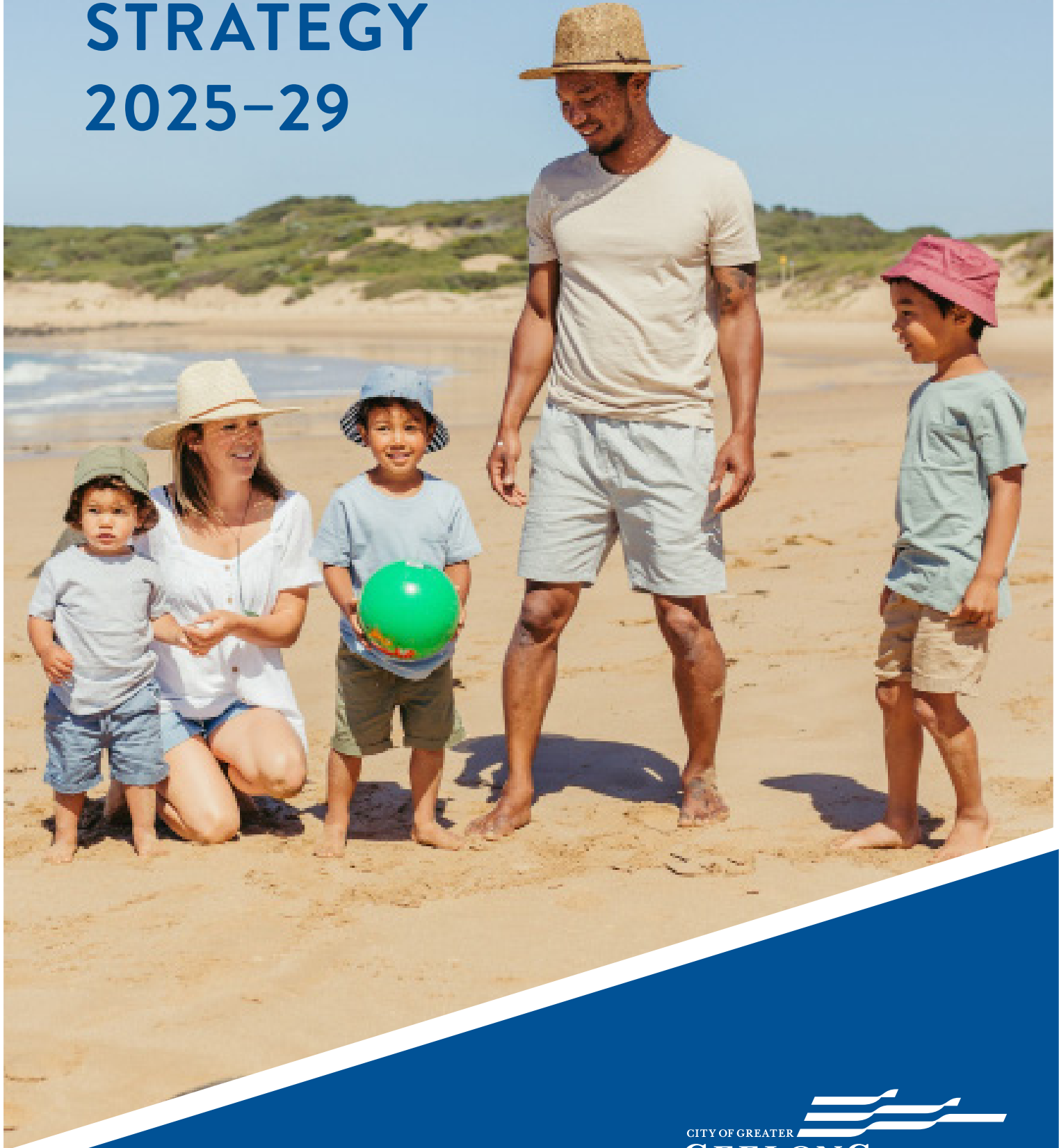


THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2025–29



We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR AND CEO

We believe that everyone in Greater Geelong should have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. As our city continues to evolve, so too do the needs of our community.

That's why we have developed the Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy – a comprehensive four-year vision designed to enhance the health and wellbeing of our entire municipality.

Greater Geelong is a vibrant and diverse region, and this strategy is committed to addressing health inequities so that nobody gets left behind on our journey to becoming a healthier, happier community.

The six Health and Wellbeing priorities outlined in this document will shape our efforts over the next four years, laying the foundation for long-term improvements in health outcomes across our region.

We are fortunate to have a strong network of health providers, community organisations, and essential services. This strategy will help us strengthen these partnerships and ensure collaboration that drives meaningful change and the best possible outcomes for everyone.

Most importantly, this strategy was shaped by you – our community. Your invaluable insights and feedback have played a crucial role in helping us understand and address the diverse health needs and challenges across Greater Geelong. We are deeply grateful for your contributions.

Thank you for being a part of this journey toward a healthier, happier City of Greater Geelong.



Cr Dr Stretch Kontelj OAM
Mayor
City of Greater Geelong



Ali Wastie
CEO
City of Greater Geelong

INTRODUCTION

Our health and wellbeing are crucial resources for living full and productive lives, especially in today's fast-paced and often stressful world.

The City of Greater Geelong's *Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29* outlines the health and wellbeing priorities for us over the next four years. It is a key strategic roadmap to maintain and improve public health and wellbeing at a local level. The strategy recognises the pivotal role of local government in shaping the social, environmental, and economic factors that influence health, known as the social determinants of health.

We shape these factors through leadership, municipal planning, delivering services and programs, partnering with others, providing support and resources, and advocating on behalf of our community.

In accordance with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, which mandates councils to protect, improve, and promote public health and wellbeing the *Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29* aims to address health, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background and socioeconomic status, have the environments, resources and opportunities they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

The strategy has been informed by evidence outlined in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Inputs into the *Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29*

Based on this evidence, the six adopted Health and Wellbeing priorities are:

1. Mental wellbeing and social inclusion.
2. Equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food.
3. Physical activity and active living.
4. Gender equity and prevention of violence.
5. Climate change and health impacts.
6. Harm minimisation (tobacco, vaping, alcohol misuse and gambling).

These priorities are also aligned to the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27, providing opportunities for collaboration with other organisations for collective impact. The interrelationship between these priority areas means addressing one priority often requires considering and potentially impacting other priorities as well. This interrelationship is referred to as co-benefits.

This strategy will be implemented through annual actions plans and will be reviewed annually to track our progress towards our strategic objectives. Annual reports will be made available for the community.

We are committed to leading this strategy and implementing it in partnership with the community and partner organisations. Through collaborative leadership, we aim to ensure that everyone in our community has the opportunity to live a healthier, more fulfilling life.

OUR ROLE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Local governments play a vital role in promoting and safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our communities. We do this by:

- Leading, facilitating and role modelling.
- Developing public health policies.
- Collaborating with partner organisations and government agencies to address the social determinants of health, and health and wellbeing priorities.
- Advocating for, securing, and allocating funding for health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Collecting and analysing data to identify trends and make evidence informed decisions.
- Providing resources such as grants to support community organisations and initiatives.
- Delivering and funding community programs and services such as Early Years, Maternal and Child Health and immunisation.
- Protecting public health by enforcing regulations and standards.
- Delivering public awareness and education campaigns.

All departments within the organisation have a role to play in promoting health and wellbeing.

The *Environments for Health Framework* is used to help demonstrate how each sector or area of expertise influences health and wellbeing.



DOMAIN	BUILT	SOCIAL	ECONOMIC	NATURAL
LANGUAGE	Liveable	Equitable	Viable	Sustainable
DETERMINANTS OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY	Roads Transport Housing Footpaths Lighting Parks Playgrounds Sports facilities	Arts and culture Community hubs, neighbourhood houses, libraries Early years services Care services Sense of place, community, belonging and safety.	Employment Resources Tourism Economic development Economic policy	Climate change Natural disasters Air and water quality Native vegetation Food production and farming practices.

Figure 2: Environments for Health Framework.

OUR APPROACHES

Health and wellbeing needs can differ depending on a variety of factors, and this will influence our approach to promoting health and wellbeing.

Life course approach

This approach is adopted when health differences are influenced by age or life stage. We may focus our efforts on a particular age group such as the early years or older people.

Place-based approach

This approach is adopted when there are health inequities based on geographic location. This acknowledges that not all communities are the same, and some will have better access to assets which promote health and wellbeing, such as green spaces, healthy food outlets or transport.

Strengths-based approach

Communities which might be facing challenges, also have innate strengths. We adopt a strengths-based approach to ensure these strengths are further maximised and community assets are valued.

Community Voice

We amplify the voices of priority population groups during the planning and design of specific projects and initiatives.

Collective Impact

We are working with our partners to develop indicators for demonstrating collective impact. This will help to evaluate the combined efforts of us and multiple partner organisations working together towards a common goal.

Aligning our health and wellbeing priorities with those in the *Barwon South West Local Public Health Unit Population Health Catchment Plan 2023-29* will provide some opportunities for collective impact over the next four years.

Alignment with the Council Plan

The strategy has been developed alongside our *Council Plan 2025-29* as part of an integrated strategic planning and reporting framework.

This framework describes how the objectives of the community's vision and aspirations flow to operational delivery. With clear strategic alignment to the strategic directions of our council plan, we can ensure the more efficient and valuable use of resources to deliver for the community.

Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework (ISPRF)

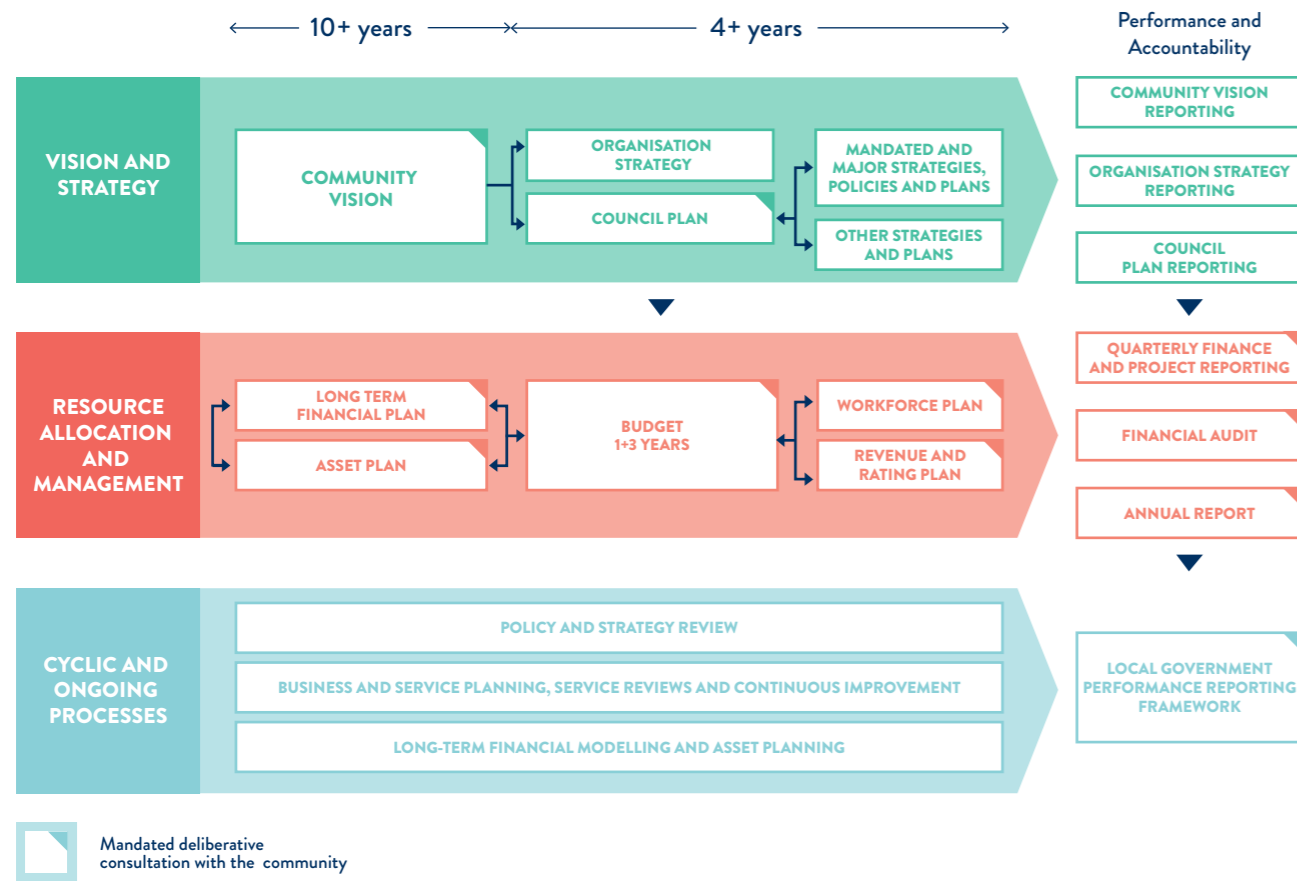


Figure 3: Integrated Planning Cycle.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Community Vision	By 2047, Greater Geelong will be internationally recognised as a clever and creative city-region that is forward looking, enterprising and adaptive, and cares for its people and environment. Pillar: An Inclusive, diverse, healthy and socially connected community					
Council Plan 2025-29	Strategic Direction: We are committed to advancing community outcomes for a thriving Greater Geelong <i>Healthy and caring community</i> Strategic Objective: Identify, promote, advocate for, and deliver equitable health and wellbeing outcomes for our diverse communities <i>Outcome 1: A community that is fair, compassionate and inclusive.</i> <i>Outcome 2: Services and facilities that enhance health and wellbeing are accessible to all.</i> <i>Outcome 3: A community with the resources and capacity to control their health and wellbeing.</i>					
Organisation Strategy	We will be an extraordinary employer.	With innovation at our core.	Delivering a sustainable future.	Side-by-side with our partners.	Committed to delivering for our customers and community.	And for our sector.
Principles	Affirm that health is everyone's core business.	Research and evidence-led.	Promote health equity and social justice.	Work in partnership.	Include all ages, abilities, genders, cultures and sexualities.	Share our learnings.
Our Approach	Environments for Health.	Systems Thinking.	Social Determinants of Health.	Collective Impact.	Place-Based, Strengths-Based, Life Course Focus. Community voice	Monitoring and Evaluation.
Supports	Shared leadership and governance.	Capability building.	Financing and resource allocation.	Community groups and organisations.	Responsive services, accessible facilities, effective programs.	Data, evidence and learnings from others.

HEALTH EQUITY

"Health is a fundamental human right. Health equity is achieved when everyone can attain their full potential for health and wellbeing" (World Health Organisation, 2025)

Globally, health and illness follow a social gradient, meaning those with the lowest socioeconomic status suffer the poorest health (World Health Organisation, 2025). A person's position on this social gradient is influenced by their income, education, occupation, gender, cultural background, and other factors also known as the social determinants of health. These factors affect the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Using a social model of health, these determinants greatly influence health and wellbeing.

Health and health equity are determined by the distribution of power, money and resources which provide greater or lesser access to living conditions that promote health.

Our Community

An estimated 282,809 residents (ABS, 2021) call Greater Geelong home. There are population groups within Greater Geelong who experience health inequities, which are the unfair and avoidable differences in health status within and between population groups. Placing equity at the heart of everything we do, means we will build a healthy, thriving community where everyone is welcomed and valued. Some of these population groups are outlined in the diagram below.

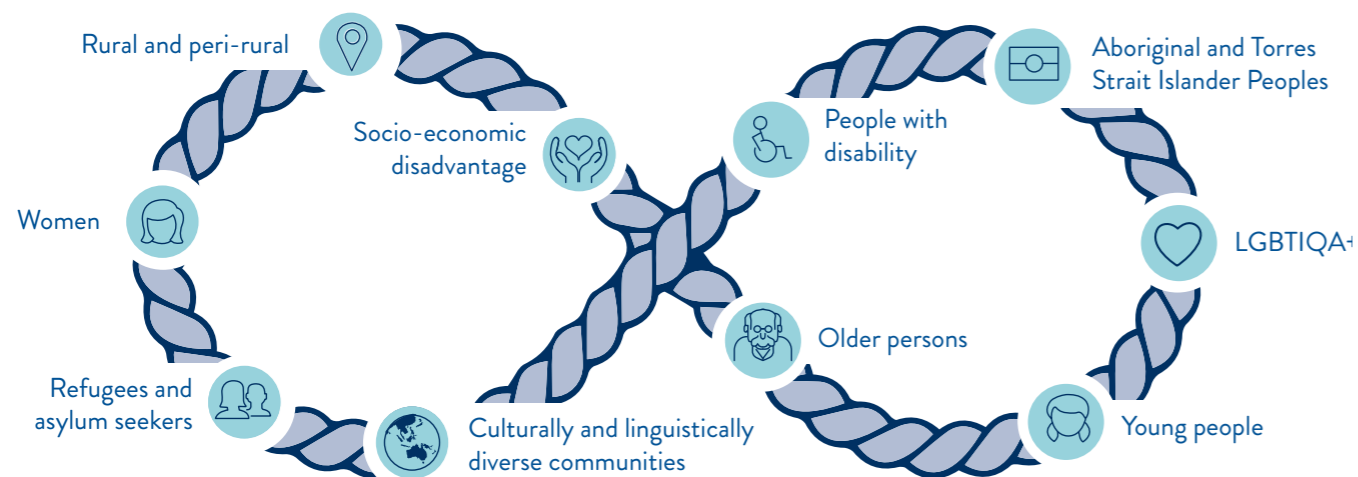


Figure 4: Intersectionality (Social Equity Framework 2022-25)

We strive towards an equitable approach to health and wellbeing, which means greater attention is given to the needs of the following priority population groups:

First Nations

First Nations communities comprise 1.3 per cent of the population, or 3,562 people, which is a higher proportion than Victoria (1.0 per cent) or Greater Melbourne (0.7 per cent). This signals the need for support tailored to the needs of First Nations communities in Greater Geelong. Their health concerns include:

- 20 per cent have a diagnosed mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)
- 16.6 per cent have asthma
- 4.3 per cent have diabetes.
- 10.8 per cent have other long term health conditions (ABS, 2021).
- First Nations women experience poorer health outcomes compared to non-Indigenous women and are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).

Multicultural communities

17.7 per cent of residents were born overseas which is the highest proportion in the G21 region. Between 2016 and 2021, most migrants were from India, and 11.7 per cent of residents speak a language other than English at home.

Gender

More women (17 per cent) than men (14 per cent) have experienced discrimination (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

More women (14 per cent) in Greater Geelong experience severe or moderate psychological distress than men (10 per cent) (City of Greater Geelong, 2024) and women are also more likely to seek professional help.

Gender impacts feelings of safety with more women (9 per cent) than men (3 per cent) feeling unsafe or very unsafe in the area where they live (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

In relation to family violence, women are more often

victims than men. Women in Greater Geelong are also more likely to be stalked, harassed or threatened (6.64 per 10,000) than their male counterparts (2.58 per 10,000) (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).

Men (23 per cent) are more at risk of lifetime harm due to alcohol consumption than women (12 per cent) (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

Financial insecurity (being unable to raise \$2000 in an emergency) is more common for women (16 per cent) than men (13 per cent).

Older women are the fastest growing homelessness cohort. More women (95.22 per 10,000) than men (86.88 per 10,000) in Greater Geelong were assisted by Specialist Homelessness Services in 2021-22 (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).

Children and families

37.9 per cent of households in Greater Geelong have children. Greater Geelong has a higher proportion (21.7 per cent) of single parent families with young children when compared to the Victorian average (18.2 per cent). More children in Greater Geelong (11.1 per cent) compared to Victoria (9.6 per cent) reported to have been diagnosed with asthma (Department of Education and Training, 2021).

Young people

17.8 per cent of residents are aged between 10 and 24 years which is on par with the G21 region. Mental health and loneliness are key issues for young people in Greater Geelong.

Greater Geelong also has a higher proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 years reporting a long term mental health condition (14.2 per cent) when compared to the population as a whole (11.15 per cent) (Western Victoria PHN Dashboard, 2024).

Older people

Our population is ageing, with 31.5 per cent aged 55 years and over, an increase from 30.9 per cent in 2016. The City currently has a slightly higher proportion of residents aged over 60 (25.6 per cent) when compared to Victoria (22.4 per cent), and by 2041, most of the population growth will be amongst adults over 70 years of age.

Greater Geelong has a higher proportion of older people (over 65 years) living in triple jeopardy (i.e.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

living alone, with disability, low income) (3.24 per cent) when compared to the WVPHN region (2.66 per cent) (PHN Dashboard, 2024).

A higher proportion of people aged 65 and over in Greater Geelong (29.24 per cent) live with two or more chronic diseases when compared to Victoria (27.81 per cent) (Western Victoria PHN Dashboard, 2024).

There is a higher rate of dementia amongst women in Greater Geelong (110.27 per 10,000) when compared to men (71.37 per 10,000). The rates for both sexes are higher in Greater Geelong than regional and state estimates (Women’s Health Victoria, 2024).

People with disabilities

22.1 per cent of people in Greater Geelong have a disability, with 6.5 per cent of residents having a severe or profound disability and need assistance with day to day living.

A higher proportion of the Greater Geelong population are NDIS participants (3.2 per cent) when compared to the Western Victoria PHN catchment (2.8 per cent) and Victoria (2.19 per cent) (Western Victoria PHN Dashboard, 2024).

A significant proportion of residents over 15 years of age in Greater Geelong (13.5 per cent) provide unpaid care to someone because of disability, old age, or a long term illness. This is an increase since 2016 (12.5 per cent) and a similar proportion to the G21 region (13.7 per cent).

LGBTQIA+ communities

9.6 per cent of residents in Greater Geelong identify as LGBTQIA+ which is lower than the Victorian average of 11 per cent. However, 3.1 per cent of people preferred not to say, so the actual percentage may be higher (Department of Health, 2023a)

LGBTQIA+ communities face poorer health and wellbeing outcomes due to discrimination, isolation, and marginalisation (VLGA, 2020).

Socio-economic disadvantage

Disadvantage in Greater Geelong is characterised by a high percentage of residents who are unemployed, renting, receiving rent assistance, and living in social housing. Pockets of disadvantage in Geelong include Corio, Norlane, Whittington, Newcomb, and Breakwater (Western Victoria PHN, 2023).

Residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage for a variety of reasons (e.g., hold a health care card, single parent families and those with lower levels of education) are more vulnerable to circumstances which impact their health and/or unhealthy behaviours such as:

- More likely to be at increased risk of short term alcohol harm.
- More likely to be in psychological distress.
- More likely to be lonely.
- More likely to experience financial insecurity.
- More likely to experience food insecurity.
- More likely to smoke/vape (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

For a full health and wellbeing profile of the Greater Geelong community, please refer to the *Health and Wellbeing Profile – Companion Document 1* available on the City’s website.

Our *Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29* fulfils our legislative requirement for a municipal public health and wellbeing plan under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

Under this Act, the strategy must:

- include an examination of data about health status and health determinants in the municipality,
- identify goals and strategies based on evidence for improving health and wellbeing,
- specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims,
- involve the community in its development, implementation, and evaluation, and
- specify how we will work in partnership with other agencies to accomplish the goals of the plan.

Legislation also requires the strategy to:

- Be consistent with the Council Plan.
- Have regard to the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan*.
- Have regard to the:
 - o *Climate Change Act 2017*
 - o *Gender Equality Act 2020*
 - o *Local Government Act 2020*.

The strategy has been guided by international, federal, state, regional and local policies and strategies, some of which are shown in table one.

Actions to improve community health and wellbeing are informed by our regulatory responsibilities under legislation and funding or partnership opportunities that arise from commitments within these strategies and plans.

For the broader policy and legislative context, including the context for the health and wellbeing priorities and our priority population groups, refer to the *Policy and Legislative Context - Companion Document 2* to this strategy on our website.

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations 2030 Agenda

Geneva Charter for Wellbeing 2021

FEDERAL

National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-30

National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020

STATE

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27

VicHealth Strategy 2022-33

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

REGIONAL

G21 2050 Regional Plan

Barwon South West Local Public Health Unit (LPHU) Catchment Plan 2023-29

Barwon Health and Bellarine Community Health’s Integrated Health Promotion Plans

LOCAL

City of Greater Geelong Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29

Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan 2020–30

Table 1: Policy Context

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In developing the *Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29*, the community and stakeholders provided input in a number of ways.

DELIBERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

A group of 48 community members who live, work or study in the Greater Geelong region came together across four sessions in August and September 2024, to identify the key challenges and opportunities, high level focus areas, guiding principles and key priorities and for the community's health and wellbeing.

The panel identified the following key focus areas:

- Community connectedness – including considering needs across the lifespan, supporting community groups and volunteers, and ensuring equitable access to Council assets for all people.
- Health and wellbeing – including community connectedness, social interaction, focusing on prevention and ensuring health and wellbeing is part of everything we do.

These key areas were considered in developing the *Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29* and alignment with the *Council Plan 2025-29*.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community was asked to consider which top five of the Victorian Government's health and wellbeing priority areas (from the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27*) are also a concern for the Greater Geelong community.

Figure 5 shows that preventing all forms of violence, increasing active living and improving wellbeing were ranked the highest priorities.

The survey also asked for ideas about how we could make places in Greater Geelong healthier. The feedback reflected a strong desire for a sustainable, healthy, and green urban environment that fosters community wellbeing and protects natural resources.

YOUTH COUNCIL

The 2025 Youth Council highlighted the impacts of bullying on mental wellbeing, vaping and accessing sexual and reproductive health services.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERS NETWORK

This network of community and health agencies across the Greater Geelong region highlighted the rising cost of living, and how this influences access to basic needs such as housing, healthy food, and access to health services. The increasing pressure placed on families as a result, can fuel an increase in violence. Agencies also highlighted the increased uptake of vaping in young people as a precursor to smoking tobacco later in life.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

Neighbourhood houses have close ties with local communities and a real time understanding of community needs. They highlighted social isolation, complex mental health issues, food insecurity, homelessness, digital literacy for older adults, the rising cost of living and recovery from emergency events as key concerns impacting on their communities.

WATHAURONG ABORIGINAL COOPERATIVE

Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative provides culturally appropriate health services, family services, activities to help strengthen community and connection to culture to achieve self-determined outcomes.

They have indicated that the primary health concerns of First Nations communities in Greater Geelong pertain to mental health issues, including anxiety, as well as the health effects associated with complex chronic conditions and disease management.

For further information about consultation activities, please refer to the *Consultation Report – Companion Document 3* on our website.

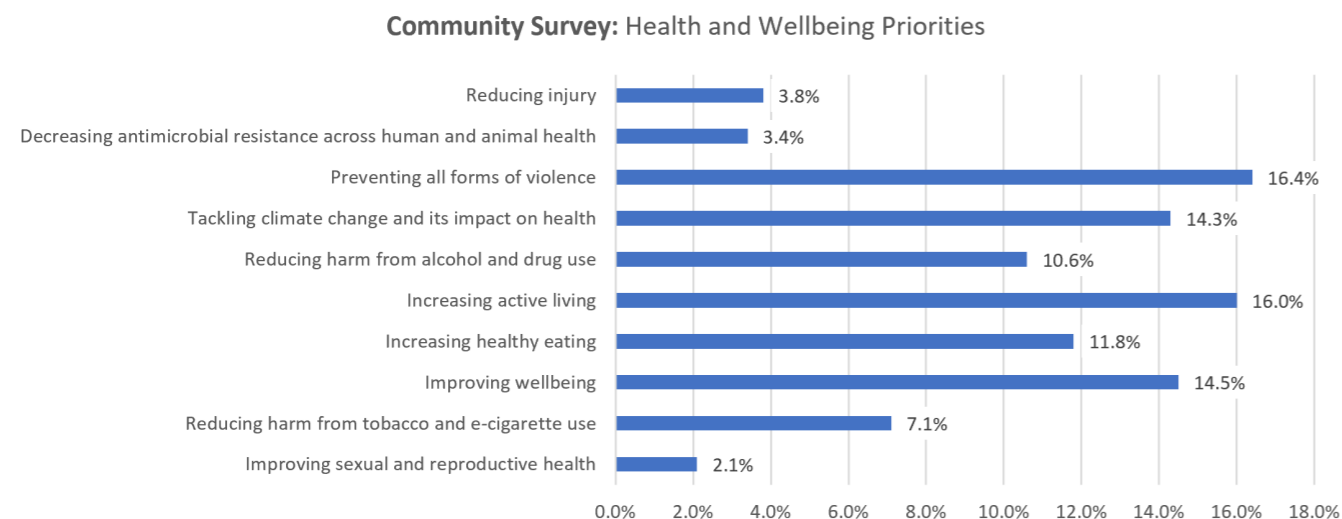
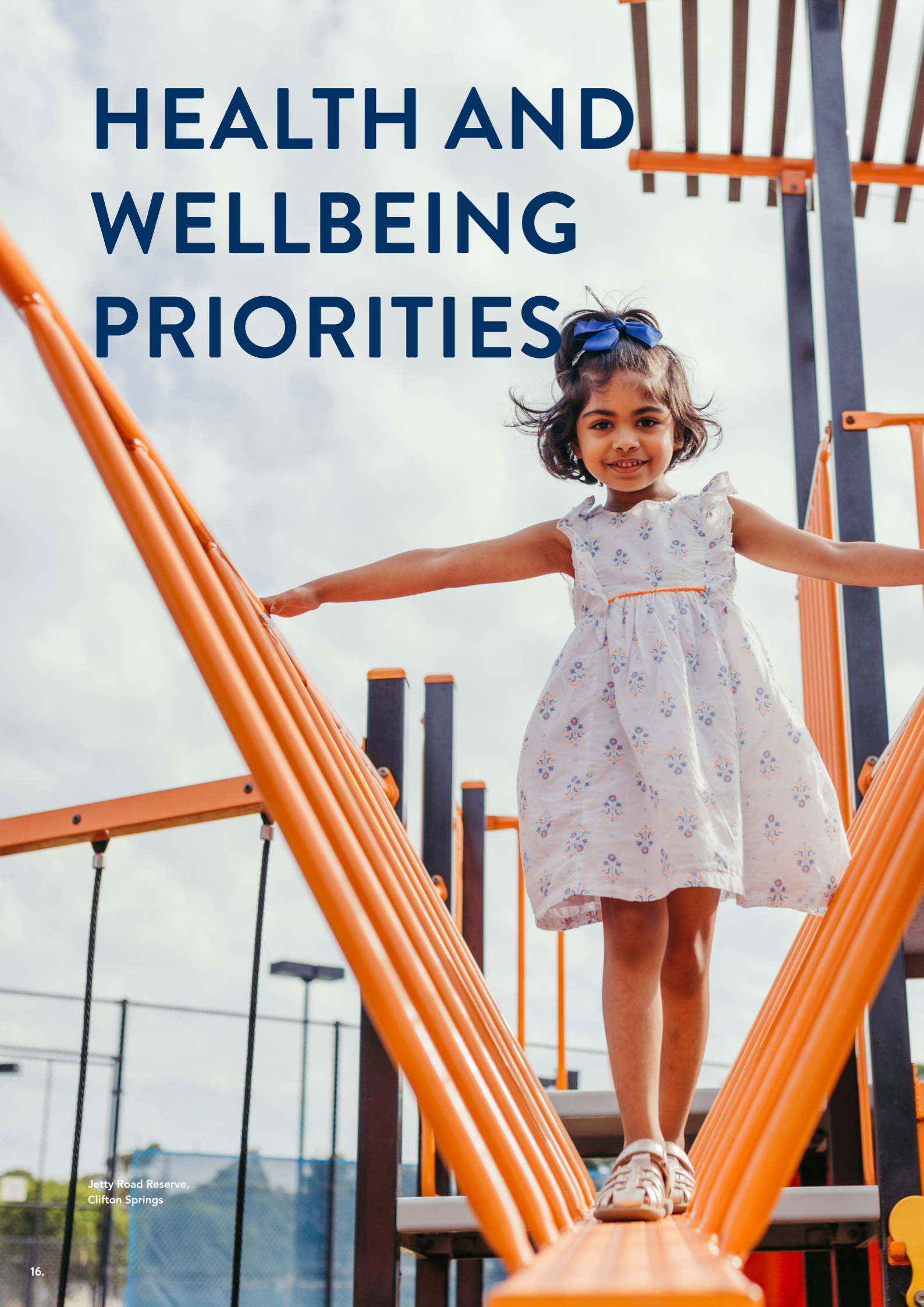


Figure 5: Community survey results.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES



Jetty Road Reserve,
Clifton Springs

STRATEGY ROADMAP

The health and wellbeing priorities below are of equal importance and are not ranked in any particular order.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY					
Priority 1: Mental wellbeing and social inclusion	Priority 2: Equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food	Priority 3: Physical activity and active living	Priority 4: Gender Equity and prevention of violence	Priority 5: Climate change and health impacts	Priority 6: Harm minimisation
<p>Goals:</p> <p>The community experiences lower levels of psychological distress.</p> <p>All community members feel connected and included in community life and have appropriate access to community facilities and services.</p> <p>All community members have access to housing that is affordable and in a community that is stable, supportive, and safe.</p>	<p>Goals:</p> <p>The community has equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food, and the food system is more resilient to shocks and emergencies.</p> <p>There are higher rates of breastfeeding and healthy eating among the community.</p>	<p>Goals:</p> <p>There are more opportunities for the community to be physically active.</p> <p>The community reports higher levels of physical activity and lower levels of sedentary behaviour.</p> <p>There are more liveable neighbourhoods which provide access to every day needs such as food, jobs, places for community interaction and open space.</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>People of all genders feel safe and live a life free from violence and discrimination.</p>	<p>Goals:</p> <p>The community is equipped to adapt to the adverse health effects of climate change and is capable of bouncing back from climate-related challenges.</p> <p>We encourage well designed public realm and public spaces which create a cooler, greener more liveable city.</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>The harm associated with alcohol and tobacco use, vaping, and gambling is reduced.</p>
<p>Goals: The population health and wellbeing outcomes we are striving towards beyond the life of this strategy.</p>					
<p>Strategic Objectives: Our role in the health and wellbeing priority area over the next four years.</p>					
<p>Strategic Actions: Commitments to areas of focus over the next four years</p>					
<p>Annual Action Plans: Evidence-based projects and initiatives that deliver on the strategic actions, objectives, and work towards progress in the six health and wellbeing priority areas. These will be developed annually, and progress reported to the community each year.</p>					



PRIORITY 1: MENTAL WELLBEING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

To experience mental wellbeing, we need to have our basic needs met (such as access to housing and food), feel safe and respected, feel connected to our communities and culture, be resilient enough to navigate our way through life's ups and downs, and to feel we have meaning and purpose to our lives (Victorian Government, 2025).

Latest data shows a quarter (25 per cent) of Greater Geelong adults are classified as lonely (higher than the Victorian average of 23 per cent) and 13 per cent experience severe or moderate levels of psychological distress, up from 10 per cent in 2017 (City of Greater Geelong, 2017 and 2024).

Certain population groups may be more at risk, such as those navigating life transitions such as leaving school, divorce, parenthood, retirement, chronic illness or the death of a loved one. Socio economic disadvantage is also an influencing factor.

Having a stable home is critical, and some people in Greater Geelong are experiencing or vulnerable to homelessness. 6.2 per cent of Greater Geelong households are in mortgage stress (spending more than 30 per cent of their income on mortgage repayments or rent) and over one in four (28 per cent) households are in rental stress (ABS, 2021). More households in Greater Geelong (5.3 per cent) need affordable housing compared to 4.5 per cent for regional Victoria (ABS, 2021). Older women are the fastest growing homelessness cohort (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).

Service providers are also seeing a significant increase in complex vulnerability, including mental health issues and social isolation, across all areas of the municipality, not just in locations of socio-economic disadvantage. Taking a life course approach and a place-based approach to promoting mental wellbeing are therefore both important considerations.

We have an important role in providing places and spaces such as neighbourhood houses, libraries, community centres and hubs, youth spaces and seniors centres as focal points for community activity and safe, welcoming places for people to meet and connect.

During consultation, the community identified several focus areas for improving mental wellbeing such as:

- reducing social isolation through creating inclusive and welcoming spaces and programs
- increasing social support for young people, families and older people
- promoting participation in arts and culture initiatives and events
- working with libraries and community centres.

CO-BENEFITS

Action to address mental wellbeing and social inclusion also works towards progress in other priority areas within this strategy:

- **Equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food** – having a healthy diet and sharing food with family and friends improves mental wellbeing and inclusion.
- **Physical activity and active living** – physical activity is a protective factor for mental wellbeing across all age groups. Increasing physical activity and active transport, accessing parks and green spaces that encourage outdoor activities and affordable exercise programs can all help to improve mental wellbeing.
- **Gender equity and the prevention of violence** – gender equity promotes social inclusion and improved mental wellbeing, especially for LGBTQIA+ communities and women from diverse backgrounds.
- **Climate change and its impact on health** – evidence links access to green spaces with improved mental wellbeing and taking climate action has been shown to decrease eco-anxiety especially for young people.
- **Harm minimisation** – issues such as alcohol abuse and problem gambling can impact mental wellbeing.

1. MENTAL WELLBEING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	
<p>The community experiences lower levels of psychological distress.</p> <p>All community members feel connected and included in community life and have appropriate access to community facilities and services.</p> <p>All community members have access to housing that is affordable and in a community that is stable, supportive, and safe.</p> <p>COMMUNITY INDICATORS:</p> <p>Psychological distress:</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members experiencing moderate to high levels of psychological distress (GPHS)</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members with a mental health condition (GPHS)</p> <p>Incidence of hospital admissions for self- harm and suicide (Hospital data; GPHS)</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members accessing mental health services (Hospital data)</p> <p>Loneliness</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members experiencing loneliness (GPHS)</p> <p>Ability to call on someone outside the household in an emergency (GPHS)</p>	<p>1.1 Provide access to initiatives and infrastructure that create opportunities for social connection.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Provide a variety of community grants to support local initiatives that respond to community needs.</p> <p>1.1.2 Provide residencies and spaces to help local creatives grow and share their craft with the community.</p> <p>1.1.3 In partnership with cultural industries, ensure the community have free or low- cost access to creative events and programs.</p> <p>1.1.4 Build the capability of community members to create resilient and connected communities that can address and advocate for their own needs.</p> <p>1.1.5 Provide opportunities for priority population groups to have shared experiences through events, festivals, arts, and culture.</p> <p>1.1.6 Establish and facilitate the Social Inclusion Action Group and associated social investment fund with both First Nations and mainstream funding streams.</p> <p>1.1.7 Partner with businesses, training providers, and social enterprises to create inclusive job opportunities for diverse community members, including First Nations, young people, older people, and people with disabilities.</p> <p>1.1.8 Support social enterprises and inclusive hiring.</p> <p>1.1.9 Support families to connect with other families in their local community</p> <p>1.1.10 Work with neighbourhood houses, libraries and community centres to provide opportunities for social connection.</p>	<p>National Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Plan</p> <p>National Children’s Mental Health Strategy</p> <p>National Quality Standards (Element 6.2)</p> <p>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Outcome 1, 2 and 3)</p> <p>Victorian Child Safe Standards</p> <p>Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy 2024-2034</p> <p>G21 2050 Regional Plan</p> <p>City of Greater Geelong:</p> <p>Advocacy Framework 2024-27</p> <p>Arts and Culture Strategy 2021-31</p> <p>Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-28</p> <p>Geelong on the Rise: A Clever and Creative International City 2024-2034</p> <p>Greater Geelong Planning Scheme</p> <p>Public Realm Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Positive Ageing Strategy 2021–47</p> <p>Open Space Strategy (under development)</p>

1. MENTAL WELLBEING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	
<p>Homelessness:</p> <p>Number of community members estimated to be experiencing homelessness (ABS Census)</p> <p>OUR MEASURES:</p> <p>Advocacy through submissions and grant applications.</p> <p>Participation in Council run programs.</p> <p>Number of grants provided to the community.</p> <p>Provision of Council assets in line with the City’s Social Infrastructure Planning and Investment Policy.</p> <p>Monitor employment rates for priority population groups.</p> <p>Number of local businesses attending capacity building sessions and engaging with social procurement initiatives.</p> <p>Strength of partnerships with stakeholders (e.g. Homelessness Working Group).</p>	<p>1.2 Encourage and provide well designed and located buildings, public realm, and open spaces.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Plan for housing close to transport and services in line with our Settlement Strategy.</p> <p>1.2.2 Provide and maintain social infrastructure in line with the Social Infrastructure Planning and Investment Policy.</p>	<p>Rainbow Action Plan 2025–29</p> <p>Settlement Strategy 2020</p> <p>Social Equity Framework 2022-25</p> <p>Social Housing Plan 2021–41</p> <p>Social Infrastructure Planning and Investment Policy; Social Procurement Policy (under development)</p>
	<p>1.3 Increase opportunity for social and affordable housing access for lower income households in the community.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Use City-owned land which is identified as surplus, for social housing.</p> <p>1.3.2 Negotiate with private developers for the inclusion of affordable housing in new private developments.</p> <p>1.3.3 Work with our partners to coordinate responses to homelessness in the City.</p>	
	<p>1.4. Support advocacy to improve the protective factors for mental wellbeing</p>	<p>1.4.1 Encourage community members from diverse backgrounds to provide advice to Council through our advisory committees and reference groups.</p> <p>1.4.2 Advocate for the reorientation of services towards prevention.</p> <p>1.4.3 Advocate for and amplify the voices of priority population groups.</p>	
	<p>1.5 Support reconciliation outcomes for First Nations communities.</p>	<p>1.5.1 Strengthen partnerships with Reconciliation Australia, and local First Nations organisations</p> <p>1.5.2 Foster a deeper appreciation of First Nations culture in the Greater Geelong community.</p>	



PRIORITY 2: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SAFE, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Food is an important part of our daily life. A nutritious diet supports healthy growth and development in childhood, reduces the risk of chronic disease in adulthood, and contributes to mental wellbeing at every stage of life. Food also plays a key role in Greater Geelong's economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and the recognition of First Nations sovereignty and knowledge. It brings cultures, histories and communities together (City of Greater Geelong, 2021a).

The food system encompasses all people, processes, and interactions involved in producing, processing, distributing, consuming, and disposing of food (Burlingame & Dernini 2012). A sustainable food system ensures that everyone has access to nutritious food while maintaining the economic, social and environmental conditions needed to support food security for future generations (Nguyen 2018).

However, many Greater Geelong community members are unfairly excluded from the benefits of a healthy, equitable and more sustainable food system. Many households have poor access to nutrient-rich fresh foods like vegetables and fruits, and rely instead on highly processed, energy dense foods which are comparatively easy to access, prepare, store and consume.

With increasing cost of living pressures, food environments in which the most affordable foods are predominantly processed foods (low in fibre, high in sugar, salt and fat) put people at greater risk of developing chronic health conditions and co-morbidities, impacting their health and quality of life.

Lower quality diets are also associated with a higher carbon footprint through higher carbon associated with production, higher food miles, environmental degradation, land use changes and waste.

Food security

- The proportion of people experiencing food insecurity has doubled from 4 per cent in 2021 to 8 per cent in 2024 but could be much higher due to underreporting and challenges with measuring the extent of the issue (City of Greater Geelong 2021; City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- Most households in Greater Geelong are closer to a fast-food outlet (1153m) than to a healthy food outlet (1294m). Residents in North Shore (2984m) are among the furthest from healthy food outlets, while residents in Newcomb (891m), Whittington (953m) and Norlane (981m) live closest to fast food outlets (AUO 2024).

Healthy eating

- 50 per cent of Greater Geelong adults meet fruit consumption guidelines (2 pieces a day), while 14 per cent meet vegetable consumption guidelines (5+ serves a day). Not meeting guidelines is primarily due to personal preference and lack of time, although in 2024 cost has emerged as having more of an impact on people not meeting guidelines (12 per cent, 3 per cent in 2021). (City of Greater Geelong 2021; City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- 29 per cent of adults drink sugar sweetened beverages more than once a week, compared to 37 per cent in 2021 (City of Greater Geelong 2021; City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- 16 per cent of adults eat takeaway meals more than weekly, down from 20 per cent in 2021 (14 per cent in 2017) (City of Greater Geelong 2021; City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

CO-BENEFITS

Action to ensure equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food also works towards progress in other priority areas within this strategy:

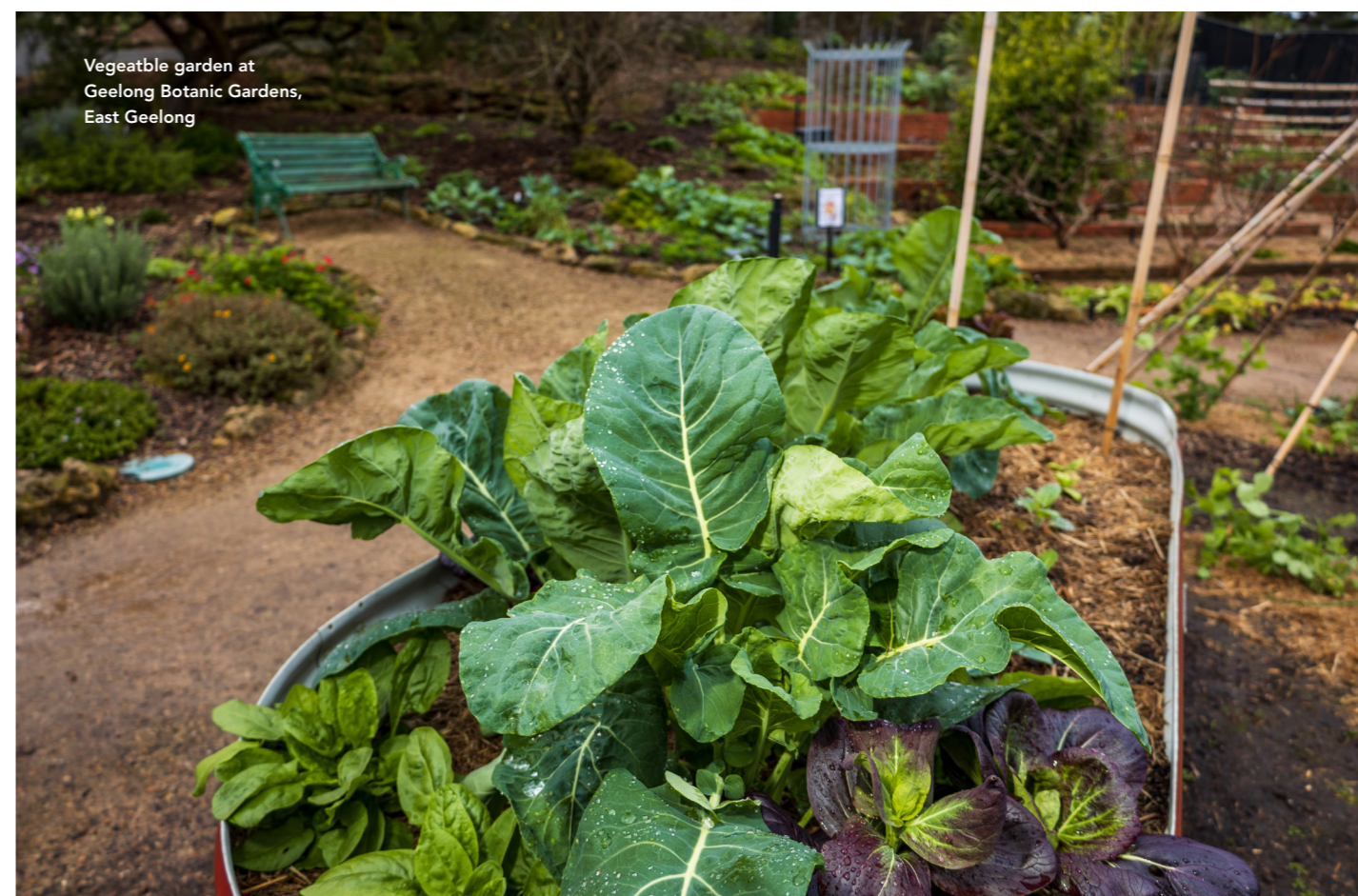
- **Mental wellbeing and social inclusion** – healthy eating and mental wellbeing are linked via the gut-brain connection. The evidence base linking mental wellbeing with what and how we eat is growing.
- **Physical activity and active living** – growing food at home provides opportunities for incidental exercise.
- **Gender equity and prevention of violence** – women and men's nutritional needs are different.
- **Climate change and health impacts** – encouraging local food production and reducing food miles, reducing food waste, encouraging composting.
- **Harm minimisation** – a healthy diet is also one which limits alcohol intake.

2.0 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
<p>The community has equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food, and the food system is more resilient to shocks and emergencies.</p> <p>There are higher rates of breastfeeding and healthy eating among the community.</p> <p>COMMUNITY INDICATORS:</p> <p>Food security and food systems</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members experiencing food insecurity (GPHS)</p> <p>Average distance to healthy and unhealthy food retail outlets (AUO)</p> <p>Amount of food waste diverted from landfill (Waste)</p> <p>Healthy eating</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members meeting fruit and vegetable guidelines (GPHS)</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members consuming sugar sweetened drinks every day (GPHS)</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members who eat takeaway meals or snacks (GPHS)</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of infants breastfeeding at 6 months of age (MCH)</p>	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	<p>WHO Action Framework for Public Food Procurement and Service Policies</p> <p>NHMRC Australian Dietary Guidelines</p> <p>National Quality Standards (Elements 2.1.3, 6.1 and 7)</p> <p>Victorian Government Healthy Choices Guidelines</p> <p>City of Greater Geelong:</p> <p>Catering Policy</p> <p>Food Policy (Under review)</p> <p>Social and Environmental Procurement Policy (under development)</p> <p>Social Infrastructure Plan</p> <p>Social Infrastructure Planning and Investment Policy</p>
	<p>2.1 Strengthen the City's leadership on equitable access to healthy and sustainable food</p>	<p>2.1.1 Develop a policy framework and action plan that embeds equitable access to safe, healthy and sustainable food across Council operations, guided by internal governance mechanisms.</p> <p>2.1.2 Implement healthy and sustainable food procurement practices across Council-operated services, programs and events.</p> <p>2.1.3 Partner with private and community leaseholders to adopt healthy and sustainable food procurement in Council-owned facilities and venues.</p>	
	<p>2.2 Design built and service environments that support healthy and sustainable food access</p>	<p>2.2.1 Incorporate features into Council infrastructure that promote healthy food access (e.g. community kitchens, breastfeeding facilities, community gardens, edible landscaping).</p> <p>2.2.2 Support early childhood services to provide nutritious meals and educate families on healthy food choices.</p> <p>2.2.3 Promote breastfeeding and healthy eating from infancy.</p> <p>2.2.4 Monitor and support food safety compliance across Greater Geelong.</p>	

2.0 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
OUR MEASURES:	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	
<p>Compliance with Management Procedure Strategy/policies endorsed by Council.</p> <p>Participation in early years services where healthy eating is prioritised and part of funded breakfast clubs.</p> <p>Number of facilities and services compliant with Healthy Choices guidelines</p>	<p>2.3 Enable collective action to build a healthy, sustainable and fair local food system</p>	<p>2.3.1 Build and maintain partnerships to strengthen the local food system through a collective impact approach.</p> <p>2.3.2 Strengthen the capacity and coordination of the food relief sector.</p> <p>2.3.3 Support community-led initiatives that address food insecurity and build food literacy.</p> <p>2.3.4 Collaborate with Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative to support access to culturally appropriate, healthy food and strengthen food knowledge systems.</p>	





PRIORITY 3: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACTIVE LIVING

Active living supports everyone, at all stages of life, to live healthier lives. Low levels of exercise are a major risk factor for chronic conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and dementia (AIHW, 2024).

Almost two thirds (65 per cent) of Greater Geelong residents meet the daily guidelines for physical activity. However, activity levels in children have been steadily declining since 2013, and older adults over the age of 55 years do not get as much physical activity as other age groups.

In addition to this, 20 per cent of Greater Geelong residents are classified as sedentary, that is, sitting for 8 hours or more on a weekday or weekend and reporting no physical activity (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

Our region is home to several sporting facilities, recreational areas as well as parks and open spaces that provide opportunities for both organised sport and passive recreation. Equitable access to these spaces encourages everyone to participate.

Overall, Greater Geelong has a below average walkability index at -0.7 (0 is average) (AUO, 2021). However, almost 40 per cent (39.9 per cent) of residents live in dwellings within 400m of public transport with a regular 30-minute weekday service (7.00am to 7.00pm). Research shows this encourages walking and reduces car dependence.

On average, 2.3 per cent of employed persons aged 15 and over, use public transport to travel to work (AUO, 2021).

The community voted increasing active living as the second highest health and wellbeing priority for Greater Geelong.

We have a role in the following key areas:

- **Safe active transport infrastructure** – safe bike paths, separated bike lanes, dedicated walking paths, connected routes, public transport improvements, traffic calming, lighting, and better walkability.
- **Accessible and affordable active spaces** – reducing cost barriers for those on a low income, pensioners and families for sport and recreation facilities, more open spaces, parks with more accessible and inclusive facilities and features, walking tracks and spaces that are accessible to all ages and abilities.
- **Community engagement and support** – work with local sporting clubs and community organisations to promote active living and help those experiencing barriers to access active living programs.
- **Environmental sustainability** – active living reduces car dependence and promotes lower to no emissions options such as public transport, walking or cycling.
- **Education** – raising awareness of the benefits of active living and encouraging sustainable modes of transport.

CO-BENEFITS

Action to address physical activity and active living also works towards progress in other priority areas within this strategy:

- **Climate change and health impacts** – active transport reduces emissions.
- **Gender equity and prevention of violence** – encouraging female participation in sport and recreation.
- **Mental wellbeing and social inclusion** – evidence links physical activity with improved mental wellbeing.
- **Equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food** – activities such as growing vegetables and gardening are great opportunities to be physically active.

3.0 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACTIVE LIVING

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
<p>There are more opportunities for the community to be physically active.</p> <p>The community reports higher levels of physical activity and lower levels of sedentary behaviour.</p> <p>There are more liveable neighbourhoods which provide access to every day needs such as food, jobs, places for community interaction and open space.</p> <p>COMMUNITY INDICATORS:</p> <p>Active transport:</p> <p>Modes of travel, walkability, distance to public transport (AUO)</p> <p>Physical activity:</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of community members across all age groups meeting physical activity guidelines (GPHS)</p> <p>Sedentary behaviour:</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of adults who are sedentary (GPHS)</p>	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	<p>Australian Physical Activity Guidelines</p> <p>Sport 2030 National Sports Plan</p> <p>National Quality Standards (Element 2.1.3)</p> <p>Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria</p> <p>Active Victoria 2022-2026</p> <p>Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-2028</p> <p>G21 2050 Regional Plan</p> <p>Vision Zero Geelong: Safe Local Travel 2022-2027</p> <p>City of Greater Geelong:</p> <p>Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-28</p> <p>Fair Play Strategy</p> <p>Fair Access Policy</p> <p>Geelong Major Events Strategy 2024-29</p> <p>Greater Geelong Planning Scheme</p> <p>Integrated Transport Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Open Space Strategy (under development)</p>
	<p>3.1 Design liveable, walkable neighbourhoods that promote active living.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Invest in and upgrade infrastructure to promote active living for all ages and abilities.</p> <p>3.1.2 Promote and encourage safe, active travel by providing appropriate infrastructure and facilities, and connecting residential areas to key destinations.</p> <p>3.1.3 Increase opportunities for passive recreation and incidental exercise in our streetscapes and open spaces.</p> <p>3.1.4 Encourage a diversity of housing close to everyday needs.</p>	
	<p>3.2 Increase and promote opportunities for active living</p>	<p>3.2.1 Design play spaces and programs that encourage physical activity for children of all abilities.</p> <p>3.2.2 Support major sporting and community events that encourage community participation.</p>	

3.0 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACTIVE LIVING

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
<p>OUR MEASURES:</p> <p>Participation in / attendance at programs for priority populations</p> <p>New membership tiers for priority populations in the City's Leisure facilities</p> <p>Number of partnership initiatives for physical activity</p> <p>Progress towards 50 per cent of trips to work being made by active travel and public transport by 2047.</p>	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	<p>Plan for Nature (under development)</p> <p>Positive Ageing Strategy 2021-47</p> <p>Public Realm Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Shared Trails Masterplan</p> <p>Social Infrastructure Planning and Investment Policy</p>
	<p>3.3 Increase participation in sport and recreation, especially for groups who face barriers.</p>	<p>3.3.1 Provide equitable access and targeted programming for priority population groups at the City's aquatic, leisure and recreation facilities.</p> <p>3.3.2 Work with our partners to promote inclusive and all abilities participation in sport and recreation.</p>	



Geelong



Breamlea

PRIORITY 4: GENDER EQUITY AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Gender equality occurs when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Evidence shows gender equity helps to prevent violence against women and girls (Our Watch, 2025).

Preventing all forms of violence and promoting community safety were key health and wellbeing concerns identified by the community in developing this Strategy.

Latest data shows that the rate of police recorded family violence incidents in Greater Geelong is increasing. In 2022-23 there was a 10.8 per cent increase in the number of incidents and in most cases, the affected family member was female. First Nations women and residents of lower socio-economic areas within the municipality are also more affected.

Gender inequities are also present in other areas of community life, for example:

- Women are more likely than men to feel unsafe in the area where they live (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- More women (14 per cent) in Greater Geelong suffer from severe or moderate psychological distress than men (10 per cent) (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- Women (38 per cent) are more likely to experience discrimination based on their gender when compared with men (18 per cent) (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- The proportion of those providing informal care / unpaid help to another person is higher for women (13.3 per cent) than men (8.8 per cent) in Greater Geelong (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).
- The burden of domestic work is still largely gendered in Greater Geelong, the Barwon Southwest region and in Victoria. Of those who worked full time, more women (25.5 per cent) than men (9.9 per cent) also completed 15 hours or more per week of unpaid domestic work (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).
- Forty-two per cent of people presenting to homelessness were survivors of domestic and family violence (DFFH data published by Barwon South West Homelessness Network, 2022)
- Older women are the fastest growing homelessness cohort. More women (95.22 per 10,000) than men (86.88 per 10,000) in Greater Geelong were assisted by Specialist Homelessness Services in 2021-22 (Women's Health Victoria, 2024).
- LGBTQIA+ communities face poorer health and wellbeing outcomes due to discrimination, isolation, and marginalisation (VLGA, 2020). Levels of psychological distress and loneliness are also higher for the LGBTQIA+ population, and social isolation is concern for older LGBTQIA+ community members.

We promote gender equity and the prevention of violence against women through a whole-of-community approach. This involves:

- Raising awareness of the drivers of gender inequality in the community.
- Celebrating women in leadership (past and present).
- Planning and designing community infrastructure to reflect the needs of all people, considering use and potential use; and
- Collaborating with our partners. Respect 2040 provides the City with a platform for a coordinated regional approach. Collaboration ensures that resources are maximised, and services are not duplicated.

CO-BENEFITS

Action to address gender equity and prevention of violence also works towards progress in other priority areas within this strategy:

- **Mental wellbeing and social inclusion** – gender equity promotes social inclusion and improved mental wellbeing, especially for LGBTQIA+ communities and women from diverse backgrounds.
- **Physical activity and active living** – safe and inclusive environments encourage women and gender diverse people to participate in physical activity.
- **Climate change and its impact on health** – evidence shows that violence escalates in extreme weather conditions, so action to reduce emissions and adapt to the health impacts of climate change can help prevent violence.
- **Harm minimisation** – issues such as alcohol abuse and problem gambling can fuel violence within the community.

4.0 GENDER EQUITY AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
<p>People of all genders feel safe and live a life free from violence and discrimination.</p> <p>COMMUNITY INDICATORS:</p> <p>Family Violence: Family violence incidents reported to the Police (Victoria Police).</p> <p>Feelings of Safety: Feelings of safety in the local area, and no significant difference is detected based on gender (GPHS).</p>	<p>Strategic Objectives</p> <p>4.1 Promote gender equity and equality within the community.</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>4.1.1 Raise awareness of gender equity and violence prevention within the community.</p> <p>4.1.2 Implement programs that educate young children about gender equity and respectful relationships.</p>	<p>National Quality Standards (Element 5.1.1 and 5.1.2)</p> <p>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Outcome 1)</p> <p>Victorian Child Safe Standards</p> <p>Our Equal State: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023-27</p> <p>Free from Violence: Victoria's Strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women</p> <p>G21 2050 Regional Plan</p> <p>Respect 2040 Regional Partnership</p> <p>City of Greater Geelong: Community Safety Framework 2022- 26 Fair Access Policy 2024 Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy</p>
	<p>4.2 Increase opportunities for prevention of violence.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Support inclusion for the LGBTIQ+ community.</p> <p>4.2.2 Build capability for our community-facing workforce to identify and respond to incidents of family violence.</p> <p>4.2.3 Work with our regional partners to prevent violence against women</p>	

4.0 GENDER EQUITY AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
<p>OUR MEASURES:</p> <p>Number of community events which promote gender equity.</p> <p>Strength of partnerships with stakeholders (e.g. Respect 2040).</p> <p>Confidence of staff to identify family violence in the community.</p> <p>Gender equity assessments are completed for all significant recreation infrastructure design projects as per the Gender Equality Act, 2020.</p> <p>Number of women and trans and gender diverse people nominating for Council elections.</p> <p>Equal gender split in senior leadership positions.</p>	<p>Strategic Objectives</p> <p>4.3. Foster gender inclusive leadership, policies, and workforce development.</p> <p>4.4. Ensure the community feels safe in public places.</p>	<p>Strategic Actions</p> <p>4.3.1 Work to improve gender balance in Community Services workforces that are predominately dominated by one gender.</p> <p>4.3.2 Develop and implement the Gender Equality Action Plan 2026-29.</p> <p>4.4.1 Work with our partners to promote community safety initiatives and monitor local hot spots.</p> <p>4.4.2 Embed gender equity principles into infrastructure planning, masterplans, and urban design frameworks.</p> <p>4.4.3 Design and activate public spaces to promote community safety (e.g., lighting, passive surveillance).</p>	<p>Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-25</p> <p>Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2024</p> <p>Open Space Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Positive Ageing Strategy 2021-47</p> <p>Public Realm Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Rainbow Action Plan 2025-29</p> <p>Smart Cities Strategic Framework and Implementation Action Plan</p>





Fyansford

PRIORITY 5: CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH IMPACTS

Climate change is a significant threat to health, and the Geelong municipality is facing the same issues as many other parts of Australia and around the world (City of Greater Geelong, 2021).

The majority (71 per cent) of the Greater Geelong community are concerned about climate change, with 42 per cent of those concerned about the impact of climate change on their health (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

Climate change has both direct and indirect impacts on health.

Climate change **directly affects health** through exposure to extreme weather events such as heatwaves, bushfires, storms, and floods which impact our basic requirements for clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. Direct health impacts include heat stress and heat related illness, injury, physical and mental trauma and possibly death (DHHS, 2020). Anecdotally, there is also a risk of heightened stress or prolonged depression due to the increased frequency of extreme events, in that people do not have time to fully recover before the next emergency.

Indirect impacts are due to changes to the environmental conditions on which human health depends (DEA, 2021). Indirect impacts include shifting patterns of vector borne disease, risks to food safety and food security, increasing cardiovascular and respiratory disease caused by air pollution, psychological distress as well as damage to infrastructure (DHHS, 2020).

The Geelong region is facing a drier, warmer future. Some predictions suggest that by the 2050s, Geelong's climate will be more like the current climate of Shepparton. The frequency of extreme weather events, such as droughts, bushfires, heavy rain, and heatwaves, are also expected to increase (CSIRO, 2019).

The effects of climate change are already impacting on the health and wellbeing of communities. As our greenhouse gas emissions continue and our climate continues to change, these impacts are set to continue and worsen, especially for those who are most vulnerable, such as children experiencing asthma, older people and people with disabilities and chronic health conditions.

However, climate change also presents an opportunity. A key aspect of addressing the health effects of climate change is recognising that, whilst support and leadership at all tiers of government are required, smaller actions contribute to global outcomes, and that Geelong and its community are part of this broader picture.

Addressing climate change and its health impacts relies on partnering with the community, building on the strong grassroots foundations of action and working with businesses and other organisations such as First Nations Traditional Owners who provide valuable insights on sustainability and caring for country.

This priority area allows us to add a health lens to our climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, strategies, and actions to ensure that vulnerable members of our community will not be adversely affected and experience even greater health impacts as a result.

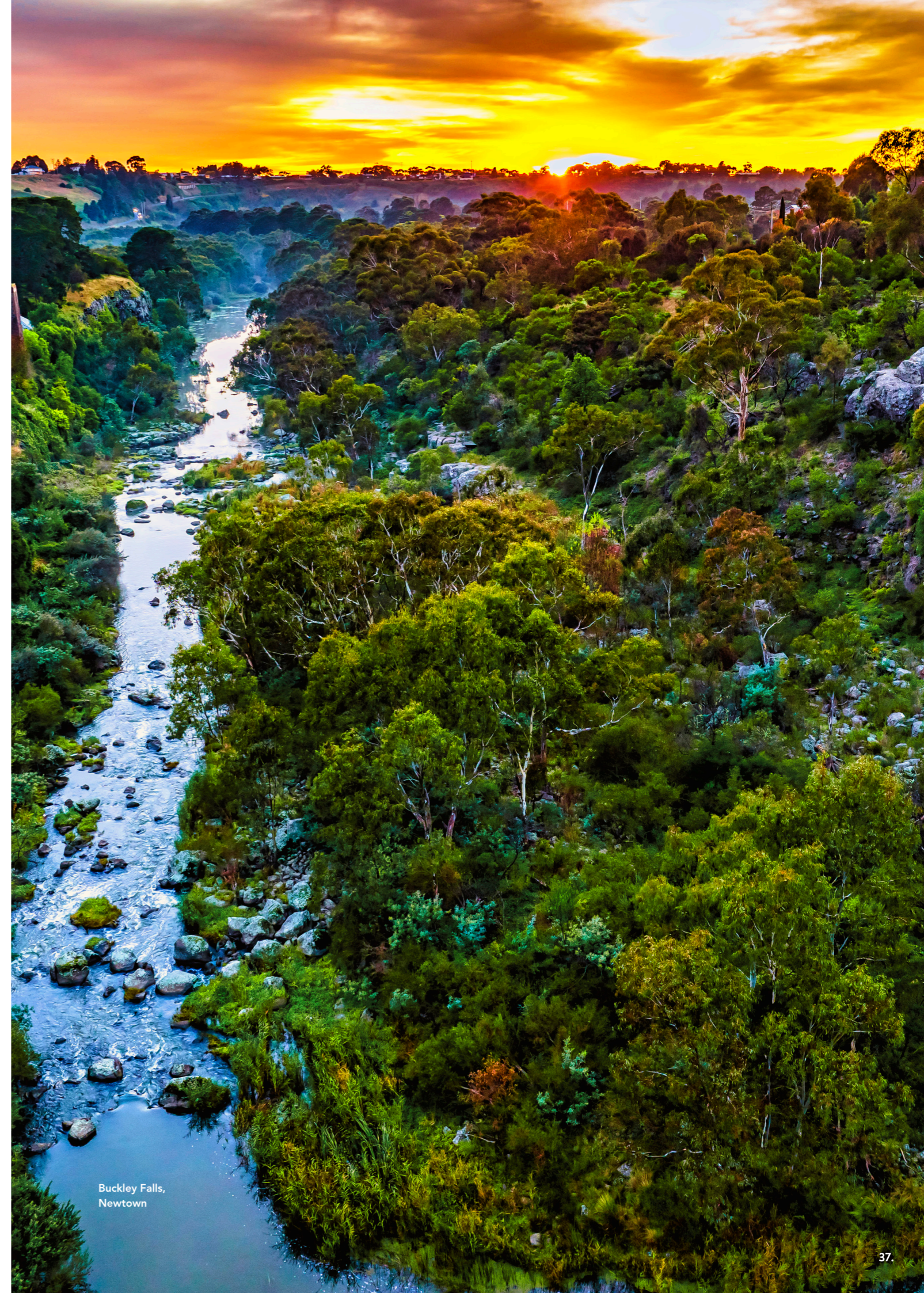
CO-BENEFITS

Action to address climate change and its health impacts also works towards progress in other priority areas within this strategy:

- **Mental wellbeing and social inclusion** – action to address climate change, can also ease feelings of eco-anxiety.
- **Equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food** – sustainable diets, such as those rich in plants from locally produced fruits and vegetables can reduce livestock production, lead to fewer methane emissions, and also improving community health and wellbeing (DHHS, 2020).
- **Physical activity and active living** – active transport can help to decrease emissions, improve air quality and also provide opportunities for exercise. Increasing canopy cover and shade in our public spaces helps to support community resilience to climate change by providing relief from extreme heat and UV protection against skin cancer.
- **Gender equity and prevention of violence** – evidence shows that violence escalates in extreme weather conditions.

5.0 CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH IMPACTS

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	
<p>The community is equipped to adapt to the adverse health effects of climate change and is capable of bouncing back from climate-related challenges.</p> <p>The City encourages well designed public realm and public spaces which create a cooler, greener more liveable city.</p>	<p>5.1. Foster improved access to green spaces and the natural environment.</p>	<p>5.1.1 Promote Greater Geelong's natural assets to the community, highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits of being in nature.</p> <p>5.1.2 Increase tree canopy cover and create shady pedestrian streetscapes to reduce urban heat island effects and UV exposure.</p>	<p>National Health and Climate Strategy Implementation Plan 2024-28</p> <p>National Quality Standards (Element 3.2.3)</p> <p>Victoria's Climate Change Strategy</p> <p>Victorian State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)</p>
<p>COMMUNITY INDICATORS:</p> <p>Community attitudes:</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of residents concerned about the impact of climate change on their health (GPHS)</p> <p>Community resilience:</p> <p>Proportion (per cent) of homes where the temperature is always uncomfortable (GPHS)</p> <p>Vulnerability:</p> <p>Lower incidence of heat related illness (Hospital data)</p> <p>Lower incidence of thunderstorm asthma (Hospital data)</p> <p>OUR MEASURES:</p> <p>Progress towards planting one million new trees in Greater Geelong by 2030.</p> <p>Progress towards 50 per cent of work trips being made by active travel or public transport by 2047.</p>	<p>5.2. Increase community resilience to the health impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.</p>	<p>5.2.1 Develop a communications strategy to raise awareness of the health impacts of climate change and promote climate actions that improve health.</p> <p>5.2.2 Raise community awareness of the risks associated with the increase in frequency and severity of extreme weather events.</p> <p>5.2.3 Identify opportunities to create climate resilient local food systems.</p> <p>5.2.4 Support partnerships and programs that engage the community in environmentally sustainable initiatives.</p> <p>5.2.5 Build multi agency partnerships to effectively respond to emergency events and support community recovery.</p>	<p>Victorian Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for People most at risk</p> <p>G21 2050 Regional Plan</p> <p>Barwon Southwest Regional Climate Adaptation Strategy 2020-25</p> <p>City of Greater Geelong:</p> <p>Climate Change Response Plan 2024-28</p> <p>Environment Strategy 2020-30</p> <p>Integrated Transport Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Mosquito Management Program</p> <p>Municipal Emergency Management Plan</p> <p>Open Space Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Plan for Nature (under development)</p> <p>Public Realm Strategy (under development)</p> <p>Urban Forest Strategy 2015-25</p> <p>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020-30</p>



Buckley Falls, Newtown



Little Malop Street,
Geelong

PRIORITY 6: HARM MINIMISATION

Our community experiences the harms associated with tobacco use and vaping, harmful alcohol use and gambling. Harm minimisation is a complex issue and the role of local government in this space is varied and evolving.

Smoking and vaping

- 10 per cent of Greater Geelong residents are current smokers (of tobacco and/or vapes) (City of Greater Geelong, 2024). This rate is relatively unchanged since 2017 and is below the current Victorian average of 18.5 per cent (Department of Health, 2023a).
- Vaping (e-cigarette use) is of great concern for young people. 22 per cent of smokers use vapes, and this increases to 42 per cent amongst 18-34 year old smokers (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- 6 per cent of all young people (18-34 years) in Greater Geelong use e-cigarettes, with most using nicotine (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).
- 81 per cent of vape users aged 18 to 34 years use nicotine in their vapes either all the time (59 per cent) or sometimes (22 per cent). This indicates a lack of awareness as to the content of vapes, as all vapes contain nicotine.

Alcohol

- Risk of lifetime harm is calculated based on those who have more than 10 drinks per week, and risk of short term harm is based on those who ever consume more than 4 drinks in a single session.
- 18 per cent of adults in Greater Geelong are at a risk of lifetime harm due to alcohol consumption. This is a greater concern for men (23 per cent) than women (12 per cent).
- 11 per cent of adults in Greater Geelong are at risk of short term harm due to alcohol consumption. This is also a greater concern for men (17 per cent) than women (6 per cent) (City of Greater Geelong, 2024).

Gambling

- Losses to electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in Greater Geelong exceed \$100 million annually, which is one of the highest levels in Victoria.
- Geelong has the highest losses in regional Victoria, with over double the number of losses in Ballarat or Bendigo and is within the top 5 Victorian local government areas with the highest annual losses.

We contribute to harm minimisation through:

- Raising community awareness of alcohol, tobacco, vaping and gambling related harms.
- Assessing planning permits electronic gaming machines (EGMs).
- Managing the amenity around licensed premises.
- Enforcing tobacco legislation.

- Designing environments that reduce harm and promote safety.
- Challenging social norms and promoting culture change.
- Developing collaborative local partnerships.
- Engaging with the community to understand their needs.

The community highlighted the need for a focus on prevention through education and awareness campaigns that promote healthy behaviours, promoting alcohol and smoke free social spaces, events and activities, limiting access to tobacco, alcohol and gambling, shifting community attitudes, and youth focused vaping prevention programs.

By working collaboratively with various stakeholders and implementing comprehensive strategies, local governments can significantly reduce the harm caused by alcohol, tobacco, vaping and gambling in the community.

CO-BENEFITS

Action to minimise harm from tobacco, vaping, alcohol misuse and gambling also works towards progress:

- **Mental wellbeing and social inclusion** – reducing harmful behaviours can promote better mental wellbeing and connections with others.
- **Equitable access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food** – money and time spent on harmful behaviours can be redirected to a healthy diet.
- **Physical activity and active living** – reducing harmful behaviours can provide time and energy for physical activity and active living.
- **Gender equity and prevention of violence** – creating environments that minimise harm can also reduce the risk of violence and promote community safety.

6.0 HARM MINIMISATION

OUR GOALS:	OUR COMMITMENTS:		POLICY AND EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDANCE FOR TAKING ACTION:
<p>The harm associated with alcohol and tobacco use, vaping, and gambling is reduced.</p> <p>COMMUNITY INDICATORS:</p> <p>Alcohol harm:</p> <p>Fewer community members are at increased risk from alcohol use, and no significant difference is detected by gender (GPHS)</p> <p>Vaping prevalence:</p> <p>Decrease in proportion (%) of residents who vape (GPHS)</p> <p>OUR MEASURES:</p> <p>Number of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGM) applications opposed.</p> <p>Positive outcomes from enforcement activities.</p> <p>Strength of partnerships with stakeholders (e.g. Victoria Police).</p>	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions	<p><i>National Alcohol Strategy 2019-28</i></p> <p><i>National Drug Strategy 2017-26</i></p> <p><i>National Tobacco Strategy 2023-30</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Tobacco Act 1987</i></p> <p><i>G21 2050 Regional Plan</i></p> <p>City of Greater Geelong:</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2024</i></p> <p><i>Community Safety Framework 2022-26</i></p> <p><i>Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy</i></p>
	<p>6.1 Collaborate with partner organisations to increase opportunities for prevention.</p>	<p><i>6.1.1 Increase community awareness of the harms associated with alcohol and tobacco use, vaping, and gambling.</i></p> <p><i>6.1.2 Explore partnership opportunities to identify and promote smoke/vape-free areas within Greater Geelong.</i></p>	
	<p>6.2 Create supportive environments for health promoting behaviours.</p>	<p><i>6.2.1 Actively support community or sporting clubs, groups, or organisations to divest themselves of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs).</i></p> <p><i>6.2.2 Monitor the sale of tobacco and the provision of smoke free dining areas.</i></p> <p><i>6.2.3 Promote community safety by monitoring alcohol free and smoke free areas.</i></p> <p><i>6.2.4 Provide support for families to create smoke-free and safe home environments.</i></p>	

IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION, GOVERNANCE

IMPLEMENTATION

Partnerships

We recognise that achieving our health and wellbeing goals requires strong partnerships. We will work closely with community groups, organisations, and other agencies to leverage their expertise and resources. Key partners include local health services, educational institutions, and non-profit organisations. We will continue to seek out new opportunities for collaboration to address our priority areas.

Our health and wellbeing partners network offers essential guidance to help us achieve our shared objectives. Our current partners include Barwon Health, Barwon South West Local Public Health Unit, Bellarine Community Health, Cultura, Deakin University, Department of Education, Department of Health, Geelong Foodshare, Geelong Regional Libraries Corporation, Leisure Networks, Meli, Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, Western Victoria Primary Health Network and Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West.

Our sport and recreation network is a partnership between us and 12 sport and recreation associations. The network aims to work closely and collaboratively with the governing body of each sport to review sporting operations, align strategic planning and maximise the use of council owned or managed facilities to generate health and wellbeing outcomes in alignment with our policies and strategies. We also undertakes an annual Sport and Recreation Census which is designed to collect annual utilisation and participation data from over 200 sporting clubs to support strategic planning for the future.

We are also involved in many other networks and partnerships to share information, learn from others and collaborate to achieve our goals.

Annual Action Plan

Each financial year, an annual action plan will highlight the projects and initiatives to be implemented over the next 12 months which make progress towards the strategic actions, objectives and health and wellbeing priority areas of this strategy.

The progress of the annual action plan will be monitored quarterly.

EVALUATION

An evaluation framework will be developed to accompany this strategy which will provide for the following opportunities for review and learning.

Annual Review

Our health and wellbeing priorities will be reviewed annually with key staff, our partners and community. This will help ensure our priorities are relevant to emerging community needs.

An annual report will be prepared for Councillors and the community which provides an update on the progress of the annual action plan. This will include data collected against our measures for each health and wellbeing priority area.

We commit to establishing intermediate indicators with our partners to measure collective impact.

Mid-point review

The health and wellbeing profile will be updated with new data from the 2026 Census and any other new data available.

Final review

Population health indicators from the Geelong Community Health Survey will be benchmarked every four years to track progress towards improved health and wellbeing outcomes for the Greater Geelong community.

GOVERNANCE

Health and Wellbeing Internal Governance Group

A group of key representatives from across the organisation will be established to monitor implementation of the strategy and participate in the annual review process.

This group will enable information sharing and collaboration across different departments with responsibilities for community health and wellbeing outcomes.

GLOSSARY

- **Co-benefits:** Co-benefits refer to the multiple benefits that can arise from an initiative across different program areas. This interrelationship highlights the connection between different health priority areas.
- **Community indicator:** The community indicators measure long term changes in the health and wellbeing of a population. These indicators are mostly outside our control. We are one of many organisations contributing to change.
- **Environments for Health:** This is a strategic framework outlining the role of local government in community health and wellbeing.
- **GPHS:** The Geelong Preventative Health Survey.
- **Health:** The World Health Organisation's definition of health is: "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
- **Goal:** The goals for the health and wellbeing priorities represent the desired outcome and provide a direction for our actions.
- **Measure:** Our measures reflect both qualitative and quantitative data we can collect. Influencing these measures is within our direct control.
- **Priority Area:** These are aligned with the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27*, and the six health and wellbeing priorities in this strategy are issues of concern for the Greater Geelong community.
- **Social determinants of health:** The social determinants of health are the non-medical factors influencing health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age such as education, housing, employment, social supports, early childhood development, access to services, transport and the natural and built environment.

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