- Expansion of delivery of bimonthly Local Scoop newsletter to every household and business



### Governance and structures

- Delegations and Authorisations formalised to support Good Governance
- Enterprise Agreement No 10 agreed and implemented
- Established a Regulatory Programs Team to provide specialist regulatory enforcement, appeals and prosecutions systems.
- Establishment of an enterprise Portfolio Management Office (ePMO) to support planned and efficient delivery of projects across the organisation
- Establishment of a dedicated Change Unit to ensure that changes are implemented effectively and benefits are fully realised
- Governance Rules updated to support good governance practices.

# Innovation and best practice



### Planning delegations

- A new Delegations Policy encourages delegation of decision-making including planning matters to staff members with the right skills and knowledge within the organisation. This structure aims to increase efficiency by allowing decisions to be made at the most appropriate level within the organisation and ensures the best outcomes for Council and the community. This approach allows the Council to focus more on broad strategic policies rather than everyday administrative or operational issues.



### Aged care services

- During the term, Council has focussed on improving service delivery models and operations to deliver the best care possible to our senior residents, maximise efficiencies, reduce duplication and minimise future cost increases. The City of Whittlesea provides a range of Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC PYP) and Council subsidised aged care services for our ageing population.

Annually, Council supports close to 15,000 clients including those accessing CHSP, HACC PYP and Let Everyone Actively Participate (LEAP), as well as members of the 80 senior citizen clubs. Service improvements have included internal reviews of processes, recruitment drives for Home Support Workers, successful negotiations with the Federal Government, competitive tendering processes and a review and change in the procurement of meals. As a result, Council has reduced its service subsidy by \$2 million while continuing to provide the same level and quality of care to our local residents



### Online public planning portal and planning excellence

- In June 2021 Council moved its planning permit application process online using the Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform. Council was the first in the sector to implement an entirely digital process and the result has seen significant improvements to the customer experience.



### Partnership approach to animal management

- In 2022 the City of Whittlesea brought the management of its pound in-house to achieve the best possible outcomes for animals and the community. In an innovative partnership approach, the facility also provides pound services to Merri-bek and Darebin councils enabling the delivery of services with a regional lens. The unique model is designed to reunite the maximum number of animals with their owners or find them loving new homes and reduce euthanasia rates.
- In 2023 the facility was renamed wat djerring after consultation with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Meaning “we together” the name reinforces the connection with animals and reuniting pet owners.
- The facility has successfully reunited hundreds with their loved pets and rehomed many more to new families.



## Innovation and best practice



### 24 hour cat curfew

- Following on from feedback gained through the development of council's Domestic Management Plan the City of Whittlesea embarked on extensive consultation about the development of cat confinement regulations. As a result, it endorsed 24-hour cat confinement and mandatory cat desexing regulations which came into effect 1 August 2023.
- A robust 12-month plan to help the community transition to the new rules included workshops, videos, community pop-ups and a range of traditional and digital media initiatives.
- This communication and engagement campaign gave pet owners a significant amount of time and empowerment to transition to the new rules meaning the changes were seamlessly adopted by the local community.



### Governance Rules

- Council's updated Governance Rules have taken into consideration recommendations from the Sardon Report particularly in relation to prohibiting moving items en bloc, recording who spoke to an agenda item and how they voted therefore removing the requirement to ask for a division.



### Audit & Risk

- Over the four-year term, Chair Administrator Wilson and one other Administrator were actively represented on Council's Audit and Risk Committee along with four independent external members to monitor Council's compliance with the overarching governance principles, financial sustainability, risk and fraud systems and controls, and Council's internal and external audit functions.



### Developing an Integrated Planning Framework

- The City of Whittlesea Integrated Planning Outcomes Framework has transformed corporate planning and reporting.
- This streamlined approach ensures that all plans, align with our endorsed Community Vision, with a focus on tangible community outcomes and benefits.
- The framework involved developing core strategies for each of our goals under our vision and the development of an outcomes framework that supported and enhanced extensive reporting mechanisms.
- A major highlight of the framework was the reduction from over 100 policies and plans to seven core strategies, increasing focus and transparency of priorities and community outcomes rather than outputs.
- This framework has been recognised as an industry-leading piece of work with the City of Whittlesea named a finalist in several awards.



### Library Review

- Faced with a growing and diverse community, the City of Whittlesea conducted an extensive review into its library service delivery model.
- While continuing to invest in traditional libraries, the review also explored alternatives to suit new and emerging communities.
- As a result, Council is delivering library services from a shop front in Mernda and creating a library hub at a community centre in Wollert.
- The review fed into Council's Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan to ensure a pipeline of future library services and branches.



### Epping Services Hub

- Council's Epping Services Hub has been recognised as a leading model for delivering community services to a rapidly growing population.
- The Hub brings together community services and strengthens links between partner organisations aiming to address the increasing fragmentation and isolation within the community services system. It seeks to reform the way practitioners work and collaborate to enhance seamless service delivery to clients.
- Since its inception, some 27 organisations have provided programs and services from this one location. The hub has attracted significant attention from other Local Governments and in 2023 it was the recipient of the LGPro Award for Excellence – Community Partnership Initiative.



### Supporting Financial Hardship

- In 2021 Council adopted a Financial Hardship Policy and has invested in dedicated staff resourcing to support our community to navigate the challenges associated with hardship.
- The policy provides options for those struggling to pay Council rates, fees or charges.
- The City of Whittlesea has signed up to the Thriving Communities Australia program that enables cross organisation collaboration to support people facing hardship.



### Digital transformation

- Council has embarked on a significant program of change to support improved customer service with an investment in technology, systems and staff. The digital transformation program has resulted in a new Council website developed with a greater focus on usability and ease of search.

A new customer portal and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will further enhance the ability of people to interact with Council online and in a time and way that suits them. A post-service survey implemented to monitor customer satisfaction has led to significant process change and satisfaction levels consistently above 80 percent.



### Community grants

- In August 2023 Council endorsed a new Community Grants program to make it easier for community groups and individuals to access funds to deliver important local initiatives. The new program has a robust governance framework that ensure accountability and transparency in the allocation of Council funding.
- The program offers year-round grants with approvals conducted on a monthly and quarterly basis as well as emergency grants to support community organisations and businesses requiring immediate assistance.
- Since the program launched Council has received 355 applications across 12 programs including community-based emergency services, community relief, economic development, emergency grants, female participation in sport, service agreements for annual community events, individual grants, large, medium and small grants, senior citizens and unincorporated groups.
- Since its inception, Council has allocated \$1.18m in grant funding.





City of Whittlesea Community Grant recipient Lalor Men's Shed



# Awards

## 2020 LGPro Awards for Excellence

- Sustainability Initiative

## 2020 AILA Landscape Architecture Award

- Best Landscape Planning for Quarry Hills Regional Parkland Landscape Master Plan
- Best Play Space for Norris Bank Reserve

## 2020 Procurement Australia Conference

- Collaboration and Innovation in Procurement Award, City of Whittlesea, together with Cities of Banyule, Darebin, Hume and Moreland and Mitchell and Nillumbik Shire Councils

## 2020 MAV Technology Awards for Excellence

- Smart City Achievement of the Year

## 2020 Parks and Leisure Australia Awards

- Strategic Planning Award, Netball and Basketball Strategy

## 2020 Institute of Public Administration Australia

- Leading Employer

## 2022 Australasian Reporting Awards Silver Award – Annual Report

## 2022 NGAA Awards

- Commendation, Olivine Place

## 2023 Australasian Reporting Awards Silver Award – Annual Report

## 2023 LGPro Awards for Excellence

- Community Partnerships Award Epping Services Hub

## 2023 Economic Development Awards of Excellence

- Economic Development Through Partnerships and Collaboration

## 2023 KABV Tidy Towns & Cities Sustainability Awards

- Young Legends

## 2023 Premiers Sustainability Award

## 2023 Mainstreet Australia Awards

- **Finalist:** Best Main Street Streetscape and Design

## 2023 Vic Awards for Planning Excellence

- Strategic Planning Project
- Planning with Country

## 2023 Multicultural Award for Excellence in Local Government

- Health

## 2024 Australasian Reporting Awards Gold Award – Annual Report

## 2024 LGPro Awards for Excellence

- **Finalist:** Innovative Management category – Transforming the way we plan at the City of Whittlesea
- **Finalist:** Service Delivery category – Voice of the Customer
- **Finalist:** Young Achiever, Ryan Allott
- **Finalist:** Corporate & Community Planning Award
- **Finalist:** Customer Impact Award

## 2024 KABV Tidy Towns & Cities Sustainability Awards

- Community

## 2024 Parks and Leisure Australia Awards of Excellence

- **Finalist:** Community Based Initiative of the Year
- Strategic And Masterplanning Award
- **Finalist:** Play space Award (>\$500K)

## 2024 NGAA Awards

- Built Environment
- Partnerships
- Leadership in Growth Areas

## 2024 Maggolee Award- Reconciliation Victoria

- Maggolee Award for the Quarry Hills Future Directions Plan.

## 2024 Victorian Landscape Architecture Award

- State Chapter Award – Quarry Hills Future Directions Plan

## 2024 National Sports Convention Awards

- **Finalist:** Places and Spaces Design



Civic Centre, South Morang





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